Design Review Program Overview

Photo by John Skelton

Seattle Department of Construction & Inspections

Presentation to the Urban Forestry Commission
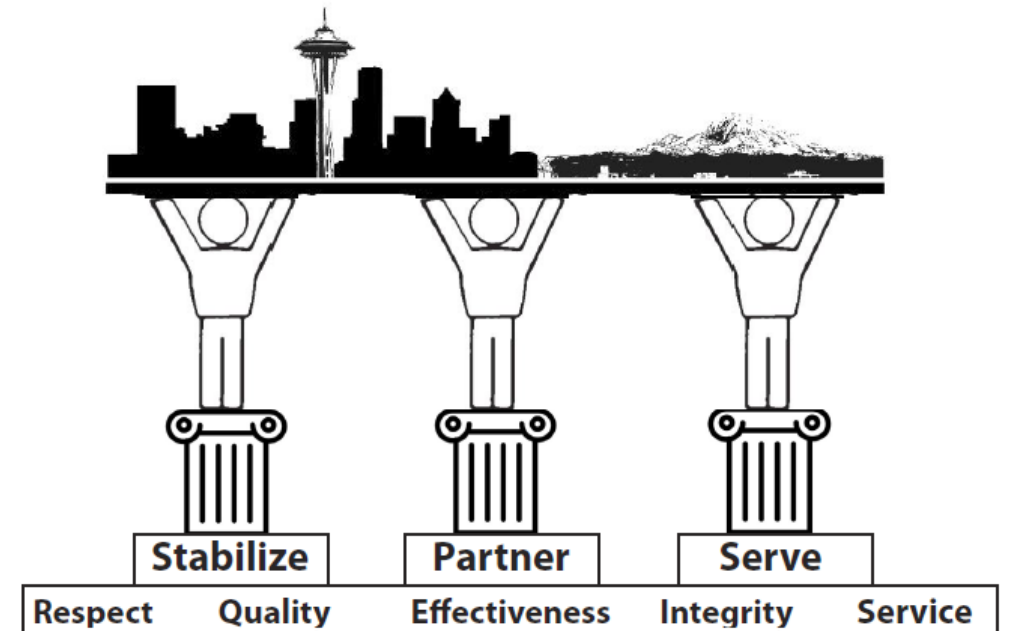Lisa Rutzick I May 1, 2019

SDCI PURPOSE AND VALUES

Our Purpose

As stewards and regulators of land and buildings, we preserve and enhance equity, livability, safety, and health of our communities.

Our Values

- Respect
- Quality of work
- Equity
- Integrity
- Service

Stabilize	Partner	Serve

Respect	Quality	Effectiveness	Integrity	Service

DESIGN REVIEW PROGRAM

Created in 1994 to…

- Encourage better design & site planning that enhances the character of the city & ensures that new development fits sensitivity into neighborhoods

- Provide flexibility in the application of development standards

- Improve communication and participation among developers, neighbors, and the City early in the design and siting of new development

DESIGN REVIEW BOARDS

- City is divided into 8 Boards

- Each Board has 5 members representing the following interests:
  1. Community
  2. Design
  3. Development
  4. Residential
  5. Business/Landscape

