

TACOMA PLANNING COMMISSION

Urban Design Project Review Program Planning Commission Recommendation Brief

The Planning Commission recommended the Urban Design Project Review package on October 18, 2023. The various elements that make up their recommended package are summarized below.

Additional documents associated with the proposed Urban Design Project Review project package can be found at www.cityoftacoma.org/UrbanDesign. These include the draft Urban Design Project Review Manual and draft TMC amendments. The draft Code amendments consist of those necessary to the implementation of the Urban Design Project Review program as well as amendments to existing development and building design standards for the Mixed-Use Center and Downtown zoning districts.

Project Summary	
Project Title:	Urban Design Project Review Program
Applicant:	City
Location and Size of Area:	Citywide within designated Mixed-Use Centers
Current Land Use and Zoning:	Multiple
Neighborhood Council Area:	Citywide
Staff Contact(s):	Stephen Antupit, Senior Planner Carl Metz, Senior Planner
Project Proposal:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create an Urban Design Project Review permit process consisting of administrative and Urban Design Board review paths.• Establish an Urban Design Board• Employ Urban Design Project Review Manual• Amend Tacoma Municipal Code requirements related to site development and building design within the Mixed-Use and Downtown zoning districts.



Section A. Scope of Work

1. Area of Applicability

The proposed Urban Design Project Review Program would be required for certain development projects located in Tacoma's designated Mixed-Use Centers. These include two (2) Regional Growth Centers (Downtown and Tacoma Mall), eight (8) Crossroads Centers and six (6) Neighborhood Centers. The Area of Applicability is shown in Exhibit A, below.

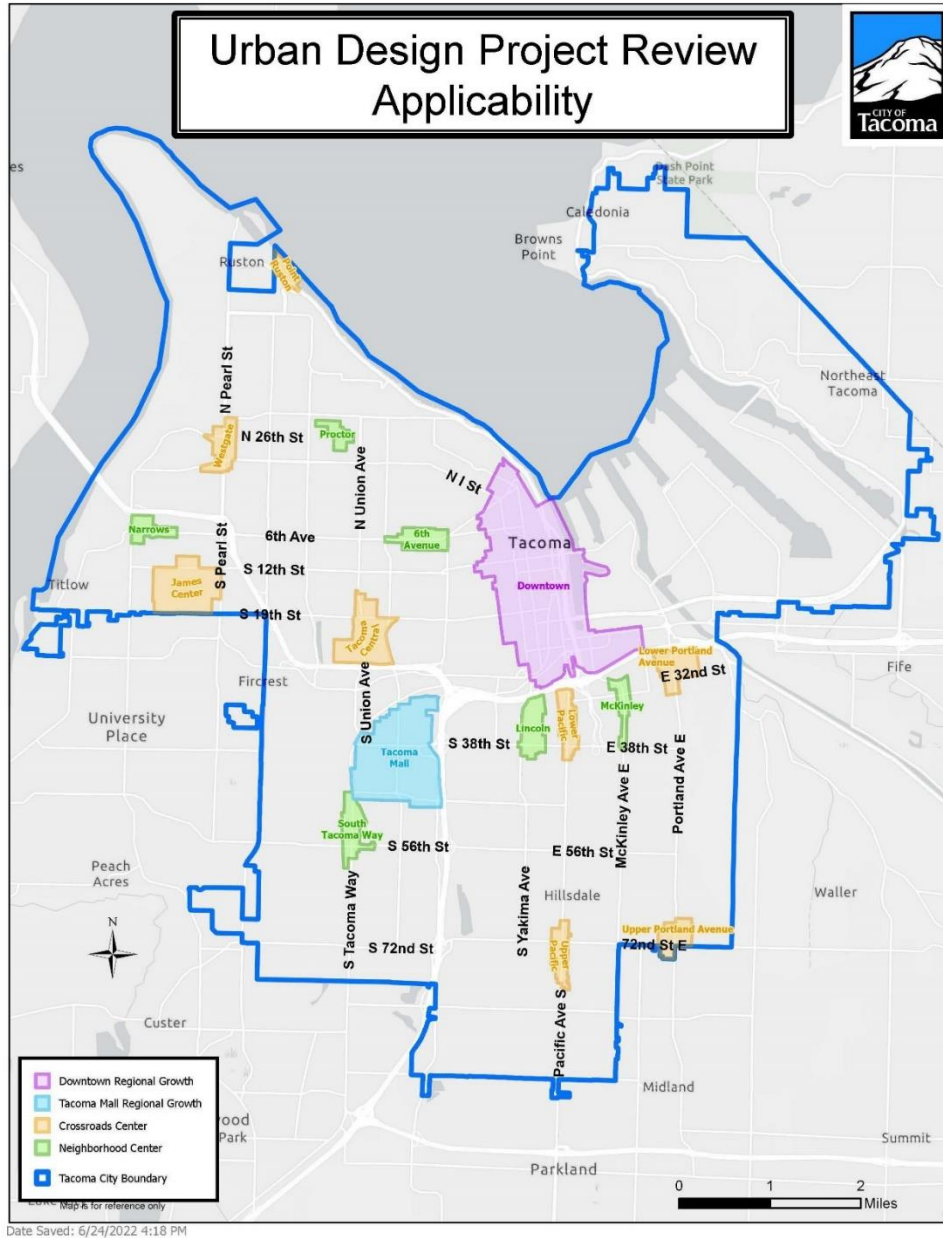


EXHIBIT A

2. Summary of Recommendations

The package comprises two major program elements. They are a) creation of an Urban Design Project Review process, and b) Tacoma Municipal Code Amendments. These are summarized below:

