



## AGENDA

**MEETING:** Regular Meeting and Public Hearing (Hybrid)  
**DATE/TIME:** Wednesday, September 20, 2023, 5:00 p.m.  
(Public Hearing beginning at approximately 6:00 p.m.)  
**LOCATION:** Council Chambers, 1st Floor of the Tacoma Municipal Building  
747 Market Street, Tacoma, WA 98402  
**ZOOM INFO:** Link: <https://www.zoom.us/j/81358095104>  
Dial-in: +1 253 215 8782  
ID: 813 5809 5104

### A. Call to Order

- Quorum Call
- Land Acknowledgement

### B. Approval of Agenda

### C. Approval of Minutes

- September 6, 2023

### D. Public Comments

This is the time set aside for public comment on Discussion Items on this agenda.

- Written comments on Discussion Items must be submitted to [Planning@cityoftacoma.org](mailto:Planning@cityoftacoma.org) by 12:00 noon prior to the meeting. Comments will be compiled, sent to the Commission, and posted on the Commission's webpage at [www.cityoftacoma.org/PlanningCommissionAgendas](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/PlanningCommissionAgendas).
- Written testimony on Public Hearing Item G-1 must be submitted by 5:00 p.m. on September 22, 2023; by e-mail to [planning@cityoftacoma.org](mailto:planning@cityoftacoma.org). Oral testimony on this item will be accepted during the Public Hearing portion of this meeting.
- To comment virtually, join the meeting using Zoom. To comment in person, sign in at the back of the Council Chambers. Where necessary, the Chair may limit the allotted time for comment.

### E. Disclosure of Contacts and Recusals

### F. Discussion Items

#### 1. Urban Design Review Program – Debrief

- Description: Review public comments received, staff responses, and possible modifications to a few elements of the Urban Design Review proposal.
- Action: Comment and Direction.
- Staff Contact: Stephen Antupit ([SAntupit@cityoftacoma.org](mailto:SAntupit@cityoftacoma.org));  
Carl Metz ([CMetz@cityoftacoma.org](mailto:CMetz@cityoftacoma.org))



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¿Necesitas información en español? Cần thông tin bằng tiếng Việt? 한국어로 정보가 필요하십니까? ព្រះការព័ត៌មានជាភាសាខ្មែរ?

Нужна информация на усском? Потрібна інформація українською мовою? Contact TacomaFIRST 311 at (253) 591-5000.

## 2. PC Annual Report and Work Program

- Description: Review and consider approving the draft Planning Commission Annual Report for 2022-2023 and Work Program for 2023-2025.
- Action: Review and Approve.
- Staff Contact: Brian Boudet ([BBoudet@cityoftacoma.org](mailto:BBoudet@cityoftacoma.org))

## G. Public Hearing

### 1. Historic District Moratorium

- Description: Conduct a public hearing in response to Council Resolution No. 41226, in which the City Council directs the Planning Commission to conduct a public process to determine whether a moratorium on the consideration and creation of local historic districts is warranted.
- Action: Receive testimony; Accept written comments through September 22, 2023.
- Staff Contact: Reuben McKnight ([RMcKnigh@cityoftacoma.org](mailto:RMcKnigh@cityoftacoma.org))

## H. Upcoming Meetings (Tentative Agendas)

(1) Agenda for the October 4, 2023, meeting includes:

- Historic District Moratorium – Debrief
- South Tacoma Groundwater Protection District (STGPD) Code Update
- Home In Tacoma – Phase 2

(2) Agenda for the October 18, 2023, meeting includes:

- 2024 GMA Update
- Urban Design Review Program – Recommendation

## I. Communication Items

- (1) **Status Reports by Commissioners** – Housing Equity Taskforce, Picture Pac Ave, and Facility Advisory Committee.
- (1) **IPS Agenda** – The Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability Committee's next hybrid meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 27, 2023, at 4:30 p.m.; the agenda (tentatively) includes presentations on the Facilities Advisory Committee, PFAS regulation updates, and the Safe Routes to School Action Plan. (Held at 747 Market Street, Tacoma, WA 98402, Conference Room 248 or virtually at <http://www.zoom.us/j/87829056704>, passcode 614650)

## J. Adjournment



## **MINUTES (draft)**

**MEETING:** Regular Meeting (hybrid)

**DATE/TIME:** Wednesday, September 6, 2023, 5:00 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Christopher Karnes (Chair), Anthony Steele (Vice-Chair), Morgan Dorner, Robb Krehbiel, Jordan Rash, Sandesh Sadalge, Brett Santhuff

**ABSENT:** Brett Marlo, Matthew Martenson

### **A. Call to Order**

Chair Karnes called the meeting to order at 5:01 p.m. A quorum was declared.

Chair Karnes read the Land Acknowledgement.

### **B. Approval of Agenda**

*Vice-Chair Steele moved to approve the agenda as submitted. Commissioner Krehbiel seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

### **C. Approval of Minutes**

- August 2, 2023
- August 16, 2023

*Commissioner Steele moved to approve the August 2 and August 16, 2023, meeting minutes as submitted. Vice-Chair Krehbiel seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

### **D. Public Comments**

Stephen Atkinson, Principal Planner, reported that five written comments were received regarding the Home In Tacoma Project.

No individuals addressed the Planning Commission.

Public Comment ended at 5:03 p.m.

### **E. Disclosure of Contacts and Recusals**

There were no disclosures of contacts or recusals.

### **F. Discussion Items**

#### **1. Election of Chair**

*Commissioner Krehbiel moved to elect Chris Karnes as Chair of the Planning Commission till September 2024. Vice-Chair Steele seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

#### **2. Pacific Avenue Subarea Plan and EIS (“Picture Pac Ave”)**

Wesley Rhodes, Senior Planner, and Madeline Borowski, Comprehensive Planning Intern, presented an overview of the engagement process for “Picture Pac Ave”, including a mailer, in-person events, virtual outreach, the online open house, a snapshot of the survey, next steps, and an update on Pierce Transit’s Bus Rapid Transit Project.

The commission provided feedback regarding the bus station areas, the walking tour, survey demographics, segments of the corridor, plans to add contractors for electric vehicles (EV), noise and safety in the corridor, the BRT, street topology and reducing traffic lanes, youth outreach and engagement, Pierce Transit's Enhanced Bus Service, and green transportation.

The Planning Commission recessed at 5:39 p.m. and reconvened at 5:45 p.m.

### **3. Home in Tacoma – Phase 2**

Elliott Barnett, Senior Planner, and Heidi Oien, Mithun, provided an overview of the Home In Tacoma package, including the revise project schedule; the zoning framework – map, housing types, and densities; building scale – setbacks, building separation, height, and floor area ration (FAR); use of space – parking, amenity space, and trees; the bonus approach – bonuses on offer and public benefits; and next steps.

The Commission provided feedback throughout regarding Council changes, a street layer on the zoning map, prioritization of transit corridors and density, single-family homes, House Bill 1110 requirements, the proposed zoning districts and their names, the buffer from transit stations, an interactive map, parks and schools, setbacks, FAR range, distribution of lot sizes in Tacoma, tree credits, parking, driveway width, amenity space by zone or housing types, transit, and bonus options.

## **G. Upcoming Meetings (Tentative Agendas)**

(1) Agenda for the September 20, 2023, meeting includes:

- Urban Design Review Program – Debrief
- PC Annual Report and Work Program
- South Tacoma Groundwater Protection District (STGPD) Code Update
- Historic District Moratorium – Public Hearing

(2) Agenda for the October 4, 2023, meeting includes:

- Historic District Moratorium – Debrief
- 2024 GMA Update
- Home In Tacoma – Phase 2

## **H. Communication Items**

The Commission acknowledged receipt of communication items on the agenda.

## **I. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:53 p.m.

*\*These minutes are not a direct transcription of the meeting, but rather a brief capture. For full-length audio recording of the meeting, please visit:*

[http://www.cityoftacoma.org/government/committees\\_boards\\_commissions/planning\\_commission/agendas\\_and\\_minutes/](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/government/committees_boards_commissions/planning_commission/agendas_and_minutes/)



**To:** Planning Commission  
**From:** Stephen Antupit, Senior Planner  
 Carl Metz, Senior Planner  
**Subject:** **Urban Design Review– Public Hearing Debrief**  
**Memo Date:** September 12, 2023  
**Meeting Date:** September 20, 2023

**Action Requested:**  
 Comment and Direction.

**Discussion:**

The Planning Commission conducted a public hearing on August 16, 2023, to receive oral testimony, and kept the hearing record open through August 18, 2023, to accept additional written comments, concerning the Urban Design Review Program proposal.

The proposal includes the following elements:

1. **Establish an Urban Design Project Review (UDPR)** permit process consisting of administrative and Urban Design Board review paths.
2. **Establish an Urban Design Board (UDB)** of a specified size and composition, with its nominees to be solicited by the City Clerk, in consultation with the Office of Equity and Human Rights, and to be appointed by City Council for specific terms of service.
3. **Employ an Urban Design Project Review Manual** to provide clear and objective guidance that meets Urban Design Project Review permit approval criteria.
4. **Amend Tacoma Municipal Code** to a) create an Urban Design Project Review Permit, b) establish an Urban Design Board (UDB), and
5. **Amend certain development and design standards** pertaining to Mixed-Use and Downtown Zoning Districts.

At the September 20, 2023, meeting staff will review with the Commission public comments received and staff responses thereto (see Attachment 1). In addition, staff will outline possible modifications to a few elements of the Urban Design Review proposal that were elicited by public comment received. They are:

- Modify the scope and criteria for eligible Design Departures
- Modify the geographically specified composition of the Urban Design Board
- Modify the Yard/Amenity Space Amendment provisions and exceptions

To facilitate the Commission’s review and discussion, staff has included Attachment 1– Public Comment Compilation and Staff Responses in the agenda packet.

Staff is seeking direction from the Commission, to be used to prepare draft “Planning Commission’s Letter of Recommendations” and “Planning Commission’s Findings of Fact and Recommendations Report,” which will be presented for the Commission’s consideration for approval at the meeting on October 18, 2023.

At the October 18, 2023, meeting, the Commission will consider both those modifications to the Urban Design Review proposal and will be asked to act on a Recommendation to the City Council. The next steps for the Urban Design Review proposal include the following dates and actions:



- September 20 – Commission review of public comments
- October 18 – Commission review of possible proposal modifications and Recommendation
- January 24, 2024 – City Council IPS briefing on Commission Recommendation and Consideration

**Prior Actions:**

- August 16, 2023– Public Hearing
- July 19, 2023– Release of Public Review Draft and setting Public Hearing Date

Staff have briefed the Commission through numerous presentations between September 2019 and Spring 2023. Most recently, notable topics on which the Commission provided direction and input are:

- Implications of recent State legislation related to design review and public meetings;
- Outlining various specific Land Use Code modifications and clarifications;
- Establishing thresholds at which development proposals would be exempt or subject to Urban Design Project Review;
- Limiting the geographic scope of the Urban Design Project Review applicability;
- Reviewing relevant permit activity/volumes and regional precedents/best practices;
- Participating in a project-level review simulation workshop with PAG members and consultants to test and give feedback on the draft Urban Design Review Guidelines; and
- Reviewing community priority input collected through the online open house survey.

**Staff Contacts:**

- Stephen Antupit [santupit@cityoftacoma.org](mailto:santupit@cityoftacoma.org)
- Carl Metz, [cmetz@cityoftacoma.org](mailto:cmetz@cityoftacoma.org)

**Attachments:**

- Attachment 1 – Staff Responses
- Attachment 2 – Public Comments Compilation (written and oral testimony)

c. Peter Huffman, Director



## Urban Design Review Program and TMC Amendments

Staff Responses to Public Review Draft Issued by Planning Commission July 19, 2023

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### Topics

- A. Program Impacts on Development
- B. Thresholds and Departures\*
- C. Guidance and Manual
- D. Tree Canopy
- E. Board Composition\*
- F. Code Amendments\*
- G. Effective Dates

*\* Note that Planning Commission direction is specifically requested on items B, E, and F.*

#### A. Program Impacts on Development

Comment Theme:

What impacts would the proposed Urban Design Review Process have on new development, particularly housing production equitably across the city?

Concerns Expressed (see below for individual comments submitted and detailed replies)

A few comments about this proposal focused on adding additional time to permitting and/or having equity impacts. About equally, others expressed support for the program design's emphasis on creating flexible means and a predictable path to allow creative design alternatives.

Response/Options to Consider:

By including the leading affordable housing developers in the program development process (through their ongoing participation in the Project Advisory Group), we have been sensitive to the concerns of those developing projects likely to be subject to this new program. Moreover, we have built this proposal specifically to avoid the operation and focus of other cities' programs where delay and uncertainty are

justified criticisms. We have also structured the proposal to address the obstacles they currently face (e.g., needing to seek Variances for minor departures to existing, inflexible design detail requirements). The program’s design guidance is explicitly NOT adding “constricting design guidelines” but rather provides examples of various design approaches that will satisfy urban design priorities---not detailed architectural regulation or style details.

The positive impact that this proposal can have on development (though its support for site-specific creative design solutions) was supported and articulated by nonprofit low-income housing developers because it is familiar to them as they work at a scale to which they are familiar in other jurisdictions. Tacoma’s program would apply similarly.

As emphasized by the Planning Commission and Council, equitable design outcomes should not be the exclusive province of privileged neighborhoods who have resources and capacity to self-advocate and/or intervene in individual development proposals. Consistent with new State law, the program proposal is designed to establish limited processing steps and timelines, clear and objective approval criteria, and implemented consistently to result in equitable outcomes across the various locations in the city.

## **B. Thresholds and Departures**

### Comment Theme:

Development size thresholds and relationship to the proposed review processes, including circumstances that involve the Board and departures.

### Concerns Expressed:

Some comments question whether building size should be the only metric by which Urban Design Project Review is required. Others acknowledge that smaller projects should not have the same review burden as larger projects. Also, a few comments indicate confusion about whether only departure requests would require an Urban Design Board process.

Additionally, more information about the Departure process was requested.

### Response/Options to Consider:

We agree that smaller projects are more sensitive to time and cost influences of approval processes, and have proposed thresholds scaled appropriately. Thresholds have been set to avoid burdening smaller projects. Even so, smaller projects in the applicable areas will now have the benefit of access to a more straightforward and efficient departure process, rather than the current burden and uncertainty of seeking Design Variances.

We also find that larger projects and their development teams are quite familiar with early design guidance processes, including a Board meeting, and generally expect to include that step in their entitlement processes. That is one of the reasons why the smallest projects would be exempt from Urban Design Review, and medium-sized developments would follow an administrative-only review. However, small and



medium sized projects that voluntarily choose to pursue departures would include one public meeting with the Urban Design Board (rather than the uncertainty of the current Design Variance process).

Whether or not they seek departures, and consistent with new State law, all projects above a certain threshold size (i.e., 40,000gsf in NMUCs, 100,000gsf in other MUCs) would be limited to having only ONE Public Meeting of the Urban Design Board. However, at that one public meeting, the Board would have the authority to “off-ramp” a project and therefore absolve it from returning to the Board for Final Review. Regardless all projects over the established and respective size thresholds would be required to one Board meeting.

