Seattle Department of Planning and Development (DPD)
Design Review Program Improvements
Recommendations Report Outline (DRAFT)

Background
As part of the Design Review Program Improvements project, a Recommendations Report will be developed. The Recommendations Report will provide information on the Design Review Program as it currently functions, and discuss proposed recommendations to:

1. Cultivate the program's purpose of encouraging **better design**
2. Improve the level of **consistency, efficiency and predictability** in how the City administers the program
3. Increase **accessibility** to encourage **better dialogue** between the boards, applicants and community
4. Use communication strategies and tools (both traditional and emerging technologies) to **improve how information is presented, shared and reviewed** throughout the entire design review process

The Recommendations Report will be based upon feedback and input received through the following processes:
- Design Review Advisory Group
- Outreach to key community stakeholders
- Outreach to representatives from historically underrepresented communities
- Public feedback collected through online surveys and at project outreach events
- Staff research

What you'll see in the draft Recommendations Report
- Introduction
- Background on the Design Review Program
- Purpose and goals of the Design Review Improvements project
- Outreach and engagement
  - What we did (Process)
  - What we heard (Key themes of feedback received)
- *Key Recommendations and Areas of Consensus (see table on page 2)*
- Next steps for implementation
- Appendices
  - Design Review Background Report (June 2015)
  - Outreach materials
    - Advisory Group meeting materials, supporting documents and summaries
    - Summaries of interviews with key stakeholders
    - Summaries of online surveys
    - Community meeting materials

Timeline for development of Recommendations Report
- Draft Recommendations Report distributed for review and comment (Late September 2015)
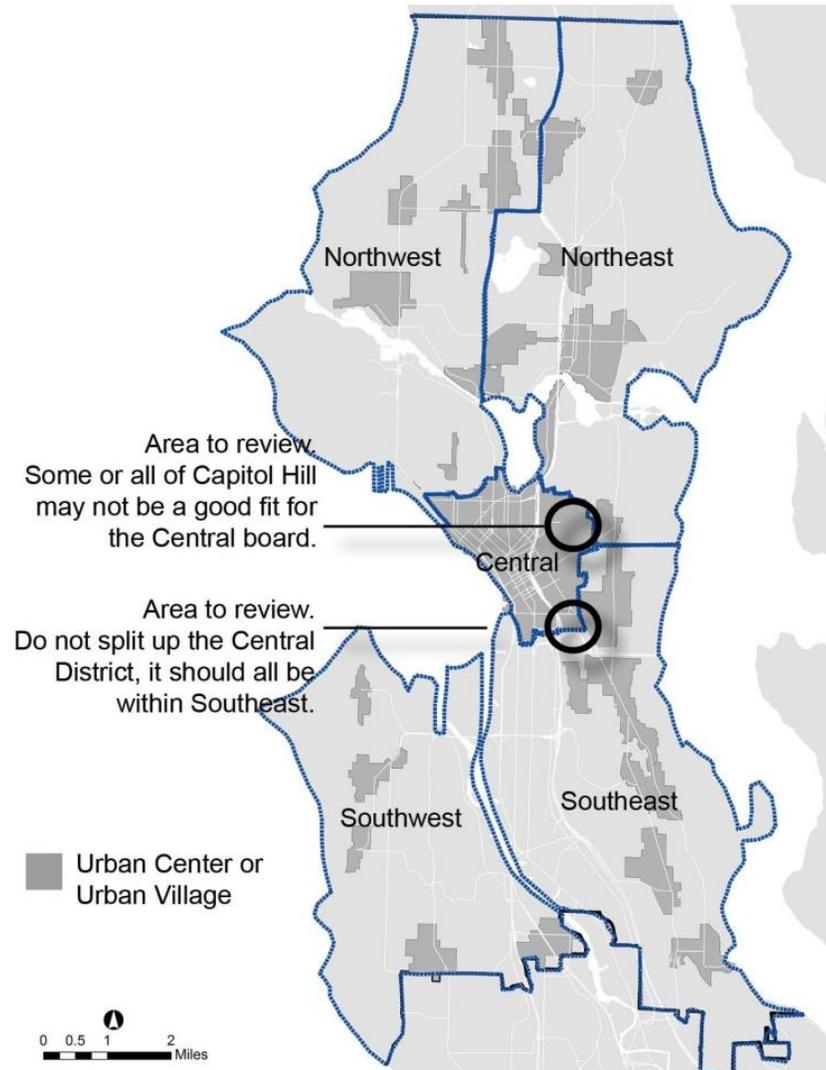- Final Recommendations Report (November 2015)