Urban Design Project Review

- **Establish an Urban Design Project Review (UDPR) permit process** consisting of administrative and Urban Design Board review paths. UDPR permits would be required for developments located within any designated Mixed-Use Center and that exceed certain development size thresholds. Required UDPR process steps would consist of a pre-application consultation, Concept Design review, and Final Design review.

The program design is intended to “right-size” the level of review based on the significance of the project and its location, such that larger developments in key locations would be subject to the highest level of review while smaller projects would receive less significant review. For example, only developments that exceed an additional, greater size threshold would be subject to review and approval of an Urban Design Board. However, Board-level thresholds within Neighborhood Centers would be lower than those of the other Mixed-Use Centers (Downtown, Tacoma Mall, and Crossroads Centers).

Any Board-level review would be limited to one public meeting, as specified in most recent State law. All review timeframes would be consistent with most recently enacted State law. Reviews and decisions will be based on, and limited in scope to, the considerations established by the most recent State law and within adopted Tacoma Urban Design Project Review Manual. Final Design approval would be required before issuance of building permits. Final Design decisions would be appealable to the Hearing Examiner.

- **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.
- **Employ an Urban Design Project Review Manual** (also referred to as design guidelines) to provide clear and objective guidance that meets Urban Design Project Review permit approval criteria. The initial version of the Manual will be adopted by the Planning and Development Services (PDS) Director. Subsequent amendments would be subject to periodic review and approval by the Urban Design Board no more frequently than once every two years. An initial draft Manual has been provided for review and possible edits through this program adoption process.

Tacoma Municipal Code Amendments

Amend Tacoma Municipal Code to a) create Urban Design Project Review Permit, b) establish Urban Design Board (UDB), and c) amend certain development and design standards pertaining to Mixed-Use and Downtown Zoning Districts. Those are summarized as:

- **Maximum Setbacks:** Establish maximum setbacks for residential development within Mixed-Use Center (X) districts and establish maximum setbacks for all Downtown districts.

- Residential yard space requirements: Rename “yard space” as “amenity space,” revise requirements overall, and amend exception/reduction provisions.
- Mixed-Use District Building Standards: Reorganize existing standards to better align with Urban Design program priorities and revise standards to improve efficacy. New provisions include residential transition standards.
- Downtown District Building Standards: Reorganize existing standards to better align with Urban Design program priorities and revise standards to improve efficacy. New provisions include residential transition standards, mass reduction standards for certain developments, and transparency standards.

3. Background

To support Comprehensive Plan Policy (see below) implementation, City Council initiated development of the Urban Design Program with creation of PDS Urban Design Studio in 2018. Funding for consultants was secured through the Budget and a competitive selection process conducted. The Planning Commission chartered the formation, composition, and scope of a Project Advisory Group (PAG), in 2019. Initial work continued until the onset of the Covid pandemic and staff changes, with Program development paused in early 2021 until late in that year. New staff reinitiated work in 2022 with the consultants, PAG, Planning Commission and, Council Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability (IPS) Committee, as well as broader outreach and engagement.

Since then, development of the proposed Urban Design Project Review Program has been informed by best practices and lessons learned from other jurisdictions, while focused on the unique policy priorities, needs and circumstances of Tacoma. Regular Planning Commission briefings through mid-2023 have provided detailed guidance and direction to refine the overall structure and specific provisions of the proposal, supported by numerous working meetings with the Project Advisory Group (which includes several Planning Commissioners).

Actions by Washington State’s 68th Legislature, in its 2023 Regular Session, provided additional requirements (e.g., via ESHB1293, 2SSB5290, 2SEHB1110) to which this proposal responds.

Section B. Recommendations

This section further describes the main elements of the new Urban Design Project Review (UDPR) program: UDPR permit processes, Urban Design Board (UDB), and the draft Urban Design Project Review Manual; along with a summary of the draft Tacoma Municipal Code (Code or TMC) amendments: UDPR program implementation-related and various development and building design standards.

1. Urban Design Project Review

a. Urban Design Project Review permit processes

The Urban Design Project Review (UDPR) permit process would be required for developments located within any designated Mixed-Use Center and that exceed certain development size thresholds. The UDPR permit process will consist of two review paths: administrative and Urban Design Board.

Departures from certain development and building design standards are also administered through the UDPR process. Required UDPR process steps would consist of a pre-application consultation, Concept Design review, and Final Design review. These are summarized below in Exhibit B.

