

Urban Design Project Review Program

Public Review Staff Report: July 19, 2023, as revised per Planning Commission action July 19, 2023

The Planning Commission has received multiple briefings and given significant guidance on elements of the Urban Design Project Review proposal. Staff will present, in summary form, the major elements proposed for public review and the setting of a public hearing date on the proposal. A public hearing date and time of August 16, 2023, at 6:00 p.m. is tentatively recommended.

| 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 |
| Staff Recommendation: | Solicit public comment on a package related to creating an Urban Design Project Review permit process and Code amendments related to site development and building design. |
| 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 on Exhibit A.

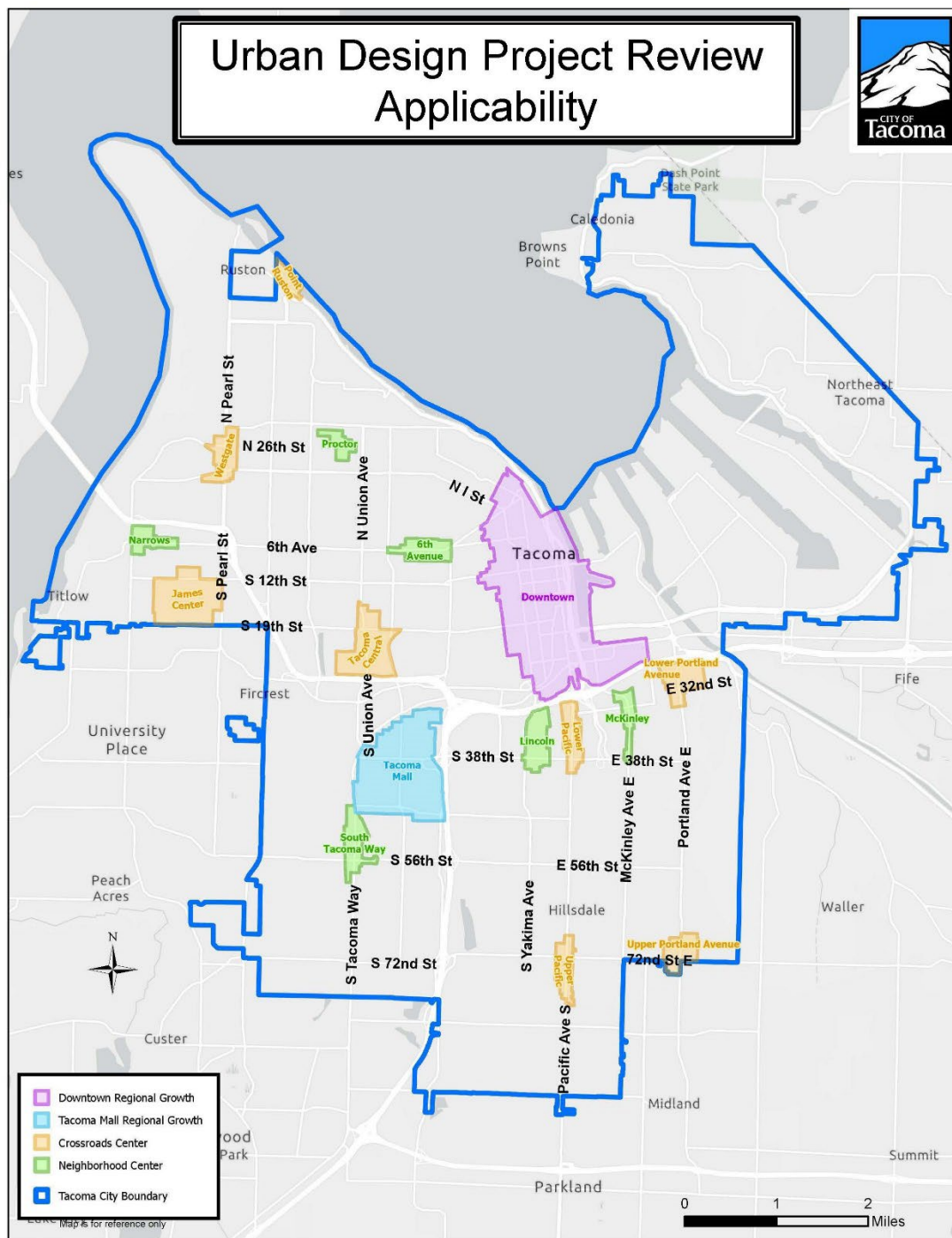


EXHIBIT A

2. Summary of Recommendations

The proposal 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. The initial draft Manual is included for review and possible edits through this program adoption process (Attachment 1).