Key Recommendation/Area of Consensus	Next steps	When was this item discussed/agreed to?
EARLY AND ONGOING OUTREACH As part of the design review process, the project applicant would be required to conduct and demonstrate outreach to the community prior to permit submittal at a very early stage of design, and continuing throughout the permitting process.	• Develop public outreach guide to provide to project applicants, including: 　○ Expectations for public involvement as part of the design review process 　○ Strategies, tools and techniques 　○ Reference guide listing community organizations located within each DR district	• Meeting #2 (4/27/15) – *Initial discussion* • Meeting #3 (5/7/2015) – *Consensus*

Things to consider *(based on feedback received)*

- Outreach should help provide context and help the public better understand the purpose of Design Review.

- Outreach should provide information about relevant neighborhood design guidelines.

- Outreach should educate the public on the various factors that help shape the design of a building.

- Need to help the public understand which projects fall under the purview of design review, which do not, and why.

- Local land use review committees can be a valuable resource and provide an opportunity for dialogue about a project.

- Explore opportunities to have City staff (from DPD and other departments) on hand at applicant-led outreach events, when appropriate.

- Outreach to the community should begin as soon as possible, even prior to submittal of an application.

- Clear standards and expectations need to be provided to the applicant, in order to ensure good outreach.

- Coordinate with the Office of Housing to learn more about their outreach requirements and processes.

- Encourage applicants to coordinate with Department of Neighborhoods to learn more about relevant community organizations in each district.

- The applicant should be required to demonstrate to staff and the Board the outreach that was conducted, public comments received, and how those comments were addressed or considered.

- Consider seeking public comment on the effectiveness of the applicant's outreach.

- Help the public understand the different ways to provide comment.

ADMINISTRATIVE EDG AND TIERED DESIGN REVIEW		
ADMINISTRATIVE EDG **AND TIERED DESIGN REVIEW** The Early Design Guidance (EDG) phase of the Design Review process would be tailored to meet the unique characteristics of different types of projects. Projects that are more complex or have greater impacts would go through formal review by the Design Review Board as part of the EDG phase, while for other projects the DPD design review planner would lead review during the EDG phase. Each type of project would be reviewed by a Design Review Board during the Recommendations phase.	• Develop new code language to reflect changes in the design review process • Confirm revised thresholds for design review • Confirm clear roles and responsibilities of staff in the administrative review process	• Meeting #2 (4/27/15) – *Initial discussion* • Meeting #3 (5/7/2015) – *Continued discussion* • Meeting #4 (5/21/15) – *Continued discussion* • Meeting #5 (6/22/15) – *Consensus*

Things to consider *(based on feedback received)*
- Think more about what applicants are required to show in terms of massing alternatives (e.g. number of alternatives, level of detail, etc.)
- Thresholds for the various tracks needs to be abundantly clear.
- Provide clear expectations on the role of design review staff and provide additional training to staff, as needed.
- Need to very clearly document iterations in the design process.
- Needs to be a way to recognize/reward exemplary design.
- Coordinate with the Office of Housing to better define "affordable housing."
- Explore opportunities to allow developers to opt-in to a specific track.
- Think about potential loopholes and how to craft the code language in a way that minimizes the potential for loopholes.
- Consider engaging other relevant City staff in the design review process, to ensure a comprehensive analysis of key issues.

