

An aerial photograph of a city, likely Tacoma, showing a mix of residential and commercial buildings, streets, and a waterfront area. A thick blue horizontal bar is positioned across the middle of the image, separating the main title from the event details.

Urban Design Project Review & Code Amendments

Planning Commission Public Hearing

August 16, 2023

Urban Design Studio
City of Tacoma | Long Range Planning

Agenda

◇ *Project Overview*

◇ *Project Elements*

- *Urban Design Project Review*
- *Urban Design Board*
- *TMC Amendments*

◇ *Tentative Schedule*

◇ *Public Comment*

Project Background

Why are we doing this?

What **CURRENTLY** determines Project Design?

- **Zoning Standards:** use, setbacks, heights, open space
- **Site Development Standards:** parking, landscaping
- **Building Design Standards:** pedestrian requirements, windows, bulk and scale (upper story stepbacks, building modulation)

Generally, development only requires a building permit WITHOUT public notice or opportunity for public input

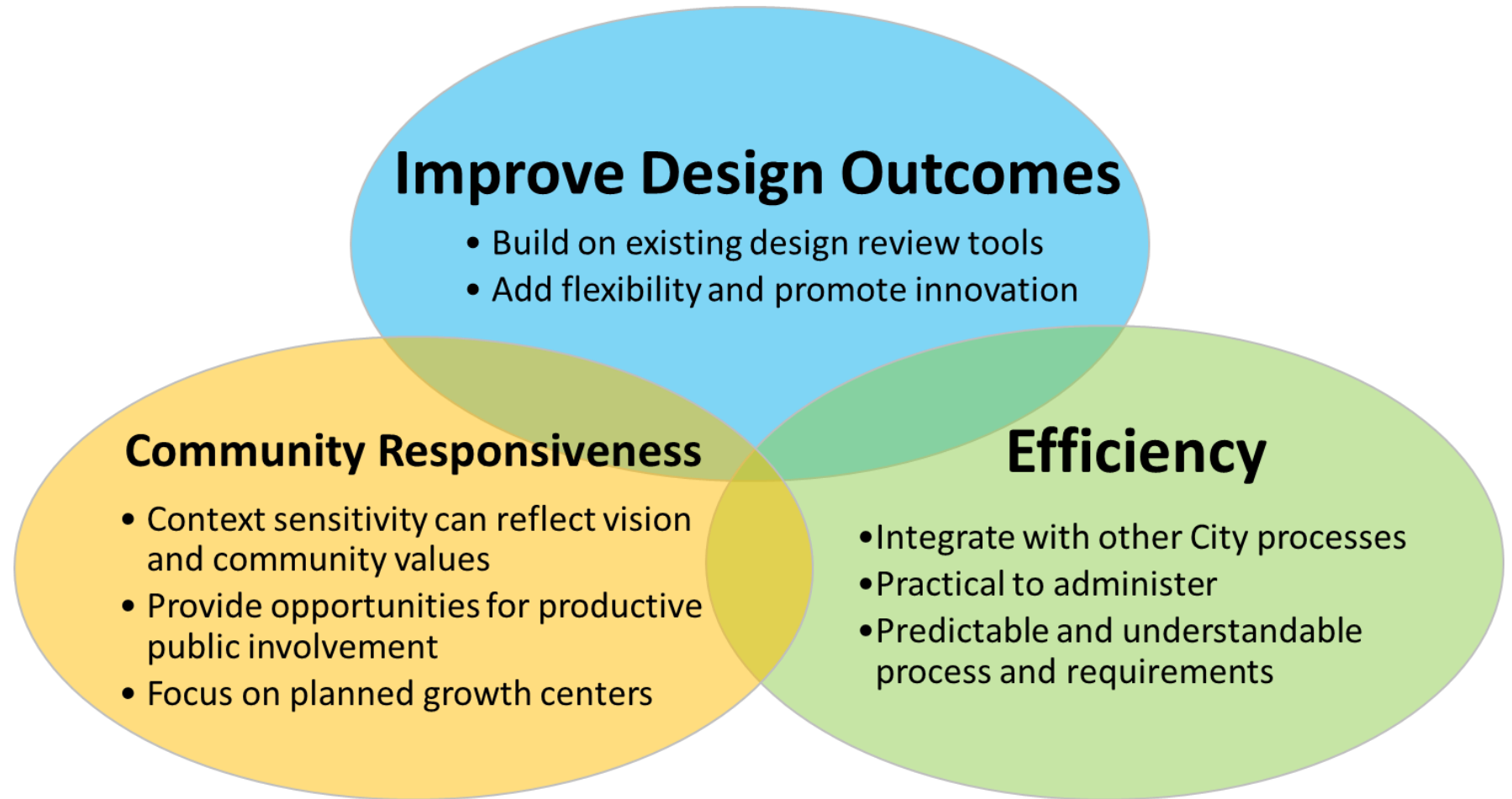
Prescriptive standards establish a baseline level of design and predictability **BUT** encourage *same-ness, limits creativity* in design, cannot account for *unique site contexts*, and does NOT guarantee the *best outcomes*

Project Timeline

How did we get here?

