

# Design Review in Other Cities Report

## January 2023



**Seattle** Department of  
Construction & Inspections

## Executive Summary

Local government municipalities recognize the impact design has on our daily life, be it design of parks, roadways, or the buildings we move through and around, design has the potential to enhance our experience of the built environment. Design professionals, city staff, and the public serve as stakeholders throughout the extensive development of design review programs, guidelines, and standards to create a shared vision for the future of their city. Design Review then provides a mechanism by which municipalities cast the shared vision of their cities into the future through setting design standards for new development. Principles of design including, siting, scale, rhythm, variation, composition, provide the foundation for setting standards and the jumping off point for individual design guidelines to reflect the character of a specific place and community.

This report provides a snapshot of several other design review programs in major cities across the United States in response to the Statement for Legislative Intent's request to *review national best practices for design review programs with significant public participation components*. Though it is important to acknowledge each city is unique with differing histories, legislative process, and form of governing bodies, gathering information on other cities allows us to begin a bench marking process for how the City of Seattle's Design Review Program compares to similar programs.

The purpose of this report is to compare:

- 1) Required vs. optional Design Review
- 2) Inclusion of Early Design Guidance phase
- 3) Inclusion of Public Comment / Public meetings
- 4) Design Guideline scope
- 5) Inclusion of equity design guidelines

Seven cities including Austin, Bellevue, Boston, Chicago, Denver, Portland, and San Francisco, were analyzed as part of this *Design Review in Other Cities* report.

All included cities except for Austin, have a threshold for requiring Design Review. In the City of Austin applicants can pursue Design Review to meet criteria for bonus incentives. Chicago, Portland, Denver, and Boston have a public meeting or public comment component as part of the Design Review Process. Three of the 7 cities included a phase similar to the City of Seattle's Early Design Guidance phase including Boston, Denver, and San Francisco.

Regarding an equity component in the design guidelines, only the City of Chicago currently has established and explicit guidelines related to equity. Though it is important to note many of the included cities are currently undergoing updates which seek to better integrate equity into their design guidelines. In addition, it is worth noting the City of Seattle has historically been a leader in implementing progressive planning initiatives including standards related to Design Review.

In summary, each city includes some form of Design Review, ranging from optional/incentive based (Austin), administrative review (Bellevue, Boston, Denver, Portland), to review by planning/ design boards (Boston, Denver, Portland, and San Francisco). As our cultural and societal norms shift to reflect our evolving values, design guidelines will continue to evolve and adapt to meet these changing priorities, including equity. Looking at other cities allows us to identify strengths and where we might begin to improve our own Design Review process to better meet the evolving needs and values of the communities we serve.

The following table provides a snapshot of the information provided in the case studies which are included in this report.

CITY	Required	Early Design Guidance Phase	Equity Design Guidelines	Public Meeting	Review Component: Site Plan	Review Component: Materials	Review Component: Program	Departure/ Code Deviations
Austin								
Bellevue								
Boston								
Chicago								
Denver								
Portland								
San Francisco								

Table 1: Comparison Chart

## Background

### Why do we value Design

We spend much of our lives in buildings and moving through the built environment. We work, play, rest in built environment. Design of the built environment changes the way we move through and experience the places we inhabit. Design has the potential to improve the way in which we engage with the built environment through intentional design which considers both how the design fits into the larger context and quality of the design itself.

### Purpose of Design Review

As cities continue to grow and continue to become denser one tool used to anchor new development within larger city goals and plans is Design Review. The City of Seattle outlines the following as the goals for Design Review:

- Helps new development fit into the neighborhood context and enhance our communities.
- Establishes parameters for discussion of new development through design guidelines.
- Creates an opportunity to hear community’s design related concerns.

### Design Review Process

Three paths for design review currently in the City of Seattle:

- **Streamlined Design Review:** Early Design Guidance only and then straight to building permit. Including public comment but not public meeting.
- **Administrative Design Review:** Early Design Guidance, Master Use Permit / Recommendation, Building permit all required (reviews completed by city staff). Includes public comment but not public meeting.

- **Full Design Review:** Early Design Guidance, Master Use Permit / Recommendation, Building permit all required (reviews completed by city staff). Includes public comment and public meeting.