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:** Revise yard space requirements overall and amend exception/reduction qualifications.
- **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.

4. Policy Framework

State Law

Washington State’s Growth Management Act establishes a vision for well-being, natural system function, and economic viability that depends on cities and urban development patterns which are complete, connected, and compact. Urban design strategies emphasized in this proposal align with the importance of supporting precisely those urban development patterns—places that efficiently use urban land and infrastructure, are walkable, cycling- and transit-supportive

Most recently, several actions of the Washington Legislature in 2023 directly address cities’ programs for individual project-level design review. Reacting to concerns about certain extant programs’ efficiency and effectiveness, amendments to the Growth Management Act now constrain design review programs such that:

- they may apply in any design review process only clear and objective development regulations governing the exterior design of new development;
- they may not result in a reduction in density, height, bulk, or scale below the generally applicable development regulations for a development proposal in the applicable zone; and
- no design review process may include more than one public meeting. (ESHB 1293)

This proposal proactively addresses each of these requirements. This proposal is designed to encourage creative design approaches to higher density development, and consistent with Law, would not impact development allowances. Further, as a non-project action, the proposal is categorically exempt from the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA, see below).

Additionally, new State law (2SSB5290) specifies that land use permitting processes must adhere to certain time limits while permit application materials are in possession of the permitting authority (as distinct from whatever time applicants are preparing, responding to, or revising applications in response to city reviews). This type of requirement is commonly referred to a “shot clock.” See discussion below in Section B for this proposal’s specific conformance with these “shot clock” requirements.

Finally, 2SEHB1110, commonly known as the “Middle Housing Bill,” now prohibits application of design review to “middle housing” projects. This Urban Design Project Review proposal’s geographic applicability only to Tacoma’s mapped growth centers, as well as its building scale thresholds, anticipated and addresses this prohibition.

Regional Long Range Vision

Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) supports urban design priorities and the use of design guidelines to encourage desired outcomes. Specifically, Vision 2050 Multi County Planning Policies (MPPs) include:

MPP-DP-9 Support urban design, historic preservation, and arts to enhance quality of life, support local culture, improve the natural and human-made environments, promote health and well-being, contribute to a prosperous economy, and increase the region’s resiliency in adapting to changes or adverse events.

By establishing this proposed Urban Design Project Review program, Tacoma would bring forth the third of the above listed three-part set of strategies.

MPP-DP-15 Design communities to provide safe and welcoming environments for walking and bicycling.

This proposal focuses on pedestrian orientation, access and connectivity, public realm design, and support for active transportation as a significant focus of urban design project review.

MPP-DP-19 Develop and implement design guidelines to encourage construction of healthy buildings and facilities to promote healthy people.

One Tacoma Comprehensive Plan

Tacoma's Comprehensive Plan has two relevant chapters to the City's urban design priorities and specifically, employing design guidance to achieve those built results.

Urban Form Element (Chapter 2)

Chapter 2 contains some very specific policies establishing the City's urban design priorities. They address urban design considerations at scale of neighborhood patterns, systems of connectivity, and open space, distinct from addressing an individual site development's contributions to good urban form. These are the same considerations that the proposal aims to positively impact, as reflected either in the Urban Design Project Review Program design, or as either Code amendments or as part of the design guidelines.

UF-1.9 Encourage high quality design and development that demonstrates Tacoma's leadership in the design of the built environment, commitment to a more equitable city, and ability to experiment and generate innovative design solutions (2-14)

UF-3.1 Design centers to be compact, safe, attractive, and accessible places, where the street environment makes access by transit, walking, biking, and mobility devices, such as wheelchairs, safe and attractive for people of all ages and abilities. (2-18)

UF-3.10 Integrate nature and green infrastructure into centers and enhance public views and connections to the surrounding natural features. (2-19)

UF-5.2 Enhance both the internal pedestrian connectivity and connectivity to regional transportation facilities to promote cohesion of the [Mall Growth] center and to optimize access to the shopping and employment opportunities. (2-33)