- All Board members are volunteers and are appointed by the Mayor and Council for a 2-year term that can be extended by 2 years
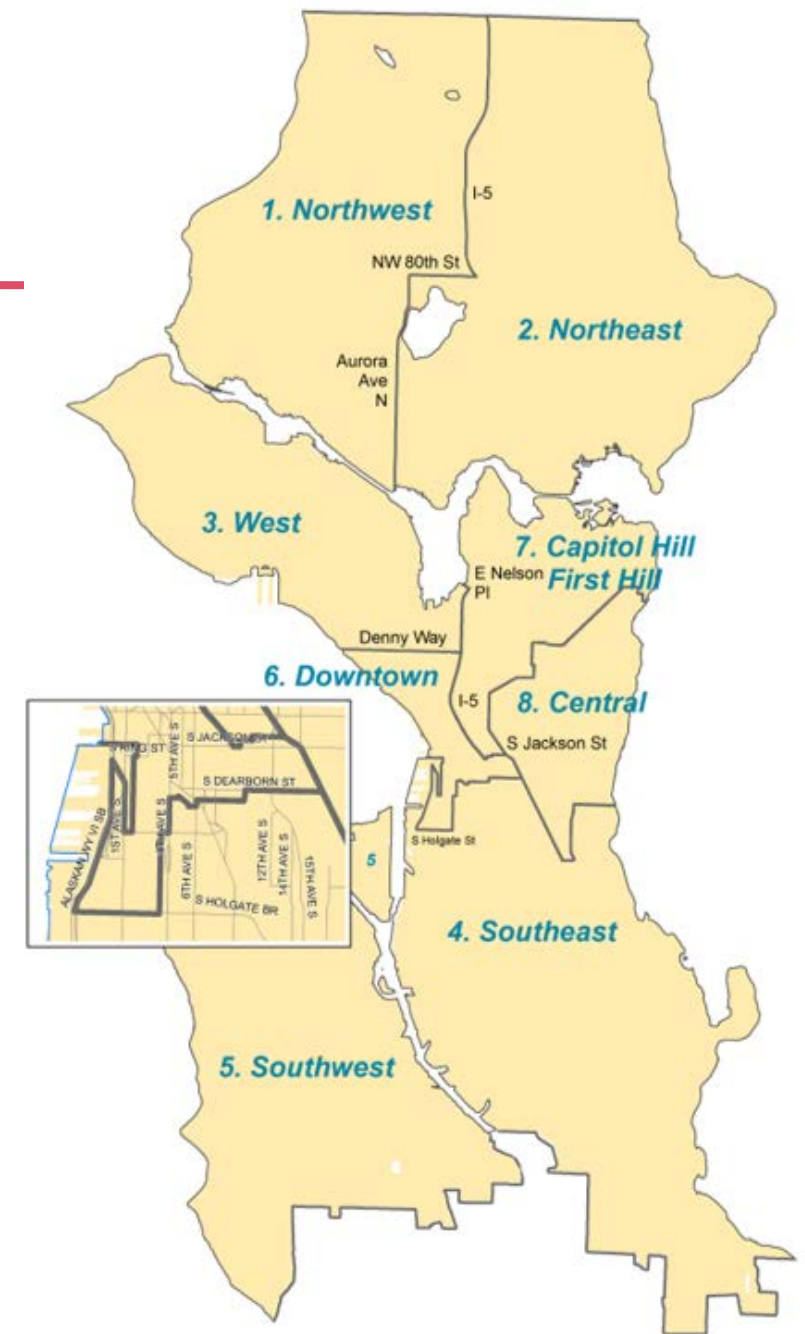
DESIGN GUIDELINES

Design Guidelines are used…

- As Code authority by the Design Review Program
- By Design Review Boards & City staff to judge the merits of proposed projects
- To inform the development of 23 sets of supplemental guidelines known as the Neighborhood Design Guidelines
- Apply to private property and the intersection with the ROW

Seattle's Design Guidelines include…

- Citywide – *Updated in 2014!*
- Downtown
- Neighborhood-Specific

SEATTLE DESIGN GUIDELINES

CONTEXT & SITE

CS1 Natural Systems & Site Features

CS2 Urban Pattern & Form

CS3 Architectural Context & Character

PUBLIC LIFE

PL1 Open Space Concept

PL2 Walkability

PL3 Street-Level Interaction

PL4 Active Transportation

DESIGN CONCEPT

DC1 Project Uses & Activities

DC2 Architectural Concept

DC3 Open Space Concept

DC4 Materials

CITYWIDE DESIGN GUIDELINES RELATED TO TREES

CONTEXT & SITE 1: Natural Systems & Site Features - Use natural systems and features of the site and its surroundings as a starting point for project design.

D. PLANTS AND HABITAT

D1. On-Site Features: Incorporate on-site natural habitats and landscape elements such as: existing **trees**, **native plant species or other vegetation** into project design and connect those features to existing networks of open spaces and natural habitats wherever possible. Consider relocating significant **trees and vegetation** if retention is not feasible.

D2. Off-Site Features: Provide opportunities through design to connect to off-site habitats such as riparian corridors or existing urban forest corridors. Promote continuous habitat, where possible, and increase interconnected corridors of **urban forest and habitat** where possible.

CITYWIDE DESIGN GUIDELINES RELATED TO TREES

CONTEXT & SITE 1: Natural Systems & Site Features - Use natural systems and features of the site and its surroundings as a starting point for project design.

E. WATER

E2. Adding Interest with Project Drainage: Use project drainage systems as opportunities to add interest to the site through water-related design elements. Features such as **trees**, rain gardens, bioswales, green roofs, fountains of recycled water, and/or water art installations can create movement and sound, air cooling, focal points for pedestrians, and habitats which may already be required to manage on-site stormwater and allow reuse of potable water for irrigation.