**Examples:**



SDR



ADR



FULL DR

## Methodology

Seven cities including Austin, Bellevue, Boston, Chicago, Denver, Portland, and San Francisco, were analyzed as part of this *Design Review in Other Cities* report. Cities were selected based on similarity in size, population, and overall rate of growth by looking at 2020 Census data. In addition, the City of Bellevue was also included given its proximity to the City of Seattle.

# CASE STUDY

AUSTIN



## SNAPSHOT

**Population 978,908**

a density of 3,141 people/sq mile

**22.1%**

growth from 2010 to 2019.

**Why did we choose this example?**

Comparable to Seattle size/growth

**What projects are subject to Design Review?**

Projects that opt into the Density Bonus Program

## WHAT DOES DESIGN REVIEW LOOK LIKE? HOW IS EQUITY INTEGRATED?

Austin's Design Review program is currently more limited. Projects opt into the Density Bonus Program, where projects which met the guidelines were awarded development incentives. All other projects are reviewed by staff to meet Type 1 standards in the zoning code

Equity is not explicitly integrated; however, Austin is currently undergoing an update effort, with a key focus to better align the guidelines with current community goals; including, but not limited to, adopted city policies related to affordability, connectivity, equity, environment, access to open space, mobility, sustainability, and resilience

The scope Design Review includes site plan and the building (exterior lighting, glazing, façade relief (like modulation), location of entries, pedestrian paths, etc.). There is a limited consideration of materials/colors.



### area-wide urban guidelines

This describes issues which apply generally throughout any area where the urban design guidelines are applied.



### guidelines for the public streetscape

The major focus is on the streetscape environment which affects the pedestrian. This includes all the elements that can make a pedestrian comfortable such as the sidewalk, street trees, street furniture, and the facade of the building.



### guidelines for plazas and open space

These guidelines propose the adoption of a uniform philosophy through shared vision for open spaces and plazas within urban centers. This vision would result in the focus of pedestrian activity pre-eminently over vehicular modal transport in urban settings.

These guidelines adopt the principle that open spaces and plazas are public spaces, and that these natural public amenities encourage human occupancy.



### guidelines for buildings

These guidelines include recommendations for the physical makeup and shape of construction inside the property lines.

## DESIGN GUIDELINES

Initially created in 1999, the process and guidelines were grounded through a values and vision process.

*“Because the city is a community of people and not of buildings, and because people can come to community through shared values, the Commission sought first to articulate a set of commonly held values”*

The current 2008 revision of the original Downtown Design Guidelines expanded the geography to include any areas in the city which, through general agreement, seek to create and shape dense development.

The proposed update includes four main priorities:

1. Having broader applicability throughout Austin’s urban core, and therefore, the ability to serve a wider range of users and project types
2. To better align the guidelines with current community goals; including, but not limited to, adopted city policies related to affordability, connectivity, equity, environment, access to open space, mobility, sustainability, and resilience.
3. More clarity by creating a more inviting and user-friendly document that all Austinites can seek insight from
4. The guidelines must evolve to become a predictable resource for everyone. To achieve this, an easy-to-use document is needed with a simple graphic format (including illustrations and photos) to visually communicate the desired (and undesired) outcomes.

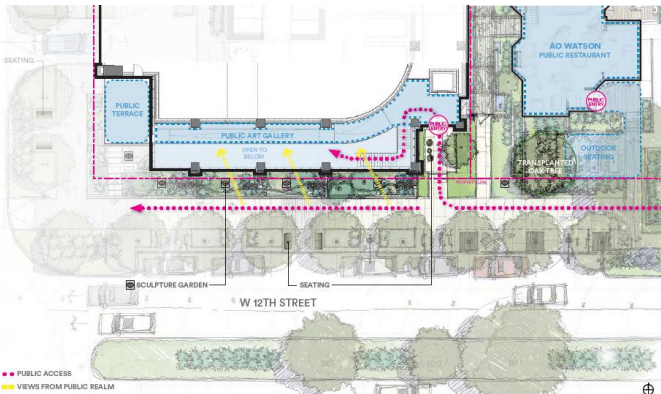
- B.1 - Build to the Street
- B.2 - Provide Multi-Tenant, Pedestrian-Oriented Development at the Street Level
- B.3 - Accentuate Primary Entrances
- B.4 - Encourage the Inclusion of Local Character
- B.5 - Control On-Site Parking
- B.6 - Create Quality Construction
- B.7 - Create Buildings with Human Scale

## DESIGN REVIEW PROCESS

Most reviews are staff only and there is no public meeting.