Finally, we agree that thresholds be set sensitively to context, as one commenter suggested. That is, the threshold for Urban Design Review in Neighborhood centers is notably LOWER than in the Regional Growth Centers downtown or in the Mall area, or Crossroads Centers, where larger parcels and more significant sized developments are constructed.

***Planning Commission direction is requested on the items below.***

As Departures are concerned, the draft proposal allows alternative design proposals that do not meet certain development and design requirements to be considered with UDPR applications, referred to as a Departure. Items that can be approved through departure review are limited to parking development standards (TMC 13.06.090.C, 13.06.090.D, 13.06.090.E) and building design standards (TMC 13.06.100), which are analogous to existing variances. To receive approval, applicants must demonstrate the proposed alternative design provides equal or superior results to the requirement from which relief is sought in terms of quantity, quality, location, and function. However, in response to some comments received, particularly those related to tree preservation, and to provide as much design flexibility as possible staff believe some revisions to the draft departure provisions are worth considering.

- Expand scope of eligible standards: Consider expanding standards to which departures can be requested to include certain development standards not included in the draft proposal. Examples include, but not necessarily limited to:
  - Prohibition of ground-floor residential uses along designated Pedestrian Streets
  - Maximum setbacks
  - Amenity space requirements
  - Residential transition standards
- Clarify considerations for approval: While staff believe the draft language provides an opportunity to consider a wide range of ways in which a development might provide superior results to prescriptive standards, including preservation of natural features such as significant trees, this could be more explicit. To achieve this, language that more explicitly lists the range of elements that can be considered in departure review, particularly preservation or responsiveness to nature features, could be added.

## **C. Guidance and Manual**

Comment Theme:

Comments range from concern and questions about the intent and use of the guidelines to very specific design topics of interest to commenters.

Concerns Expressed:

A few commenters appreciate the guidance documents offering alternative design approach options to meet clear and objective criteria. Others would prefer a checklist of required, specific design elements. Specific design topics requested include building shapes, renewable energy generation, EV charging infrastructure, and that designs respond to surrounding context and built form.

Response/Options to Consider:

We agree that satisfactory design solutions consider surrounding built form as well as microclimate and a sustainability-orientation in site planning and urban design considerations. Because the opportunities and constraints of each development differ from site to site and local context, that is precisely why the guidance documents do NOT prescribe required solutions, but rather illustrate a range of possible approaches to satisfy the approval criteria of the seven urban design focus areas.

**D. Tree Canopy**Comment Theme:

Concern for tree preservation and increasing the city's overall tree canopy.

Concerns Expressed:

Existing trees should be preserved and additional tree planting should be a high priority.

Response/Options to Consider:

We agree that early design guidance can be a valuable forum for exploring site plans and building arrangements that can preserve on-site urban trees. In addition, street tree and other planting can be an important strategy for shading pavement and structures alike. The proposed Urban Design Project Review process will create opportunities to identify and address potential conflicts early in the design process. The proposed Departures process will include specific reference to preservation of trees as one basis for creative design approaches that might not otherwise be allowed under Code Standards.

Staff also note that the design of capital projects and other programs well beyond this proposal's limited scope will be necessary to grow the city's overall tree canopy.

**E. Board Composition**Comment Theme:

Interest expressed in equitable representation across the city and balance between professional expertise and other perspectives on the

Urban Design Board. Given the reliance on professional expertise for more than half of the Board, the draft proposal provides for up to two Board members to reside outside the City as a means to avoid vacancies on the Board.

Concerns Expressed:

A request that north end Council Districts ( e.g., 1 and 2) have dedicated positions on the Board. Also concern expressed that cultural diversity be represented on the Board, and not limited to the “conservative white male perspective.”

Concern and opposition to the allowance for non-Tacoma residence to sit on the Board has been voiced in previous discussions with the Planning Commission.

Response/Options to Consider:

Geographic diversity on the Urban Design Board is an important priority built into the program proposal. We agree that the goal of diversity should be clearly presented and built into the program. For that reason, the proposal specifies a minimum participation from historically underrepresented and lower opportunity areas of Tacoma (at least two members representing City Council districts 3, 4, or 5), while also valuing relevant lived experience beyond professional credentials.

***Planning Commission direction is requested on the item below.***

Staff is confident that neighborhood residents from higher opportunity areas, higher levels of formal educational attainment and overall privilege (i.e., Districts 1 and 2) will undoubtedly present themselves as candidates for the Urban Design Board (UDB). Nonetheless, staff recommend the Planning Commission consider modifying the composition of the Board to include minimum participation from all Council Districts.

- Consider adding a requirement that at least one or two Board members reside or have primary place of business in City Council Districts 1 or 2. This mirrors the draft requirement for Council Districts 3, 4, and 5.

Staff also seeks direction as to whether the provision to allow up to two non-Tacoma residents should remain or be eliminated.

**F. Code Amendments**

Comment Theme:

The City is also considering several amendments to the Land Use Regulatory Code (TMC Title 13) that would modify development and building design standards in areas within the Mixed-Use and Downtown zones. The items we have received comments on are discussed below.

***Yard/Amenity Space Requirements-- Planning Commission direction is requested on this item.***

Current code uses the term “yard space” to describe a wide range of private and common spaces including balconies, courtyards, rooftop decks, etc. The draft proposal would replace the term “yard space” with “amenity space” to better reflect the range of types of space that satisfy these requirements and some interior spaces would now be eligible to meet these requirements.

Current code exempts yard space requirements for developments that meet one of these three: located within ¼ mile of parks or school yards, achieve a 3 FAR, or incorporate ground floor retail/restaurant uses.

The draft proposal would make the following changes:

- Introduce a tiered set of reductions full and 50%. Full reductions would be limited to the most intensive Mixed-Use zones, typically located along busier streets, including designated Pedestrian Streets. Other zones would be limited to the 50% reduction.
- Proximity to a park space would be a required condition (1/8 mile for full reduction, ¼ mile for 50% reduction) and school yards would be eliminated.
- One of the other two existing conditions (FAR and active commercial ground floor use) would also need to be met to qualify for a reduction.

These proposed revisions are in response to observed inconsistent quality and access to school yards across the city and to better ensure developments that take advantage of the reductions are also reflective of the vision for mixed-use centers in terms of density, scale, and mix of uses.

Concerns Expressed:

- Generally unsupportive of yard/amenity space exemptions and emphasis on shared, common spaces
- Concerned how these code amendments might negatively impact development of small/moderate-sized sites (i.e. 25 – 75’ wide).
- Specific code revisions suggested related to applicability and qualifying amenity spaces

Additionally, previous discussions with the Planning Commission indicated there may be some interest in eliminating the exception provision all together.

Response/Options to Consider:

Staff agree access to private outdoor space is highly desired but that requiring such amenities for every unit presents some challenges and trade-offs to consider in light of the vision for development in mixed-use centers, which is relatively dense in terms of number of units but also building massing. For this reason, staff believe it is reasonable to revise current requirements to provide greater flexibility in the types of spaces that meet amenity space requirements (such as indoor spaces) but also scale back current yard space exceptions for the reasons discussed above.

***Planning Commission direction is requested on the items below.***

Staff share the concerns raised related to potential impact of amenity space requirements on small to mid-sized developments. The current requirements and exceptions are not based on the scale of development and the proposed draft amendments do not currently include these either. While staff believe the proposed amendments to the exception provisions logically and reasonably addresses the amendments' intent, staff believe they may have a disproportionate impact on smaller developments and some revisions to the draft requirements and exception language is worth considering per the concerns raised.

- Amenity space requirements: Introduce a scaled or tiered set of amenity space standards, whether they're based on site area, building area, or number of units could be developed. For example, smaller project sites (i.e. less than 20,000 sq. ft.) could require less amenity space per unit than sites greater in size.
- Amenity space exceptions: Instead of fully eliminating school yards from being a type of qualifying park facility, more specific language could be developed to better refine which school yards would qualify for the exception. For example, the term "school park" could be used and defined with specific requirements such as long-term inter-agency agreements between Tacoma Public Schools and Metro Parks, which aligns with an active pilot "Community Schoolyard" program between TPS, Metro, and the Trust for Public Land.
- Amenity space exceptions: Continue to allow for a wider application of the full reduction, equivalent to the current exceptions, for smaller developments.
- Amenity space exceptions: Consider eliminating the exception/reduction provisions entirely. This might be more appropriate if combined with a reduction in required amenity space for smaller development sites.

**Building Design Standards**

Comment Theme:

The City employs a set of minimum building design standards within Mixed-use and Downtown zoning districts. These are intended to ensure a minimum level of building design that is consistent with the type and scale of development that is envisioned in these areas. Generally, these areas are envisioned to consist primarily of mid-rise (5-10 stories) buildings (taller "tower" buildings are generally limited to the Downtown Commercial Core zone) with an emphasis on the pedestrian experience at the ground-floor.

Concerns Expressed:

- Does not support design standards that "attempt to legislate aesthetics." Cited sections include: Ground Floor Façade Details and Articulation and Building Form and Expression Façade Articulation and Roofline Design.

- A number of comments were provided regarding specific standards. These are addressed in the table below.

Response/Options to Consider:

Staff recognize the limits prescriptive standards such as those currently employed by the City. Strengths of these types of requirements are they ensure a minimum level of design for developments and are predictable. Weaknesses can include fostering a sense of sameness amongst developments and hampering design creativity. Staff find these types of standards to be necessary and generally effective but identified opportunities to reduce unnecessary complexity and provide greater flexibility as reflected in the draft proposal. Recognizing the best design solution for a development might not conform exactly to the prescribed requirements, staff hope to encourage applicants to pursue design alternatives (known as “Departures”) through the Urban Design Project Review permit review.

**G. Effective Dates**

The City is considering establishing a new Urban Design Project Review (UDPR) land use permit process for developments of a certain size located within a designated Mixed-Use Center.

The City is also considering several amendments to the Land Use Regulatory Code (TMC Title 13) that would modify development and building design standards in areas within the Mixed-Use and Downtown zones.

Concerns Expressed:

- How are projects “in-process” affected by the program?
- Please explain/explore providing a grace period between approval and effective date.
- Please include a transition period of at least six months.

Response/Options to Consider:

If passed, staff expect the two discrete portions of the proposal (UDPR and TMC code amendments) to have different effective dates. Code amendments are typically effective 10-30 days after adoption but more significant changes, such as these, may warrant longer timeframes. The goals of these grace periods are to provide a sufficient and reasonable amount of time to make necessary adjustments to projects currently in design, allow impacted projects to be better prepared for the new permit process, and hopefully avoid surprises at the time of permitting.

These effective date timeframes have yet to be determined but could range between 30 to 180 days. Ultimately, the effective dates will be set at the discretion of City Council at the time of adoption.

Regardless of how long the UDPR grace period is, City staff would be available during this time to provide pre-application consultation to help streamline the application process once the program is active.

TOPIC A: Program Impacts on Development		
Streamlining the process for overall approval is not a bad thing as long as the overall impact is considered above minor technical variances that are necessarily addressed in the overall evaluation process anyway.	TW	Agreed.
a fair and quick process that requires the project team to look at all the community design issues is important.	DF	Agreed. Consistent with new State law, the program proposal is designed to establish limited processing steps and timelines, clear and objective approval criteria, prioritizing equitable outcomes across the various locations in the city.
Small and medium projects can do prescriptive design requirements to keep the cost down, if the perspective requirements are reasonable, clear and easy to follow in the Design manual.	DF	Agreed. Project thresholds are set to respond to complexity of projects, and those developments' respective capacity to engage in more involved entitlement processes.
staff exhibited consistent commitment to providing a program that resulted in maximum benefit for the public, with minimal negative impacts to the development community.	BF	Comment noted. Volunteer participation from the design, nonprofit housing, and other development community representatives has been essential to guiding the staff's work on developing this program proposal.
Thresholds should not be purely number driven (i.e, solely related to the square footage of the project). It should also be context driven.	FD	We agree. For that reason, thresholds and the level of review are set relative to the type of growth area where projects would be subject to Urban Design Review. That is, a proposed development of a certain intensity could have a more substantial relative impact in a Neighborhood center than downtown, and therefore the thresholds for those locations are calibrated in response to that contextual circumstance.
I would like to see the project sponsors identify a comprehensive list of risks (and mitigations to those risks). I would like the project sponsors to	ZC	Precedents, lessons learned, and program modifications in relevant peer jurisdictions were presented to the Planning Commission at its meeting of December 15, 2022.



identify instances where similar policies were adopted elsewhere previously.		
Concern raised about establishing a “design review board.” Concerns raised include that design review boards can result in development delays, which increases costs, and have been used to restrict development, particularly housing, and excluding housing in certain areas of a city.	RB	We agree that the process must be well managed to contain scope relative to the size of project, review and communication timelines, and a limit on only one public meeting (per new State laws) and to assure equitable outcomes throughout the city. This requires having a clear and efficient process, strong staff role in using the objective review criteria, and equally administrated not subject to “NIMBY weaponization” in more privileged areas.
Concerns raised about the design review increasing the City’s exposure to possible litigation.	RB	Thank you for expressing this concern. Staff have consulted with the City Attorney to get clear guidance and confirm legal authority and new requirements set by new State legislation.
Demand for affordable housing vouchers is greater than those current availability.	RB	Comment noted. Please note that the Tacoma Housing Authority, an independent public agency that is wholly separate from the City, is solely responsible for obtaining (from the Federal government) and managing the inventory of affordable housing vouchers available within Tacoma. See responses to concerns raised about impacts to development in general above.
Concerned that the new project review permit process will increase the overall cost and risk born by developers and make it more difficult. Instead, suggests the City speed up the permitting process.	CD	Comment noted. See responses to concerns raised about impacts to development in general (Topic A) above.
Design review boards have been used to exclude housing production resulting in increased costs and reduced housing capacity. Suggests design review be used to ensure requirements are met and not just subjective design preferences.	YR	We agree. This proposal is oriented to having a clear and efficient process of which a Board review component would only be engaged in the very largest projects, with strong staff role in using the objective review criteria, and a program equally administrated as not subject to “NIMBY weaponization” in more privileged areas. Additionally, this program is overwhelming attentive to larger concerns of neighborhood fit and urban design function, not architectural style or details of color, material, etc. Finally, new State law explicitly prohibits design review from materially decreasing height, bulk, or scale allowed by the underlying zoning. As a benefit, the proposal will provide a new, more proscribed avenue for allowing creative design solutions without lengthy Variances.

