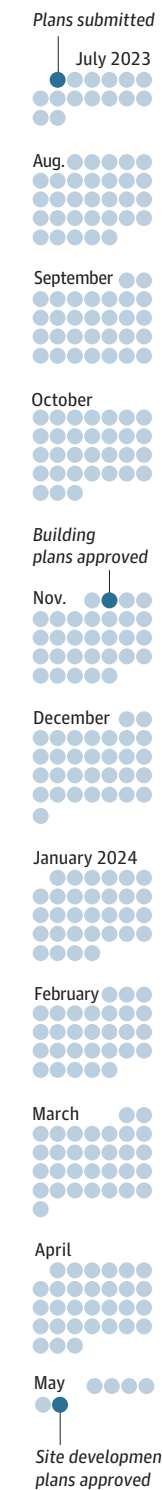


CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

TIMELINE

It took 118 days for building plans and 294 days for site development plans to be approved for five duplexes, submitted by Reggie Brown.



Tacoma is great to work with compared to other cities in the region.

He says that reviewers will answer their phones, and permit applicants are assigned to specific planners, which makes communication easier. On the other hand, the land-use permit process is “broken,” Thomas says.

The land-use permit process nearly put an end to the recently completed 199-unit Cornus project because it was delayed by five months. The Cornus House permit fees cost \$670,000, or \$3,300 per unit.

Newton understands the frustrations, saying the department works with the Tacoma Permit Advisory Group, which was formed in 2017, to fine-tune the process.

“We welcome the feedback and are always looking for ways to get better,” he says. “There is a lot of engagement in the process and it helps us build relationships within the industry. It is a give-and-take process. I was apprehensive at first, but it has allowed both sides to build trust.”

Newton says the Home in Tacoma new zoning codes – which took effect Feb. 1 – will likely pave the way for more units to be developed over the next few years.

“Home in Tacoma will give us an opportunity to build more density in the city,” he said. “It will help us build the housing supply.”

Home in Tacoma, a housing ordinance that was approved by the Tacoma City Council in 2021, allows for more types of housing and does away with single-family housing. It is meant to encourage more housing development in the city, which will eventually lead to an increase in units and more supply.

A key aspect of the ordinance is that it allows property owners to more easily subdivide property, with no minimum lot size as long as it is as big as the structure.

Tacoma is committed to increasing its housing options for all resi-

dents through the Home in Tacoma initiative, says Maria Lee, a spokesperson for the city.

The actual number of units built will depend on a variety of market factors, however. Lee notes Home in Tacoma focuses on regulatory changes that expand what types of housing can be built and where, but it doesn’t dictate outcomes. Ultimately, she says, the private sector will determine the pace and scale of new construction.

Tacoma City Council member Sarah Rumbaugh is optimistic that Home in Tacoma will bolster the housing supply, though it is unclear exactly how that will unfold.

“This is where the rubber hits the road,” Rumbaugh says. “We are now putting our Home in Tacoma plan into action. We can now put more units on a piece of property. The new zoning is more inclusionary and will give more housing options to those who live and work here.”

From 2019 through June 2024, 1,331 affordable units were developed in Tacoma. That works out to 242 units per year.

If that trend continues, only 2,420 of the targeted 6,000 new affordable units will be in place by the end of 2028. But Brown says the market factors and private sector are all in place.

“There is enough land, skill and willpower to hit those goals,” he says. “We need the permit process to go faster.”