There is a notice of application only, no public comment period or public meetings. Rarely projects go to a Land Use Commission, which does include comment and appeal period. When there is opportunity for public comment, the comments are rarely "entertained" due to politics.

An "Equivalent path" allows applicant to propose an equivalent to the code required standard. Small adjustments are possible (ex. lighting, different amenity like a bench in the common area, etc.)



# CASE STUDY

CHICAGO



## SNAPSHOT

**Population 2,693,976**

a density of 11,943 people/sq mile

**-0.1%**

growth from 2010 to 2019.

### Why did we choose this example?

Suggested by stakeholder advisory group

### What projects are subject to Design Review?

All public and private projects located along Chicago's commercial corridors.

### WHAT DOES DESIGN REVIEW LOOK LIKE? HOW IS EQUITY INTERGRATED?

In 2020, the City of Chicago launched a community led planning process called "We Will Chicago." In the process they devised a design review program and design guidelines based on community input. Initially the Chicago Department of Planning and Development engaged a Design Excellence Working Group to answer the question:

*"How do we engender a culture that values design excellence in everyday life?"*

From this question, several thematic principles emerged that collectively aspire to achieve design excellence for Chicago residents, businesses, and other local stakeholders. Equity is called out and integrated into these principles including commitments to:

- Equity & Inclusion; Achieving fair treatment, targeted support, and prosperity for all residents
- Innovation; Implementing creative approaches to design and problem solving
- Sense of Place; Celebrating and strengthening the culture of our communities
- Sustainability; Committing to environmental, cultural, and financial longevity
- Communication; Fostering design appreciation and responding to community needs

The scope of the Design Review program is similar to Seattle and includes the building program including uses, unit sizes, etc.



*Harper Court  
Hartshorne Plunkard*  
A mix of commercial, hotel, and office uses brought needed neighborhood amenities as well as customers.



*Vue 53  
Valerio Dewalt Train*  
Active ground floor, easy resident access to upper floors, and hidden parking make complementary uses work.



*Independence Library and Apartments  
John Ronan Architects*  
Retail isn't the only way to create active uses - this library fronts the street with affordable housing above.

**City of Chicago**

## DESIGN GUIDELINES

Developed by DPD under Mayor Lightfoot and adopted by Plan Commission in March 2022, the Neighborhood Design Guidelines provide specific recommendations to enhance the planning, review and impact of development along the city's commercial corridors. As a complement to other City design resources and regulations, the guidelines are adaptable to the unique context of individual neighborhoods, corridors, and blocks.

The guidelines are organized across six categories:

- Sustainability  
Features that have long-term environmental, sociocultural, and human health impacts.
- Program  
Targeted uses that complement a property's surrounding context.
- Site Design  
Building orientation, layout, open space, parking, and services.
- Public Realm  
Improvements within and near the public right-of-way adjacent to the site.
- Massing  
Bulk, height, and form of a building.
- Façade  
Architectural expression of a building's exterior, including entrances and windows.

The guidelines are intended to be used for all public and private projects located along Chicago's commercial corridors. Projects that require the City's review and oversight should substantially correspond to their parameters, especially Planned Developments, Lakefront Protection Ordinance projects, and projects that receive City grants, funding, or other incentives.

## DESIGN REVIEW PROCESS

After initial zoning and planning and design review, qualifying projects are presented to the COD (no fee for COD review). DPD staff writes up the COD recommendations. Applicant follows them or justifies why they are unable to follow them, and proceeds to Chicago Plan Commission hearing. Applicant can disagree with recommendations, then staff will review further or make a negative recommendation to Plan Commission. Or applicant can withdraw their proposal. It seems applicants can choose a staff review process instead (like ADR) which may require multiple review cycles prior to Plan Commission.





# CASE STUDY

SAN FRANCISCO



## SNAPSHOT

### Population 874,784

a density of 18,562 people/sq mile

### 8.5%

growth from 2010 to 2019.

### Why did we choose this example?

Comparable in size to Seattle; more density, less growth.

