

Concerns with the Change to Single-Family Zones in Tacoma's Affordable Housing Package

Historic Tacoma is concerned about the current plan to up-zone the city's single-family neighborhoods, those zoned R-1, R-2, R-2-SRD, and HMR- SRD as part of its Affordability Plan. The up-zone would allow more small-lot development, more conversions to duplexes or triplexes, and encourage the building of duplexes, triplexes, townhouses and cottage housing as well as detached Accessory Dwelling Units (DADUs) in these zones. It's the same as what was proposed and then withdrawn in Seattle at the end of this July. View article [here](#). Our first concern is for our city's two residential historic districts, the Wedge and the North Slope. These sensitive neighborhoods already have many small lots and a high density, and they should not be subject to more development pressures from increased density from even more small lots. The focus of preservation in these historic districts has been on renovating and restoring the buildings to their historic uses. Conversions of remaining single-family houses to duplexes and triplexes destroys interiors and often require historically inappropriate exterior changes.

However, our concerns go beyond the historic districts. This up-zone proposal encourages the building of multi-family housing (duplexes, triplexes, townhouses cottage housing, and DADUs) in all of the city's single-family residential neighborhoods. Single-family zoning has served as a passive form of historic preservation in our older neighborhoods throughout Tacoma. They have been largely protected from teardowns by their single-family zoning. Under the proposed up- zone, however, that protection would disappear. A developer could buy a \$250,000 bungalow, tear it down, and build three townhouses on the lot to sell upward of \$300,000 each. This does nothing for affordability, and we fear that many of these teardowns would be "historic resources", that is, houses that would qualify for inclusion on the city's landmark register. Moreover, the affordable housing that Tacoma most desperately needs are units with 3+ bedrooms for larger families. The proposed up-zone would put a bullseye on less expensive, small, older houses, the very ones that are most affordable for families.

Since its inception, Historic Tacoma has advocated for a demolition review process that would assess a building's historic value and its value to the neighborhood and provide alternatives to the demolition. This proposed up-zone puts many historic homes across the city at risk. We believe this proposal needs further study and must be coupled with a preservation-oriented demolition review process. While we support the city's efforts to create more affordable housing, we do not believe it need be at the expense of our lower density single-family neighborhoods that have served the city so well over the years. Much of the downtown and most of the city's Mixed-use Centers have already been up-zoned to accommodate all the anticipated growth the city is expected to absorb over the next 25 years.

This [link](#) probably gives you the best overall details of the proposal without getting into the actual zoning language. Pages 4-13 are most relevant. The proposal is couched in terms of a "pilot study", but that only refers to the "design review" portion of the proposal. The proposed single-family up-zone is proposed as a permanent change. The public review of this begins in August with a public hearing scheduled for Aug. 19th. You can find more information on the "Affordable Housing Planning Work Program" and how to comment [here](#).

From:

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