<p>What are possible impacts of the program as it relates to perpetuating “exclusionary housing” practices.</p>	PC-RK	See response above.
<p>By making one more permit process, board reviews, and constricting design guidelines you are making it more difficult to build affordable housing. More regulation equals more cost. The city should be trying to make it easier to build, not harder to build.</p>	SK	<p>By including the leading affordable housing developers in the program development process (through their ongoing participation in the Project Advisory Group), we have been sensitive to the concerns of those developing projects likely to be subject to this new program. Moreover, we have built this proposal specifically to address the obstacles they currently face (e.g., needing to seek Variances for minor departures to existing, inflexible design detail requirements). The program’s design guidance is explicitly NOT adding “constricting design guidelines” but rather provides examples of various design approaches that will satisfy urban design priorities---not detailed architectural regulation.</p>
<p>Overall, we are appreciative of the intent of updated design guidelines and design review for the City of Tacoma. Utilizing guidelines and advisory design review are a great way to prompt development and design teams to think about the issues of design and public realm that matter most, while still giving design teams flexibility to respond to their particular context. We also appreciate how the program is designed to respond to known issues with design review in other jurisdictions.</p>	KR	Comment noted.
<b>TOPIC B: Thresholds and Departures</b>		
<p>I am dubious about the size of a building schedule with large projects getting a full design review by the board review, medium size buildings getting an administrative review and small buildings getting none. All should comply and if they do not meet administrative review, they can elect to go to the Design Review Board.</p>	DF	<p>We agree that smaller projects would be exempt from Urban Design Review, and medium -sized developments would follow an administrative only review—and only those that voluntarily choose to pursue departures would include one public meeting with the Urban Design Board.</p>

I am less concerned with good design in large buildings.		
If projects meet the minimal requirements they can have administrative approval and move forward quickly. This is the best aspect of this program.	BF	Note that all projects above a certain threshold size (40,000 gsf in NMUCs, 100,000 gsf in other centers) would be required to have ONE public Meeting of the Urban Design Board. At that meeting, the Board would have the authority to “off-ramp” a project and therefore absolve it from returning to the Board for Final Review (see next comment below). However, in all cases, projects over the established and relevant threshold would need to have one Board meeting.
Projects will not need to present to the Design Review Committee unless they wish to take an alternate approach that meets or exceeds the well-defined criteria. This approval off-ramp will hopefully enable innovative designs that can become landmarks and sources of public pride. In many design programs these kinds of buildings are simply not allowed.	BF	To clarify, the “off-ramp” provision would be available only for projects that, after their first, threshold-determined Board meeting, are found to be of such strong design concepts that their final review could be made administratively, and avoid having to come back to the Board for Final Review.
Explain the departures process	PC-BS	Departures from the Code’s Building Design Standards and certain parking-related design standards (not quantity) would be available to any proposal subject to urban design review. Requesting a departure would not change the UDPR review path. This process would replace the current design and parking lot design Variance provisions of the TMC.  Please see discussion above related to potential revisions to Departure scope and criteria.
<b>TOPIC C: Guidance and Manual</b>		
take design cues from older surrounding structures and that neighbors should be consulted.	MW (w)	Comment noted. The guidance documents emphasize the value of site surroundings in informing design responses. Furthermore, public notice and circumstances where a single public meeting are allowed by new State law are incorporated into the proposal.

contributions to civic improvement should be included here. Solar panels, charging stations, schools.	MW (w)	Comment noted. The guidance documents emphasize the value of, and will include additional examples of, microclimate- responsive and climate resilience strategies to inform design responses.
Guidelines should require new development to fit into the larger neighborhood – not necessarily just adjacent houses.	MW (o)	Consistent with the focus on the city’s mapped Growth Centers, the program will be evaluating development proposals based on the underlying zoning capacity, height regulations, and similar provisions in the Code. New State law prohibits design review from materially reducing the height, bulk, scale, and density allowed by the underlying zoning.
Design consideration need to be given to the overall character and style of the surrounding neighborhood for new development. Buildings should include articulated facades on all sides with minimum articulation/modulation standards.	KK (o)	Current and proposed code language includes some provision for building articulation or vertical modulation for buildings over a certain size or width as a means to reduce the building’s massing. It is worth noting, the proposed amendments would provide greater flexibility to the developer in how massing is approached so vertical modulation may not be provided in all circumstances where the developer/designer opted for an upper story stepback or a courtyard instead.
The Design Review Manual Guidelines should be specific not vague! The Design Manual does not instruct the designer with a specific guideline. If this is on purpose then the process will be long, length, political and costly.	DF	To clarify, the project Review Manual (“guidelines”) are designed as providing a wide set of clear and distinct example approaches, intentionally encouraging creativity of designers and responsiveness to specific site contexts that cannot be exhaustively anticipated.  Moreover, by specifying that the state-mandated time limits and one-public-meeting limit, the proposal is explicitly
[The] program avoids the “Garanimals” approach to design that many design review programs use, policies such as “pick two features from column A for a façade exceeding 50-feet, pick a building base from column B, and a building top from Column C.”	BF	Noted. The guidelines are intended to provide a range of design approaches acceptable to meet approval criteria, but not proscribe specific solutions. Site responsive and creative alternatives are encouraged by this program’s design.
The key aspect of the plan that I support is clear, prescriptive intentions for how the urban space should look and function, with specific actions that can be taken to satisfy the goals.	BF	Noted.

buildings should incorporate articulated front and side walls, minimizing long stretches of flat surface.	JE	Building design standards in the Code include articulation provisions. This program will establish methods to have meaningful design responses that are not formula-driven.
most important, will be predictability. Shared understanding between the City and Developers about whether the new guidelines are advisory (our understanding) or code they will be held to will be crucial.	KR	Comment noted. We agree that predictability is key to the program success. The guidelines are intended to provide a range of design approaches acceptable to meet approval criteria, but not proscribe specific solutions. Moreover, we appreciate the commentor's ongoing coordination with staff regarding projects already in the design process. See also Effective Dates, below.
<b>TOPIC D: Tree Canopy</b>		
Protect... the existing mature trees [and] plans for planting and maintaining new trees. ..ensure that a healthy tree canopy is a top priority.	GR	<p>We agree that early design guidance can be a valuable forum for exploring site plans and building arrangements that can preserve on-site trees. In addition, street tree and other tree planting can be an important strategy for shading pavement and structures alike. The proposed Urban Design Project Review process will create opportunities <i>early in the design process</i> to identify potential conflicts and support creative alternatives for tree canopy.</p> <p>In addition, staff are recommending adding to the proposed Departures process a specific reference to preservation of trees as one basis for creative design approaches that might not otherwise be allowed under Code Standards.</p> <p>Staff also note that the design of capital projects and other programs well beyond this proposal's limited scope will be necessary to grow the city's overall tree canopy.</p>
Please prioritize the preservation of mature trees and provision of ample space for planting new trees.	FD	We agree. Please see response above.
Preserve every mature tree on private property as part of "design standards."	HS	These proposed code amendments do not add such requirements.
The number of trees to be planted needs to be connected to the size of the development.	MW (w)	Tree planting quantities are not part of the code provisions considered for amendments in this process.

("Trees to toilets") and those need to be shade trees.		
<b>TOPIC E: Board Composition</b>		
I urge you to also include a representative from District 1 and District 2.	GR	Geographic diversity on the Urban Design Board is an important priority built into the program proposal. We agree that the goal of diversity should be clearly presented and built into the program. While staff is confident that neighborhood residents from higher opportunity areas, higher levels of formal educational attainment and overall privilege will undoubtedly present themselves as candidates for the Urban Design Board (UDB), we do recommend modifying the composition of the Board to include minimum participation from all Council Districts.
Urban Design Board needs to be more community members from each district, to better balance "design professionals" with community voices.	HR	We agree each District should be represented on the Urban Design Board.
I worry about a design review board ...will only approve and reflect one small part of Tacoma... the safe, tried, and true conservative white male culture. Different cultures have very different ideas of beauty and design.	DF	We agree that diversity should be clearly presented and built into the program. For that reason, we have proposed a minimum number of Board members be selected by City Council from those parts of Tacoma more associated with cultural and socioeconomic diversity, not just from the areas of highest opportunity.
I agree that there should be equitable participation on the Review Board. City could appoint 2 representatives from each council district who will serve on the Board when a development in their district comes up for review. These board members would specifically represent district residents, rather than doubling up to represent development, heritage, transit, etc.	FD	As recommended, Council appointment to the Board requires an outreach and public education process, a formal recruitment, application and interview processes that require time to be thoughtful, and therefore could not efficiently be "restarted from scratch" in a timely manner for each individual project review. For that reason, a Board of standing membership will be necessary to conduct the work in a timely and predictable way.
Where is the Design Committee?? And who is on it?	JQ	The proposal includes a new Council-appointed Urban Design Board. The proposal identifies a range of expertise and geographic diversity to be included

		in the new Urban Design Board. Staff are including modest adjustments to the Board composition as a result of public review comments received.
<b>TOPIC F: Code Amendments</b>		
The process would be more conducive to approving a project assuming it was consistent with the uses consistent with the neighborhood and even if variances were required, they would be addressed in the evaluation/approval of the overall project and avoid endless bureaucratic wrangling over individual applications for variances and other relief thereby reducing costs for all concerned, while protecting the interests of others in the neighborhood given the nature of the project at large.	TW	Comment noted. We agree that the proposal's provision of clear and predictable permit process, while allowing flexibility for "better than minimal" proposals, is a benefit.
Concerned about how code requirements might negatively impact development of small/moderate-sized sites (25, 50, 75 ft.-wide). Suggests further review of existing and proposed standards related to amenity space, light and air access, weather protection, parking requirements, bike parking, and driveway widths.	DFo(o), (w)	Comment noted. See discussion above about possible revisions to draft amendments.
<b>Yard/Amenity Space</b>		
Do not support renaming "yard space" as "amenity space" or encouraging shared, common spaces, including interior spaces.	JE	Comment noted.
Do not support yard/amenity space exemptions.	JE	Comment noted. To clarify, staff notes yard/amenity space exemptions currently exist and the proposed amendments would scale back some elements of the current exemptions.
Please clarify how yard/amenity space exemptions would occur. Do exemptions have	JE	Please see the description of how the current and proposed exceptions/reductions work above. The exceptions/reductions alone do not

the potential to increase building height? Is this commonly accepted in other municipalities?		increase the maximum height of a development. Based on brief review of other cities' yard/amenity/open space requirements, these requirements vary and are often reduced in designated growth centers, like Tacoma's Mixed-Use Centers, where developments of greater density and scale are expected and desired.
Do not support emphasis on shared, common spaces or reliance on public parks and thinks residents should have access to private outdoor space.  Desires more information about yard/amenity space exemptions.	JQ	Comment noted. Please see the description of how the current and proposed exceptions/reductions work above.
Explain the yard space changes and exception provision.	PC-RK	Please see the description of how the current and proposed exceptions/reductions work above.
Concerned about how revised amenity requirements and exceptions might negatively impact development of small/moderate-sized multifamily projects, resulting in fewer units or no longer being financially feasible.	DFo(w)	Comment noted. See discussion above about possible revisions to draft amendments.
Interior Amenity Space description is too vague.	DFo(w)	Comment noted.
Suggested Amenity Space changes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exempt all X District projects 20 units or fewer</li> <li>• Allow walkways to be included</li> <li>• Allow a 10' min dimension in certain cases for common amenity spaces</li> </ul>	DFo(w)	Comment noted.  Staff notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See discussion above about possible revisions to draft amendments.</li> <li>• Walkways may be part of an eligible outdoor amenity space subject to other qualifying features.</li> <li>• The 15' minimum dimension for common amenity space is the existing standard and amendment is not currently proposed.</li> </ul>
<b>Building Design Standards</b>		
Does not support design standards that "attempt to legislate aesthetics." Cited sections	DFo(o), (w)	Comment noted.



include: Ground Floor Façade Details and Articulation and Building Form and Expression Façade Articulation and Roofline Design.		
Tacoma doesn't need such extensive Building Design Standards.	DFo(w)	Comment noted.
The fact is that missing middle projects (~15 units on 6000 SF lots or similar) need a break and these new rules are a big step backward.	DFo(w)	Comment noted.
Weather protection: Sees intent of these requirements to be reasonable but has concerns about the draft requirements. Specific concerns cited include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To require private sidewalks, walkways and amenity spaces to have a 5' deep canopy regardless of building use or specific site conditions is not reasonable.</li> <li>Elsewhere in the code, 75% of amenity areas are required to be uncovered, so this rule creates a rabbit hole.</li> </ul>	DFo(w)	Comment noted. Staff notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The provisions cited are generally consistent with current requirements and the proposed amendments do not represent substantively new requirements.</li> </ul>
Building Transitions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A 2 foot grade change at entrances is in direct conflict with accessibility requirements (wheelchair access).</li> <li>Hard paving requirement might work in some cases but in other cases landscaping may be desirable.</li> <li>In summary, this entirely new section is an attempt to impose specific design details and should be deleted.</li> </ul>	DFo(w)	Comments noted. Staff notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The grade change referenced describes one of three building transition options and a grade change is not required.</li> <li>The hard surfacing requirement is intended to better ensure consistent access to the public benefits provided by weather protection.</li> </ul>
Transparency: The intent here is understandable but the requirements are poorly considered.	DFo(w)	Comments noted. Staff notes:

<p>Specific concerns cited include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A project located on a Pedestrian Street would require an interior-courtyard-facing bike room (or any ancillary use) to have 35% transparency.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The proposed draft would require ground floor walls containing a residential or ancillary use (including a bike storage room) facing an interior courtyard to provide at least 15% of transparency. To be clear, it does not necessarily require transparency along the walls containing ancillary uses but these areas are included for the purposes of determining the total amount required and that the minimum amount of windows and doors can be provided elsewhere on the façade. 35% transparency is only required along walls facing a designated Pedestrian Street. Where there is a common amenity space (meeting minimum requirements) between the building and the Pedestrian Street, the 15% requirement would apply.</li> </ul>
<p>Blank Walls: Sees intent of these requirements to be reasonable but has concerns about the draft requirements. Specific provisions were cited regarding what constitutes a blank wall and the effectiveness of the blank wall treatment options.</p>	DFo(w)	<p>Comments noted.</p> <p>Staff notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The provisions cited are generally consistent with current requirements and the proposed amendments do not represent substantively new requirements.</li> <li>The option of adding windows or doors to treat blank walls was removed because if windows or doors are added, by definition the wall ceases to be a “blank wall” thereby blank wall treatment is no longer necessary. Therefore, this option does not seem like blank wall treatment so much as a solution to no longer needing blank wall treatment.</li> <li>The provision of artwork was added as a blank wall treatment option.</li> </ul>
<p>Building Form and Expression</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facade Articulation: This section is an attempt to legislate aesthetics and should be deleted, not least because it is highly biased toward “historic/traditional” design details.</li> </ul>	DFo(w)	<p>Comments noted.</p>
<p>Building Form and Expression</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mass Reduction: Light and Air Access is overly restrictive for mid-size lots which do not have the space. Also, this section</li> </ul>	DFo(w)	<p>Comments noted.</p> <p>Staff notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The draft Light and Air Access standards replace the current “solar access” standards. The draft language reduces the required setback</li> </ul>

falls under the Mass Reduction section which doesn't make sense. New light/air access standards will sacrifice another unit if not more.		for side-facing units from 15 ft. to 8 ft. The draft language also more specifically addresses interior spaces such as courtyards or light wells. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The draft standards only apply to developments that have more than 60 feet of frontage along streets, open space, or parking areas whereas the current solar access standards have no such applicability threshold and are applicable to all developments. Staff believe the draft requirements better address smaller development sites than current requirements.</li> </ul>
Building Form and Expression <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Roofline Design: This section is an attempt to legislate aesthetics and should be deleted</li> </ul>	DFo(w)	Comment noted.
Building Form and Expression <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transparency seems to be redundant/in conflict with 3.e</li> </ul>	DFo(w)	Comment noted but staff could not identify the conflict cited.
Tacoma appears to be on a path to building large blocks of multi storied buildings without any suggestion of design. Other Pacific NW cities have limits on the expanse of flat surface on all sides of buildings.	JQ	Comment noted. Staff notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The City currently employs design standards that include some amount of vertical building modulation. These provisions are generally retained in the draft proposal.</li> </ul>
<b>Misc.</b>		
Code Formatting: Please, reformat the code so that the code section appears in a footer or header on every page. Navigating the code is impossible right now.	DFo(w)	Comment noted.
Suggested future study items: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parking reductions: "Phantom" parking reductions. The code supposedly allows up to a 50% reduction in X-Districts</li> </ul>	DFo(w)	Comments noted.