CITYWIDE DESIGN GUIDELINES RELATED TO TREES

PUBLIC LIFE 1: Connectivity - Complement and contribute to the network of open spaces around the site and the connections among them.

A. NETWORK OF OPEN SPACES
A2. Adding to Public Life: Seek opportunities to foster human interaction through an increase in the size and/or quality of project-related open space available for public life. Consider features such as widened sidewalks, recessed entries, curb bulbs, courtyards, plazas, or through-block connections, along with place-making elements such as **trees**, landscape, art, or other amenities in addition to the pedestrian amenities listed in PL1.B3.

CITYWIDE DESIGN GUIDELINES RELATED TO TREES

PUBLIC LIFE 1: Connectivity - Complement and contribute to the network of open spaces around the site and the connections among them.

B. WALKWAYS AND CONNECTIONS

B3. Pedestrian Amenities: Opportunities for creating lively, pedestrian oriented open spaces to enliven the area and attract interest and interaction with the site and building should be considered. Visible access to the building's entry should be provided. Examples of pedestrian amenities include seating, other street furniture, lighting, **year-round landscaping**, seasonal plantings, pedestrian scale signage, site furniture, art work, awnings, large storefront windows, and engaging retail displays and/or kiosks.

CITYWIDE DESIGN GUIDELINES RELATED TO TREES

PUBLIC LIFE 1: Connectivity - Complement and contribute to the network of open spaces around the site and the connections among them.

C. OUTDOOR USES AND ACTIVITIES
C3. Year-Round Activity: Where possible, include features in open spaces for activities beyond daylight hours and throughout the seasons of the year, especially in neighborhood centers where active open space will contribute vibrancy, economic health, and public safety. These may include… **trees** for moderate weather protection and shade…

CITYWIDE DESIGN GUIDELINES RELATED TO TREES

DESIGN CONCEPT 3: Open Space Concept - Integrate open space design with the design of the building so that each complements the other.

C. DESIGN

C2. Amenities and Features: Create attractive outdoor spaces well-suited to the uses envisioned for the project. Use a combination of hardscape and plantings to shape these spaces and to screen less attractive areas as needed. Use a variety of features, such as planters, green roofs and decks, **groves of trees**, and vertical green trellises along with more traditional foundation plantings, **street trees**, and seasonal displays.

CITYWIDE DESIGN GUIDELINES RELATED TO TREES

DESIGN CONCEPT 3: Open Space Concept - Integrate open space design with the design of the building so that each complements the other.

C. DESIGN

C3. Support Natural Areas: Create an open space design that retains and enhances **on-site natural areas and connects to natural areas that may exist off-site and may provide habitat for wildlife**. If the site contains no natural areas, consider an open space design that offers opportunities to create larger contiguous open spaces and corridors in the future with development of other public or private projects.

CITYWIDE DESIGN GUIDELINES RELATED TO TREES

DESIGN CONCEPT 3: Open Space Concept - Integrate open space design with the design of the building so that each complements the other.

D. TREES LANDSCAPE & HARDSCAPE MATERIALS
D1. Choice of Plant Materials: Reinforce the overall architectural and open space design concepts through the selection of landscape materials. Choose plants that will emphasize or accent the design, create enduring green spaces, and be appropriate to particular locations taking into account solar access, soil conditions, and adjacent patterns of use. Select landscaping that will thrive under urban conditions.

CITYWIDE DESIGN GUIDELINES RELATED TO TREES

DESIGN CONCEPT 3: Open Space Concept - Integrate open space design with the design of the building so that each complements the other.

D. TREES LANDSCAPE & HARDSCAPE MATERIALS

D3. Long Range Planning: Select plants that upon maturity will be of appropriate size, scale, and shape to contribute to the site as intended. It may be necessary to create a landscaping plan for various stages of **plant maturity**, such as 5, 10, and 20 year plans in order to ensure the landscaping will perform and function as needed over the life of the project.

D4. Place Making: Create a landscape design that helps define spaces with significant elements such as **trees**.