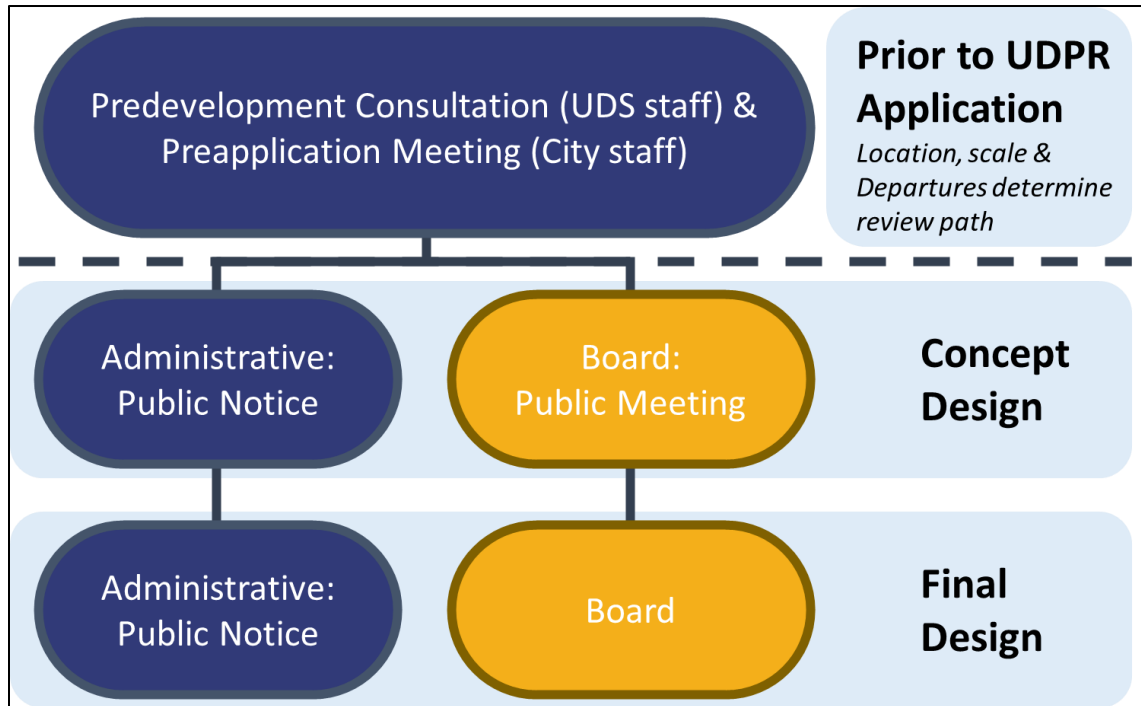


EXHIBIT B

Applicability

UDPR permits would only be required for development projects of a certain size located in one of Tacoma’s designated Mixed-Use Centers. The City’s Mixed-Use Centers consist of two (2) Regional Growth Centers, eight (8) Crossroads Centers and six (6) Neighborhood Centers. The applicable centers are listed below and shown on a map in Exhibit A, above.

Regional Growth Centers	Crossroads Centers	Neighborhood Centers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Downtown • Tacoma Mall 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower Pacific Ave. • Lower Portland Ave. • James Center • Point Ruston • Tacoma Central • Upper Pacific Ave. • Upper Portland Ave. • Westgate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6th Ave. • Lincoln • McKinley • Narrows • Proctor • South Tacoma Way

The total building size of the development determines if a UDPR permit is required and developments that exceed an additional, greater size threshold would be subject to review and approval of an Urban Design Board. Developments that exceed the lower, baseline building size threshold but are lower than

the UDB threshold would be subject to an Administrative review and decision. Additionally, these thresholds within Neighborhood Centers would be lower than those of other Mixed-Use Centers (Downtown, Tacoma Mall, and Crossroads Centers).

These specific thresholds are informed by a number of considerations centered around *efficiency* (program capacity, staff and UDB – fewer than 20 total and fewer than 10 UDB-level permits annually estimated), *effectiveness* (limited to development scales where a qualitative review would be most productive), and context *responsiveness* (increased sensitivity within Neighborhood Centers). These building size thresholds are outlined below.

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

Departures

Departures from certain site development and applicable building design standards may be requested through the Urban Design Project Review process. Design departure requests are not considered to be variances as currently administered in TMC 13.05.010.B, but rather are unique to the Urban Design Project Review process and would replace Design (TMC 13.05.010.B.2.d) and Parking Lot (TMC 13.05.010.B.2.f) Variances within the applicable UDPR geographies. This more flexible approach will provide new options to address certain development standards and make adjustments as part of an overall project design review. Requesting a Departure does not change the decision path on which the Urban Design Project Review permit is required.

Applicants seeking a Departure from eligible standards are required to demonstrate that the requested departure equally or better meets the intent and purpose of the standards and are consistent with the relevant Urban Design Objectives. As described below, the Design Approaches to Consider describe a range of means to achieve the associated Guideline and Design Objective. However, projects, including Departure requests, may request design approaches that are not contained in the guidelines.

Administrative Review

For projects subject to Administrative Review the UDPR application process consists of a pre-application consultation and two formal review steps outlined below. Public notice will be provided and will explain how comment can be provided. All reviews and decisions will be based on adopted Tacoma Urban Design Project Review Manual and consistent with applicable State law. All review timeframes will be consistent with or less than maximum timeframes established in State law. Under the provisions of 2SSB5290, a decision must be made no more than 100 days from a determination of completeness.