UF-13.2 Promote infill development within the residential pattern areas that respects the context of the area and contributes to the overall quality of design. (2-62)

Design and Development (Chapter 3)

Chapter 3, Design and Development is an exhaustive compendium of goals and policies that articulate the City's aspirations for the built results at an individual site development scale. Taken together, they largely frame the creation of this proposal and its constituent parts, either as Code amendments or as part of the design guidelines. These policies emphasize the cumulative results, rather than the individual stylistic or architectural particulars, which mirrors the emphasis of this proposal. With regard to developing and implementing an Urban Design Project Review program, note especially:

DD-1.4 Consider development of a design review program to promote high quality design that supports community identity, a distinctive built environment, human-scale elements and amenities, resilient and durable materials, landscape enhancements, and other similar features.

Additionally, the Chapter's Goals speak directly to the UDPR program priorities. Much of the guidance document's language in this proposal reiterates the Design and Development chapter's priorities. In summary, they are:

GOAL DD-1 Design new development to respond to and enhance the distinctive physical, historic, aesthetic and cultural qualities of its location, while accommodating growth and change.

GOAL DD-2 Ensure that parking area design and management balances the needs of all users, supports modal priorities, and is responsive to site context.

GOAL DD-3 Ensure that sign location and design is responsive to site context and compatible with the envisioned mix of uses and modal priorities.

GOAL DD-4 Enhance human and environmental health in neighborhood design and development. Seek to protect safety and livability, support local access to healthy food, limit negative impacts on water and air quality, reduce carbon emissions, encourage active and sustainable design, and integrate nature and the built environment.

GOAL DD-5 Ensure long-term resilience in the design of buildings, streets and open spaces, including the ability to adjust to changing demographics, climate, and economy, and withstand and recover from natural disasters.

GOAL DD-6 Protect and preserve designated significant scenic resources, including public views and scenic sites.

GOAL DD-7 Support sustainable and resource efficient development and redevelopment.

GOAL DD-8 Promote development practices that contribute to a sense of safety and reduction in opportunities for crime.

GOAL DD-9 Support development patterns that result in compatible and graceful transitions between differing densities, intensities and activities.

GOAL DD-12 Integrate and harmonize development with the natural environment.

GOAL DD-13 Protect and preserve Tacoma's historic and cultural character.

GOAL DD-14 Infuse the City's built environment with creative expression and design that encourages expressions of creativity and results in vibrant public spaces where people want to be.

The complete text of One Tacoma Comprehensive Plan Chapter 2, Urban Form and Chapter 3, Design and Development can be found [online here](#).

5. Outreach and Stakeholder Engagement

From the outset, the effort to develop Tacoma’s Urban Design Project Review Program has engaged with a range of general, technical, appointed advisory, and policymaking stakeholders.

Project Advisory Group

Significant in that effort has been the formation and ongoing committed participation of a volunteer Project Advisory Group. The Planning Commission chartered the formation, composition, and scope of the Project Advisory Group (PAG) in 2019. The Project Advisory Group was initiated by the Tacoma Planning Commission at its regular meeting on April 3, 2019. Then, a motion allowed Planning and Development Services (PDS) staff to provide nominations to be approved by the Director of PDS. The Motion directed that the PAG have the following interests represented:

- Community members from across the city
- Planning Commission (chair)
- Design Community
- Development Community
- Landmarks
- Environment
- Affordable Housing

As constituted, the PAG provided feedback and guidance on how the work being undertaken by the project team (PDS staff, VIA Architects, Code Studio, Winter + Co.) balance stakeholder needs and meet the project goals in a comprehensive and equitable way.

After a Covid pandemic pause and staffing changes in 2021, new staff augmented the PAG membership roster, including additional stakeholders representing affordable housing and multi-unit development interests when it reconvened in February 2022. In addition, two to three Planning Commissioners have actively participated in the PAG in 2022 and through 2023 via PAG meetings and individual briefings.

Input from the PAG has provided significant guidance to staff in development of the proposed program design, and has substantively contributed to the draft Design Guideline documents. The full range of this guidance and input has been provided regularly in Planning Commission and City Council briefings. PAG members also participated in a joint project review simulation workshop with the Planning Commission and project consultants in September 2022.