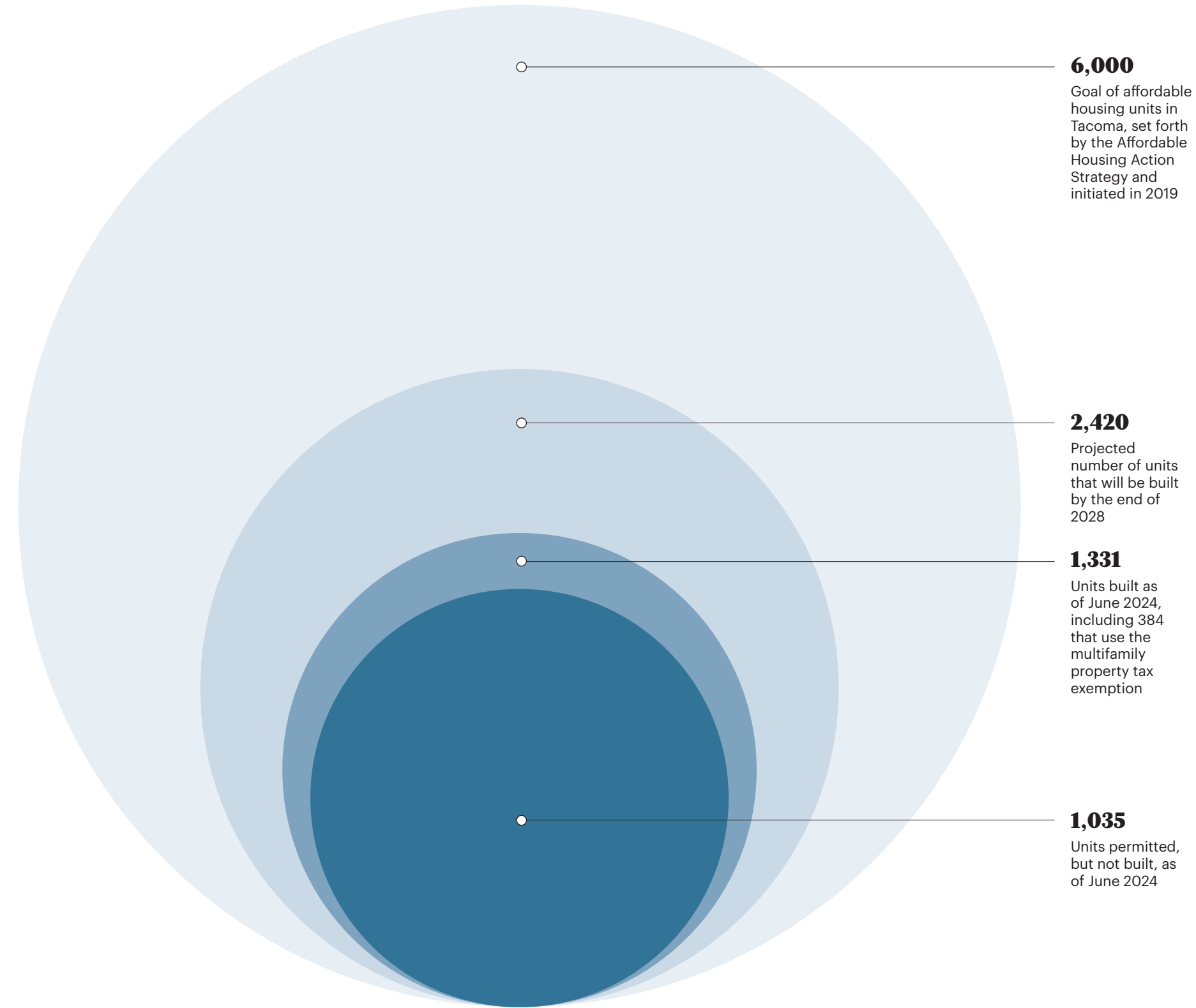
Tacoma had 221 units in the revision review process between Jan. 4 and Feb. 3, according to the city’s permit records. It has 1,065 units in the pipeline permitted and approved.

Brown commends the Home in Tacoma zoning changes and hopes the resolution makes a difference.

“We’ve been falling behind in housing for 40 years,” he says. “Home in Tacoma is providing a great opportunity to have more units built quickly thanks to the upzoning, but if we can’t get permits out in a timely manner, it won’t matter.”

Where Tacoma stands with its affordable housing goals

The city of Tacoma has an ambitious goal to add 6,000 more affordable housing units by 2028, but it is not on track to hit that number.



SOURCE: CITY OF TACOMA AFFORDABLE HOUSING ACTION STRATEGY

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