Step One: Pre-application

Potential UDPR applicants are required to hold a pre-application consultation with Urban Design Studio staff. The purpose of this meeting is for the applicant to introduce the project at the

earliest possible juncture and discuss their approach to meeting the UDPR Design Objectives and allow staff to provide initial insights into the design review process, application requirements, and any key design issues.

Step Two: Concept Design review

To initiate a formal UDPR review, the applicant submits a Concept Design application package. Minimum application requirements are outlined in the TMC and the application submittal form, which will be made available online. Following the review of the Concept Design materials, a report summarizing staff's response and guidance for the Final Design will be provided to the applicant.

Step Three: Final Design review

The applicant may submit a Final Design application package within one (1) year of receiving their Concept Design summary report. The Final Design must be responsive to the guidance provided in the Concept Design summary report. Once the application is deemed complete, the Final Design review application will be approved (with or without conditions) or denied.

Final Design decisions would be appealable to the Hearing Examiner.

Urban Design Board Review

The Board-level UDPR process contains the same steps outlined above *with the addition of a single public meeting*, consistent with applicable State law, at the Concept Design review step. Public notice will be provided ahead of the public meeting and will explain how comment can be provided ahead of the public meeting. All review timeframes will be consistent with or less than maximum timeframes established in State law. Under the provisions of 2SSB5290, a decision must be made no more than 170 days from a determination of completeness.

At the Final Design review step, applications will be reviewed and a decision will be rendered at the next available Board meeting upon a completeness determination. In accordance with State law, public testimony will not be collected at the Final Design review step.

Public Meeting

In light of recent State law limiting any Design Review process to one public meeting (see above), staff consulted with both the Planning Commission and City Council's Infrastructure, Planning and Sustainability Committee to help determine the preferred timing of this meeting.

It was generally found that the Concept Design review step is the most appropriate time to conduct the public meeting. Some of the benefits of holding the public meeting at this step instead of the Final Design that were discussed include:

- Providing guidance at the early, Concept Design stage provides the best opportunity to address "big picture" and contextual fit concerns such as building placement and orientation, topography, public realm relationships, and overall design approach. These levels of concern are emphasized in the program, which is reflected in the criteria and Manual. These types of concerns become very difficult to affect later in the process where changes would likely result in significant costs in design and delay, a more antagonistic

relationship between an applicant and decision-maker, and greater frustration for all parties – applicant, staff, Board, and public.

- Focusing the public participation on the earlier stage affords greater opportunities for constructive collaboration between the applicant, City, and general public.
- Not conducting a public meeting at the Final Design review avoids focus on items such as architectural style and details. We find design review programs that conduct public meetings at the final decision point are susceptible to being mired in debates over these inherently highly subjective elements, sometimes because the other elements are too big to change at that stage. While thoughtful and attractive buildings are expected to result from the UDPR program, architectural style is not a point of emphasis of the program.

b. Urban Design Board

An Urban Design Board (UDB) will need to be established to conduct Board-level UDPR permit review as outlined above. The UDB would be composed of seven (7) volunteer members representing a mix of urban design-related concerns and program priorities.

A minimum number of members would be drawn from certain parts of the City to provide a minimum level of geographic and equitable representation. All members are required to demonstrate a material interest and experience working within Tacoma, and no more than two (2) members may reside outside of the City limits. Members will be appointed by City Council for a three (3) year term though some of the initial appointments will be two (2) year terms in order to stagger the subsequent appointment cycles.

Position	Urban Design Board Representation	Examples
1	Design and/or development professional	Architect, landscape architect, urban designer, urban planner, construction management, developer
2	Design and/or development professional	
3	Design and/or development professional	
4	Design and/or development professional	
5	Active Transportation	Active transportation planner, engineer, advocate
6	Sustainable Development	Green building design professional, green infrastructure professional, urban forestry professional, third party certifier, advocate
7	Culture and Heritage	Historian, historic architect, public artist, cultural organization employee or board member, local organizer

- At least two (2) members must reside or have significant work experience within the boundaries of Council Districts 3, 4, or 5.
- No more than two (2) members may reside outside of Tacoma city limits. With the caveat that when multiple candidates are under consideration for appointment and some but not all candidates are Tacoma residents, preference shall be granted to Tacoma residents.

Beyond UDPR reviews, the UDB may review, advise, and comment to the Tacoma Planning Commission and City Council on land use and development controls, municipal improvements, and other types of programs undertaken by the City or other agencies as they relate to urban design within the City.

c. Urban Design Project Review Manual

The Draft Urban Design Project Review Manual most substantively contains the clear and objective guidance to meet Urban Design Project Review permit approval criteria. It also provides an overview of the UDPR program and processes, with supporting references and background materials.

The Manual’s structure and components are described below.

Urban Design Topics

The Manual is organized by seven (7) Topics, listed below, that establish the basic framework for Urban Design Project Review and reflect the program’s priorities. Each Topic section contains a Design Objective, Tacoma Urban Design Fundamentals, Guidelines, Design Approaches to Consider, and Precedent Imagery.