- 2018 Program initiated with creation of PDS Urban Design Studio & consultants selected
- 2019 Planning Commission chartered formation of a Project Advisory Group (PAG)
- 2020 Work initiated
- 2021 Program development paused & new staff reinitiated work
- 2022 – Re-start work w/ consultant and PAG; Planning Commission and
- 2023 Council Committee briefings and workshops; broader public outreach and engagement: Neighborhood Councils, Business Districts & Online Open House/Survey
- 2023 Refine program elements

Project Goals



Project Elements

- Establish an ***Urban Design Project Review*** process
 - Develop ***Manual*** for design review
- Create an ***Urban Design Board***
- Improve ***Design Standards*** in Land Use Code (TMC)

Urban Design Project Review

UDPR permits required for larger, new development projects located in the mapped Mixed Use Centers across the City, regardless of individual neighborhoods' resources, privilege, or capacity to self-advocate for good outcomes.

Would *not apply to Home in Tacoma areas* or *middle housing projects* generally.

Building size and location determines decision path – Administrative or Urban Design Board

Building size thresholds differentiate review paths within Neighborhood Centers and other Mixed Use Centers.

Urban Design Project Review

Where this Permits would be required

Limited to 16 mapped Mixed Use Centers







- Downtown RGC
- Tacoma Mall RGC
- Crossroads Centers (8)
- Neighborhood Centers (6)

Does NOT apply to Home in Tacoma



Urban Design Project Review

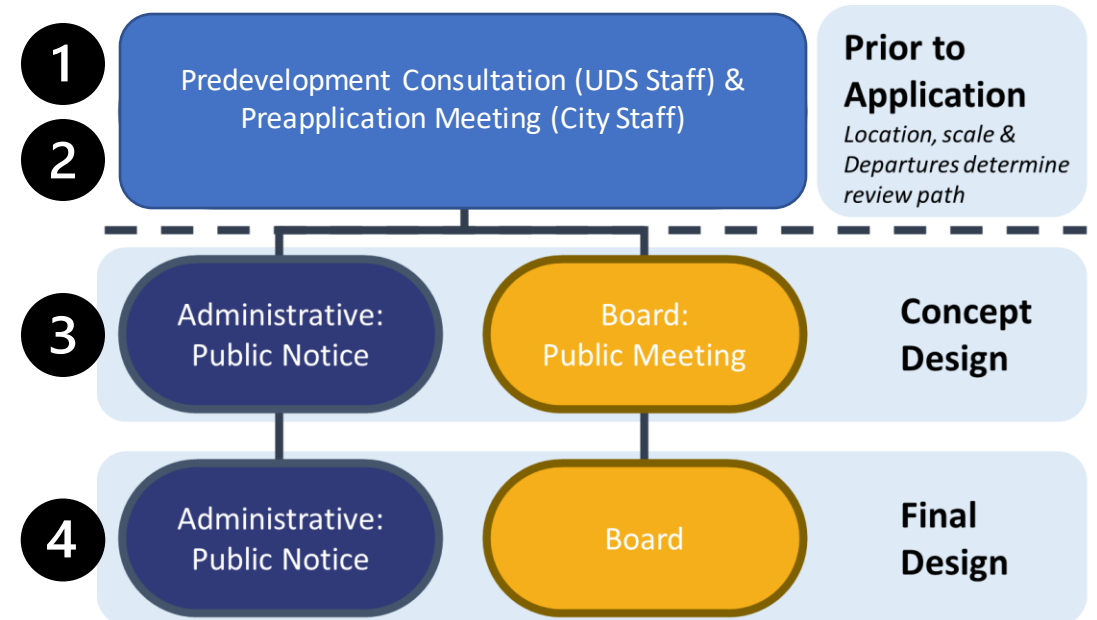
What types of Projects will require Permits?

Location	Exempt from UDPR	UDPR Required	
	TMC standards only	Administrative Review	Board Review
Neighborhood Center	0-10,000 sq. ft. 	10,000 – 40,000 sq. ft. 	40,000 + sq. ft. 
Downtown Tacoma Mall Crossroads Center	0-20,000 sq. ft. 	20,000 – 100,000 sq. ft. 	100,000 + sq. ft. 

Urban Design Project Review

What is the Permit process?

