

Seattle Permits

— part of a multi-departmental City of Seattle series on getting a permit

Streamlined Design Review:

General Information, Application Instructions, and Submittal Requirements

August 12, 2011

What Is Streamlined Design Review?

The City of Seattle's design review process, outlined in SMC 23.41.018, requires that certain new development projects undergo a discretionary review of their siting and design characteristics. Streamlined Design Review (SDR) is a type of design review specifically for townhouse developments and other small forms of lowrise multifamily housing. This Client Assistance Memo (CAM) provides general information about SDR and offers detailed instructions about the application, submittal and review process.

Streamlined Design Review has three principal objectives:

1. To encourage better design and site planning that enhances the character of the city and ensures that new development sensitively fits into neighborhoods.
2. To provide flexibility in the application of development standards.
3. To improve communication and participation among developers, neighbors and the city early in the design and siting of new development.

The SDR process differs in several important respects from the full Design Review process and Administrative Design Review. The SDR program includes measures to reduce the complexity of application materials and process. To streamline the review process, SDR differs from the City of Seattle's full Design Review in a number of important ways:

- SDR is performed by a DPD planner instead of by neighborhood Design Review Boards.
- Public notice is provided for SDR project applications. No public meetings occur with the SDR process.

- Submittal requirements are reduced for SDR applications.
- Projects undergoing SDR have access to flexibility from the application of specific Land Use Code development standards called *adjustments*.
- As with full design review, the final decision on the SDR component is made by the Director of DPD, similar to decisions on any other MUP components. However, this decision may not be appealed to the City of Seattle Hearing Examiner.

Streamlined Design Review utilizes the same Design Review Guidelines as the regular Design Review program. These guidelines apply throughout the city's neighborhoods and are entitled *Design Review: Guidelines for Multifamily & Commercial Buildings*. In addition, many neighborhoods have adopted and published neighborhood-specific extensions of the multifamily and commercial guidelines.

Design guidelines are available by hard copy at the DPD Public Resource Center and online at: **www.seattle.gov/dpd/designguidelines**. For information on the City's full design review process, which applies to most new large multifamily, commercial and mixed use projects, see CAM 238, *Design Review: General Information, Application Instructions, and Submittal Requirements*.

Types of Streamlined Design Review

Mandatory Streamlined Design Review

SDR is required for applications for development of three or more townhouse units, in any zone. See SMC 23.84A under "Residential Use - Townhouse Development." Townhouse development refers to units attached along one or more side walls, with housing units that occupy the space from the ground to the sky except for underground parking, and no dwelling units are located above or below other dwelling units.

In addition, SDR is required for all development in multifamily and commercial zones that propose removal of an exceptional tree if the project falls

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below the thresholds for Design Review established in SMC 23.41.004.

Voluntary Streamlined Design Review

Applications for projects in lowrise 1, 2, and 3 zones that do not exceed a Design Review threshold - either the SDR threshold for townhouses, or a threshold for full Design Review - may volunteer for SDR. Developments comprised of housing types other than townhouse, such as cottage housing, rowhouses and apartments, may also elect to go through SDR in order to take advantage of the possible development standard adjustments that are available through this process. See the development standard adjustments below for a specific discussion of available design flexibilities.

Types of Streamlined Design Review

Adjustments

Development standard adjustments are unique to the SDR process. An adjustment allows a project to achieve flexibility in the application of a specific set of land use code standards or requirements. In order to allow an adjustment from a land use code standard, an applicant must demonstrate that it would result in a development that better meets the intent of the adopted design guidelines and provides a better response to environmental or site conditions.

Development standard adjustments differ in a few important respects from development standard departures that may be granted through other forms of the City's design review process. First, development standard adjustments are evaluated and may be approved by the planner during the review of the project as a part of the Type I land use decision. This means that while the project is given public notice and public comment is accepted, there is no official public comment period associated with the decision. There is also no appeal opportunity of the decision to the City's Hearing Examiner. The planner reviews the merit of a potential adjustment during the design guidance step, and approves the adjustment with the issuance of the project's combined construction and land use approval.

The second important difference between an adjustment and a departure is that adjustments are only available for a designated set of land use code development standards. SMC Section 43.41.018.D.4 provides the list of the specific development stan-

dards for which adjustments may be allowed, and is summarized below:

- Setback and separation standards may be reduced by a maximum of 50 percent;
- Amenity areas may be reduced by a maximum of 10 percent;
- Landscaping and screening may be reduced by a maximum of 25 percent;
- Structure width, depth, and facade length limits may be increased by a maximum of 10 percent; and
- Screening of parking may be reduced by a maximum of 25 percent.