NEW TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES Explore the use of new tools and techniques to support the Design Review Program, which could include, *but are not limited to*: - Online tools (e.g. online commenting features, web-based mapping application, web-based project information) - Revised formats for Design Review Board meetings (e.g. allowing for dialogue between Board members and applicants) - Additional training for Design Review Board members and staff	- Finalize development of new web-based mapping tool and explore opportunities for sharing more information/receiving comments on project online, including possible online streaming of meetings - Explore opportunities for additional training of Design Review Board members and staff - Continue to evaluate which tools will work best for the Design Review program moving forward	- Meeting #2 (4/27/15) – *Initial discussion and general consensus regarding need to explore additional tools* - Meeting #3 (5/7/2015) – *Continued general discussion of this topic* - Meeting #4 (5/21/15) – *Continued discussion of this topic* - Meeting #5 (6/22/15) – *Continued discussion followed by group feedback on specific tools to explore via the Tools Worksheet*

Things to consider *(based on feedback received)*

- Develop a program to reward and publicize good design.

- Provide public involvement and facilitation training for Board members and staff.

- Provide training for Board members and staff on specific neighborhood concerns/issues, as well as issues related to affordability and cost constraints.

- Explore opportunities to stream Design Review Board meetings online.

- At each meeting, explain how the Design Review process works.

- Make it easy to find relevant information resources online (e.g. Neighborhood Design Guidelines, SDOT manuals, overlays, etc.)

- Provide the applicant with more time to present, particularly for large or complex projects.

- In Design Review packets, require applicants to show wall sections and key details that will have an impact on the pedestrian experience.

- Consider providing a stipend for Design Review Board members to participate in potential daytime meetings.

CHANGES TO BOARD STRUCTURE AND COMPOSITION Changes could include a reduction in the number of boards, revisions to DR district boundaries, and changes in the size and composition of DR Boards	• Evaluate district boundaries • Confirm Board composition and size	• Meeting #2 (4/27/15) – *Initial discussion* • Meeting #5 (6/22/15) – *Continued discussion and general support for further exploration of this concept*

Things to consider *(based on feedback received)*

- Having an urban design representative would be useful, particularly on the Downtown Board.

- Consider having the Northeast District capture a portion of Capitol Hill, the Southeast District cover the Central District and the Downtown district focus more on high-rise type projects.

- It might be helpful to have a broader pool of community representatives, each of whom represents an urban village overlay zone. These individuals could then rotate into their respective Board when a project in their community is being reviewed. Alternatively, consider the idea of a floating urban village representative.

- When developing district boundaries, think of neighborhood transitions and how neighborhoods are defined – be cognizant of informal neighborhood boundaries (e.g. area along Jackson Street)

- Consider three years terms rather than four.

- Consider having a few Board members that are hired positions, to provide continuity.

Design Review Board Process Improvements
Draft Board Structure Proposal
For Discussion Purposes Only

Area to review.
Some or all of Capitol Hill may not be a good fit for the Central board.

Area to review.
Do not split up the Central District, it should all be within Southeast.

Urban Center or Urban Village

0   0.5   1   2
Miles

Five (5) DR Boards with (7) members.

The Central (Downtown) Board is expanded to include most of the Downtown Urban Center, including South Lake Union and First Hill. Some new technologies and format changes can be tested here.

* Longer meetings, daytime locations (i.e. Noon to 6PM)
* Leverages city facilities to pilot technology tools (i.e. Streaming, interactive commenting)
* Focuses on highrise/downtown building types

4 District Boards (NE, NW, SE, SW). Function similar to existing process, but could be more tailored to low rise / midrise development.

* Meets in neighborhoods in the evening, like existing process.
* Narrowed focus on mid- to low rise scaled projects
* Possible reduced volume for neighborhood boards
* Possibly increases available time for in depth reviews.

Board Structure

* 35 Total Design Review Board Members:
* 5 boards with 7 members each
* Facilitates quorums, minimizes substitutions

Board Composition
(For further discussion and deliberation)

* 2 Design Professionals – Citywide
* 1 Design Professional, Landscape Architect – Citywide
* 1-2* Developer / Real Estate Professionals – Citywide
* 2-3* Community members* – District

* Review the appropriate number of community members as balanced with other positions such as developer / real estate.