<p>when transit is close by but requires the transit to have a 20 minute headway. There are currently NO buses in Tacoma with a 20 headway so this reduction is actually not available.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Driveway widths: With more parking required, the parking gets pushed onto the site with a 20' driveway requirement. (Seattle allows just 10'.) This represents literally 40% of the width of a 50' lot given up for a driveway. A 3 story building can easily lose 3 units.</li> <li>• Bike parking: at 1 space/unit literally takes up the footprint of a unit.</li> </ul>		
TOPIC G: Effective Dates		
How are projects “in-process” affected by the program?	PC-BM	Effective dates would be determined for both the Urban Design Project Review and TMC amendments at the time of City Council adoption. This “grace period” would allow people who are in the design process to make any necessary adjustments prior to making application and hopefully avoid any unnecessary surprises.
Explain/explore implementation of a grace period.	PC-BS	See comment above.
For the purposes of determining Urban Design Project Review applicability, it is suggested vesting be made at the time of pre-application review to avoid having to take projects that are well into design through concept design review, which could be incredibly costly and possibly detrimental to a project.	KR	Comment noted. Generally, vesting for either a building permit or land use permit takes place at the time an application is deemed complete and not at the time of pre-application or earlier, less-formal communications. Staff do not expect that to change for the launch of the UDPR program. That being said, staff would like to be available to conduct early, predevelopment review and guidance during the period between adoption and UDPR program effective dates to help streamline the program’s initial rollout. Projects that are well beyond the concept phase are encouraged to try to submit building permits prior to the effective date to avoid delays. Unfortunately, it is likely some projects will be awkwardly caught up during the transition time and will

		experience some amount of delay, but staff are committed to making the program's launch as smooth as possible.
Please include a transition period of at least six months.	DFo(o), (w)	Comment noted.

Initials	Name	Initials	Name	Initials	Name
RB	Reggie Brown	DFo (w)	David Foster (written)	KR	Katie Randall
ZC	Zack Campbell	DFo (o)	David Foster (oral)	YR	Yonik Rendu
FD	Felicity Devlin	JJ	Jonathan Jarmon	GR	Georgette Reuter
CD	Chris Dunaski	KK	Karen Kelly	PC-BS	Commissioner Santhuff
JE	Jane Evancho	PC-RK	Commissioner Krehbiel	HS	Heidi Stephens
PC-MD	Commissioner Dorner	SK	Scott Kubiszewski	MW (o)	Martha Webb (oral)
BF	Ben Ferguson	PC-BM	Commissioner Marlo	MW (w)	Martha Webb (written)
DF	David Fisher	JQ	Judi Quilici	TW	Tom West





**Proposed Urban Design Project Review**  
**Public Comments Received**  
**(Planning Commission Public Hearing Process, August 2023)**

**List 1 – Commenters of Written Comments**  
**(Received through August 18, 2023)**

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**From:** [Zack Campbell](#)  
**To:** [Planning](#)  
**Subject:** Urban Design Project Review feedback  
**Date:** Thursday, August 17, 2023 11:51:46 AM

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Hello,

Regarding the Urban Design Project Review, I have a couple pieces of feedback:

- At the hearing, we heard objections from various stakeholders, including developers and homeowners. They raised visibility of only a couple different potential risks of this change. I can readily think of others, and I'm certain a diverse set of stakeholders could think of several more that wouldn't occur to me.  
However, it shouldn't only be on us -- the people and companies who will be impacted by this -- to try to think up every way this process change could go badly or be misused. **I would like to see the project sponsors identify a comprehensive list of risks (and mitigations to those risks).**
- This seems like a fairly extensive and ambitious change. **I would like the project sponsors to identify instances where similar policies were adopted elsewhere previously**, so we can assess how those went (and learn from their mistakes, if possible).

Thank you,  
Zack Campbell

**From:** [Felicity Devlin](#)  
**To:** [Planning](#)  
**Subject:** Comments for Urban Design Project Review  
**Date:** Friday, August 18, 2023 11:56:03 AM

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Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Urban Design Project Review proposal. It's great to see the project nearing completion.

My comments concern Project Thresholds, the Urban Design Board, and tree preservation.

### **Project Thresholds:**

I suggest that the threshold for review should not be purely number driven (i.e, solely related to the square footage of the project). It should also be context driven. For example, a building of 6 stories proposed for an MUC that's currently composed of mostly one to two story buildings will have a significant visual impact on the streetscape. And it will help set a design precedent for successive development.

Yet, if the building is proposed for a narrow lot, it would fall below the square foot threshold required for Board Review. A current example is the building proposed for the old Jasminka site on N. 26th. Similar tall developments on small lots could be proposed for all the Neighborhood MUCs. Because these buildings will have a significant impact on the streetscape, they should receive Board review.

### **Composition of Review Board**

I agree that there should be equitable participation on the Review Board. Since Urban Design Project Review will be the main avenue for council district residents to have an effective voice in the design of large-scale development in their district, I think it's important that each district should provide representatives. Each development will be exclusive to a particular district; therefore, the City could appoint 2 representatives from each council district who will serve on the Board when a development in their district comes up for review. These board members would specifically represent district residents, rather than doubling up to represent development, heritage, transit, etc.

### **Landscaping**

As much as is possible through the parameters of the program, please prioritize the preservation of mature trees and provision of ample space for planting new trees.

Thank you,

Felicity Devlin

**From:** [Jane Evancho](#)  
**To:** [Planning](#)  
**Cc:** [Karen Kelly](#); [J Quilici](#)  
**Subject:** COT Urban Design Review comments  
**Date:** Friday, August 18, 2023 7:25:50 AM  
**Attachments:** [COTdesignreviewcomments8182023.doc](#)

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Please find my comments on the Urban Design Review process attached.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Jane Evancho

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This email has been checked for viruses by AVG antivirus software.

[https://urldefense.com/v3/\\_http://www.avg.com\\_!!CRCbklf!S\\_EDUZpbgOg5zal1nlcodaKmHWkTdMv87-U4hxMPITcxf2HzRKJvQV6CF1CnxPBSeFYa8\\_2ynVjSeqYNS4iQm\\_ppcwKFS](https://urldefense.com/v3/_http://www.avg.com_!!CRCbklf!S_EDUZpbgOg5zal1nlcodaKmHWkTdMv87-U4hxMPITcxf2HzRKJvQV6CF1CnxPBSeFYa8_2ynVjSeqYNS4iQm_ppcwKFS)

August 18, 2023

### Comments Regarding Urban Design Project Review

I agree with the **citizen** comments provided at the Wednesday public hearing. Bland buildings are currently going up throughout the city. Design considerations should be given to neighborhoods. The new larger buildings should reflect the nearby community.

Specifically, the buildings should incorporate articulated front and side walls, minimizing long stretches of flat surface.

I am not in favor of the proposed renaming of 'yard space' to 'amenity space'. Private/individual yard space is highly valued and should not be minimized by downsizing through 'common amenity space' adjustments or indoor spaces.

I am not in favor of the proposed development exemptions for yard space. How does location to near park or school yard negate the benefit of individual yard space?

Exemptions: Please clarify how exemptions would occur. Do exemptions have the potential to increase building height by 1-2 stories? If so, is this commonly accepted in other municipalities?

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Jane Evancho  
922 S. Mountain View Ave.  
Tacoma, WA 98465

**From:** [Ben Ferguson](#)  
**To:** [Planning](#)  
**Subject:** Public Hearing Comment - Support for Urban Design Review  
**Date:** Tuesday, August 1, 2023 4:58:57 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)

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My name is Ben Ferguson, I am the Principal of Ferguson Architecture, a Tacoma based and Tacoma focused design firm specializing in projects that will be built in the boundaries of the new Urban Design Review Program. I have been a community stakeholder throughout the development of this program, including Phase 1 prior to Covid-19.

I can assure the Planning Commission that the process was transparent and staff exhibited consistent commitment to providing a program that resulted in maximum benefit for the public, with minimal negative impacts to the development community. Any new regulation or requirement will cause additional costs and take longer, but the program that has been developed will hopefully be minor. The key aspect of the plan that I support is clear, prescriptive intentions for how the urban space should look and function, with specific actions that can be taken to satisfy the goals. The program avoids the “Garanimals” approach to design that many design review programs use, policies such as “pick two features from column A for a façade exceeding 50-feet, pick a building base from column B, and a building top from Column C”. If projects meet the minimal requirements they can have administrative approval and move forward quickly. This is the best aspect of this program. I believe Tacoma would be better today if the floor were raised on project design, many projects do the least necessary, and it shows.

Projects will not need to present to the Design Review Committee unless they wish to take an alternate approach that meets or exceeds the well-defined criteria. This approval off-ramp will hopefully enable innovative designs that can become landmarks and sources of public pride. In many design programs these kinds of buildings are simply not allowed.

Staff and the citizen advisory groups have spent long hours crafting this program. We hope you will support the work and enable this program to go before council for approval.

Thank you,

Ben Ferguson, AIA, LEED AP, Assoc DBIA  
Managing Principal

**FERGUSON**  
ARCHITECTURE

1916 Jefferson Avenue Tacoma, WA 98402  
p 253.248.6060 www.fergusonarch.com

**From:** [DAVID Fisher](#)  
**To:** [Planning](#)  
**Subject:** Public Hearing Comment for Planning Commission Meeting August 16 2023 - Design Review Process  
**Date:** Thursday, August 17, 2023 3:26:16 PM  
**Attachments:** [TACOMA DESIGN REVIEW MANUAL - BOARD PLANNING COMMISSION HEARING LETTER 8-16-2023.pdf](#)

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Please see attached comment to the Design Review process as part of the Public Hearing Comments for 8-16-2023 meeting.

Thank You

David Fisher AIA  
708 Market Street #415  
Tacoma, WA 98402

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows



August 17, 2023

**City of Tacoma Planning Commission  
Public comments regarding the Mixed-Use Centers Design Review Process**

Hello Commission Members,

I am a practicing Architect and live / work in the Theater District / Saint Helens District of Tacoma. I have over 35 years of experience as an Architect and served on a neighboring Cites Design Review Board. I also have had many projects reviewed and ultimately approved by this Design Review Board.

I am 'on the fence' when it comes to supporting the Design Review Process. If Tacoma goes with a Design Review Process then a fair and quick process that requires the project team to look at all the community design issues is important. Historically The City of Tacoma had its first administrative design rules in 1864 when the North Pacific Railroad required the land purchasers to build their commercial building with brick in order to be fire safe for the community. They also required buildings along level areas of Pacific Ave to line up all their upper floor levels in order for future tenants to be able to expand horizontally building to building. This design rule certainly helped the University of Washington Tacoma!

I am dubious about the size of a building schedule with large projects getting a full design review by the board review, medium size buildings getting an administrative review and small buildings getting none. All should comply and if they do not meet administrative review, they can elect to go to the Design Review Board. If Design is important than all should comply. I am less concerned with good design in large buildings as I am in small or medium ones since large projects can handle the cost to do more. Small and medium projects can do prescriptive design requirements to keep the cost down, if the perspective requirements are reasonable, clear and easy to follow in the Design manual.

The city staff needs to comply with a strict time frame to process the Design Review package provided by the applicant (developer / architect / builder project team representative). The complete Design Review Package submitted for review and approval shall be reviewed, responded to or approved by City staff &/ or Design Review Board in 60 days or less. If the City staff / DRB does to respond in 60 days the application is approved as is.

The Design Review Manual Guidelines should be specific not vague! The project team needs to know what to design and what the city is looking for in their guidelines. The staff also needs to know what is acceptable and what is not? Are you saying the project team can select which guidelines to follow and which not to follow? Who decides what should be complied with and at what phase? The Design Manual appears to be more of a "wish list" and does not instruct the designer with a specific guideline. If this is on purpose then the process will be long, length, political and costly; and by the time this process gets approved Tacoma may be underwater because of climate change.

Again, I am on the fence as to whether the city should have a Design Review process. The reason I worry about a design review board is the possibility it will only approve and reflect one small part of Tacoma. Tacoma is a wonderfully diverse community with

vibrant cultures that we need to celebrate. Many design reviews only put forward the safe, tried, and true conservative white male culture. Different cultures have very different ideas of beauty and design. Native American culture celebrates design that harmonizes with the natural world, Indian culture has Vastu Shastra, China uses Feng Shui, etc. A dynamic and welcoming city is inclusive and makes sure there are public spaces for it's diverse community to gather, communicate with each other, and feel safe.

Respectfully Submitted,

David K. Fisher, AIA – Architect



**From:** [David Foster](#)  
**To:** [Planning; Design Review](#)  
**Subject:** Comments on Proposed Land Use Code Changes  
**Date:** Friday, August 18, 2023 11:13:09 AM  
**Attachments:** [Comment on LUC proposed changes August 16, 2023.pdf](#)

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Attached please find my comments on Urban Design Review and proposed changes to the Land Use Code.

Thank you,  
David Foster  
612 Tacoma Ave S  
Tacoma, WA 98402  
206-422-3363

August 16, 2023

To the Planning Commission, City of Tacoma

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on proposed Land Use Code changes. I have practiced architecture for 33 years and have personally developed a number of multifamily and mixed use projects including in Tacoma. I also served on the Design Review Board for the City of Seattle for 4 years.

My comments are split between Design Review and the Land Use Code changes.

### Land Use Code

I request **that any revisions to the code include a transition period of at least 6 mo after passing council**. This is important because projects that are currently in the advanced design stages (such as my own, a 25 unit MF building in the 6th Ave district) should not be penalized or forced to start from scratch because the rules were changed in the middle of the game.

I request that the City commission a **study to determine how the proposed changes will impact midsize projects on lots 25', 50', and 75' wide**. To be effective the study should look at:

Amenity Space requirements - effect of new revisions

Light and Air Access - effect of new revisions

Weather Protection - effect of new revisions

Parking Requirements - effect of current code requirements

Bike Parking - effect of current code requirements

Driveway Widths - effect of current code requirements

Following comments address specific sections of the revised code:

The proposed LUC changes will **negatively** affect small and midsize housing projects on sites between 25' and 75" wide. Infill development is very important for the supply of "missing middle" housing. The new rules will make many of these projects **not pencil out**.

#### I. Amenity Space Standards

The proposed revisions are brutal and remind me of Seattle's pre-2010 code. In that year Seattle drastically relaxed its amenity space standards (among many other standards) After hiring a group of local architects to do a "white hat - black hat" study of its Lowrise code and the results showed that the standards for amenity space were illogical in the real world and were stifling desired density goals.

These proposed revisions go in the wrong direction. Current exemptions for proximity to school playfields are deleted, **and** only projects that are a mixed use building or have a FAR of 3

(essentially, 4 stories or higher) **and** are close to a park qualify - and these larger scale projects are exactly the ones that **don't** need an exemption.