- Site Planning
- Connectivity
- Architectural Composition
- Public Realm

- Open Space
- Cultural Vitality, Heritage, and Creativity
- Climate Responsiveness

Design Objectives

These describe Topic-specific Design Objectives. Applicants must demonstrate how their development meets each Design Objective where they effectively serve as UDPR approval criteria.

Tacoma Urban Design Fundamentals

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

Guidelines

Within each Topic, two to three Guidelines provide general direction toward meeting the Topic Design Objective.

While every project must address each of the seven Topic Design Objectives, not all Guidelines will be applicable and will depend on the project’s specific location, size, scope, and unique context.

Design Approaches to Consider

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

Precedent Imagery

The image shows a collage of pages from a design manual. On the left, page 22 '01 SITE PLANNING' features a 'HEADLINE SKETCH' and a 'TOPIC STATEMENT & DESIGN OBJECTIVE'. On the right, page 23 'SITE PLANNING' features a 'GUIDELINE' and 'DESIGN APPROACHES'. Below these are 'URBAN DESIGN FUNDAMENTALS' and 'PRECEDENT IMAGERY' callouts. The 'PRECEDENT IMAGERY' callout points to photographs of buildings in the 'SITE PLANNING' section.

Photographic examples and descriptions of elements that successfully meet the Guideline are offered in this section. The photographs support design approaches and correspond to the examples listed in the Design Approaches.

2. Tacoma Municipal Code Amendments

a. UDPR Permit Administration

Code amendments will need to be made to implement the UDPR program outlined above. These include the UDPR permit requirements and processes and establishment of the Urban Design Board (new TMC 13.19,).

b. Development and Building Design Standards

The existing Code includes building design standards for most types of development in most zoning districts. The proposed Urban Design Review Program presented a timely opportunity to review existing design controls within Mixed-Use and Downtown districts, where Urban Design Project Review would be applicable. Based on early input received from the Project Advisory Group as well as consultation with City staff and the Planning Commission, a variety of development and building design standards are proposed to be amended as described below.

The primary goals of these amendments are to improve their effectiveness in terms of results and usability, ensure consistency with the priorities presented within the Urban Design Project Review manual, and provide a more consistent approach to development design between Mixed-Use and Downtown districts.

Mixed-Use Center Districts Zoning Standards (TMC 13.06.040)

- Upper story building setbacks: Current code includes a Mixed-Use District Building Design Standards reference for NCX and CCX zones only even though these standards apply within all zones. Mixed-Use District Building Design Standards reference is added for all zones.
- Maximum setbacks: Current code includes maximum setback standards for non-residential uses only. Maximum setbacks for residential development along Pedestrian Streets is added.
- Multi-family residential yard space requirements: The term “yard space,” which is limited to outdoor spaces and implies a vegetated space, would be replaced with “amenity space,” which includes certain outdoor and indoor spaces. The proposed changes would allow common indoor spaces to satisfy the minimum requirements and moves “rooftop decks” to be a type of “common amenity space.”
- Multi-family residential yard space exceptions: Current code exempts any development from yard (renamed as “amenity”) requirements that is located within ¼ mile of a park or school yard, achieves a minimum FAR of 3, or meets ground floor retail/restaurant height bonus requirements. Open space was cited as a high priority within the community and there is concern, also expressed by the Planning Commission, that these provisions may not always result in development that reflects the City’s urban design goals. The recommended changes would:
 - Limit the reduction to fifty (50) percent of the total required amenity space for developments that meet the criteria.

- In order to receive the reduction, the project site must be located within one-eighth (1/8) of a mile of a qualifying park or “school park.” Qualifications include a minimum area of 10,000 sq. ft., recreational amenities, and accessibility. Additional qualifications for “school parks” include an interlocal agreement between Tacoma Public Schools and Metro Parks establishing minimum levels of access, maintenance, and amenities.
- In addition to park proximity, a qualifying development proposal would be required to meet either the 3 FAR or active ground floor use requirements.

Downtown Zoning Standards (TMC 13.06.050)

- Maximum setbacks: Current code only applies maximum setback standards within the Downtown Commercial Core (DCC) zone. The proposed amendment would expand the existing standard to any development located along a designated Pedestrian Street. Notable streets where this standard currently does not apply but would apply with this change include: Pacific Ave. (S. 17th to S. 25th Streets), Tacoma Avenue (S. 7th to S. 15th Streets), South Jefferson (S. 21st to S. 25th Streets), S. 25th St. (S. Fawcett Ave to I-705)/E. 25th St., and Puyallup Ave.

Site Development Standards: Landscaping (TMC 13.06.090.B)

- Tree and light separation: Current Downtown Building Design Standards require a minimum 10 ft. separation between trees and any pedestrian or parking lot lighting (TMC 13.06.100.D.4). The proposed amendment would make this a standard requirement for development citywide.

Site Development Standards: Pedestrian and Bicycle Support Standards (TMC 13.06.090.F)

- Pedestrian lighting and tree separation: Like the standard described above, the current Downtown Building Design Standards require a minimum 10 ft. separation between pedestrian lighting and trees (TMC 13.06.100.D.5). The proposed amendment would make this a standard requirement for pedestrian and bicycle facilities citywide.