### What projects are subject to Design Review?

Required citywide for projects 10 or more units, or over 10,000 sq ft

### WHAT DOES DESIGN REVIEW LOOK LIKE? HOW IS EQUITY INTEGRATED?

In general, San Francisco's Design Review program is quite similar to Seattle's regarding scope, process, and the content of the design guidelines. The major distinctions are the lack of public meetings, that more smaller scale projects are subject to design review, the larger role played by city design review staff, and that the Planning Commission provides final project approval.

Design review is part of the overall entitlement process. The scope of SF's design review includes massing, scale, articulation, materials, composition of open space, relation of the new building to existing buildings and street pattern, and location of functions especially as they relate to the public realm and aesthetics.

Equity is not explicitly integrated into the design review process or design guidelines. While the guidelines do contain references to "diversity" and "culture", those concepts are left up to interpretation. The guidelines do contain precedent images that reference BIPOC art, cultural events, and architectural forms.

A set of guidelines specific to projects that are in the Affordable Housing Bonus Program help to ensure that affordable housing projects are designed to an equal level of design excellence as typical private development.

# Urban Design Guidelines

- S1 Recognize and Respond to Urban Patterns
  - S2 Harmonize Relationships between Buildings, Streets, and Open Spaces
  - S3 Recognize and Enhance Unique Conditions
  - S4 Create, Protect, and Support View Corridors
  - S5 Create a Defined and Active Streetwall
  - S6 Organize Uses to Complement the Public Environment
  - S7 Integrate Common Open Space and Landscape with Architecture
  - S8 Respect and Exhibit Natural Systems and Features
- 
- A1 Express a Clear Organizing Architectural Idea
  - A2 Modulate Buildings Vertically and Horizontally
  - A3 Harmonize Building Designs with Neighboring Scale and Materials
  - A4 Design Buildings from Multiple Vantage Points
  - A5 Shape the Roofs of Buildings
  - A6 Render Building Facades with Texture and Depth
  - A7 Coordinate Building Elements
  - A8 Design Active Building Fronts
  - A9 Employ Sustainable Principles and Practices in Building Design
- 
- P1 Design Public Open Spaces to Connect with and Complement the Streetscape
  - P2 Locate and Design Open Spaces to Maximize Physical Comfort and Visual Access
  - P3 Express Neighborhood Character in Open Space Designs
  - P4 Support Public Transportation and Bicycling
  - P5 Design Sidewalks to Enhance the Pedestrian Experience
  - P6 Program Public Open Spaces to Encourage Social Activity, Play, and Rest
  - P7 Integrate Sustainable Practices into the Landscape
- 

## DESIGN GUIDELINES

Urban Design Guidelines are the default guidelines used; Residential Design Guidelines; Ground Floor Residential Design Guidelines are layered on as supplemental depending on the project zone and uses. There are a handful of neighborhood specific design guidelines. A separate set of Affordable Housing Bonus Program Guidelines are provided for projects that are 100% affordable housing, as they receive extra height and FAR and are generally larger than surrounding context.

The content, organization, and style of the three main sets of guidelines are similar to Seattle's; focusing on designing to respect and enhance context, contribute to vibrant and active streetscapes, and create visually rich and textured façade and building design. There is perhaps a bit more deference requested to fitting in to existing historic context, direct rejection of expanses of large cementitious panels, and desire for secondary architectural elements and quality ground-floor residential design.

## DESIGN REVIEW PROCESS

Design Review is led by the Urban Design Advisory Team (UDAT), an internal staff team comprised of staff planners with expertise in architecture, landscape architecture, historic preservation, and urban design.

Design review occurs in two phases: Initial Design Review, in which the intent is to identify and respond to basic design issues early on, and the second stage, which occurs before entitlement action and encompasses a more detailed review of the project design. There may be multiple rounds of review and revisions to the project design. Design findings are documented in case reports, which the Planning Commission uses as the basis of review in their final review motions. There is no public meeting exclusively on the proposed design of a project

# CASE STUDY

## BELLEVUE



## SNAPSHOT

**Population 149,440**

a density of 4,335 people/sq mile

**14.7%**

growth from 2011 to 2021.

### Why did we choose this example?

Similar regulatory environment (Washington); geographically proximate urban center.