I spent an hour studying the Tacoma map and by my rough calculation 90% of all X-district projects will lose the exemption. 6Th Ave and Lower Pacific will lose ALL exemptions. Most of the sites in Proctor, Westgate, Upper Portland, Upper Pacific, and McKinley will lose exemptions. Why offer exemptions if almost no sites will be able to qualify? Compare this to Seattle's standard in which all neighborhood-commercial zoned projects up to 20 units have an automatic exemption.

I suggest that Tacoma follow Seattle's lead by:

- **Exempting all X-District projects up to 20 units** from Amenity Space requirements.
- **Allow walkways to be included** and
- **Allow a 10' min dimension in certain cases for common amenity areas.**

These changes will at least make the space requirements more workable in the real world.

Also please note that Section I.3.a.9 Interior Amenity Space is vague and while a positive standard, needs elaboration. What does "qualifying space" mean?

### 3. Ground Level Design

#### a. **Facade Details and Articulation**

This section is an **attempt to legislate aesthetics** and **should be deleted**

#### b. **Weather Protection**

The intent here is understandable but the requirements are poorly considered. To require private sidewalks, walkways and amenity spaces to have a 5' deep canopy regardless of building use or specific site conditions is not reasonable. Elsewhere in the code, 75% of amenity areas are required to be uncovered, so this rule creates a rabbit hole.

#### c. **Building Orientation and Entrances** - no comment

#### d. **Building Transitions**

Items (2) and (3) are especially wrong because a 2 foot grade change at entrances is in direct conflict with accessibility requirements (wheelchair access). (4) hard paving requirement might work in some cases but in other cases landscaping may be desirable. *In summary, this entirely new section is an **attempt to impose specific design details and should be deleted***

#### e. **Transparency**

The intent here is understandable but the requirements are poorly considered. For example a project located on a Pedestrian street would require an interior-courtyard-facing bike room (or any ancillary use) to have 35% transparency. This is not right.

f. **Blank Walls**

The intent here is understandable but the requirements are poorly considered. For example a 4' tall wall is nothing really. Window displays are an odd option that is rarely appropriate. And a covered passageway thru a building lacks sunlight and water, so plantings make no sense. This leaves artwork as the only option. Is the city seriously proposing that ALL blank walls that are not appropriate for window displays or plantings require artwork? Even those facing spaces not open to the public? *This section is an **attempt to impose specific design details and should be deleted** in addition to the fact that expensive artwork drives up building costs.*

4. Building Form and Expression

- a. **Facade Articulation** *This section is an **attempt to legislate aesthetics and should be deleted**, not least because it is highly **biased** toward “historic/traditional” design details.*
- b. **Mass Reduction** (1) is essentially massing standards, no comment. (2) Light and Air Access is overly restrictive for mid-size lots which do not have the space.. Also, this section falls under the Mass Reduction section which doesn't make sense.
- c. **Roofline Design** *This section is an **attempt to legislate aesthetics and should be deleted***
- d. **Transparency** seems to be redundant/in conflict with 3.e

Tacoma doesn't need such extensive Building Design Standards. 16 single space pages compared to Seattle's 4 pages double spaced - literally 8 times as long!

The fact is that missing middle projects (~15 units on 6000 SF lots or similar) need a break and these new rules are a big step backward.

**Design Review**

As mentioned I served on the Seattle Design Review Board for 4 years and have taken at least 6 projects (as architect/applicant) through Design Review in that City.

My conclusion is that **public** Design Review is not worth it. It creates a massively inefficient process and bureaucracy, drives up building costs significantly, all for **questionable** “improvements” to the built landscape.

**That said it is reasonable to introduce a Departures process to enable designers to work around the code. But there is no reason to make that process public - keep it at the administrative level.**

**Lastly, some Misc. comments:**

Please, **reformat** the code so that the code section appears in a **footer or header** on every page. Navigating the code is impossible right now.

Here are some requirements that hinder mid-size projects and again **I request that the City study these further:**

1 - **“Phantom” parking reductions.** The code **supposedly** allows up to a 50% reduction in X-Districts when transit is close by but requires the transit to have a 20 minute headway. There are currently NO buses in Tacoma with a 20 headway so this reduction is actually not available.

2 - with more parking required, the parking gets pushed onto the site with a **20’ driveway** requirement. (Seattle allows just 10’.) This represents literally 40% of the width of a 50’ lot given up for a driveway. A 3 story building can easily lose 3 units.

3 - **Bike parking** at 1 space/unit literally takes up the footprint of a unit.

4 - New **light/air access standards** will sacrifice another unit if not more.

5 - **Amenity space standards**, if passed, will cost up to three units if the building is three stories.

Thus, a ~15 unit building goes down to ~11 units. This is a 25% reduction in unit count and will almost always kill a project.

My own project, which I referred to earlier, will go from 25 units to 20 units and WILL NOT pencil. No way that I can make a 20% reduction in units work.

Sincerely,

David Foster

**From:** [Scott Kubiszewski](#)  
**To:** [Planning](#)  
**Subject:** Urban Design Review Comments.  
**Date:** Monday, August 7, 2023 1:31:34 PM

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Hello, everyone wants affordable housing. By making one more permit process, board reviews, and constricting design guidelines you are doing to opposite. More regulation equals more cost. The city should be trying to make it easier to build, not harder to build.

Take care,  
Scott

Scott Kubiszewski, CSP, CHST, LEED AP  
Cell 1-206-919-6824

**From:** [J Quilici](#)  
**To:** [Planning](#)  
**Subject:** CJT Urban Design Review Comments  
**Date:** Friday, August 18, 2023 4:09:09 PM

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August 18, 2023

Urban Design Project Review Comments:

Tacoma appears to be on a path to building large blocks of multi storied buildings without any suggestion of design. Other Pacific NW cities have limits on the expanse of flat surface on all sides of buildings.

Where is the Design Committee?? And who is on it???

Apartment dwellers should be able to have dinner outside in their own space or have their children play there and not have to walk them blocks away to a central location.

What are these yard space exemptions and how do these exemption occur? We need clarification!!!

Thank for the opportunity to comment.

Judi Quilici  
1530 Fernside Dr. S.  
Tacoma, Wa 98465

**From:** [Katie Randall](#)  
**To:** [Planning](#)  
**Subject:** Public Comment - Design Review  
**Date:** Tuesday, August 15, 2023 11:11:40 AM

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Hello Tacoma Planning Commission,

I am reaching out to provide public comment on the design review proposal for the City of Tacoma. Mercy Housing Northwest is a nonprofit affordable housing provider that has been active in Tacoma for 20 years, particularly in the Hilltop neighborhood. Overall, we are appreciative of the intent of updated design guidelines and design review for the City of Tacoma. Utilizing guidelines and advisory design review are a great way to prompt development and design teams to think about the issues of design and public realm that matter most, while still giving design teams flexibility to respond to their particular context. We also appreciate how the program is designed to respond to known issues with design review in other jurisdictions.

In implementing, the most important element to developers, particularly of affordable housing, will be predictability. Shared understanding between the City and Developers about whether the new guidelines are advisory (our understanding) or code they will be held to will be crucial. Similarly, we encourage the City to be intentional about vesting for the new program. Vesting for most new permitting programs occurs at Building Permit. It's very clear from the documents that design review and design guidelines are meant to inform early stages of design and decisions like siting and massing. We're concerned that if vesting happens at building permit, there may be projects that are advanced in design but are not quite to submitting building permit that will suddenly be required to integrate feedback on high level project elements that would be incredibly costly or time consuming, if not impossible, to change. This could cause delays or funding need increases to publicly funded affordable housing projects. We'd like to offer the feedback and recommendation that vesting for participating in design review should explicitly be at the pre-application meeting, as this is the phase when design review would be triggered once the program is in place.

We appreciate your consideration of these suggestions and important work in implementing a strong and thoughtful design review process!

Thanks,  
Katie

**Katie Randall**  
 PROJECT MANAGER I | Real Estate Development  
*she/her/hers*



Mercy Housing Northwest | 6930 Martin Luther King Jr. Way S  
 | Seattle, WA 98118 | Direct: 206.602.3483





**From:** [Georgette Reuter](#)  
**To:** [Planning](#)  
**Subject:** Public Hearing Comment  
**Date:** Friday, August 18, 2023 12:25:31 AM

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Thank you for the opportunity to make comments regarding the Urban Design Project Review.

### **Urban Design Board**

In your current draft, you have listed future members of your Urban Design Board that will include representatives from Council Districts 3,4 and 5. As a matter of equity and fair representation, I urge you to also include a representative from District 1 and District 2. And that is because these 2 districts are experiencing a rapid growth of mixed-use multi-family buildings - especially in the Proctor MUC, which has been designated as a future high density area. Those of us in District 1 and District 2 deserve to have our voices heard and our input valued to ensure that our neighborhood's uniqueness and livability will be preserved.

### **To Preserve, Protect and Increase Our Tree Canopy**

In your draft plans #5, "Open Space", you stated that "one of the most significant elements in defining and structuring Tacoma's open space network is our Urban Forest." Although I totally agree with your words, I haven't seen any of your concrete plans for protecting the existing mature trees that will be growing on future building sites nor have I seen your plans for planting and maintaining new trees. In the City of Tacoma's "Urban Tree Canopy Assessment", (Dec. 2018), on page 21 of the report it states " The City must establish set policies and guidelines for the preservation of tree canopy amidst future development and planning." Therefore, I urge you to ensure that a healthy tree canopy is a top priority within your future landscape designs.

Georgette Reuter  
District 2  
NENC Board Member  
PNPP Steering Committee  
Tacoma Urban Forest Friends, Chair

**From:** [Heidi S.](#)  
**To:** [Planning](#)  
**Subject:** Public Comments for Urban Design  
**Date:** Thursday, August 17, 2023 9:33:35 PM

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#### Public Comments for Urban Design

- In South Tacoma (which currently has less than 9% canopy) it must be required to preserve every mature tree on private property as part of “design standards”... without such requirements, builders will never build around trees and the canopy will decline even more.
- Any housing developments within South Tacoma should also retain at least 25% open green space for aquifer infiltration.
- Regarding the Urban Design Board, there needs to be more community members from each district, to better balance “design professionals” with community voices.

Thank you,  
Heidi Stephens

**From:** [Martha Webb](#)  
**To:** [Planning](#)  
**Subject:** Comments - Planning Commission Agenda  
**Date:** Friday, August 18, 2023 8:16:06 AM

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Greetings —

Regarding the urban design considerations that are on your agenda, I spoke Wednesday at the hearing about people buying into neighborhoods because something there made them feel comfortable. And much of that is surely connected to the actual house and the houses around it. They probably don't want something that particularly stands out. So, that being so, every neighborhood would be different and I suggest you include a statement that the building should take design cues from older surrounding structures and that neighbors should be consulted.

If it's a developer that's going into a neighborhood there should be greater considerations. Certain contributions to civic improvement should be included here. Solar panels, charging stations, schools.

And definitely the tree canopy must now be brought into all plans. The number of trees to be planted needs to be connected to the size of the development. (Trees to toilets?) and those need to be shade trees. Some good examples around town are:

- \*6th and Alder trees around the parking area of the 7-11
- \*Plantings along the parking garage at S. L and S. 13th behind Hilltop Regional Health
- \*New plantings that will someday provide shade along N. Alder between N. 13th and N. 17, maybe planted by UPS

~Marty Webb

Sent from my iPad

**From:** [Tom West](#)  
**To:** [Planning](#)  
**Subject:** Urban Design Project Review and Land Use Regulatory Code Amendments  
**Date:** Tuesday, August 1, 2023 12:42:42 PM

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The way the amendments were explained to me suggests that the process would be more conducive to approving a project assuming it was consistent with the uses consistent with the neighborhood and even if variances were required, they would be addressed in the evaluation/approval of the overall project and avoid endless bureaucratic wrangling over individual applications for variances and other relief thereby reducing costs for all concerned, while protecting the interests of others in the neighborhood given the nature of the project at large. This has to be a good thing, as scrutiny is on the overall project and its impact on the community as opposed to variances to be decided by any particular person, the denial of which might scrap the entire project, to the detriment of the owners and the community alike. Streamlining the process for overall approval is not a bad thing as long as the overall impact is considered above minor technical variances that are necessarily addressed in the overall evaluation process anyway. I am a commercial property owner within the downtown Tacoma area and it would be great that the community needs and standards would be consulted to some degree along with some leeway given to owners of property to develop their properties in that community. Thank you for your consideration of my comments.



## Oral Testimony Public Hearing – Urban Design Project Review August 16, 2023

1. **David Foster** – I've been practicing architecture for 33 years. I've designed many mixed-use buildings and multifamily buildings, and I've also developed a mixed-use building and a multifamily building right here in Tacoma. I live here now on Tacoma Avenue South. I also served on the design review board for the city of Seattle for four years. First of all, I don't wish to speak to design review, but rather to the proposed land use code changes. I've spent a few hours reading them in great excruciating detail. My conclusion is, don't do it. At least study them further. There are a lot of issues with them that I have. In particular, yard space/amenity space – the new language for that, the removal of exemptions for amenity space requirements. Here's where I'm at - infill development is really important to increasing the housing supply. I'm talking about lots, 50 feet wide, although maybe 25 or 75 feet wide, not the huge projects – fine, have at it. But mid-sized projects, it's so hard to get them to pencil out when there's layer upon layer of space requirements, whether they're amenity spaces or parking or 20-foot-wide driveways, bicycle parking, it's really hard. I don't think that these changes go in the right direction. For example, in 2010, Seattle drastically revised its amenity space requirements because it did a study where it hired local architects to do a black hat, white hat investigation and realize these just do not work for mid-sized lots. It totally revised its amenity space requirements. Now, for example, projects up to 20 units in size are automatically exempt in mixed-use districts. This is the thing I'm talking about. A lot more study is needed. I don't think that on the whole these changes are positive. I could say some similar things about the attempt to legislate aesthetics. It's a fool's game. The building design standards, I think, need a much closer look taken at them. Again, Seattle threw out its modulation requirements in 2010. Just threw them out, with the exception of U Village. They just don't exist anymore. Lastly, I want to say this. If you send this up to the council for a vote, please include a transition period of at least six months. People like me who have projects in development and in advanced stages of design, it's not fair to change the rules right in the middle of the game. I have a project in the 6th Avenue mixed-use center that will not work, and it wouldn't be fair to me.
  