PAG Meetings:

June 2019-October 2019, three meetings (6/12, 8/6, 9/17)

2020, two meetings (2/18, 3/31)

2021, one meeting (1/12)

2022, eleven meetings (2/17, 3/3, 3/17, 4/7, 5/5, 5/19, 6/30, 7/7/ 7/21, 8/11, 11/3)

2023, one meeting (2/8/2023)

City Council Committees

Starting with Resolution 36685 in 2005, Tacoma City Council expressed interest in exploring and developing a Design Review program. Initial briefing of Neighborhoods and Housing Committee by PDS staff were held April 16 and June 18, 2007, and October 18, 2010.

Briefing the Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability Committee occurred on May 8, 2019 before the Covid pandemic paused work and departure of PDS staff. With new Urban Design Studio staff hired and the re-starting of consultants' activities, briefings have been held on:

June 8, 2022,
February 22, 2023, and
June 14, 2023

Through these briefings, Councilmembers have been apprised of community and PAG input, as well as ongoing guidance provided and concerns expressed to the project team by Planning Commission. In addition, Committee members have provided further guidance on program scope, design, and priorities.

Commissions and Committees

Planning Commission

Ongoing engagement with Tacoma Planning Commission has been facilitated by regular active participation of Planning Commissioners in the Project Advisory Group (PAG). As Planning Commission has included new members, several have joined and participated in the work already significantly underway through the PAG.

Briefings:

From 2006 through 2008, seven briefings.

In 2019, briefings on April 3, June 19, August 7, and September 18.

In 2020, briefings March 4 and October 7.

Briefings in 2021 were suspended with departure of PDS staff and consultant work paused.

With new staffing, Planning Commission briefings recommenced in 2022 on March 3rd, followed by briefings on April 4, May 18, July 6, October 19, December 7. Briefings have continued in 2023 on January 18, March 15, and most recently, June 7.

Workshops:

November 4 and December 16, 2020--workshops with consultants on initial draft standards and guidelines.

September 21, 2022-- project review simulation workshop

Other Council-Appointed advisory bodies have been engaged with the program development. Notable to the scope and design of review processes and policy objectives of Urban Design Project Review, staff have met with the Permit Advisory Task Force on two occasions (October 11, 2018, April 20 and June 15, 2022). To solicit input and participants for a focused workshop, staff briefed the Sustainable Tacoma Commission regular meeting of on June 16, 2022, with a consultant-facilitated workshop on July 21, 2022.

Neighborhood and Community Groups

Staff presented program proposal scope and schedule to the Community Council of Tacoma (CCOT) on April 28, 2022. A similar presentation with Q&A was conducted at the Cross District Association on May 18, 2022. Staff presented highlights of the Urban Design Project Review Program proposal as part of

regular meetings of the North End Neighborhood Council (March 7 and October 3, 2022) and the South End Neighborhood Council on September 6, 2022.

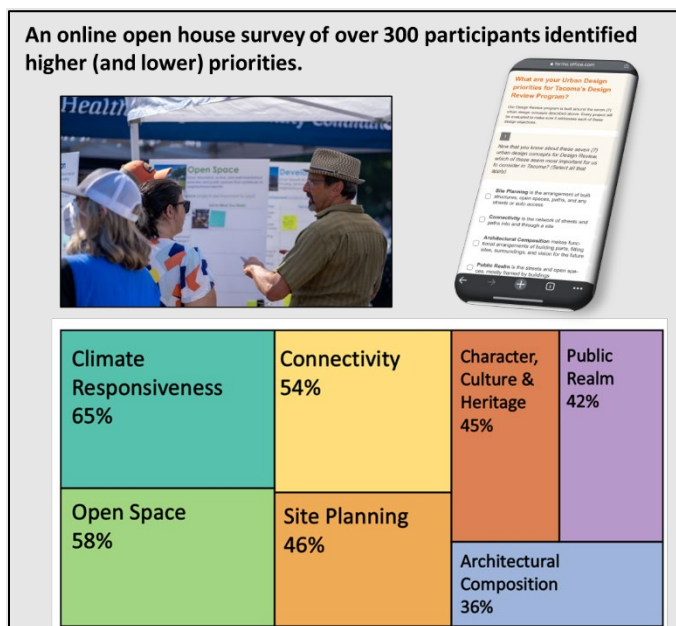
Neighborhood Planning Program

Working closely with PDS staff leading the current Neighborhood Planning efforts in McKinley Hill and the Proctor District, Urban Design Studio staff have coordinated activities, including providing presentations, engaging with the respective communities at events, and with the Neighborhood Planning Steering Committees. In McKinley Hill, this includes in-person participation at the Community Fair on September 10, 2022 and soliciting input via the Urban Design Project Review online survey (see below).