Departures

Development standard departures are also a potential source of flexibility that are outside of the scope of the SDR process. A development standard departure allows a project design to achieve flexibility in the application of most of the Land Use Code standards. Departures are available for nearly all multifamily land use code standards. (See CAM 238, *Design Review: General Information, Application Instructions, and Submittal Requirements*, and SMC 23.41.012 for a list of standards not available for departures). For the purposes of the lowrise multifamily code, the main non-departable standards include: permitted uses, residential density limits; floor area ratio (FAR), and structure height.

If it is determined during the design guidance step of the SDR review that a project proponent seeks flexibility exceeding the limitations of adjustments, a departure may be sought. Development standard departures however must be made as part of a Type II land use decision. This means that an official public notice and public comment period must be provided at the time the land use application for the departures is submitted. The planner now evaluates the proposed departure as part of the Administrative Design Review process. Development standard departures decisions are subject to appeal to the City's Hearing Examiner. This process can add some processing time for projects seeking development standard departures. See CAM 201, *Master Use Permit (MUP) Overview*, for more information.

What Is the SDR Process?

The following steps outline the SDR process:

STEP 1: PRE-SUBMITTAL APPLICATION AND CONFERENCE

Application

In order to schedule a pre-submittal conference, the following completed application forms may be dropped off, mailed or faxed (206) 233-7866 to the Applicant Services Center (ASC). These forms and instructions are available online at www.seattle.gov/dpd/publications/forms, or from the 20th floor ASC, Seattle Municipal Tower, 700 Fifth Ave.:

- Preliminary Application Form (PAF)
- Pre-application Site Visit
- Pre-submittal Conference Application
- Statement of Financial Responsibility/Agent Authorization Form
- Conceptual site plan

ASC support staff will review the request, note pertinent information, and call back with available appointment times and an assigned project number. Fees for pre-submittal conferences and additional hours of review are listed in the current version of the Fee Subtitle and are summarized in the Land Use Application and Fee Requirements document available online on DPD's "Fees" page at www.seattle.gov/dpd/about/fees, or at the Public Resource Center on the 20th Floor of Seattle Municipal Tower at 700 Fifth Ave., (206) 684-8467.

Conference

SDR requires a pre-submittal conference with the assigned Planner. The assigned planner serves as the reviewer and point of contact on the project through not only design review, but also during any associated MUP and zoning review on the building permit.

At the pre-submittal conference, the project site, context and general development program will be discussed. This is an opportunity to address possible development standard adjustments, departures or other important preliminary issues. Prior to the meeting, the planner will also provide a copy of the design guidelines priorities for the proposed project based on a previously conducted site visit.

This conference may be combined with the acceptance and screening of the design guidance applica-

tion. The applicant may also choose to drop-off the design guidance application materials at a later time following the procedure outlined below.

STEP 2: SDR DESIGN GUIDANCE APPLICATION

Immediately following the pre-submittal conference, design guidance applications may be dropped off at the ASC instead of scheduling a land use intake appointment. This allows the applicant to submit a drop-off packet, which includes the initial 11 x 17 inch design proposal. The information in this application will be used to give public notice of the project. An applicant may also elect to submit the drop-off packet at a later time after the pre-submittal conference.

The 11 x 17 inch packet enables the applicant to describe the conditions influencing the design and graphically demonstrate the design proposal for the project. This packet is what the planner will evaluate in the design guidance review.

The following are the required items that must be included for a successful SDR drop-off packet. All materials listed below should be placed in a large manila envelope with an identification label including the assigned project number and address:

1. Copy of Statement of Financial Responsibility / Agent Authorization Form (This form is only required when the financially responsible party or agent has changed for the project).
2. Copy of Pre-Submittal Conference Notes.
3. Completed Application "Attachment A" (contained in this CAM), Part I.
4. Two (2) hard copies of the 11 x17 inch Design Guidance Proposal developed according to the instructions contained in Part II of "Attachment A" (contained in this CAM).

To submit the drop-off packet, first sign in at the Applicant Services Center to speak with staff from the Addressing/Land Use Intake team. Your application materials will be reviewed and once the determination is made that the application is complete, payment will be due to the cashier. The fees due are outlined in the Drop-Off Submittal for EDG Fee Worksheet. The fees for additional land use hours that have accrued after the pre-submittal conference will also be collected at this time.

