



Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability Committee

September 22, 2021 Meeting

Home in Tacoma – Discussion Outline



Meeting Topics

- **Housing Growth Scenario – Mid-scale Residential Map Options** – Based on guidance from the 9/8/21 IPS meeting, prior City Council comments, and public input regarding Mid-scale Residential principles, staff are preparing potential alternative maps that reduce the overall amount of Mid-scale Residential and target its locations, based on new/adjusted criteria
- **Design** – The IPS Committee will discuss the infill design policies that are part of the Home In Tacoma Project recommendations, the public and City Council comments to date, and potential policy options

Upcoming IPS Review Schedule

Based on the City Council’s direction, and in coordination with the IPS Chair and Vice-chair, staff 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

Mid-scale Map Options

On September 8, 2021, the IPS Committee began a discussion of the recommended Housing Growth Scenario, focusing on the extent and location of the Mid-scale Residential designations. For more background on the recommendations, public testimony and initial policy options, see the 9/8/21 IPS Committee packet.

At the meeting, Committee members expressed interest in considering options to reduce the overall amount of Mid-scale Residential and to identify ways to target its designation to areas that are the most appropriate first.

Planning Commission Recommendation

Based on the objectives of promoting mid-scale, urban housing located in walkable, transit-ready locations, the Commission developed a Housing Growth Scenario Map designating Mid-scale Residential 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 tailored these general distances to generally transition at streets, and to promote an equitable distribution of low and mid-scale housing opportunities in each neighborhood

Potential modifications

Based on the Committee's discussion, prior Council discussion, and public testimony, there is interest in evaluating options that reduce the amount and further target the location of Mid-scale Residential.

In response, staff have identified the following factors as potential bases for map refinements:

- Frequency of transit service (how often transit stops to pick up riders)
 - The Commission used frequency of transit to determine the width of Mid-scale Residential designations (see above)
 - The IPS Committee could recommend Mid-scale Residential only along higher frequency routes
- Existing land use patterns (for example, are there apartments, shops or commercial uses there?)
 - The Commission did not utilize this factor in designating Mid-scale Residential
 - The IPS Committee could recommend using this factor, in combination with transit and Corridors, to further focus where Mid-scale Residential is appropriate (for example, Mid-scale along transit and Corridors, but only near commercial areas)

To illustrate these alternatives, staff will present the following alternative maps at the 9/22/21 meeting:

Map 1: No new Mid-scale Residential designated (update existing Multifamily Low-Density only)

Map 2: New Mid-scale Residential along highest frequency transit corridors only

Map 3: New Mid-scale Residential along highest frequency transit corridors AND adjacent to Centers

Map 4: New Mid-scale Residential along highest frequency transit corridors, around Centers AND around commercial nodes located on transit and/or Corridors

Map 5: New Mid-scale Residential along transit, designated Corridors and around Centers (Planning Commission recommendation)

NOTES:

- These maps will be preliminary, and would require refinement once the Committee provides direction
- In addition, there are numerous alternative methods for adjusting the proposed Mid-scale Map. 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?)
 - Metering options (for example, should the number of mid-scale projects in a given area be limited initially?)

Design Policies

Planning Commission Recommendation

The Commission's recommendations strongly emphasize design standards as an essential component of getting infill housing growth right. In fact, a core idea of Missing Middle Housing is shifting a regulatory approach based on number of dwelling units to one based on infill scale and design compatibility. Recommendations are intended to balance housing growth with design, livability, historic preservation, urban forestry, public infrastructure and services, and other community goals.

The recommendation (and SEPA Environmental Determination) commit to enacting design standards prior to adopting zoning changes. The standards must implement both existing policy direction as well as the recommended design policies proposed as part of Home in Tacoma – Phase 1.

Existing design policies

The *One Tacoma Comprehensive Plan – Design and Development Element* contains the City's design policies.

General Design and Development goal:

GOAL DD–1 Design new development to respond to and enhance the distinctive physical, historic, aesthetic and cultural qualities of its location, while accommodating growth and change.

Policies provide both general design guidance as well as guidance for specific types of development. The Residential Design and Development goal is:

GOAL DD–4 Enhance human and environmental health in neighborhood design and development. Seek to protect safety and livability, support local access to healthy food, limit negative impacts on water and air quality, reduce carbon emissions, encourage active and sustainable design, and integrate nature and the built environment.

Multiple existing design policies are pertinent to Home in Tacoma. Policies call for development design and scale to be compatible with Tacoma neighborhoods, respond to neighborhood and site context, consider view impacts, protect historic assets, integrate green features and open space, and more.

PDS is working to address community and Council calls for enhanced design standards. The ongoing Urban Design Studio effort identifies actions to better implement Tacoma's design policies, with an initial emphasis on larger projects located in Centers and Corridors.

Recommended design policies

Since current housing rules largely prohibit residential infill, existing design policies are relatively silent on this topic. The Commission recommendation addresses that gap with substantially strengthened policy direction, with the broad objective of ensuring infill design compatibility with existing neighborhood patterns. In summary, Home in Tacoma design policy recommendations are to develop standards that:

- Ensure context-sensitive infill design tailored to neighborhood patterns
- Reflect Missing Middle infill design principles
- Ensure that infill scale and massing is compatible with the neighborhood

- Ensure that infill design addresses landscaping, open space, and physical accessibility
- Promote reuse and discourage demolitions, particularly for historic districts and buildings

See below for the actual text of the Commission's recommended policies.