- 1) Predevelopment conference – Urban Design Studio staff
- 2) Preapplication meeting – UDS & other City staff
- 3) Concept Design review either
 - Board - Public meeting
 - Administrative
- 4) Final Design review



Urban Design Project Review

Criteria

Applications must meet seven Design Objectives tied to Topics

Departures – Must also provide equal or superior results in terms of quantity, quality, location, and function.

SITE PLANNING

CONNECTIVITY

ARCHITECTURAL COMPOSITION

PUBLIC REALM

OPEN SPACE

CULTURAL VITALITY, HERITAGE & CREATIVITY

CLIMATE RESPONSIVENESS

Urban Design Project Review Manual

HEADLINE SKETCH:
Sketch expressing the design intent of the chapter.

01 SITE PLANNING

Tacoma Urban Design Fundamentals

"The built form should be made up of identifiable, distinct places, physically defined, that belong to or are controlled by an individual or group. The diversity of buildings and their combination should create visual variation. The juxtaposition of different appearances can contribute a sense of place, making for a more interesting sensory experience and a greater feeling of identity, both for individuals and for a community. These visual differences make a street or neighborhood more distinct and recognizable, which aids orientation and makes walking more enjoyable." –Soft City p224, 215

Fundamentals

Developing a good site plan is critical to a project's short term as well as long term success and a foundational concern for the Urban Design program. The arrangement of structures, spaces, and other elements is directly related to meeting Urban Design objectives related to Connectivity, Public Realm, and Open Space and can reflect how the project furthers other goals related to Character, Culture and Heritage and Climate Resiliency. Additionally, there are other special site conditions, outlined below, that will need to be thoughtfully considered whenever present.

The topography significantly determines the city's development pattern and should inform the planning responses of individual development proposals. Particularly in the Downtown area, site planning must significantly respond to topographic versus down-slope orientation along the north-south avenues.

Shoreline conditions, views of Puget Sound, Commencement Bay, and Mount Tahoma (a.k.a. Mt. Rainier), along with steep slopes, wetlands, open spaces and critical areas represent other major form-organizing landscape features. Built barriers such as limited access roadways add an additional set of constraints to those natural features.

The range of development patterns that comprise Tacoma are inventoried according to Topography, Block Structure, Intersection Density, and Eto of Development (as described in Tacoma's Infill Tools for a Happy City).

Site organization with respect to circulation space, automobile accessibility and storage is perhaps the most profound differentiator among the city's predominant development patterns, respectively of those pre-existing patterns, limiting the extent to which new development site plans are organized around automobile access and storage is among the highest priorities of the Urban Design Development Review program.

Site planning describes the arrangement of built structures, points of access, and related infrastructure including paths, open spaces, streets, parking, and utilities on a site.

Design Objective: Development presents a unified site plan that achieves desirable urban form and is responsive to context.

TOPIC STATEMENT & DESIGN OBJECTIVE:

This section describes the urban design Topic and its key considerations; and the Design Objective, which serves as one of the seven UDPR approval criteria.

URBAN DESIGN FUNDAMENTALS:

This section summarizes relevant background information for the Topic. The section also describes opportunities and challenges related to the Topic, including assets, design attributes, and amenities.

GUIDELINE:

Provides guidance toward demonstrating consistency with the Section Design Objective. Not every guideline will be applicable to every development site but should be considered whenever appropriate.

SITE PLANNING

G-1 : The arrangement of buildings, infrastructure, and open spaces support Urban Design goals and objectives and be contextually appropriate.

Design Approaches To Consider:

01. Orient buildings toward streets, internal connections, pedestrian network (including trails), and open spaces.
02. Provide minimal setbacks, prominent entrances, and active ground floor uses for buildings abutting Pedestrian streets and other streets with enhanced or notable active mobility features.
03. Provide more generous setbacks, emphasized public-private transitions, and private or less active ground floor uses for buildings abutting Residential streets or where buffering is warranted.
04. Locate utilities and access for support services, such as refuse, loading, and deliveries, along the alley or secondary street frontage where alley access is not available.
05. Locate motor vehicle parking at the rear of the site and limit access to the alley or secondary street frontage where alley access is not possible or practical.
06. Situate surface parking in a way that allows for flexible programming and future development.

See Additional Precedent Imagery and Illustrations in Section C Appendices

DESIGN APPROACHES:

This section lists planning approaches that could effectively satisfy the associated Guideline. The list is not exhaustive and should not be used as a checklist for meeting the guideline. Rather, they provide clear and objective examples of an approach consistent with the Guideline and Design Objective and that successfully respond to the conditions and opportunities of the urban design context.

PRECEDENT IMAGERY:

Photographic examples and descriptions of elements that successfully meet the guideline are offered in this section. The photographs support design approaches and correspond to the examples listed in the DESIGN APPROACHES. Additional precedent imagery and illustrations can be found in the Appendices.