DESIGN REVIEW DEPARTURES

SMC 23.41.012

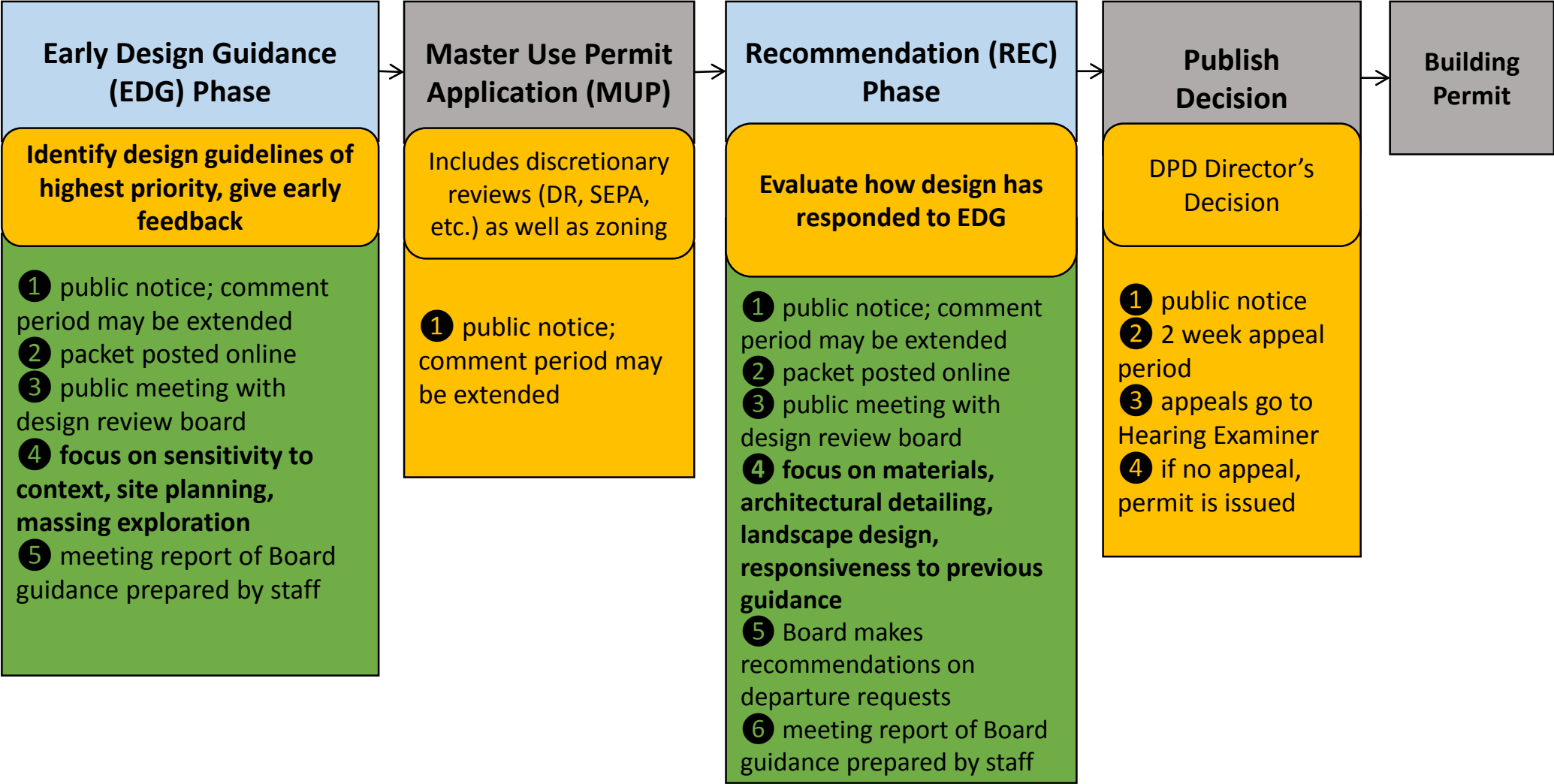Departures may be granted from Land Use Code standards or requirements, except for