### WHAT DOES DESIGN REVIEW LOOK LIKE?

Design review is discretionary administrative decision that is part of the overall entitlement process. Departures from code are allowed through the Design Review process. Design guidelines are embedded within the code. Generally, Design Review is only required in denser areas of mixed-use development, as well as in areas that abut single-family zones. No public meetings are held as part of the Design Review process.

### WHEN & WHERE IS DESIGN REVIEW REQUIRED?

Design review is required in specific mapped districts, including Downtown, Belred subarea, several transit-oriented development overlays, Community Retail Design Districts, Neighborhood Mixed Use Districts. Design review is also required in Transition Area Design Districts, which are areas where multifamily uses are planned next to single-family uses.

### HOW IS EQUITY INTERGRATED?

Equity is not integrated into the design review process or design guidelines.

3. Promote Welcoming Residential Entries.

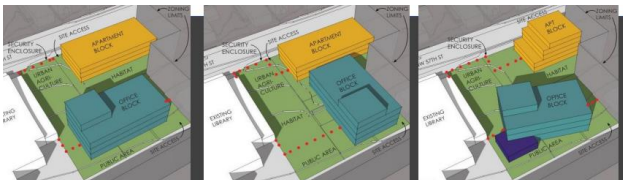
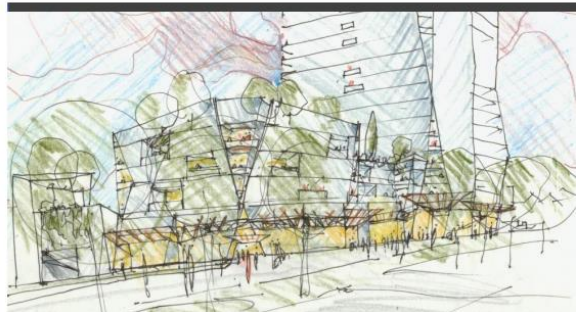
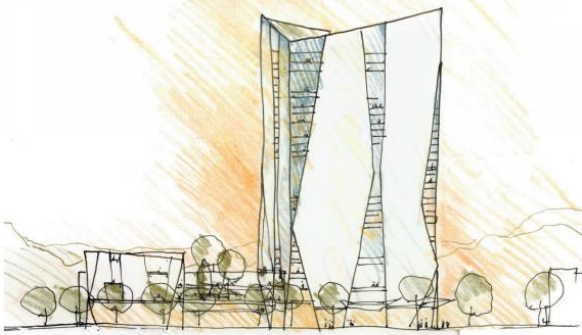
- a. Intent. Residential entries should provide a graceful transition between the public and private realms.
- b. Guideline. Residential entries should be substantial enough to suggest privacy yet welcoming to those who approach and enter.
- c. Recommended.
  - i. Ground-related individual unit entries should be provided on ground floor space not used by storefronts or a multifamily lobby. Where there are ground-related individual entries, a clear transition between public, semi-private, and private space should be delineated with a combination of the following techniques:
    - (1) Moderate change of grade (two to five feet is preferred) from sidewalk level to entry.
    - (2) Provision of a porch or deck at least six feet wide by four feet deep. A covered porch is preferred.
    - (3) Private open space at least 10 feet wide.
    - (4) A low fence, rail, or planting two to four feet high. (This option is recommended in combination with any of the above.)

## DESIGN GUIDELINES

Design guidelines are embedded into the land use code, generally under the special district in which they apply. Design guidelines do not prescribe specific design solutions, and there are many ways to meet a guideline. Each individual guideline provides the following detail:

- Intent: an initial concise statement of the objective of the guidelines
- Guideline: Explanatory text describing the details of the guidelines
- Recommended: Textual and photographic examples of recommended development consistent with the intent of the guideline.
- Not recommended: Textual and photographic examples of development that does not meet the intent of the guidelines.

Guidelines generally cover architectural compatibility, architectural detailing, materials, massing, design concept and character, site layout, pedestrian-oriented design and building elements.



## DESIGN REVIEW PROCESS

Design Review applications are reviewed and approved by city staff within the development services department. A preapplication conference is required for Design Review projects, in which city staff provide initial feedback and guidance on codes and design guidelines. Applicants must submit the following materials: project narrative; design concept and images; site plans; site analysis of existing conditions and transportation access; elevation and massing diagrams; design process concepts; responses to design guidelines, and drawings that depict the pedestrian experience of the project. After a permit application is submitted, the discretionary design review process occurs as part of the overall permitting process.