Urban Design Board

Seven Members

Appointed by City Council

Mix of design and development professionals and program priority representation

No. of Members	Board Representation
4	Design or development professional
1	Active transportation
1	Sustainable development
1	Culture and heritage

Min. 2 from Council Districts 3, 4 or 5

Max. 2 may reside outside of City limits

TMC Amendments

Mixed-Use Center Districts

- Maximum setbacks for residential development along Ped. Streets
- Revising yard space requirements as “amenity” & reduce exceptions

Downtown Districts

- Maximum setbacks for all development along Ped. Streets

Site Development Standards

- Establish new Downtown utility standards

Code Amendments

UDPR Permit

- Creates Urban Design Project Review (UDPR)
 - Application requirements
 - Criteria
 - Processes
- Establishes Urban Design Board

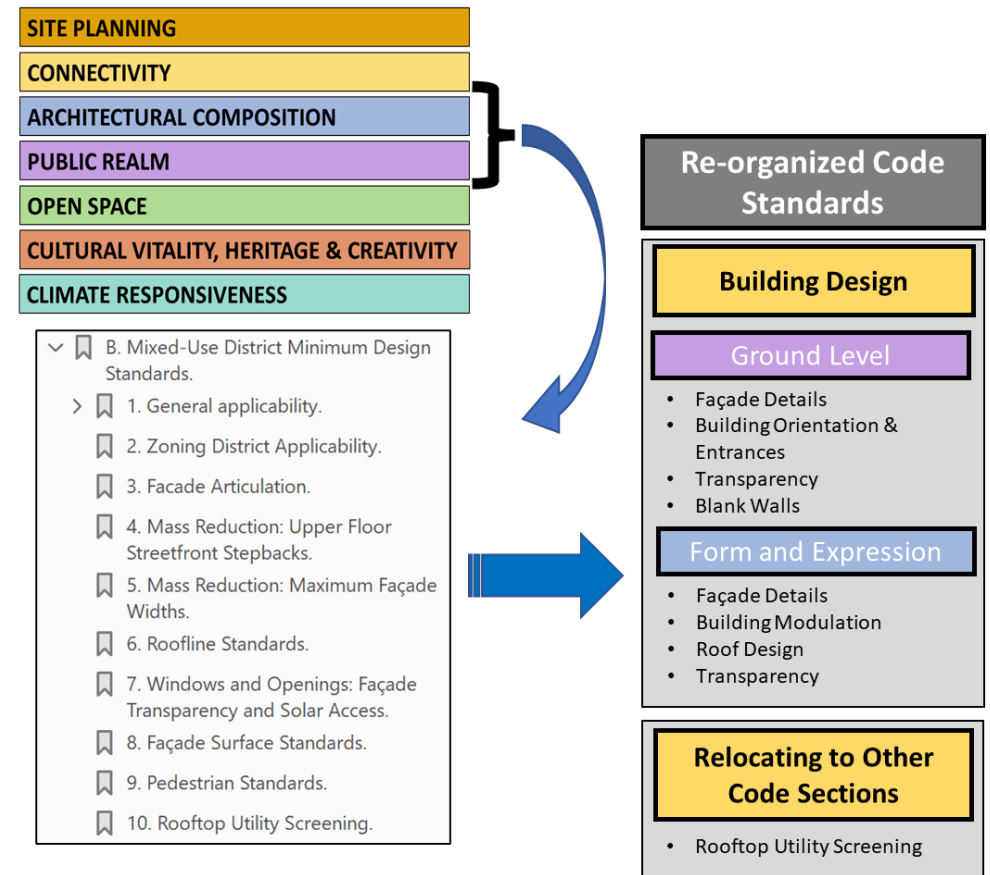
Development & Design Standards

- Limited to Mixed-Use and Downtown zoning districts
- Mix of minor fixes and more substantive changes

TMC Amendments- *cont'd.*

Mixed-Use Center & Downtown Building Design Standards

- Reorganize & retool standards
- Better align Downtown standards with Mixed-Use Centers



Tentative Schedule

Planning Commission Next Steps:

- Accept public comment through ***Friday, August 18th at 5:00pm***
- Review and Recommendation to IPS –
 - September 20th &
 - October 18th (if necessary)

August 23rd Staff briefing Council IPS Committee

TBD City Council Study Session, Public Hearing, 1st & Final Readings (adoption)

Providing Oral Testimony

Topics reviewed today:

- Urban Design Project Review
 - Applicability: Geography
 - Applicability: Project Thresholds
 - Permit Process
- Urban Design Board
- Code Amendments

Testify at Planning Commission Public Hearing (“Raise Hand” in Zoom or dial *9 on phone)

*Provide written comments to planning@cityoftacoma.org by **Friday, August 18th at 5:00 p.m.***