Note: For projects that require street or alley improvements, the right-of-way (ROW) plans will need to be submitted to Seattle Department of Transportation

(SDOT), and accepted for review, prior to submitting your construction permit plans to DPD. The applicant should initiate coordination with SDOT and submit initial Street Improvement Plans at this time to ensure full coordination and to avoid potential delays. Construction permit applications for new buildings will not be accepted by DPD until the SDOT plan has been accepted.

STEP 3: DESIGN GUIDANCE REVIEW

When the design guidance submittal is deemed complete, the DPD planner will begin the design guidance review. DPD will post a notice of the project on the site and distribute notices to addresses within 300 feet of the project. SDR does not require a public meeting, and comments received by the planner are advisory.

The DPD planner will review the design guidance packet considering applicable citywide and neighborhood design guidelines. The planner will prepare a Design Guidance Report after the 14-day comment period. The Design Guidance Report will identify priority design guidelines, any design changes related to the guidelines and provide direction on whether requested development standard adjustments may be granted at the time of permit issuance or whether further modifications to the design might be required for the design to be approved. The report may identify whether potential development standard departures might be a suggested option for the proposed design to obtain approval (See Step 4B below).

STEP 4A: CONSTRUCTION PERMIT APPLICATION FOR PROJECTS WITH DEVELOPMENT STANDARD ADJUSTMENTS ONLY – TYPE I (Projects with departures, see Step 4B)

The applicant develops the project proposal incorporating responses to the Design Guidance Report. If no development standard departures are included in the project and there are no other permit components otherwise requiring a Master Use Permit (MUP) submittal (such as environmental review, environmentally critical areas review, or shoreline substantial development review) the applicant may prepare for application of a multifamily construction permit. See CAM 100, *Getting a Multifamily or Commercial Construction Permit from DPD*, Step #4 for a description of construction permit submittal requirements. Visit the ASC or call (206) 684-8850 to schedule an appointment to apply for a construction permit.

Along with the construction permit submittal, the applicant must include documentation of responses to the Design Guidance Report. Depending on the content of the Design Guidance Report, the applicant's response may be required to include one or more revised color renderings, site plan or landscape plan graphics. The application must include material adequate to address the guidance provided in the Design Guidance Report. This should include a written statement documenting response to the Design Guidance Report.

Once the construction application and response to design guidance is accepted, the assigned planner will conduct the zoning analysis as well as review the adequacy of the response to the Design Guidance Report. The planner will determine whether to approve or not approve proposed adjustments as a part of this permit decision. Concurrently, DPD and other City staff will conduct other reviews which include building code and potentially other reviews specific to the proposal such as: energy/mechanical, geotechnical, shoring, ECA, grading/drainage, health, and fire.

STEP 4B: LAND USE & CONSTRUCTION PERMIT APPLICATION FOR PROJECTS WITH DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES ONLY – TYPE II

If, during the process, the application elects to include a proposed development standard departure, the applicant may submit a combined MUP and construction permit application. The applicant must schedule a construction intake appointment and the proposal will now be treated as an Administrative Design Review project and will follow the process outlined in CAM 238, *Design Review: General Information, Application Instructions, and Submittal Requirements* (Design Review, beginning with Step 3). Once the application is converted to a MUP, it will be reviewed simultaneously with the building permit.

Along with the MUP submittal, the applicant must include documentation of responses to the SDR Design Guidance Report. Depending on the content of the Design Guidance Report, the applicant's response may be required to include one or more revised color renderings, site plan or landscape plan graphics adequate to address the planner's guidance provided in the Design Guidance Report.

Once the MUP application has been accepted, the appropriate notice of application will be performed

for the project. Citizens may comment on the project, including siting and design issues. The assigned DPD planner will conduct the zoning review and check to ensure adequate response to the Design Guidance Report. The planner will determine whether to approve or not approve proposed departures as a part of a MUP Type II permit decision. Application for a construction permit will follow the standard process, but will not be approved until the Director's decision has been published and the appeal period and process has been completed.