Site Development Standards: Utilities (TMC 13.06.090.L)

- Rooftop utilities: The current code regulates rooftop utilities by zoning category or structure type within TMC 13.06.100 Building Design Standards. The proposed amendments would relocate the rooftop utility screening requirements from the Mixed-Use and Downtown District Building Design Standards here with minor amendments to the text.
- Downtown standards: This section of the current code consists of specific standards for zoning categories (e.g., Mixed-Use Districts, Commercial Districts) and certain Residential structure types (note the multi-family standards only apply to those within Residential Districts). The recommended amendments add a new section for Downtown Districts here. The provisions are largely the same as those for Mixed-Use Districts, with the added reference to “courts” along with alleys.

Mixed-Use District Minimum Design Standards (TMC 13.06.100.B)

Existing standards includes those related to ground level design (architectural details, building orientation, entrances, weather protection), mass reduction, roofline design, transparency (windows, openings), rooftop screening, public realm elements (trees, lighting, public screening), and consideration of historic landmarks in certain zones.

- The current standards are organized by building design feature with each containing a mix of ground and/or upper level-related provisions. The recommended amendments reorganize these standards by Ground Floor and overall Building Form & Expression with required building design features under each. This organization better reflects Urban Design program priorities emphasizing ground floor/pedestrian realm and that working from the ground level upward is logical and should make their application easier.
- Notable substantive changes:
 - Overlapping Pedestrian Street ground floor articulation and façade surface requirements consolidated into a single Façade Details & Articulation section.
 - Horizontal building modulation (a.k.a. upper story stepbacks) and vertical building modulations are no longer required separately but are presented as two of three optional Mass Reduction choices along with a new outdoor amenity space option. The new standards also expand the application of mass reduction from only Pedestrian Street-fronting buildings to all street-facing facades but with non-Pedestrian Street buildings having reduced requirements. This is similar to the existing Multi-family Residential Mass Reduction standards, which are related to the size of the building rather than Pedestrian Street frontage.
 - Building orientation standards are expanded for all uses whereas existing standards are limited to multi-family buildings.
 - General building transition standards for all uses and specific standards for buildings along Pedestrian Streets are added.
 - Orientation and entrance standards for individual and shared residential entrances are added. Similar residential building transition and entry standards are currently limited to Residential and Commercial zoning.

The table below provides a summary of how existing standards were incorporated into this new structure and where new standards were added. As noted, many of the existing standards are incorporated as they are currently written or with minor adjustments.

Existing Code—Mixed-Use Districts	
13.06.100.B	Changes
1. General Applicability	
2. Zoning District Applicability	
3. Façade Articulation	
Pedestrian Street articulation choices (2 of 5)	<i>Moved to Ground Level Design section. Standards revised as combination of required and optional features with Ground Level Design: Façade Details & Articulation</i>

Draft Code—Mixed-Use Districts	
13.06.100.B	Changes
1. General Applicability	n/c
2. Zoning District Applicability	n/c
3. Ground Level Design	
a. Façade Details & Articulation	
Pedestrian Street, required features	<i>From Façade Articulation</i>
Pedestrian Street, choices (1 from 2 categories: windows/entries, building materials)	<i>Includes elements from Façade Articulation & Façade Surface Standards</i>
b. Weather Protection	
General requirements	<i>From Pedestrian Standards</i>
Pedestrian Streets	
Other streets & amenity space	

Non-residential buildings, non-Pedestrian Street articulation choices (3 of 8)	<i>Many standards incorporated into Building Form & Expression: Façade Articulation</i>
Residential buildings articulation choices (3 of 5)	
4. Mass Reduction: Upper Floor Streetfront Stepback	
Pedestrian Streets, zoning based	<i>Concept revised as a Mass Reduction option</i>
5. Mass Reduction: Maximum Façade Widths	
Vertical modulation (1 of 3)	<i>Concept revised as a Mass Reduction option</i>
6. Roofline Standards	
Roofline modulation standard	<i>Moved to Building Form & Expression: Roofline Design, revised</i>
Flat roof standards	
7. Windows and Openings: Façade Transparency & Solar Access	
Non-residential buildings, ground floor	<i>Moved to Ground Level Design: Transparency</i>
Non-residential buildings, upper level	<i>Moved to Building Form & Expression: Transparency</i>
Residential buildings, total	
Solar access for residential units	<i>Moved to Building Form & Expression: Mass Reduction</i>
Window/trim detailing	<i>Eliminated</i>
8. Façade Surface Standards	
Blank walls, choices (1 of 4)	<i>Moved to Ground Level Design: Blank Walls</i>
Building face orientation, multi-family	<i>Moved to Ground Level Design: Building Orientation & Entrances</i>
Building details, Core Pedestrian Streets choices (1 from 3 categories: windows/entries, façade attachments, building materials)	<i>Many incorporated into Ground Level: Façade Details & Articulation</i>
9. Pedestrian Standards	
Customer entrances	<i>Moved to Ground Level Design: Building Orientation & Entrances</i>
Weather protection	<i>Moved to Ground Level Design: Weather Protection</i>
10. Rooftop Utilities	
Screening standards	<i>Relocated to Utilities (TMC 13.06.090.L)</i>