Per data provided by the City of Bellevue, 13 projects have completed the Design Review Process in the past year, taking an average of 76.3 weeks to achieve project or site plan approval.

# CASE STUDY

PORTLAND



## DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT

**Population 660,398**

a density of 4,994 people/sq mile

**11.5%**

growth from 2010 to 2019.

### Why did we choose this example?

Comparable to Seattle size/growth

### WHAT DOES DESIGN REVIEW LOOK LIKE?

Design review supports development that builds on context, contributes to the public realm, and provides high quality and resilient buildings and public spaces. Design Review offers opportunities for increased flexibility over the design standards. Design Review occurs as part of the overall entitlement process.

There are three types of Design Review:

- Type I is administrative review and is appealable to the state LUBA.
- Type II is administrative review and is appealable to the Design Commission.
- Type III requires a hearing and approval by the Design Commission; staff provide a recommendation.

### WHEN & WHERE IS DESIGN REVIEW REQUIRED?

All new development within the Design Overlay Zones is subject to design review; the overlay is limited to mainly the central city but has been expanded to some growing urban nodes across the city. The type of review required is based on geographic location, project size, and

complexity, with larger and more complex projects requiring Type III review. Development in the downtown area is generally required to go through a Type III process; in other areas, a two-track system is available for certain projects (generally, those under 40,000 sf). In these areas, projects may opt to comply with a set of prescriptive design standards using the Design Plan Check process instead of going through the discretionary Design Review process and using the design guidelines

## HOW IS EQUITY INTERGRATED?

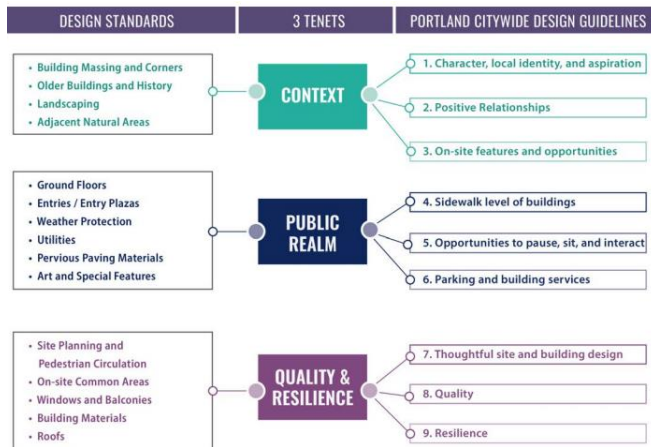
Certain projects are required to coordinate a Neighborhood Contact meeting prior to submitting permits, to provide opportunity for the community to learn about a project and initiate discussion about potential issues.

The Design Commission lists equity as a core principle of the design review process, stating that “everyone deserves the opportunity to participate” and that “everyone deserves to live and work in safe, well-designed buildings...”

## DESIGN GUIDELINES

Projects that are subject to Design Review must meet the Citywide Design Guidelines; in some areas, neighborhood specific guidelines may also apply.

The Design Guidelines are organized into three sections: context; public realm; and quality and resilience. There are nine overarching design guidelines, each accompanied by background information, diagrams, images, and suggested design approaches that provide examples of how to meet the design guidelines.



## DESIGN REVIEW PROCESS

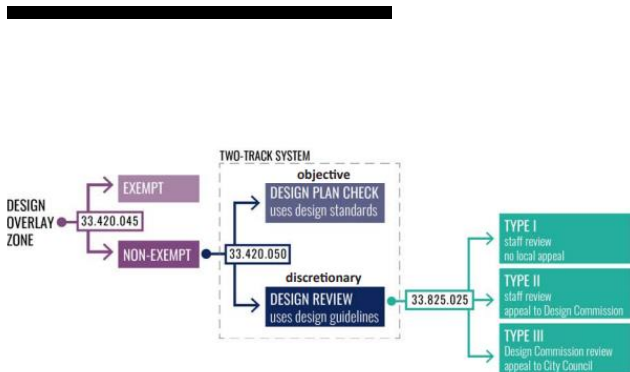
Type III procedures require a pre-application conference. Applicants may opt in for a Design Advice Request (DAR) to get feedback from the Design Commission prior to the submittal of a Design Review. DARs are strongly recommended for Type II reviews that are large and/or sensitive.