- Floor Area Ratio (FAR)
- Height
- Parking
- See Code for complete list

The Board makes a determination that a requested departure may be allowed is an applicant demonstrates that the design would result in a development that better meets the intent of adopted design guidelines.
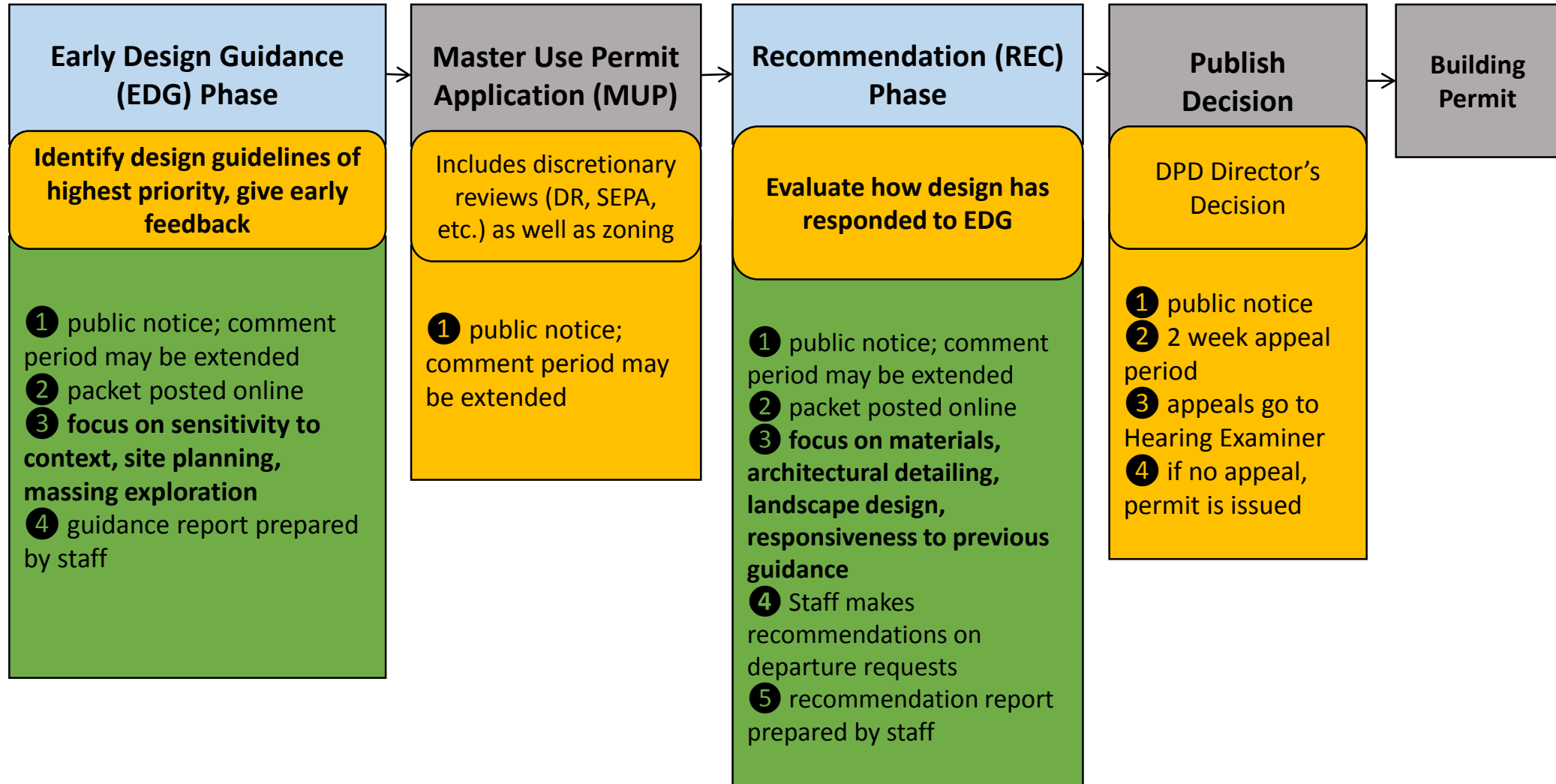
3 TYPES OF DESIGN REVIEW

1. Full Design Review – design review board input at public meeting, per the threshold table

2. Administrative Design Review – staff review (optional for projects under the SEPA thresholds and for certain projects containing SEDUs)

3. Streamlined Design Review – staff review (required for two or more townhouses, developed in 2011 when the multifamily code was updated and began to distinguish between townhouse and row house housing typologies, and for certain projects containing SEDUs)

FULL DESIGN REVIEW (DR)

Early Design Guidance (EDG) Phase

Identify design guidelines of highest priority, give early feedback

❶ public notice; comment period may be extended
❷ packet posted online
❸ public meeting with design review board
❹ **focus on sensitivity to context, site planning, massing exploration**
❺ meeting report of Board guidance prepared by staff

Master Use Permit Application (MUP)