2. **Reggie Brown** – I'm the owner of Louis Rudolph Homes. This year we'll deliver 75 housing units in Tacoma, mostly or 100% in mixed-use centers, and we build the middle. My concern here is not for today because today, as proposed, this project wouldn't impact me at all. But as I grow, it would impact me. But more importantly, it starts where it doesn't impact me. Then after a while, it's, "Hey, you know what? We need to add to these and then we need to add to these and then add to these." The next thing you know, we're all involved in it. And so here are my reasons for really being against it. One, it allows the continuation of exclusionary housing. Two, it allows the continuation of exclusionary housing. Design review boards are notorious for delaying permit times, increasing holding costs, and driving overall cost to construction up. I understand that the long-range planners spent a year and a half preparing for this. If there is some change that they, whoever they are, wants, I would suggest bringing us builders into a room and telling us. Debbie Bingham has done this several times when it comes to multifamily tax exemption. If you tell us what you want – more Craftsman homes or modern homes or this type of look or that type of look – we could and would do it much faster than any committee. We build what people want. It's the only way. If I had my way, I would only build a certain type. I love four square and Craftsman. I don't build them because the kids like the modern stuff. So, I build these flat roof things. This isn't without liability and risk to the city. There are lawsuits specifically in regard to design review boards. In *Knick v. Township of Scott*, the US Supreme Court recently overruled a precedent that prevented property owners from bringing cases against state and local governments in Federal Court. Number six, it allows the continuation of exclusionary housing. How? Because many don't want construction in their neighborhood. Going to a public hearing will block projects, not because we can't agree on design, but because of time delays and neighbors pushing against the project. It's not fair that once you move into a neighborhood, you get to decide if anyone else gets to move into that



neighborhood or how their home looks. Meanwhile, the Tacoma Housing Authority has 15,000 applicants for 1500 vouchers. The majority of those units will come in mixed-use centers. We can't do anything that will slow down the permit process. We need to speed it up.

3. **Chris Dunayski** – I'm with Gordon T. Jacob. We're a design build firm here in Tacoma. We do small multifamily, typically in mixed-use centers, between four units up to 20 or so units. We do remodels in town, and we also are doing DADU's, and things like this. So, we're very focused on improving neighborhoods in Tacoma as well as providing quality housing in Tacoma. The thing that I wanted to add to what the other two said that wasn't really mentioned much is risk. Right now, developers, small developers, like me - we run a family-run business. Everyone in my company is family. When we decide to buy a lot and build eight doors or twelve doors, we are taking massive risk. I was just camping last weekend with somebody who's a leader in the city of Tacoma, and I described the risk, and her response was, "I would never do that" – because there's so much risk when you go into a project like this. So, I really oppose anything that's going to either increase the design review time because that leads to more risk because it impacts money. When we go through multiple reviews, what means is that I got to spend more money with engineers and architects, and all that does is increase my risk and make it more difficult for us to develop and provide quality housing. So, I'm for speeding up the process of us getting permits so that we can provide quality housing in Tacoma. So, anything you can do to make that happen would cause developers like me to want to keep investing in Tacoma rather than putting our money and our effort and our time on the sidelines waiting for the process to be faster.
4. **Jonathan Jarmon** – I'm a homeowner, and I've lived at my address in Tacoma for the past close to 30 years. I'm age 65, and I'm retired. But one thing I want to say first is that I view myself as a free American – a free American that owns land – and I view that I'm a Free American regardless if this is the United States of America or not. The thing is, I intend to live in my house until I die, and perhaps it might be in about 15 years or so, but I have no intent to sell my property just to sell it to be redeveloped, because the average rent in the city of Tacoma is approximately \$2550 per month. And if I were to sell my property and rent then basically my money would probably run out before 8 years and I'd have nothing. I'd end up living in a tent. I live sustainably and I live very environmentally friendly because I do not have an automobile. For the past 11 years, I've been writing electric bikes that get about 600 miles per gallon, both for my health as well as for transportation. I even use my bike and ride it into my grocery store, and I don't need a shopping cart, a parking space, a shopping bag, or anything else. Most other items I can have delivered directly to my residence. I grow a tremendous amount of food in my backyard as well. I've got several apple trees. I even have a lemon tree in my backyard and got a hundred lemons off it last year. I have not taken any airplane flights. I just intend to live where I'm at.
5. **Yannick Rendu** – So historically design review boards have been just another exclusionary tactic that's been used on the side to prevent and complicate. As an example, we can look to Seattle and see within the past few years how they've prevented projects that looked great but added significant cost and reduced the housing capability of the units. And not necessarily purposely, but definitely increased the cost of housing for those areas. What I'm hoping is that if we do some kind of design review that it's mostly to ensure that the rules that we set in place are enforced and not just another "Oh, this doesn't look good. Let's do something more architecturally interesting." – which, in a lot of places, is just in the eye of a few architects. So, all I'm hoping for is that we don't create yet another exclusionary process in the name of design review.
6. **Marty Webb** – I live in the North Slope Historic District and we have design review. I'm in a 1949 ranch and we had earthquake damage. So, I had to go before the Landmarks Preservation Commission and talked to them about rebuilding part of my house. There was a design review and they were wanting to protect my little old ranch. I wanted to kind of change it, but no, this had value. So, when we go into these neighborhoods, what do we want from them? I think what we want is for them to fit in like my little house. We wanted it to fit in. We didn't want it to be something extravagant because it wasn't that way to begin with, and the one next door isn't extravagant, and that came into the picture even though there are guidelines. So it seems to me that what we want to do in these neighborhoods is have houses and buildings, no matter how big they are, we want them to fit in. We have an awful lot of big white buildings trimmed in black in Tacoma right now, and they're glaring. We don't want that. So, it seems to me we should be able to write something like that into the design review guidelines that it needs to fit into the

neighborhood, not necessarily the houses on either side of it but the neighborhood. We have some beautiful architecture in the Lincoln District that is not protected, and I think as a city we need to protect it. As a historic neighborhood, I am willing to step in and talk about that and help other neighborhoods come to grips with this.

7. **Karen Kelly** – As I drive around the city, I'm distressed as I see multifamily homes, multistory builds that are nothing more than flat front square boxes and long expanses of fronts with a smattering of windows. There are more of these types of new builds than not. As the multi-use areas in the city are beginning to be developed, design consideration needs to be given to the overall character and style of the surrounding neighborhood. So many builders throw these unsightly buildings up, get their tax benefit, and move on to the next build without regard for the community they are impacting. Those of us who live in those builds will feel no pride in their living space, which will result in a lack of care for their community, poor upkeep, and deterioration of the surrounding community. Nobody wants to live in or near ugly buildings. Builds that demonstrate articulated fronts, backs, and sides that reflect the character of the nearby community create community pride in the surrounding area, which results in overall long-term care and upkeep. Please consider supporting a design code limiting the number of feet on a front, back, or side build that would be allowed before an articulation or return is required.

--- (Public Hearing closed at 6:45 p.m.) ---







**To:** Planning Commission  
**From:** Brian Boudet, Manager, Planning Services Division  
**Subject:** **Planning Commission Annual Report for 2022-2023 and Work Program for 2023-2025**  
**Memo Date:** September 13, 2023  
**Meeting Date:** September 20, 2023

**Action Requested:**  
Review and Approval.

**Discussion:**

At the next meeting on September 20, 2023, the Planning Commission will review and consider approving the draft Planning Commission Annual Report for 2022-2023 and Work Program for 2023-2025 (revised draft attached) that highlights the Commission's accomplishments between July 2022 and June 2023 and outlines planning projects to be carried out or initiated during the timeline of July 2023 through December 2025 or beyond.

The Planning Commission discussed an initial draft of the report on August 2, 2023. The revised draft provided here is based on input from the Commission during that discussion, as well as a few recent Council actions. The areas where there are notable changes from the initial draft have been highlighted in this revised version and generally fall into the following categories:

- Items the Council has recently requested, such as the home occupation expansion study and the historic district moratorium consideration
- Items emphasized by the Commission, such as landscaping/trees, streetscape design, code/website improvements, and parks/open space planning in coordination with the Tacoma School District and MetroParks Tacoma
- Clarify and simplify what was previously referred to as the "Emerging and Deferred" category

**Background:**

Section 13.02.040.L of the Tacoma Municipal Code requires the Commission to *"develop the work program for the coming year in consultation with the City Council and provide an annual report to the City Council regarding accomplishments and the status of planning efforts undertaken in the previous year."*

In developing the work program, staff conducted early engagement and consultation as part of a mid-cycle work program check-in with the Commission in January 2023 and with the City Council's Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability (IPS) Committee in February 2023. Initial thoughts and suggestions provided by the Commission and the IPS Committee have been incorporated into the report.

Upon approval by the Commission, the report will be presented to the IPS Committee for its review and concurrence. That presentation is currently scheduled for December 2023. The work program is subject to adjustments in response to legislative requirements, community requests, Council priorities, budget and staffing constraints, or other emerging situations.

**Staff Contacts:**

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- Steve Atkinson, [satkinson@cityoftacoma.org](mailto:satkinson@cityoftacoma.org)



**Attachments:**

- Attachment 1 – Planning Commission Annual Report for 2022-2023 and Work Program for 2023-2025 (revised draft)

c. Peter Huffman, Director



## Planning Commission Annual Report 2022-2023 and Work Program 2023-2025

(September 13, 2023, revised draft; subject to Planning Commission's review/approval)

This report, prepared pursuant to the Tacoma Municipal Code Section 13.02.040.L, highlights the Planning Commission's accomplishments between July 2022 and June 2023 and outlines the Commission's work program for the general timeline of July 2023 through December 2025.

### Part I. Accomplishments 2022-2023

#### A. Major Projects Reviewed:

##### 1. 2023 Annual Amendment to the Comprehensive Plan and the Land Use Regulatory Code ("2023 Amendment") ([www.cityoftacoma.org/2023amendment](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/2023amendment))

The Commission reviewed various applications included in the package during June 2022 through May 2023, conducted a public hearing in March 2023, and made its final recommendations to the City Council on May 17, 2023. The Council completed its review and made a final decision on each component of the amendment package in August 2023. The package included the following applications:

- (1) **Mor Furniture Land Use Designation Change:** This proposal is to change the Land Use Designation for a 1.24-acre parcel located at 1824 S. 49th Street owned by Wesco Management, LLC from "Low Scale Residential" to "General Commercial." This would allow the applicant to apply for a future site rezone to develop the site as part of a Mor Furniture Outlet Store that would include four applicant-owned Commercial zoned parcels bordering directly to the north of the subject site along S. 48th Street. *(Not recommended for adoption; Revised version adopted by Council)*
- (2) **Electric Fences:** This proposal would apply citywide in C-1 and C-2 Commercial Districts, as well as the CIX Industrial Mixed-Use District and the WR Warehouse Residential District. Local businesses, particularly ones that store vehicles or other equipment outside, are seeking ways to reduce theft and have posed electric fences as a solution. The draft code would permit electric fences with standards focused on safety and maintaining a pleasant pedestrian experience. *(Not recommended for adoption; Revised version adopted by Council)*
- (3) **Shipping Containers:** This proposal would allow shipping containers to be used as an accessory structure in C-1 and C-2 Commercial Districts and on residentially zoned properties that are operating with an approved Conditional Use Permit (such as parks, schools, and churches). The placement of shipping containers would be subject to certain development standards and, depending on size, may require a building permit. The proposal would also broaden the potential use of shipping containers as a temporary structure. *(Recommended for adoption; Adopted by Council)*
- (4) **Delivery-Only Retail Businesses:** This proposal would apply citywide in zoning districts allowing for retail commercial uses. Staff proposes to address delivery-only food establishments as a commissary kitchen use, and add commissary kitchens as a subset of "Retail" uses in the Tacoma Municipal Code land use tables. This would mean that commissary kitchens are no longer an unlisted use and would be required to meet "Retail" use and development standards (parking, loading, etc.). Additional regulations would add size limitations for commissary kitchens in mixed-use districts and a requirement for an in-person, direct-to-customer sale component for retail establishments located on a designated pedestrian street. These measures would add clarity

around delivery-only retail use and standards in Tacoma Municipal Code. *(Recommended for adoption; Adopted by Council)*

- (5) **Commercial Zoning Update Phase I:** Neighborhood Commercial Design Standards: The commercial zoning update is a City-wide update to our commercial zoning code. Phase I, being implemented as part of the 2023 amendment package, is limited in scope to updates deemed appropriate prior to the expansion of the multi-family tax exemption (MFTE) program to neighborhood commercial nodes. Phase 2, as part of the 2024 Periodic Comprehensive Plan update, will further assess necessary code updates to commercial areas throughout the City. Phase I updates focus on clarifying the applicability of existing standards to more clearly articulate which standards apply to single- and mixed-use multi-family development in the City's commercial zoning districts (C-1, C-2, PDB, T). *(Recommended for adoption; Adopted by Council)*
- (6) **Minor Plan and Code Amendments:** Proposed by the Planning and Development Services Department, this application compiles 7 minor and non-policy amendments to the One Tacoma Comprehensive Plan and the Land Use Regulatory Code, intended to keep information current, correct errors, address inconsistencies, improve clarity, and enhance applicability of the Plan and the Code. *(Recommended for adoption; Adopted by Council)*

## 2. South Tacoma Groundwater Protection District (STGPD) – Moratorium and Code Update

On June 28, 2022, the City Council adopted Amended Substitute Resolution No. 40985, approving the Work Plan for STGPD Code Amendments, as part of the 2022 Amendment. The Council also requested that “the Planning Commission will conduct a public process to develop findings of fact and recommendations as to whether a moratorium on heavy industrial uses and storage of hazardous materials within the South Tacoma Groundwater Protection District is warranted, and if so, to recommend the scope, applicability, and duration for City Council consideration within 60 days of the effective date of this resolution.” The Commission made its recommendations regarding the moratorium in August 2022. The Council adopted the moratorium in March 2023. Additionally, the Commission initiated the project to review the STGPD code provisions with discussion about the project context, background, related policy and environmental work, and the potential scope and schedule. The Commission is expected to make recommendations to Council on the STGPD code in 2024. ([www.cityoftacoma.org/MoratoriumSTGPD](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/MoratoriumSTGPD))

## 3. Tidelands Subarea Plan and EIS

In recognition of the regional significance of the Tidelands, the City of Tacoma, Port of Tacoma, Puyallup Tribe of Indians, City of Fife, and Pierce County have partnered to develop a Tidelands Subarea Plan and EIS that would establish a shared, long-term vision and a coordinated approach to addressing development, environmental review, land use, economy, public services and facilities, and transportation in the area. The Commission has received periodic updates since 2019 and will continue its review through 2023 and into early 2024. ([www.cityoftacoma.org/TidelandsPlan](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/TidelandsPlan))

## 4. Home in Tacoma Project – Phase 2

Home in Tacoma Phase 1, which was recommended by the Commission in May 2021 and adopted by the City Council in December 2021, set the stage for significant changes to Tacoma's housing growth strategy, policies and programs to increase housing supply, affordability, and choice for current and future residents. The subsequent Home in Tacoma Phase 2 was launched in July 2021 and includes development of zoning, standards, infrastructure actions, and other implementation programs. The Commission has been reviewing Phase 2 since August 2021, conducted a public scoping hearing in April 2022, and will continue its review through 2023. The Commission is expecting to finalize our recommendations to Council in early 2024. ([www.cityoftacoma.org/homeintacoma](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/homeintacoma))

## 5. Design Review Program

In early 2019, the City launched an effort to develop a comprehensive Design Review Program to enhance the quality of the built environment throughout the City. The work was put on hold in early 2021 due to staffing changes. New staff were hired in late 2021 and assigned to complete the design guidance documents, develop administrative procedures, prepare land use code amendments, and potentially establish a Design Review Board. The Commission reviewed the project throughout 2022

and 2023 and is expected to make recommendations to the City Council in the next few months. ([www.cityoftacoma.org/UrbanDesign](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/UrbanDesign))

#### **6. Neighborhood Planning Program**

In response to a desire for more equitable delivery of services and to provide a grassroots response to neighborhoods' concerns, the City Council provided funding in 2021 for a pilot Neighborhood Planning Program (NPP) and permanent funding in the 2022-23 biennial budget. The goal of the NPP is to support neighborhood identity and vitality. The Council also identified McKinley Hill and Proctor as the first two neighborhoods representing different locations on the spectrum of neighborhood development between growth creation and growth management. The planning effort kicked off in McKinley in early 2022. The Commission provided its recommendations regarding the McKinley Hill Neighborhood Plan in February 2023, which Council adopted in March 2023. The Commission has also been involved in the Proctor Neighborhood Plan effort, which is still in the planning phase. ([www.cityoftacoma.org/NeighborhoodPlanning](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/NeighborhoodPlanning))

#### **7. Pacific Avenue Corridor Subarea Plan and EIS – “Picture Pac Ave”**

In recognition of the significance of Pacific Avenue as Pierce County’s first Bus-Rapid Transit (BRT) line, the City of Tacoma, Pierce Transit, and the State Department of Commerce have partnered to fund and develop a subarea plan and programmatic EIS for the 4.5-mile-long portion of Pacific Avenue between I-5 and S. 96<sup>th</sup> Street. The “Picture Pac Ave” subarea planning process will create a shared long-term vision and more coordinated approach to development, environmental review, and strategic capital investments along the corridor. The Commission began to review the project in June 2022 and will continue its review through 2023 and into 2024. ([www.cityoftacoma.org/PicturePacAve](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/PicturePacAve))

#### **8. College Park Historic Special Review District**

The City received a petition in May 2021 to create a new local historic overlay zone in the "College Park" neighborhood that forms an inverted L shape bordering the north and east edges of the University of Puget Sound campus. The proposed area is already listed on the National Register of Historic Places as the College Park Historic District, designated in 2017. After a year-long review, the Landmarks Preservation Commission forwarded its recommendation to establish the College Park Historic Special Review District to the Planning Commission on April 13, 2022. The Planning Commission conducted a public hearing on June 1, 2022. After reviewing community input and further deliberations, the Commission completed its review and denied the proposed local historic district in November 2022.