c. Building Orientation & Entrances	
Residential buildings, location & dimensions	<i>From Façade Surface Standards</i>
Non-residential buildings, location & dimensions	<i>From Pedestrian Standards</i>
d. Building Transitions	
General requirements	<i>New provisions, includes revised and expanded Additional Standards for DCC Zoning standards</i>
Residential: Individual unit entrances	
Residential: Shared entrances	
Pedestrian Streets	
e. Transparency	
Residential buildings	<i>New provisions</i>
Non-residential buildings, except Industrial	<i>From Windows and Openings: Façade Transparency</i>
Industrial uses	
Structured parking	
f. Blank walls	
Treatment choices (1 of 4)	<i>From Façade Surface Standards</i>
4. Building Form & Expression	
a. Façade Articulation	
Required bipartite or tripartite articulation	<i>From Façade Articulation but required vs. optional</i>
Articulation choices (2 of 6)	<i>From Façade Articulation</i>
b. Mass Reduction	
Pedestrian Streets, choices (2 of 3)	<i>Consolidates Mass Reduction: Upper Floor Streetfront Stepback & Maximum Façade Widths, revised, and adds outdoor amenity option</i>
Other streets, choices (1 of 3)	
Residential light and air requirements	<i>From Windows and Openings: Solar Access, revised</i>
c. Roofline Design	
Flat roof standards	<i>From Roofline Standards, revised</i>
Roofline modulation	
d. Transparency	
Residential buildings	<i>From Windows and Openings: Façade Transparency</i>
Non-residential buildings	

Downtown District Minimum Building Design Standards (TMC 13.06.100.D)

Existing standards includes those related to rooftop screening, ground level design (transparency, uses along Pedestrian Streets), public realm elements (trees, lighting, public screening), and consideration of historic landmarks in certain zones. The existing standards notably lack the upper story and mass reduction standards found in the existing Mixed-Use Building Design Standards.

- Given the many similarities between much of the downtown and the various Mixed-Use Centers in terms of scale of development (i.e., mid-rise podium buildings), pedestrian orientation, and transit service, it is logical to better align the Downtown building design requirements with those of the Mixed-Use Districts. For that reason, many of the proposed Downtown District

requirements are similar to the Mixed-Use District standards but tailored to reflect the potential of taller, more intense development, particularly within the DCC zone. Many of the DCC-specific standards are carried over from the existing code.

- Existing standards are reorganized to reflect urban design priorities and to be consistent with revised Mixed-Use Zoning Building Design Standards as described above, maintain the current standards' emphasis on ground floor/pedestrian realm while introducing overall building requirements.
- New organization structure: Ground Level and Building Form & Expression with required building design features described under each.
- Some standards are proposed to be relocated elsewhere in the TMC (i.e., tree and lighting spacing requirements, rooftop utility screening). It is worth noting, the separation requirement for parking lot lighting is already included in the Downtown off-street parking standards (TMC 13.06.090.C.6.c) so it's removal from this section of the Code would have no effect.
- Notable substantive changes:
 - Additional ground floor articulation requirements are added.
 - Weather protection requirements along Pedestrian Streets beyond DCC zoning are expanded and new weather protection requirements along non-Pedestrian Streets are added.
 - Building orientation and entrance requirements are added for all uses.
 - Building transition requirements are expanded beyond DCC zoning and new residential building transition requirements are added.
 - Current ground floor transparency requirements are based on Pedestrian Street adjacency and zoning rather than building use. Proposed changes would add new specific requirements for residential and industrial uses. This would have the following affects:

Residential uses

- Pedestrian Streets within DCC zoning: ground floor transparency reduced from 60 to 35%
- Pedestrian Streets in other zones: ground floor transparency increased from 20 to 35%
- Non-Pedestrian Streets all zones: no change from 20%

Industrial uses

- Pedestrian Streets within DCC zoning: ground floor transparency reduced from 60 to 30%
- Pedestrian Streets in other zones: ground floor transparency increased from 20 to 30%
- Non-Pedestrian Streets all zones: no change from 20%

- Blank wall requirements are added.
- Façade articulation standards for buildings less than 11 stories in height are added. This recognizes the design approach to a high-rise building would likely be substantively different than that of a mid-rise building and articulation requirements are unnecessary for taller buildings.
- Mass reduction standards for buildings less than 11 stories in height are added. Because of the FAR limitations and bonus requirements within the Downtown districts, a building achieving heights greater than 10 stories will necessarily incorporate some amount of mass reduction into their design and therefore these requirements are unnecessary for buildings of these heights.
- Minimum light and air access requirements for residential units located on the lower 10 floors of a building are added. For reasons similar to those outlined above, these requirements are not found to be necessary or appropriate for units above 10 stories.
- Roofline design standards are added.
- Overall building transparency requirements for all uses are added.

The table below provides a summary of how existing standards were incorporated into this new structure and where new standards were added. As noted, many of the existing standards are incorporated as they are currently written or with minor adjustments.