Specific to the Proctor Neighborhood Plan’s Steering Committee topical meeting on “human-centered” design, staff presented the draft program proposal scope, priorities, and schedule on April 13, 2023.

Online Engagement

An online community engagement open house/survey was launched in August 2022 to introduce fundamental urban design concepts, present the scope of the proposed Urban Design Project Review program, solicit input on the priorities of the draft proposal, and evaluate relative satisfaction with various urban design approaches. The open house/survey ran through the end of September 2022 and 314 community responses to the survey’s 18 questions were received.



On several occasions in 2022 and 2023 the Planning Commission received written public comment coincident with scheduled briefings on Urban Design Project Review Program proposal elements.

State Environmental Policy Act

As a non-project procedural action, the proposal is categorically exempt from State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) review. The proposed Urban Design Project Review process, as

a type of design review process, will not result in a change in density, height, bulk, or scale of a development. Similarly, the proposed Code amendments do not reflect a substantive change to current requirements and do not change permitted uses. For these reasons, the proposed actions are exempt per WAC 197-11-800(19)(b).

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.

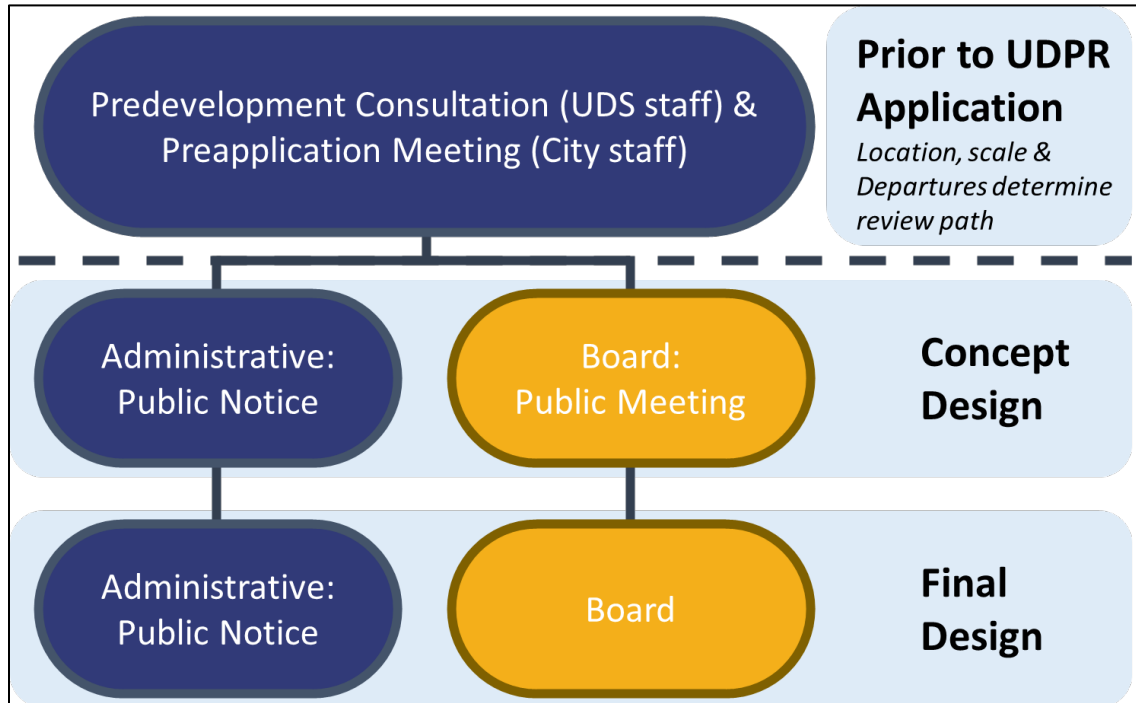
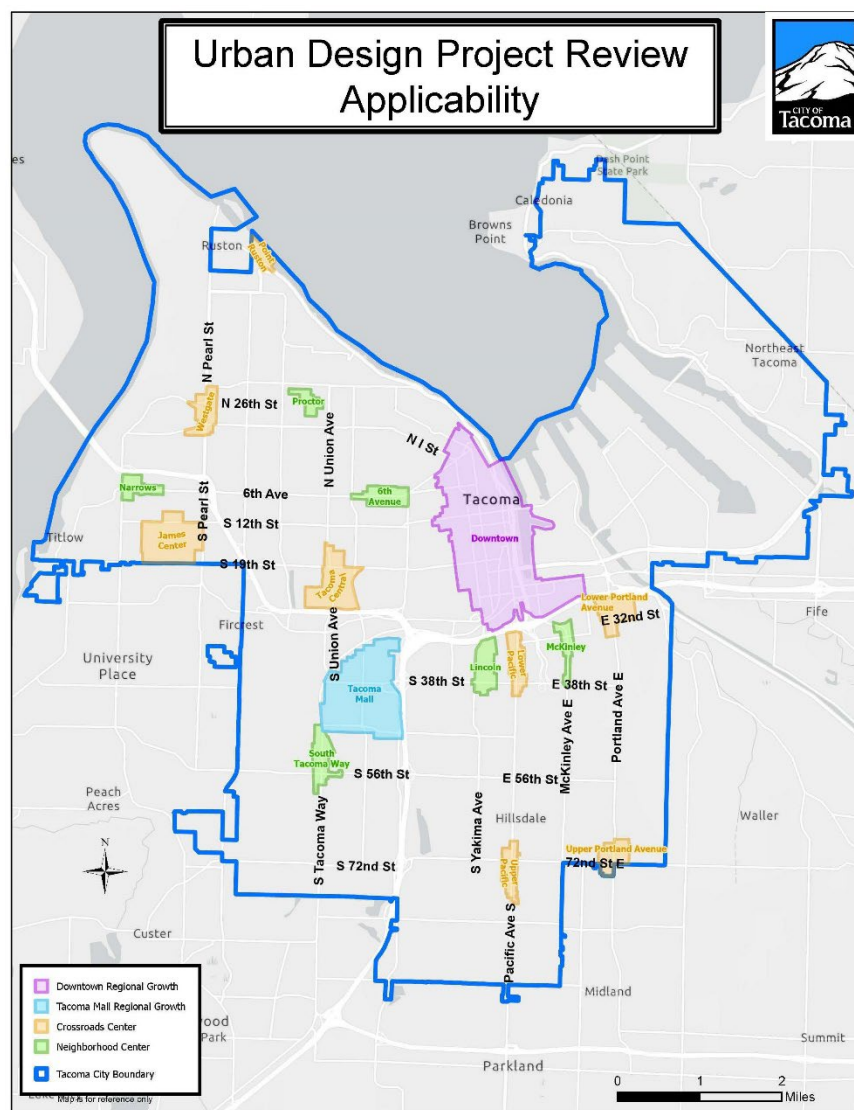


EXHIBIT B

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.

| 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 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.

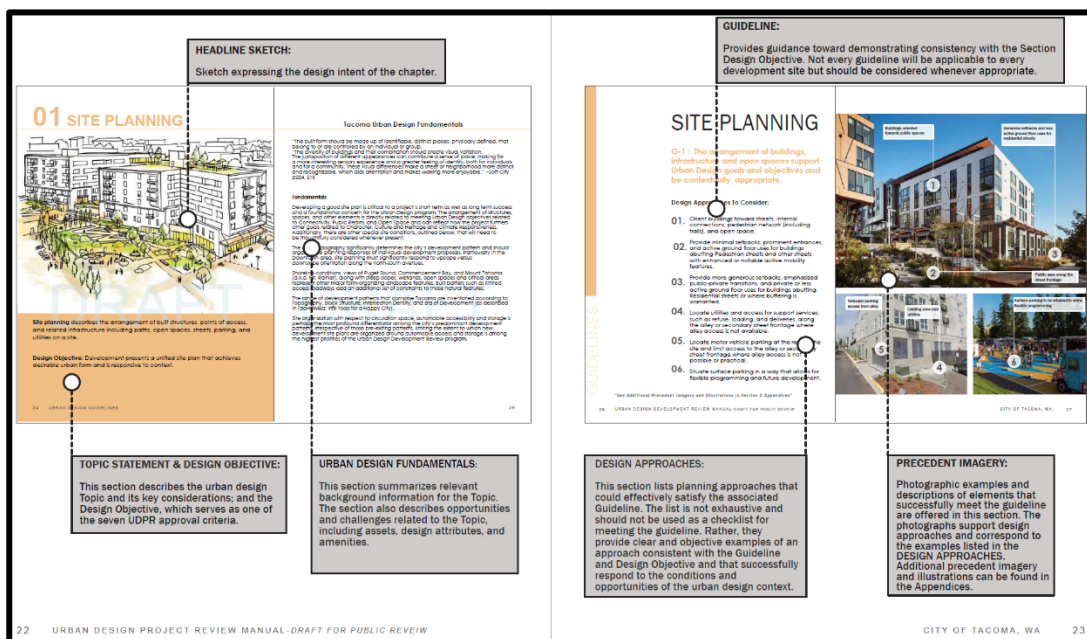
| Position | Urban Design Board Representation | Examples |
|-----------------|--|---|
| 1 | Design and/or development professional | Architect, landscape architect, urban designer, urban planner, construction management, developer |
| 2 | Design and/or development professional | |
| 3 | Design and/or 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.