STEP 5: DIRECTOR'S DECISION

DPD makes the final decision on the SDR component. If the proposal includes no other permit component requiring a MUP, the Director may approve the construction permit along with the proposed development standard adjustments. The planner's evaluation of the response to the design guidance and adjustments shall be embedded within the construction permit plans approved by the Director. This is a Type I land use decision. In this case, no further public notice is required or appeal opportunity allowed. The decision is final.

If any development standard departures are proposed, or if another permit component requiring a MUP is present (Step 4B) the department's ADR decision will be issued as part of the decision on the MUP. This is a Type II land use decision. Written notice to all parties of record, as well as notice of the decision in the weekly Land Use Information Bulletin (available online at www.seattle.gov/dpd/notices) is provided. This decision is appealable to the Hearing Examiner.

STEP 6: POST PERMIT REVIEW AND REVISIONS (IF NECESSARY)

Any revisions an applicant wishes to make to a construction permit that underwent SDR must be presented to the planner for review. Revisions to projects that have undergone SDR must be reviewed for consistency with the original Design Guidance Report. If the revision is minor and clearly within the intent of the original design and the SDR design guidance, the planner may provide approval. Major revisions or departures from the intent of the original

SDR approval may trigger additional administrative process. See CAM 224B, *Master Use Permit (MUP) Revisions*, for more information about revisions. All additional administrative costs for review of revisions will be borne by the applicant.

Additional Information on Design Review

Visit www.seattle.gov/designreview for more information about Seattle's Design Review program. In addition to basic program information, the site features:

- Links to the Preliminary Application Form (PAF), Statement of Financial Responsibility/Agent Authorization Form and Fee Worksheet
- A calendar of upcoming design review meetings
- An "Applicant's Toolbox," including the citywide and neighborhood-specific design guidelines
- A "Gallery of Great Examples" of Design Review projects
- Design proposal packets
- The *Community Guide to Design Review*

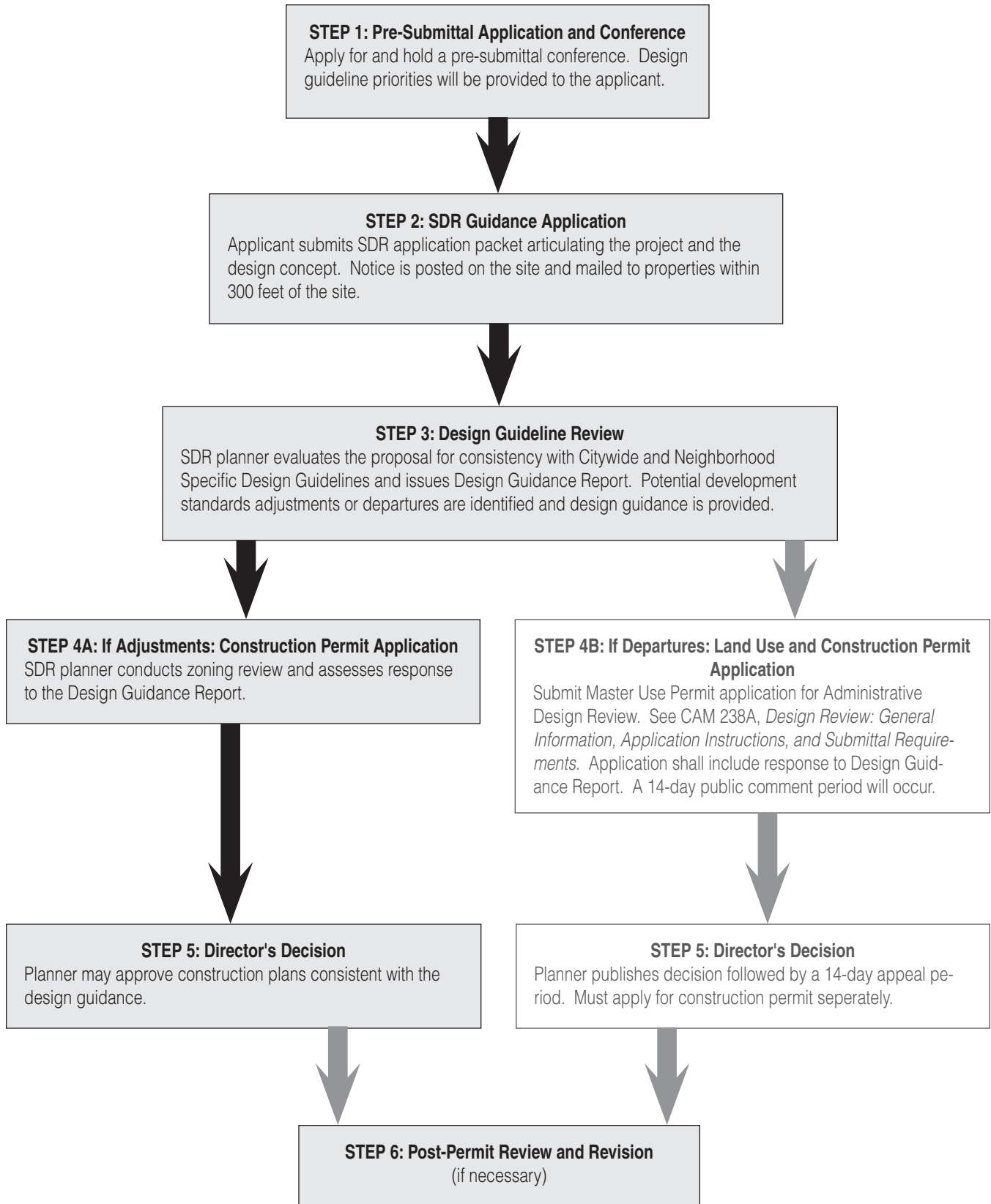
Printed design review resources are available at the Public Resource Center, 20th floor, Seattle Municipal Tower, 700 Fifth Ave. Available materials include:

- *Design Review: Guidelines for Multifamily and Commercial Buildings*, October 1993; revised January 1998
- Neighborhood-Specific Design Guidelines

Access to Information

Links to electronic versions of DPD **Client Assistance Memos (CAMs)**, **Director's Rules**, and the **Seattle Municipal Code** are available on the "Publications" and "Codes" pages of our website at www.seattle.gov/dpd. Paper copies of these documents, as well as additional regulations mentioned in this CAM, are available from our Public Resource Center, located on the 20th floor of Seattle Municipal Tower at 700 Fifth Ave. in downtown Seattle, (206) 684-8467.

Streamlined Design Review (SDR) Process



Attachment A

City of Seattle Application for Streamlined Design Guidance

PART I: CONTACT INFORMATION

1. **Property Address** _____

2. **Project Number** _____
Additional Related Project Number(s): _____

3. **Owner/Lessee Name** _____

4. **Contact Person* Name** _____
Firm _____
Mailing Address _____
City State Zip _____
Phone _____
Email Address _____

5. **Applicant's Name** _____
Relationship to Project _____

6. **Design Professional's Name** _____
Address _____
Phone _____
Email Address _____

7. **Applicant's Signature** _____ **Date** _____

*Only the contact person will receive notice of the meeting. The contact person is responsible for informing other pertinent parties.

PART II: DESIGN GUIDANCE PROPOSAL PACKETS

In a brief narrative format, please include the following information along with all relevant graphics in 11 x 17 inch sized design packets that are printed double sided and in color. All pages should be numbered and all graphics should be oriented consistently with street names and north arrows.

- 1. Proposal.** Statement of development objectives indicating types of desired uses, structure height, number of residential units, amount of commercial square footage and number of parking stalls.
- 2. Analysis of Context.** Initial site analysis addressing site opportunities and constraints, adjacent buildings, zoning of the site and adjacent properties, overlay designations, solar access, views, circulation patterns, community nodes, landmarks, and existing architectural and siting patterns.
- 3. Existing Site Conditions.** A drawing of existing site conditions, indicating topography of the site or other physical features and location of structures and prominent landscape elements on the site including but not limited to all trees 6 inches or greater in diameter measured 4.5' above the ground (see CAM 242).
- 4. Site Plan.** A preliminary site plan including proposed structures, open spaces, vehicular and pedestrian access, and landscaping. Include all dimensions.
- 5. Design Guidelines.** A brief description of how the proposal meets the intent of the applicable citywide and neighborhood design review guidelines. Identify design guidelines most relevant to the proposal.
- 6. Architectural Concept.** One or more color renderings adequate to depict the overall massing of structures and the design concept. Graphics should show proposed siting, massing, open space, and façade treatments. Three dimensional studies and sketches, including those at the street level are optional, and may assist the planner to evaluate the design proposal. May also include images from the neighborhood or beyond that will inform the design development of the proposed development.
- 7. Adjustments and/or Departures.** A summary of potential development standard adjustments (or departures). A table comparing code requirements with the proposed design should be included.