The proposal for the College Park Historic Special Review District was re-submitted to the Landmarks Preservation Commission in March 2023, who then forwarded the nomination to the Planning Commission. In accordance with the Tacoma Municipal Code, the Planning Commission conducted an initial assessment of the application to determine whether the proposal should be accepted for review. The Commission voted to decline to consider the resubmitted application, finding that issues raised during the first review of this proposal and resultant recommendations made by both the Landmarks and Planning Commissions have yet to be implemented. ([www.cityoftacoma.org/CollegeParkHD](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/CollegeParkHD))

#### **9. Capital Facilities Program (CFP)**

The Commission reviewed the proposed update to the 2023-2028 CFP in May 2022 and conducted a public hearing in June and made a recommendation to the City Council. The Commission also requested staff to improve project mapping and update the project prioritization criteria for future CFPs. The Commission, in December 2022, also received an update regarding the 2023-2028 CFP and projects that received funding in the 2023-24 Capital Budget.

([https://www.cityoftacoma.org/government/city\\_departments/office\\_of\\_management\\_and\\_budget/2023-2024\\_biennial\\_budget\\_development](https://www.cityoftacoma.org/government/city_departments/office_of_management_and_budget/2023-2024_biennial_budget_development).)

#### **10. Transit-Oriented Development Advisory Group (TODAG)**

The TODAG was a broad-based advisory group established by the City Council in April 2019 (per Resolution No. 40303) to review and make recommendations on various projects impacting regional and local public transportation facilities in neighborhoods and business districts where there are significant TOD opportunities. The TODAG was tasked to review Sound Transit’s Tacoma Dome Link Extension (TDLE), Pierce Transit’s Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), and the City’s Puyallup Avenue Design

Project. Commissioners Karnes actively participated in the TODAG, representing the Commission's interest. Former Commissioner Strobel also served on the group, but as a representative from the Puyallup Tribe of Indians. ([www.cityoftacoma.org/TODAdvisoryGroup](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/TODAdvisoryGroup))

### 11. Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)

The Planning Commission has been, in coordination with the Transportation Commission, tracking and engaged in Pierce Transit's BRT planning, including the Pacific Avenue BRT project (Stream 1) and the Stream System Expansion Study (SSES). This included providing recommendations in June 2022 and receiving a briefing in July 2022. ([www.piercetransit.org/BRT](http://www.piercetransit.org/BRT))

### 12. Local Historic Districts – Potential Moratorium

On June 20, 2023, the Tacoma City Council adopted Resolution No. 41226, directing the Planning Commission to conduct a public process to determine whether a moratorium on local historic district creation is warranted, and if so, to recommend a scope and schedule. The Commission will be holding a public hearing on the potential moratorium, coordinating with the Landmarks Preservation Commission to get their input, and making a recommendation to the City Council in late 2023.

### 13. 2024 Comprehensive Plan Update

The Commission initiated review for the state-mandated periodic update of the City's Comprehensive Plan that is due in 2024. In January and March 2023, the Commission began discussions about the general timeline, phases, scope considerations, and potential key projects and priorities. The project is expected to get into full swing in late 2023 and be a significant work item throughout 2024.

## B. Meetings Conducted / Attended:

### 1. Commission Meetings:

The Commission held 23 regular meetings and canceled 1 meeting between July 2022 and June 2023. The Commission also held one special meeting in April 2023 to participate in safety training. The Commission also conducted the following public hearings:

- 6/1/22 – Proposed College Park Historic District
- 6/15/22 – 2023-2028 Capital Facilities Program
- 4/5/23 – 2023 Annual Amendment Package

### 2. Community Meetings:

Individual Commissioners have been actively involved in various community groups, meetings, open houses, and events, including but not limited to the following:

- Transit-Oriented Development Advisory Group (TODAG) meetings
- Design Review Project Advisory Group meetings
- Housing Equity Taskforce meetings (jointly with the Human Rights Commission)
- Home in Tacoma Project Informational Meetings
- Tideflats Subarea Planning Project Community Meetings
- 2023 Annual Amendment Informational Meeting (March 29, 2023)
- Historic Preservation Month 2023 – People Saving Places (May 2023)
- McKinley Hill Neighborhood Planning Program Events
- Proctor Neighborhood Planning Program Events
- South Tacoma Groundwater Protection District meetings
- Facilities Advisory Committee (FAC)

In addition, the Commission has initiated discussions about forming a joint task force with the Transportation Commission regarding transit-oriented development and to facilitate coordination between the two commissions on key projects, as Council requested in Resolution No. 41195 (adopted May 9, 2023). We expect that joint task force to be up and operational in the next few months.

**C. Membership Status (July 2022 through June/July 2023):**

<b>Council District / Expertise Area</b>	<b>Commissioner</b>	<b>Appointment</b>
District No. 1	Andrew Strobel / Jordon Rash	Commissioner Strobel served through June 2023 Commissioner Rash appointed in July 2023
District No. 2	Morgan Dorner	Commissioner Dorner appointed in January 2022
District No. 3	Brett Santhuff	Reappointed in January 2022
District No. 4	Alyssa Torrez / Sandesh Sadalge	Commissioner Torrez served through February 2023 Commissioner Sadalge appointed in July 2023
District No. 5	Robb Krehbiel	Commissioner Krehbiel appointed in January 2022
Development Community	Anthony Steele	Appointed in January 2022 Reappointed in July 2023
Environmental Community	Brett Marlo	Appointed in July 2022
Public Transportation	Christopher Karnes	Appointed in September 2019; Elected Vice-Chair in October 2021; Elected Chair in July 2022 Reappointed in July 2023
Architecture, Historic Preservation, and/or Urban Design	Matthew Martenson	Appointed in July 2022

**Part II. Planning Commission Work Program for 2023-2025 (Attached)**

Attached is the "Planning Commission Work Program for 2023-2025". The Work Program contains projects and planning activities slated for completion or substantial progress during the general timeframe of July 2023 through December 2025. These projects and activities are primarily mandated by legislation or initiated by the City Council and are within the Commission's review and recommendation authority. The Work Program is subject to adjustments in response to legislative requirements, community requests, Council priorities, budget and staffing constraints, or other emerging situations.



## Planning Commission Work Program (2023-2025) Planning Commission Recommendation (September 13, 2023 revised draft; subject to Planning Commission’s review/approval)

### Expected Completion in 2023

- **2023 Annual Amendment Package:** *Council Action August 2023*
  - Mor Furniture Land Use Designation and Areawide Rezone (private application)
  - Shipping Containers for Storage (Sub Resolution #40955, 5/10/22)
  - Electric Fences – Expanded Allowances (Sub Resolution #40955, 5/10/22)
  - Delivery-Only Businesses
  - Commercial Zoning Update – Phase 1 (includes items in Ordinance #28798)
  - Minor Plan and Code Amendments
- **Proposed College Park Historic District (2.0)** *Commission Declined Review August 2023*
- **Design Review Program** *Expected Commission Recommendation October/November 2023*
- **Potential Historic District Moratorium** *Expected Commission Recommendation November 2023*
  - Resolution #41226 (6/20/23)
- **Proctor Neighborhood Plan**

### Expected Work Program for 2024 (preliminary)

- **Neighborhood Planning Program – Proctor Neighborhood Plan**
- **South Tacoma Groundwater Protection District – Phase 2 (Code Update)**
- **Home in Tacoma Project – Phase 2:** zoning, standards, affordability, anti-displacement, infrastructure, and programmatic components (includes zoning-related items from ADU Accelerator discussion, evaluation of shipping containers for housing, etc.)
- **Tideflats Subarea Plan and EIS**
- **GMA 2024 Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update (potential key issues):**

*Note: The extent of the 2024 Comp Plan Update, including whether all of these issues will be addressed and/or to what depth, will be partly dependent on available staff and funding resources, which is not fully determined*

**Plan Updates:**

- Coordination/integration with Tacoma 2035 Strategic Plan update (in coordination with CMO)
- Growth Targets and Consistency with VISION 2050 (including new affordable housing targets)
- Transportation Master Plan Update (in coordination with PW)
- Tribal Lands Coordination and Compatibility
- 20 Minute Neighborhoods and Performance Measures
- Economic Development Element (in coordination with CEDD)



- Mixed-Use Centers Policy Updates (including Core/Pedestrian Street review and height bonus program)
- Commercial Zoning Policy Updates
- Climate Action Plan Integration (including GHG Targets and Implementation Actions)
- Watershed Plan Elements (in coordination with ES)
- Historic Preservation Plan Update and Integration (including policy/code review on local historic districts)
- Level of Service Standards and Priority Project Lists (multiple)
- Health, Equity and Anti-Racism Policy Updates (in coordination with TPCHD, OEHR, Housing Equity Task Force, etc.)
- Downtown Subarea Plan integration (including street designation review)

#### **Code Updates:**

- Critical Areas Preservation Ordinance Update (including biodiversity corridors)
  - Mixed-Use Centers Code Updates
  - Commercial Zoning Update – Phase 2
  - Landscaping code improvements – flexibility, planting guidelines, tree preservation (in coordination with ES)
- **Pacific Avenue Corridor Subarea Plan and EIS (“Picture Pac Ave”)**
  - **Design Review Program** (program launch)
  - **Neighborhood Planning Program – South Tacoma Neighborhood Plan**
  - **Cushman/Adams Substation Reuse Study** (in partnership with TPU)
  - **2025-2030 Capital Facilities Program (CFP)**
  - **Additional items from Home in Tacoma** (such as the Eastside View Sensitive District, commercial uses in mid-scale areas, and the Passive Open Space areas)
  - **South Tacoma Groundwater Protection District – Moratorium** (potential extension)
  - **Home Occupation Expansion** (Resolution No. 41259)

### **Expected Work Program for 2025 (*very preliminary*)**

- **2025 Amendment Package** (including private applications)
- **Implementation of Senate Bill 5290 – Consolidating Local Permit Review Processes**
- **Further Implementation of House Bill 1110 – Middle Housing Bill**
- **South Tacoma Economic Green Zone – Subarea Plan** (pending budget consideration)
- **Home in Tacoma Project – Implementation and Refinement**
- **Design Review Program – Implementation and Refinement**
- **Neighborhood Planning Program – Implementation and Additional Planning Efforts** (pending budget consideration)

### **On-going Planning Issues**

- Six-Year Comprehensive Transportation Program
- Joint Planning Commission/Transportation Commission TOD Task Force (per Council Resolution)

- Joint Meetings of the Planning Commission with appropriate groups (e.g., the Landmarks Preservation Commission, Transportation Commission, and Community Council)
- Transportation Master Plan Implementation, in coordination with the Transportation Commission (e.g., impact fees study, transportation network planning, streetscape design guidance, **such as Tacoma Ave.**, signature trails development, etc.)
- Light Rail Expansion projects (including the Hilltop Links to Opportunity Program, ST3 Tacoma Dome Link Extension, Tacoma-TCC Link Extension, Sounder Station Access Improvements, etc.)
- Pierce Transit Long-Range Plan, Stream System Expansion Study (SSES) and Pacific Avenue BRT Project
- Historic Preservation, in coordination with the Landmarks Preservation Commission (e.g., Historic TDR, integration of Historic Preservation Plan with *One Tacoma* Comprehensive Plan, historic districts process and standards, preservation incentive tools, educational programs, etc.)
- Subarea Plan Implementation (and potential review/updates) – North Downtown, South Downtown, Hilltop, and Tacoma Mall Neighborhood
- Citizen Participation, Notification, Language Access, and Public Outreach Enhancements
- Proactive Equity/Social Justice/Anti-Racism integration in policies and programs
- Schuster Corridor Trail
- Fossil Fuel Tracking and Council Reporting
- Urban Forestry Implementation (landscaping and planting guidelines, tree preservation, open space, etc.)
- **Zoning Code conversion to web-based, linked format**

## Regional and Cross-Jurisdictional Issues

- Regional Transportation Issues, in coordination with the Transportation Commission (e.g., Tacoma LINK and Central LINK Light Rail Expansions, Pierce Transit Long-Range Plan and BRT Project)
- PSRC Regional Centers Framework Update, Vision 2050 implementation, GMA review
- PCRC County-Wide Planning Policies, County-level Centers Update, Population Allocations, Buildable Lands, Annexations and Pre-Annexation Planning
- Regional/Countywide Climate planning and coordination (Pierce County Climate Collaborative)

## Emerging Issues

***These items are generally not integrated into the current work program and are dependent on future program space, priorities, funding, etc.***

- Health Impact Assessments (*in partnership with TPCHD*)
- Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) policy and code review (*potentially coming out of Crime Prevention Plan*)
- Corridor Plans, focused on TOD corridor planning, such as 19<sup>th</sup> Street, Portland Avenue, 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, etc.
- Station-Area Planning, such as Portland Avenue/I-5 area and “Four Corners” at James Center/TCC Mixed-Use Center
- Mixed-Use Centers Implementation Programming, Action Strategies/Master Plans
- Parking Update - RPA, refinements along light rail, Mixed-Use Centers, design, etc.
- Potential Local Historic Districts, such as Stadium (*coordinated with LPC*)

- Street Typology and Designation System Review
- Tribal Planning Coordination, including with their upcoming Comprehensive Plan
- Wildfire Adaptation and Mitigation (*from Sustainable Tacoma Commission*)
- Urban Heat Island review/considerations (*from Sustainable Tacoma Commission*)
- Parks and Open Space Planning (*in coordination with MetroParks Tacoma and Tacoma School District*)
- Subarea Plan review/updates – North Downtown, South Downtown, Hilltop and Tacoma Mall Neighborhood
- Sign Code Update
- Pre-Annexation Planning – Browns Point/Dash Point, Parkland/Spanaway (*with Pierce County*)
- Self-Storage Code Amendments - zoning and standards
- Pre-Approved Plans for ADUs (and possibly other middle housing types)
- Transfer of Development Rights program review
- SENCO SNAP review/integration
- Unified Development Code
- Institutional Master Plans
- “Dark Sky” lighting standards (*from JBLM AICUZ study*)
- Trail-Oriented Design Standards





City of Tacoma  
Planning and Development Services

**To:** Planning Commission  
**From:** Reuben McKnight, Historic Preservation Officer  
**Subject:** **Public Hearing: Consideration of a “Moratorium on Nomination and Designation of Historic Special Review and Conservation Districts”**  
**Memo Date:** September 11, 2023  
**Meeting Date:** September 20, 2023

**Action Requested:**

Receive public testimony

**Discussion:**

At the next meeting on September 20, 2023, the Planning Commission will conduct a Public Hearing to receive public testimony in response to Council Resolution No. 41226, in which the City Council directs the Planning Commission to conduct a public process to determine whether a moratorium on the consideration and creation of local historic districts is warranted. The public comment period will remain open until September 22 at 5:00 p.m.