Certain projects—generally those over 10,000 square feet--require ‘neighborhood contact’

Modifications may be granted if it is demonstrated that the modification “better meets the design guideline” and are “consistent with the purpose of the standard for which a modification is requested.”

The Commission relies heavily on the issues identified in staff memos and Staff Reports and most often agrees with their recommendations.

Design Commission is a volunteer body.



# CASE STUDY

DENVER



## SNAPSHOT

### Population 727,211

a density of 4,532 people/sq mile

### 21.2%

growth from 2010 to 2019.

### Why did we choose this example?

Comparable to Seattle size/growth

### What projects are subject to Design Review?

New Construction as required by the applicable Small Area Plan

### WHAT DOES DESIGN REVIEW LOOK LIKE? HOW IS EQUITY INTEGRATED?

The Downtown Design Advisory Board is empowered through the Denver Zoning Code to advise and assist the Community Planning and Development Department in the design review process. The board is composed of Downtown residents, property owners, design professionals, and real estate development industry representatives who help ensure that projects are developed in accordance with these DSG's Design Standards and Design Guidelines specific to each Small Area Plan

Equity is not explicitly integrated, and the scope Design Review appears to be exterior and site only.

## DESIGN GUIDELINES

The DSG is organized to follow a typical approach to project design.

- 3.I To encourage use of well-detailed exterior materials with texture and depth that provide a sense of Human Scale**
- 3.J To integrate changes in exterior building materials with the overall design and articulation of the building**
- 3.K To promote use of a variety of high-quality durable exterior materials**
- 3.L To reduce resource and energy consumption through use of sustainable exterior materials**



67. Building materials shall be of proven quality and durability.

1. Site Organization
2. Building Mass & Scale
3. Facade Design & Site Details
4. Private Streetscape Design
5. Neighborhood Specific Design
6. Building Signs

Each section includes intent statements, design Standards and design guidelines

Intent Statements establish the objectives to be achieved for each topic and may also be used to determine the appropriateness of alternatives or innovative approaches that do not meet specific design standards. It is expected that projects will be consistent with all relevant intent statements.

Design Standards set prescriptive criteria for achieving the intent statements. They use the term “shall” to indicate that compliance is expected and are numbered by chapter for reference.

Design Guidelines provide additional suggestions to achieve the intent statements. They use the term “should” or “consider” and are numbered by chapter for reference.

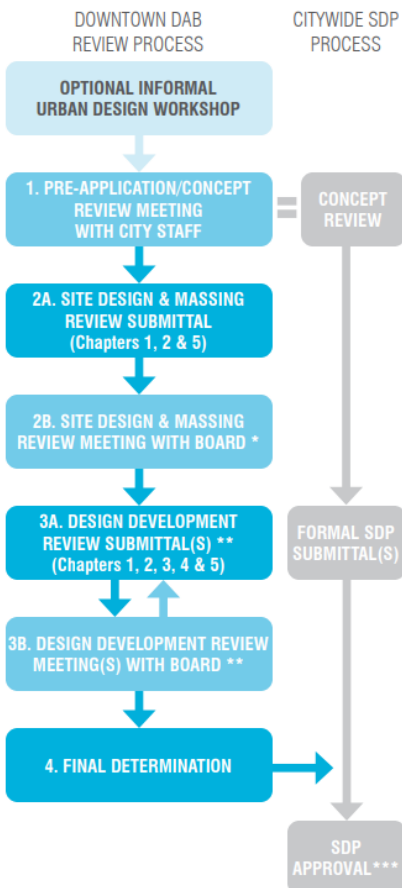
## DESIGN REVIEW PROCESS

Depending on the project location, Design review may be admin or by a Board. Some Boards appear advisory, others appear to recommend decisions to the zoning administrator

Site Development Plan and/or Large Development Review similar’ to Seattle’s EDG; seems to be admin. Depending on the Small Area Plan, a Board/Commission review may be required, which seems to be facilitated by the planner.

Public notice is required for development in some Areas (ex. A General Development Plan is required in the station area, and that plan requires extensive public outreach, new specific design guidelines, etc.)

