



Public Comments

Meeting: Wednesday, December 7, 2022

Submittal: Written comments only; e-mailed received at planning@cityoftacoma.org by 12:00 noon, on the meeting day

Subjects: Comments are addressing the following Discussion Item on the agenda:

#3 – Urban Design Review Program

**No. of
Comments:** One



From: [Ben Ferguson](#)
To: [Planning](#)
Subject: Public Comment - Urban Design Program
Date: Thursday, December 1, 2022 12:28:50 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

My name is Ben Ferguson and I am the Owner of Ferguson Architecture, a local practice that primarily designs projects in Tacoma. I have been a member of the Urban Design Studio advisory group since the program began. The advisory group has a health cross-section of participants, including architects, engineers, planners from the private, public and non-profit sectors.

I have been impressed with the level of transparency, vision, and professionalism of the program. City staff and their consultants have consistently asked good questions, listened, and responded to our comments, questions and concerns. Together we have identified a vision for Tacoma that has the potential to have a major positive impact on the quality of urban design while avoiding the trap of creating a bureaucratic process that adds unreasonable costs and schedule delays.

The goal of the project is to scale the review process so small projects have less requirements, and large projects that impact the urban fabric more have higher requirements. The guide sets clear goals and provides options for how designers can satisfy them, this clarity is essential. If designers meet the goals then they can typically gain administrative approval. If the design seeks to break rules and their vision is an improvement, the public review process provides this possibility.

This has been the most transparent and collaborative process I have been involved in with any public agency. This is a major change in the permit approval process, and no system is perfect, but I am confident that this process is an improvement and will provide benefits to our community with minimal and acceptable negative impacts.

Ben Ferguson, AIA, LEED AP
Managing Principal

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