**Background:**

Tacoma Municipal Code (TMC) 13.07.060 outlines regulations for the local Tacoma Register of Historic Places and the nomination and designation process for Historic Special Review and Conservation Districts. The Landmarks Preservation Commission and Planning Commission are both responsible for reviewing nominations and making recommendations. In 2022, both bodies reviewed an application to add a district to the Tacoma Register of Historic Places. The Landmarks Preservation Commission made recommendations on April 13, 2022, and the Planning Commission denied the request on November 2, 2022. During their reviews, both commissions noted concerns about the existing historic district designation process and recommended that a review and potential update to the process should be conducted in the earliest possible plan and code amendment cycle.

The requested review is planned to be included in the upcoming 2024 Comprehensive Plan periodic update process. However, in the interim, the City is still able to accept applications for Historic Special Review and Conservation Districts. As noted by Council in the Resolution:

- It takes a great deal of volunteer and staff time to review these requests, and any review at this time may encounter the same concerns that these commissions have already identified and requested the City address.
- It may be beneficial to implement a moratorium until the review can be completed and the changes be put into effect.

The council resolution requests the Planning Commission, in coordination with the Landmarks Preservation Commission, conduct a public process to develop findings of fact and recommendations as to whether a moratorium on nomination and designation of Historic Special Review and Conservation Districts is warranted, and if so, to recommend the scope and duration.



### **About Moratoria:**

Tacoma Municipal Code Section 13.05.030.E “Moratoria and Interim Zoning” outlines the requirements and scope of moratoria:

- City Council-initiated moratoria or interim zoning shall be referred to the Planning Commission for findings of fact and a recommendation prior to action.
- The Planning Commission shall address duration and scope and note if a study, either underway or proposed, is expected to develop a permanent solution and the time period by which that study would be concluded.
- Moratoria or interim zoning may be effective for a period of not longer than six months but may be effective for up to one year if a work plan is developed for related studies requiring such longer period.

The key questions for the Planning Commission to address include:

1. Is a moratorium on local historic district and conservation district consideration warranted?
2. If so, what is the appropriate timeline?
3. Are there additional studies or research necessary in order to identify a solution for permanent code changes?

### **About Local Historic Districts in Tacoma:**

There are presently 4 local historic districts and 2 conservation districts within Tacoma. Local historic districts differ from National Register Districts and Washington State Heritage Districts in several ways:

- Local historic districts are overlay zones that are created by City Council following review by the Landmarks and Planning Commissions. National Register and Washington Heritage Register Districts are created by the National Park Service following review and recommendations at the state and federal level and are not land use zones.
- Local historic districts have a regulatory component, including design review, for most exterior alterations to historic buildings. National and state-listed districts are primarily honorary.
- Historic districts may be listed on multiple registers.
- Listing of districts on the National Register of Historic Places or the Washington State Heritage Register is outside the scope of this proposal; likewise existing local historic districts would not be affected.
- Additions of individual property to the Tacoma Register of Historic Places would also be unaffected by the moratorium.
- The last local historic overlay zone created in Tacoma was the Wedge Neighborhood Historic District, created in 2011.

### **Notice:**

A public hearing notice was sent via regular mail to recipients of the Landmarks Commission general hearing list, as well as to the Planning Commission’s and Landmarks Commission’s distribution lists on September 6, 2023. Notice was published in the Tacoma News Tribune and Tacoma Daily Index on September 8, 2023. Notice was also sent via email to Joint Base Lewis McChord.

A Preliminary Determination of Nonsignificance was issued on September 5, 2023, under permit number LU23-0150 and published to the Department of Ecology website.

### Review Schedule:

The schedule below outlines the steps for this review in coordination with the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

The schedule is as follows:

DATE	FORUM	SUBJECT
September 20	Planning Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public hearing on moratorium</li> </ul>
October 4	Planning Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Debrief on hearing testimony</li> <li>Summary of issues</li> <li>Identify key questions for LPC input</li> </ul>
October 11	Landmarks Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review testimony</li> <li>Adopt response to Planning Commission</li> </ul>
November 15	Planning Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LPC feedback presented to Planning Commission</li> <li>Finalize recommendations to Council</li> </ul>
TBD	Council Study Session	
Jan-Feb 2024 TBD	City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resolution on moratorium (TBD)</li> </ul>

### Staff Contact:

- Reuben McKnight, [rmcknigh@cityoftacoma.org](mailto:rmcknigh@cityoftacoma.org)
- Brian Boudet, [bboudet@cityoftacoma.org](mailto:bboudet@cityoftacoma.org)

### Attachments:

- Attachment 1 – City Council Resolution No. 41226
- Attachment 2 – City Council Action Memorandum

c. Peter Huffman, Director







## RESOLUTION NO. 41226

1 BY REQUEST OF COUNCIL MEMBERS BUSHNELL, HINES, AND RUMBAUGH

2 A RESOLUTION relating to historic districts; directing the Planning Commission,  
3 in coordination with the Landmarks Preservation Commission, to  
4 determine if a moratorium on nomination and designation of Historic  
Special Review and Conservation Districts is warranted.

5 WHEREAS historic preservation honors the legacy of the City and adds  
6 character to neighborhoods, improving perception and overall quality of life,  
7 however preserving history should be complementary to equity access to  
8 housing options throughout the City, and  
9

10 WHEREAS Tacoma Municipal Code (“TMC”) Section 13.07.060 outlines  
11 regulations for the local Tacoma Register of Historic Places and the nomination  
12 and designation process for Historic Special Review and Conservation Districts  
13 (“HSRCD”), and the Landmarks Preservation Commission (“LPC”) and Planning  
14 Commission (“PC”) are both responsible for reviewing nominations and making  
15 recommendations, and  
16

17 WHEREAS in 2022, both bodies reviewed an application to add a district  
18 to the Tacoma Register of Historic Places; the LPC made recommendations on  
19 April 25, 2022, and the PC denied the request on November 2, 2022, and  
20

21 WHEREAS during their respective reviews, both commissions noted  
22 concerns about the existing historic district designation process, including the  
23 need to address equity issues, and recommended that a review and potential  
24 update to the process should be conducted in the earliest possible plan and  
25 code amendment cycle, and  
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WHEREAS the requested review is planned to be included in the upcoming 2024 Comprehensive Plan periodic update process, however, in the interim, the City is still able to accept applications for HSRCD, and

WHEREAS any review at this time may encounter the same concerns that the commissions have already identified, and since it takes a great deal of volunteer and staff time to review these requests, it may be beneficial to implement a moratorium until the review can be completed and the changes be put into effect, and

WHEREAS this resolution requests that the PC, in coordination with the LPC, conduct a public process to develop findings of fact and recommendations as to whether a moratorium on the nomination and designation of HSRCDs is warranted, and if so, to recommend the scope and duration; Now, Therefore,

**BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TACOMA:**

That the proper officers of the City are hereby authorized to direct the Planning Commission, in coordination with the Landmarks Preservation



1 Commission, to determine if a moratorium on nomination and designation of  
2 Historic Special Review and Conservation Districts is warranted.

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4 Adopted \_\_\_\_\_

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6 \_\_\_\_\_  
7 Mayor

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9 Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
10 City Clerk

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12 Approved as to form: \_\_\_\_\_  
13 Deputy City Attorney

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City of Tacoma

City Council Action Memorandum

**TO:** Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager  
**FROM:** Council Member Sarah Rumbaugh  
**COPY:** City Council and City Clerk  
**SUBJECT:** **Resolution - Resolution – Directing Planning Commission to determine if a Moratorium on nomination and designation of Historic Special Review and Conservation Districts is warranted – June 20, 2023**  
**DATE:** June 14, 2023

### **SUMMARY AND PURPOSE:**

A resolution to direct the Planning Commission, in coordination with the Landmarks Preservation Commission, to conduct a public process to develop findings of fact and recommendations as to whether a moratorium on nomination and designation of local Historic Special Review and Conservation Districts is warranted, and if so, to recommend the scope and duration.

[Council Member Rumbaugh]

### **COUNCIL SPONSORS:**

Council Members Bushnell, Hines, and Rumbaugh.

### **BACKGROUND:**

#### **The Council Member's Recommendation is Based On:**

Tacoma Municipal Code 13.07.060 outlines regulations for the local Tacoma Register of Historic Places and the nomination and designation process for Historic Special Review and Conservation Districts. The Landmarks Preservation Commission and Planning Commission are both responsible for reviewing nominations and making recommendations. In 2022, both bodies reviewed an application to add a district to the Tacoma Register of Historic Places. The Landmarks Preservation Commission made recommendations<sup>1</sup> on April 25, 2022, and the Planning Commission denied the request<sup>2</sup> on November 2, 2022. During their reviews, both commissions noted concerns about the existing historic district designation process and recommended that a review and potential update to the process should be conducted in the earliest possible plan and code amendment cycle.

The requested review is planned to be included in the upcoming 2024 Comprehensive Plan periodic update process. However, in the interim, the City is still able to accept applications for Historic Special Review and Conservation Districts. It takes a great deal of volunteer and staff time to review these requests, and any review at this time may encounter the same concerns that these commissions have already identified and requested the City address. It may be beneficial to implement a moratorium until the review can be completed and the changes be put into effect.

This resolution requests the Planning Commission, in coordination with the Landmarks Preservation Commission, to conduct a public process to develop findings of fact and recommendations as to whether a moratorium on

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.cityoftacoma.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server\\_6/File/cms/Planning/Historic-Preservation/Agendas-Minutes/2022-Packets/LPC%20recommendation%20packet%20pt1%20-%20College%20Park%20Historic%20District%20\(06-01-22\).pdf](https://www.cityoftacoma.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_6/File/cms/Planning/Historic-Preservation/Agendas-Minutes/2022-Packets/LPC%20recommendation%20packet%20pt1%20-%20College%20Park%20Historic%20District%20(06-01-22).pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://cityoftacoma.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server\\_6/File/cms/Planning/Historic-Preservation/Districts/College-Park-planning-commission-decision.pdf](https://cityoftacoma.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_6/File/cms/Planning/Historic-Preservation/Districts/College-Park-planning-commission-decision.pdf)



nomination and designation of Historic Special Review and Conservation Districts is warranted, and if so, to recommend the scope and duration.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT/ CUSTOMER RESEARCH:**

During a recent review of a Historic District proposal, both the Landmark Preservation Commission and the Planning Commission recommended a policy review of the nomination and designation process for historic special review and conservation districts. This resolution follows up on their request, and further seeks their guidance on next steps. Their consideration of a mortarium will be an open public process and will seek feedback from the community.

### **2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:**

#### **Equity and Accessibility: *(Mandatory)***

The recommendations from the Landmarks Preservation Commission are intended to address equity issues, and includes the following language:

“A. The Historic Comprehensive Plan Element and associated regulatory codes should be reviewed during the next code and policy amendment process to assess and evaluate compatibility with the broad City policy of objectives concerning diversity, equity and inclusion, to identify barriers, gaps in preservation policy, and criteria used by the Commission, and to identify additional tools and incentives for owners and residents of historic properties.”

Similarly, the Planning Commission identified a need to incorporate equity goals into this review and designation process. Their recommendation includes:

“The Planning Commission recommends that Comprehensive Plan policies and regulatory code relating to historic districts be reviewed [and] amended at the earliest appropriate amendment cycle, to include review of consistencies between historic preservation policies and policies elsewhere in the Comprehensive Plan relating to housing, equity, and sustainability.”

#### **Civic Engagement: *Equity Index Score: Moderate Opportunity***

Increase the percentage of residents who believe they are able to have a positive impact on the community and express trust in the public institutions in Tacoma.

#### **Livability: *Equity Index Score: Moderate Opportunity***

Improve access and proximity by residents to diverse income levels and race/ethnicity to community facilities, services, infrastructure, and employment.

Increase positive public perception of safety and overall quality of life.

### **Explain how your legislation will affect the selected indicator(s).**

Historic preservation honors the legacy of Tacoma and adds character to neighborhoods, improving perception and overall quality of life. However, preserving history should be complementary to equity access to housing options throughout the City. We heard from our Commissions that they see a need to review code language, and honoring that recommendation will show them they're able to have a positive impact on the community and will build trust in the public institutions in Tacoma.

### **ALTERNATIVES:**



City of Tacoma

City Council Action Memorandum

Alternative(s)	Positive Impact(s)	Negative Impact(s)
1. Take no action	Maintain maximum flexibility for applicants to Historic Special Review and Conservation Districts	Divert staff time and resources into a process that Commissioners have already requested we change

**EVALUATION AND FOLLOW UP:**

This resolution directs the Planning Commission, in coordination with the Landmarks Preservation Commission, to conduct a public process to develop findings of fact and recommendations as to whether a moratorium on nomination and designation of local Historic Special Review and Conservation Districts is warranted, and if so, to recommend the scope. The results of this should be reported back to Council.

**SPONSOR RECOMMENDATION:**

Sponsors recommend this resolution be passed and the Council hear from the Planning Commission and Landmarks Preservation Commission on how they'd like to proceed with this process.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

Please provide a short summary of the fiscal impacts associated with the grant, agreement, policy action, or other action.

Fund Number & Name	COST OBJECT (CC/WBS/ORDER)	Cost Element	Total Amount
1. N/A			N/A
<b>TOTAL</b>			N/A

**What Funding is being used to support the expense?**

No fiscal impact

**Are the expenditures and revenues planned and budgeted in this biennium's current budget?**

N/A

**Are there financial costs or other impacts of not implementing the legislation?**

No

**Will the legislation have an ongoing/recurring fiscal impact?**

No

**Will the legislation change the City's FTE/personnel counts?**

No

**ATTACHMENTS:**

- Resolution

