TIPS FOR SUMMARIZING PUBLIC FEEDBACK

EARLY COMMUNITY OUTREACH FOR DESIGN REVIEW

**June 2018**

This document is intended to serve as a resource for development projects conducting early community outreach for Design Review, as required by [Seattle Ordinance No. 125429](http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/cs/groups/pan/%40pan/documents/web_informational/p3566993.pdf) and joint SDCI Director’s Rule 4-2018 / DON Director’s Rule 1-2018.

# Basics

* All comments or feedback received during your required outreach should be reviewed by your team and used to prepare a summary.
* The summary should identify major themes and should not be more than one page. A half page may be sufficient for some projects.
* Avoid including personal information about the people who shared comments. Do not use names (first or last), gender pronouns (he/she/him/her), or location specific information (e.g., “next-door neighbor”) that would give away the identity of any individual.
* The more thought you put into developing your outreach plan and designing your outreach materials, the easier it will be to prepare your summary. For example, design an online survey or comment boards for an open house to include specific questions or categories of feedback. Include ways for people to share their thoughts that will collect quantitative feedback whenever possible.
* You can summarize feedback from an individual outreach method separately (i.e. survey results or comment boards from in-person meeting) or group all of the feedback you receive from various outreach methods together.
* Use consistent structure and write in past tense. It is fine to use bullets but avoid using quotations.

# Identifying Themes

* Summarizing dozens of comments, questions, and other feedback from different people using multiple outreach methods at different points in time can be difficult, and will require some generalization. However, themes of the community’s priorities for your project site will likely emerge.
* You do not need to include individual ideas in the summary, but you should try to wrap them up into themes. For example, a comment suggesting that the building install solar panels on the roof could be bundled up into a general priority of energy performance/environmental sustainability. If you have a few comments that truly don’t fit on their own, feel free to list them under “miscellaneous” or “other”.
* If one person has a comment that is distinct from others it is fine to list it on its own, particularly if you get the sense that other people in the neighborhood may feel the same way. As an example, a single comment may suggest putting in benches because a lot of elderly residents from an apartment building nearby tend to walk up and down the street near your site.
* Try to capture the sentiments that appeared multiple times or across multiple outreach methods. Be as inclusive as possible (within reason).
* When necessary or when a comment is unclear, use your best judgement.
* Pay attention to whether the feedback is sharing a concern, offering a suggestion, or asking a question. Use phrases like “expressed concern,” “supported the idea of,” and “questioned whether”.
* Do your best to represent the feedback accurately and fairly (even if you don’t feel the same way)
* When listing comment themes, place the most common themes near the top and the least common themes near the bottom.

# Break out by “Design Related” or “Not Design-Related” Comments

* Doing so will make it easier for you to include a summary of the design-related feedback in your Early Design Guidance packet.
* Topics directly related to the design include things like the arrangement of massing (for example, around a central open space or responding to the adjacent property), materials (for example, wood siding or trim around windows), landscaping, and the pedestrian realm (curb cuts, sidewalk amenities, etc).
* Topics not directly related to design include things like the number or type of housing units, the quantity of below-grade parking spaces for cars or bikes, requests for specific companies as retail tenants, etc.

# Quantitative Information (Numbers)

* If you have statistics from a survey or other numeric ways to represent feedback, consider including it; particularly if it addresses a common theme.

Examples:

“72% of the survey responses indicated that pedestrian amenities near the sidewalks are important to them”

“Seven of the eight people who visited our Drop-In Office Hours shared concerns about transportation impacts”

# Qualitative Information (Words)

* Take good notes at in-person events. Write down any feedback that is shared verbally as soon as possible, to ensure that you don’t forget it.
* When it may not be possible, appropriate, or necessary to provide exact numbers for all comments, consider using graded quantifiers like “most”, “several,” “some,” “a few”, where appropriate.

Examples:

“Many people wanted us to focus on providing a good pedestrian realm due to the proximity of the project to the light rail station”

“Many people shared their strong connection with the previous business at the property and were sad to see it close last year”

“A lot of people shared concerns about the bus stop being relocated during construction”

“Several people liked our idea of having a preschool on the ground floor of the building.”

“Several people expressed an interest in seeing affordable housing in this project”

“A few people requested more parking for cars. A few others wanted less parking for cars and more for bicycles”

“A few people wanted more sidewalk cafes and other ways to enliven the activity on the street”

“One person shared their concern for the large maple trees lining the street near the site”

“One person suggested that the residents of a nearby retirement home would benefit from more benches along the sidewalk”