Includes discretionary reviews (DR, SEPA, etc.) as well as zoning

❶ public notice; comment period may be extended

Recommendation (REC) Phase

Evaluate how design has responded to EDG

❶ public notice; comment period may be extended
❷ packet posted online
❸ public meeting with design review board
❹ **focus on materials, architectural detailing, landscape design, responsiveness to previous guidance**
❺ Board makes recommendations on departure requests
❻ meeting report of Board guidance prepared by staff

Publish Decision

DPD Director's Decision

❶ public notice
❷ 2 week appeal period
❸ appeals go to Hearing Examiner
❹ if no appeal, permit is issued

Building Permit

ADMINISTRATIVE DESIGN REVIEW (ADR)

Early Design Guidance (EDG) Phase

Identify design guidelines of highest priority, give early feedback

❶ public notice; comment period may be extended
❷ packet posted online
❸ **focus on sensitivity to context, site planning, massing exploration**
❹ guidance report prepared by staff

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❹ Staff makes recommendations on departure requests
❺ recommendation report prepared by staff

Publish Decision

DPD Director's Decision

❶ public notice
❷ 2 week appeal period
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Building Permit

STREAMLINED DESIGN REVIEW (SDR)

Early Design Guidance (EDG) Phase

Identify design guidelines of highest priority, give early feedback

❶ public notice
❷ packet posted online
❸ **focus on sensitivity to context, site planning, massing exploration**
❹ guidance report prepared by staff

Building Permit

EXCEPTIONAL TREES & DESIGN REVIEW

- Must identify Exceptional Trees on site during the EDG phase

- Required to conduct Streamlined Design Review if not otherwise subject to Design Review and are proposing to remove an Exceptional Tree

- For projects in Highrise and Downtown zones (including South Lake Union), removal of Exceptional Trees is not required to go through design review

- In 2009, the Hearing Examiner clarified that if a project is going through full (Design Review Board) review, the design review process shall also consider the Exceptional Tree

EXCEPTIONAL TREES & DESIGN REVIEW

- **SMC 25.11.080 says SDCI can permit removal of Exceptional Trees when design review is considered, and the applicant has demonstrated that** *'protecting the tree by avoiding development in the tree protection area could not be achieved through the development standard adjustments...or the departures...a reduction in the parking requirements...and/or a reduction in the standards of [parking space dimensions, maneuverability, driveways, curb cuts, etc.]'*

- Therefore, the applicant needs to show an alternate design that shows:
    1. Critical Tree Protection zone (roots that need to be protected in order to allow the tree to live)
    2. Minimized parking and vehicular access to save Exceptional Tree(s).
    3. Modified setbacks, structure width, façade height, and other development standards to save the Exceptional Tree(s).
    4. A comparison of building area for the proposed design and the alternate design (square feet, potential number of units, etc.)

EXCEPTIONAL TREES & DESIGN REVIEW

- **When an Exceptional Tree is identified and proposed for removal, the Design Review Board needs to recommend to SDCI one of two things**:

    1. The proposed design with the tree removed meets the Design Review Guidelines better than a proposal that includes the tree, OR

    2. The alternate design with the tree retained meets the Design Review Guidelines better than the proposed design without the tree.

- *Note that the Design Review Board's authority lies in the Design Review Guidelines, not other Code requirements or the arborist report (SDCI reviews those items separately).*

RESOURCES

Design Review Website
http://www.seattle.gov/sdci/about-us/who-we-are/design-review

Land Use Code, Chapter 23.41
https://www2.municode.com/library/wa/seattle/codes/municipal_code?nodeId=TIT23LAUSCO_SUBTITLE_IIILAUSRE_CH23.41DERE

Tip 238 (explains the Design Review process steps)
http://www.seattle.gov/DPD/Publications/CAM/cam238.pdf

Shaping Seattle Map App
http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/shapingseattle/map.aspx

RESOURCES

Tip 242: Tree Protection Regulations in Seattle

http://www.seattle.gov/DPD/Publications/CAM/cam242.pdf

Tip 331: Environmentally Critical Areas: Tree & Vegetation Overview

http://www.seattle.gov/DPD/Publications/CAM/cam331.pdf

Tip 331B: Hazard Trees

http://www.seattle.gov/DPD/Publications/CAM/cam331b.pdf

CAM 2302: Tree Pruning Removal Permits

http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/SDOT/CAMs/cam2302.pdf

FIND OUT WHERE NEW BUILDINGS ARE PROPOSED: SHAPING SEATTLE

find,
learn &
comment

QUESTIONS?

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