Public Testimony

Proponents and opponents alike broadly agree that if infill is to be allowed, design standards must be in place first. Common themes regarding design considerations include:

- Height and scale of buildings
- Pedestrian oriented design features
- Yards, open space and vegetation
- Reduce the frequency of demolitions
- Tree canopy/impervious surface
- Respond to the residential patterns of each neighborhood – not all the same
- Trust in City processes to ensure that design policies are implemented

Potential Adjustments

The Planning Commission studied these issues and sought to address them in their recommendations. The Committee could consider numerous methods for adjusting the design policies, including the following:

- Modifications (add, remove or change) recommended design policies
- Provide more specific direction regarding balancing housing and other goals (such as historic preservation, view protection, tree canopy or open space and/or how standards should be tailored to each neighborhood)
- Add examples (such as pictures and hypothetical site plans)
- Provide guidance regarding the regulatory process (such as whether larger infill projects should go through a heightened design review process)
- Provide guidance regarding the Phase 2 stakeholder engagement process (for example what groups are critical to be consulted?)
- Other?

RECOMMENDED DESIGN POLICIES:

The following are some of the Commission's recommended Home in Tacoma Project policies related to infill design:

- Ensure context-sensitive infill design tailored to neighborhood patterns

Policy DD—4.13 (Recommended) Review and update Tacoma's zoning and development standards for residential development to seek opportunities to promote housing supply, choice and affordability while ensuring that infill housing complements neighborhood scale and patterns. Incorporate design standards to achieve quality, context-sensitive infill development in neighborhoods, centers, corridors, and designated historic districts.

- Reflect Missing Middle infill design principles

Policy DD—4.14 (Recommended) Promote infill of Missing Middle housing throughout Tacoma's neighborhoods to increase housing supply, choice and affordability, while ensuring that infill meets the following design principles:

- a. Locate Missing Middle Housing in a walkable context with a strong pedestrian orientation implemented through design, access, orientation to the right-of-way, pedestrian-scale lighting, and other features*
- b. Ensure that Missing Middle Housing is be consistent with massing and scale of neighboring structures and use compatible design language*
- c. Provide for smooth transitions from Low-scale to higher scale areas by preventing abrupt height and scale changes*
- d. Mitigate the appearance of density from the right-of-way and adjacent properties through breaking up the building footprint, appropriate use of setbacks/screening and limiting height at lot lines*
- e. Build a strong sense of community through integration of shared spaces*
- f. Minimize vehicular orientation through moderate onsite parking, alley access or shared driveways*
- g. Maintain a sense of continuity by encouraging reuse of existing structures including through conversions and additional units*
- h. Develop design standards for individual housing types, including standards for shared spaces when appropriate (such as for cottage housing)*

- Ensure that infill scale and massing is compatible with the neighborhood

Policy DD-4.14 (Recommended) Develop standards to regulate the scale and massing of new buildings to allow for infill housing that is reasonably compatible with existing neighborhood patterns and scale.

- a. *For Low-scale Residential areas, new development should be generally consistent with the scale, massing and patterns of the existing neighborhood (allowing for scale increases over time through home additions and remodels).*
 - b. *For Mid-scale Residential areas, new development should generally be of a moderately larger scale than that of the existing neighborhood, provided that new development shall not cause abrupt scale transitions or unreasonably overshadow neighboring sites.*
 - c. *Evaluate allowing scale increases as an incentive to promote policy goals including reuse of existing structures, affordability, green features or integrating physically accessible units.*
- Ensure that infill design addresses landscaping, open space, and physical accessibility

Policy DD-4.15 (Recommended) Strengthen landscaping, streetscape planting and other standards and incentives, and take other actions called out in the Urban Forestry Management Plan to ensure that housing development supports Tacoma’s urban forestry goals.

Policy DD-4.16 (Recommended) Address the needs of a growing population through review of development standards for onsite open space, streetscape improvements, City open space enhancements in partnership with other public agencies.

Policy DD-4.17 (Recommended) Strive to increase the quality and quantity of housing units that are accessible to people of all physical abilities through regulatory incentives, requirements, and other actions.

- Promote reuse and discourage demolitions, particularly for historic districts and buildings

Policy DD—13.10 (Recommended) Encourage and support adaptive reuse and conversions of historically significant and existing viable older structures through methods including:

- a. *Create regulatory incentives that favor housing unit conversion in existing buildings over demolition and replacement*
- b. *Evaluate subdivision standards for opportunities where flexibility could allow retention of an existing structure*
- c. *Evaluate incentives and support for reuse and conversion of abandoned houses*
- d. *Evaluate non-life safety Building Code flexibility for conversion of existing structures (such as ceiling height)*
- e. *Designate land available for houses being relocated as part of redevelopment*

Policy DD-13.12 (Recommended) Encourage infill that is architecturally compatible within surrounding contexts through appropriate scale and design controls both within Historic Districts and citywide.

NOTE: For additional recommended policies and analysis, visit www.cityoftacoma.org/homeintacoma.