Existing Code-- Downtown	
13.06.100.D	Changes
1. Applicability	
2. Screening	<i>Relocated to Utilities (TMC 13.06.090.L)</i>
3. Street Level Uses and Design	
Transparency	
Pedestrian Streets, commercial use design	
4. Tree planting separation	<i>Relocated to Landscaping standards (TMC 13.06.090.B.3.d)</i>
5. Lighting	
Parking lighting separation from trees	Eliminated, redundant
Parking lighting separation from trees	<i>Relocated to Pedestrian and bicycle support standards (TMC 13.06.090.F(1))</i>
6. Public Seating	<i>Redundant for street furniture (TMC 13.06.090.F.5). Otherwise, unnecessary for private seating.</i>
7. Additional Standards for Downtown Commercial Core Zoning	

Draft Code--Downtown	
13.06.100.D	Changes
1. General Applicability	<i>Organization consistent with Mixed-Use Building Design Standards</i>
2. Zoning District Applicability	
3. Ground Level Design	
a. Façade Details & Articulation	
Pedestrian Street, required features - DCC	<i>From Additional Standards for DCC Zoning, revised</i>
Pedestrian Street, required features - other zones	<i>From Street Level Uses and Design, revised</i>
Pedestrian Street, choices (1 from 2 categories: windows/entries, building materials)	<i>New provisions from Mixed-Use Building Design Standards</i>
b. Weather Protection	
General requirements	<i>From Additional Standards for DCC Zoning, revised and expanded</i>
Pedestrian Streets	
Other streets & amenity space	<i>New provisions</i>
c. Building Orientation & Entrances	
Residential buildings, location & dimensions	<i>New provisions</i>

Transitions	<i>Moved to Ground Level Design: Building Transition</i>
Most Pedestrian Streets, street level commercial use design	<i>Moved to Ground Level Design: Façade Details & Articulation</i>
Most Pedestrian Streets, street level transparency	<i>Moved to Ground Level Design: Transparency</i>
Most Pedestrian Streets, weather protection	<i>Moved to Ground Level Design: Weather Protection</i>
8. Additional Standards for Downtown Residential Zoning	
Historic resource adjacency	<i>Moved to Building Form & Expression: Historic Resources</i>

Non-residential buildings, location & dimensions	
d. Building Transitions	
General requirements	<i>New provisions, includes revised and expanded Additional Standards for DCC Zoning standards</i>
Residential: Individual unit entrances	
Residential: Shared entrances	
Pedestrian Streets	
e. Transparency	
Residential buildings	<i>From Street Level Uses and Design, Additional Standards for DCC Zoning standards revised and expanded, and new provisions from Mixed-Use Building Design Standards, as revised</i>
Non-residential buildings, except Industrial	
Industrial uses	
Structured parking	
f. Blank walls	
Treatment choices (1 of 4)	<i>New provisions from Mixed-Use Building Design Standards</i>
4. Building Form & Expression	
a. Façade Articulation	
Required bipartite or tripartite articulation	<i>New provisions from Mixed-Use Building Design Standards. Limited to mid-rise buildings.</i>
Articulation choices (2 of 6)	
b. Mass Reduction	
Pedestrian Streets, choices (2 of 3)	<i>New provisions from Mixed-Use Building Design Standards, as revised. Limited applicability.</i>
Other streets, choices (1 of 3)	
Residential light and air requirements	
c. Roofline Design	
Flat roof standards	<i>New provisions from Mixed-Use Building Design Standards.</i>
Roofline modulation	
d. Transparency	
Residential buildings	<i>New provisions from Mixed-Use Building Design Standards.</i>
Non-residential buildings	
e. Historic Resources	
Historic resource adjacency	<i>From Additional Standards for Downtown Residential Zoning. No revisions.</i>

Section C. Planning Commission Recommendation, Next Steps & Implementation

Planning Commission Recommendation

Following the release of this proposal for public review and comment, the Planning Commission held a Public Hearing August 16, 2023. Public comment was collected until Friday, August 18, 2023.

The Commission deliberated and recommended the proposal, as revised, to the Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability (IPS) Committee of the City Council on October 18, 2023.

IPS Committee review will begin with a presentation on January 24, 2024. Following the Committee’s review, consideration and action from the full City Council is expected to begin Spring 2024.

Launch Preparation Phase – Tentatively Mid 2024

If approved, the various provisions of the Urban Design Project Review program, program would require a period of months to establish the Urban Design Board as well as to prepare administrative procedures, customer service/applicant and public notification materials.

To seat a new Urban Design Board, staff would work with the Clerk’s Office and the Office of Equity and Human Rights to seek City Council Appointment of Urban Design Board members. Once appointed, Urban Design Board members would engage in a training and operationalization process to develop Bylaws and related procedures.

Simultaneously, staff would develop customer-facing systems, informational resources, and related materials to support applicants. This would include Pre-application guidance and submittal templates and Tip Sheets. To support the public meetings and notifications anticipated to operationalize the Program, an additional online platform and communications function would be developed and implemented.

Supporting Documents:

Available at www.cityoftacoma.org/UrbanDesign

- Urban Design Project Review Manual (draft)
- TMC Amendments: Development and Design Standards (recommended, October 2023)
- TMC Amendments: Urban Design Board and Project Review (recommended, October 2023)