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 (Attachment 1) 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

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, Attachment 3.2 under separate cover).

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. Staff are recommending changes that would:
 - Limit the full reduction to only the most intense mixed use zones and a 50% reduction would be permitted for the less intense zones.
 - Proximity to a qualifying park is required and school yards would no longer be eligible. Full reduction would require closer proximity (1/8 mile) than the 50% reduction (1/4 mile).
 - 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). Staff proposes a new section for Downtown Districts be added 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. Staff propose to reorganize these standards by Ground Floor and overall Building Form & Expression with required building design features under each. Staff find this 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> |
| 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> |

| 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 | |
| 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 | |

| | |
|--|---|
| Non-residential buildings, upper level | <i>Moved to Building Form & Expression:</i> |
| Residential buildings, total | <i>Transparency</i> |
| 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) | Many incorporated into Ground Level: Façade Details & Articulation |
| 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> |

| | |
|---|--|
| 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 (mid-rise podium buildings), pedestrian orientation, and transit service, staff see a need 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's 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. Staff 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.
- 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, staff do not find these requirements 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 | |
| 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> |

| 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> |
| 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) | |
| Other streets, choices (1 of 3) | |
| Residential light and air requirements | <i>New provisions from Mixed Use Building Design Standards, as revised. Limited applicability.</i> |
| 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. Next Steps & Implementation

Public Review and Possible Recommendation

Following the release of this proposal for public review and comment, staff recommend the Planning Commission hold a Public Hearing on the proposal. Staff recommend August 16, 2023 as the Public Hearing date, as part of that regular Planning Commission meeting. Public comment would continue to be collected until Friday, August 18, 2023.

Staff would then compile comment received for the Commission to consider at a subsequent debriefing. At that time, the Commission will have the opportunity to deliberate on any possible changes to the proposal, for the purposes of making a possible recommendation to the Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability (IPS) Committee of the City Council.

IPS Committee consideration and full City Council Action would follow the Planning Commission's Recommendation.

Launch Phase—Late 2023-Early 2024

Upon City Council adoption of the proposed Urban Design Project Review program, the various provisions of the 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.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Draft Urban Design Project Review Manual
2. Proposed TMC Amendments Title 13 – Land Use Regulatory Code—Part I
 - 2.1) 13.06.040 – Mixed Use Center Districts
 - 2.2) 13.06.050 – Downtown
 - 2.3) 13.06.090.B – Site Development Standards: Landscaping
 - 2.4) 13.06.090.F – Site Development Standards: Pedestrian and Bicycle Support Standards
 - 2.5) 13.06.090.L – Site Development Standards: Utilities
 - 2.6) 13.06.100.B – Building Design Standards: Mixed Use District Minimum Design Standards
 - 2.7) 13.06.100.D – Building Design Standards: Downtown District Minimum Building Design Standards
3. Proposed TMC Amendments Title 13 – Land Use Regulatory Code—Part II (*under separate cover*)
 - 3.1) 13.05 – Land Use Permits and Procedures
 - 3.2) 13.19 – Urban Design Board and Project Review