Community Open Houses
What is Design Review?

The review of most private new development of commercial, multi-family and mixed use buildings by citizen Design Review Boards (or city staff), for compliance with citywide and neighborhood design guidelines.
The Purpose of Design Review

- Encourage **better design** - to ensure new development enhances the city and fits into neighborhoods.
- Provides **flexibility** in application of development standards.
- Improve **communication** and mutual understanding among developers, neighborhoods and the City.

325 9th Ave. A People’s Choice finalist.
Why Program Improvements?

- The program hasn’t been significantly updated since it’s start in 1994
- The volume of projects has increased dramatically
- New tools and resources are available
- Calls for a review by stakeholders:
  - Neighborhood and community groups
  - Business and developer groups
  - Professional design organizations
- City Council direction
- Housing Affordability and Livability Agenda

Nyer Urness House, Ballard
Other Past Evaluations of Design Review

- 2014: Chamber of Commerce / NAIOP study
- 2014: DPD commissioned review
- 2008: Permit process focus groups
- 2006: Audit by City Auditor

Stack House apartments, South Lake Union.
Community Input

Stakeholder interviews
• March – April 2015

Online survey
• March – June 2015
• 400+ responses

Online Open House
• June – August 2015
• 486 participants

16 Member Advisory Group
• 6 Meetings April – Sept.
• Community members
• Architects
• Developers
• Board members

Community member provides public comment at a Design Review Board meeting.
What We Heard - Themes

• Appreciation for the input and public engagement opportunity
• Meaningful connection between developers and the public
• Public feedback is not always adequately incorporated
• More advanced notice
• More focus on how projects fit into neighborhoods
• More predictability and expediency
• Perform outreach with a variety of tools online and offline
• Improve transparency about the purpose of Design Review Board meetings
• Allow greater dialogue between applicant and board at meetings
• Communicate how feedback from an applicant or the public is used
• Perform targeted outreach to reach groups not normally involved
• Ensure that larger or more impactful projects receive more review by Boards
• Smaller or less impactful project reviews may be administrative
• Ensure all projects go through adequate review cycles
• Keep design review efficient, focused on design, predictable and concise.
• Provide materials online, however, online feedback may be difficult to moderate
Early and Ongoing Engagement

- Applicants would be required to conduct and demonstrate outreach to the community prior to permit submittal at a very early stage of design, and continuing through the project.
- Direct conversation between applicant and community.
- Variety of formats and options for outreach, such as...
  - At a local business
  - Social media
  - At a neighborhood meeting
Draft Recommendation #2

Set Thresholds Based on Site Characteristics & More Administrative Review

- Design Review process would be tailored to meet project characteristics.
- **More complex** projects would have both design review phases before the Board.
- **Less complex** projects would have one design review phase overseen by City staff.

*Example of alternatives in a Design Review packet.*
### Draft Recommendation #2

**Set Thresholds Based on Site Characteristics & More Administrative Review**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Characteristics</th>
<th>Track A</th>
<th>Track B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Context</strong></td>
<td>Established</td>
<td>Transitioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Most surrounding properties are built out</td>
<td>• One of the first new buildings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Not on a zone edge</td>
<td>• On a zone edge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scale</strong></td>
<td>Typical</td>
<td>Very Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Not more than a half block</td>
<td>• More than a half a block</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Less than 250’ of street frontage</td>
<td>• More than 250’ of street frontage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Site Characteristics</strong></td>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>Unique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Project does not have unique characteristics on site</td>
<td>• Street or alley vacation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Policy Priorities</strong></td>
<td>Policy Priority</td>
<td>N/A - projects with a Policy Priority would be in Track A regardless of other factors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Dedicated affordable housing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Art / cultural space</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• ‘Deep green’ development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Draft Recommendation #2

Set Thresholds Based on Site Characteristics & More Administrative Review

- Boards are at or near capacity.
- Long delays for scheduling a review.

- More administrative review would open about 70 Design Review timeslots per year for complex projects.
Draft Recommendation #3

New Tools & Techniques

- Online tools and commenting.
- Web-based project information.
- Video streaming of meetings.
- Revised meeting formats: more 2-way dialogue.
- Additional training for board and staff.
- Formal program to publicize design excellence.

*Shaping Seattle provides information about Design Review projects in an online application.*
Draft Recommendation #4

Changes to Board Composition & Structure

- Increase size of boards to 7 members, adding design and community expertise to each.
- Consolidate the Central board to cover area of highrise projects.
- Keep NE, NW, SE, SW boards mostly in tact with neighborhood-based meetings.
- Improves consistency.
- Pilot new tools, technologies and meeting techniques at Central board.
- Greater balance on each board.

DRAFT: Possible revised board districts.
## Draft Recommendation #4

### Changes to Board Composition & Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Existing Board Structure</th>
<th>Draft Potential Board Structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Districts</strong></td>
<td><strong>7 District</strong></td>
<td><strong>5 District</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• NE, NW, W, Central, E, SE, SW</td>
<td>• NE, NW, Central, SE, SW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Board Composition</strong></td>
<td>• 1 Design professional</td>
<td>• 2 Design professionals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 1 Community member</td>
<td>• 1 Design professional (Landscape architect / urban design)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 1 Developer / Real Estate</td>
<td>• 2 Developer / real estate / business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• * 1 Business representative</td>
<td>• * 2 Community members / residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• * 1 Resident</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* From within the district. (Otherwise, must reside within City limits.)
Thank you.

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