

Urban Design Studio

The Urban Design Studio is a long-term program with a focus on improving the design of the city's landscapes and buildings so they help create unique and welcoming places, encourage innovation and quality, and provide public space with features and amenities that promote the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors. The initial phase of this project is focused on the development of a design review program known as Urban Design Project Review (UDPR).

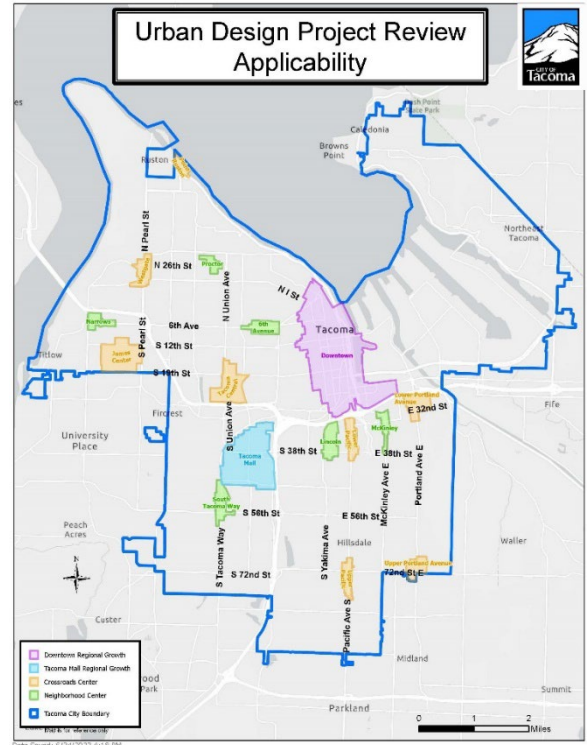
Visit www.cityoftacoma.org/UrbanDesign for information about the proposal and upcoming public meetings.

Proposal

The City currently regulates the design of new projects through prescriptive Code standards with building permits and without qualitative review. These requirements vary by zoning and building type but are fairly inflexible and do not always reflect the best approach to urban design challenges or support creativity. The proposed UDPR provides an opportunity to find the best way a development project can achieve community urban design goals given its unique context. This includes how required standards are applied as well as exploring thoughtful, more creative solutions.

The proposal includes a number of components, including:

- Creation of a new **Urban Design Project Review** permit process focused on medium- to large-scale projects in Downtown and Mixed-Use Center (see map and description below for more info)
- Creation of a City-Council appointed **Urban Design Board**, with a mix of professional experience, community interests related to urban design, and geographic diversity, to assist in review of the largest, most significant projects
- Creation of an **Urban Design Project Review Manual** to provide clear and objective design guidance for new projects
- Modifications to some of the existing **Code standards** (see further description below)



Urban Design Project Review

This would be a new land use permit considering a project's relationship with the urban environment, the public realm, connectivity, climate responsiveness, and other urban design concerns. Permits would be required for larger developments located within any of the City's 16 designated Mixed-Use Centers (see map). The largest developments would be subject to the highest level of review (through the appointed Urban Design Board) while smaller projects would receive administrative review. Additionally, building size thresholds within Neighborhood Centers would be lower than those of the other Mixed-Use Centers (Downtown, Tacoma Mall and Crossroads Centers). All levels of review will include public notice and opportunities for comment. Board-level reviews will include one public meeting at the Concept Design stage.

Amend Existing Design Code Standards

Amend certain development and design standards within Mixed Use and Downtown Zoning District to improve effectiveness and ensure integration with the new design review process requirements. This includes:

- Maximum Setbacks
- Residential yard space requirements and exceptions within Mixed-Use Districts
- Mixed-Use and Downtown District Building Design Standards

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