In some cases, an innovative or creative design approach that does not comply with specific design standards or guidelines may be approved if it is consistent with the guiding principles and relevant intent statements. It is the applicant’s responsibility to show that an alternative solution is consistent with, and effectively implements the guiding principles and intent statements of the DSG.





# CASE STUDY

BOSTON



## SNAPSHOT

### Population 692,600

a density of 14,073 people/sq mile

### 12.1%

growth from 2010 to 2019.

### Why did we choose this example?

Comparable to Seattle size/growth

### What projects are subject to Design Review?

Projects with 15 units or more and/or 20,000 sf or more

### WHAT DOES DESIGN REVIEW LOOK LIKE? HOW IS EQUITY INTERGRATED?

The Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) responsibilities include planning, workforce development, and overall economic development. As part of project review, Design Review is integrated into a holistic process. The type required, varies based on the size of project:

- Small Project Review (20-50K or 15 units)
- Admin; Large Project Review (50K+): Admin with public input and advisory boards;
- Boston Civic Design Commission review (100K+ or in certain areas): advisory board with required action prior to permit approval

Design review criteria include references to building height, massing, materials. Environmental criteria include a project's impacts on sunlight, wind, groundwater, and air and water quality. Transportation review, undertaken in coordination with the Transportation Department, focuses on the impacts of traffic, parking, and examines proposed changes to rights-of-way, encroachments on public space, curb cuts, and requirements of the Boston Air Pollution Control Commission. Employment impact review focuses on the nature and quality of jobs likely to result from the project and the degree to which those jobs will be accessible to Boston residents. Other review criteria include impacts on both infrastructure systems and capacities, and on historic resources. While equity is not explicitly integrated community participation is encouraged and supported throughout the review process.

**Project Notification Form (PNF) Filed** – Filing the PNF initiates active review of the project and a 30-day public comment period. PNFs include a project summary and renderings, transportation analysis, and environmental impact analysis. It must also indicate the project's ability to achieve LEED Certification (as of 2006), a Climate Change Preparedness and Resiliency Checklist (2013), and an Accessibility Checklist (2014).

**PNF Distribution to COB, City and State Agencies, and the IAG** – The BPDA sends the PNF to City and State Agencies, local elected officials, and others. These agencies, the IAG and all interested stakeholders comment during the 30-day public comment period.

**Scoping Session** – Scoping sessions are the official project review “kickoffs” and discussions, that include the developer, BPDA staff, interested City and State Agencies, and the IAG. All participants review the PNF prior to the Scoping Session.

**IAG-Developer Meeting** – Developers meet with the IAG prior to hosting a community meeting to discuss project impacts and possible mitigation and/or community benefits. Mitigation often relates to infrastructure and public realm improvements. Community benefits typically involve funding for neighborhood initiatives.

**Community Meeting** – The developer presents the project proposal to the community, during the 30-day public comment period. Developers may meet with community groups prior to this meeting to learn about potential community concerns.

**Boston Civic Design Commission (BCDC) Review** – Projects ≥100,000 square feet are reviewed by BCDC for impacts on the public realm. BCDC is composed of professional volunteer architects and meets monthly. BCDC review is advisory, but BCDC approval is required prior to BPDA Board approval.

**Scoping Determination Issued** – If the comments and meetings demonstrate that the PNF has adequately addressed potential impacts and mitigation, the project will proceed to the BPDA Board for approval and issuance of a Scoping Determination Waiving Further Review. If the BPDA finds that the PNF does not adequately address impacts and mitigation, the BPDA will issue a Scoping Determination requiring supplemental information represented by the Draft Project Impact Report (DPIR).

Approved or DPIR

## DESIGN GUIDELINES

In lieu of design guidelines, a comprehensive list of BRA submission requirements clarify expectations based on project size. Developers of large projects (Large Project Review), typically those greater than 50,000 square feet in size, are required to provide much of this information. Smaller proposals (Small Project Review) provide only the information appropriate to their context and complexity, as defined by the BRA.

In addition to the submittal requirements, the BRA reserves the right to request financial projections for a proposed project if a proponent cites financial limitations for non-compliance with BRA modifications.

## DESIGN REVIEW PROCESS

Design review is an integrated element of the full review process. The BRA’s Urban Design department, in conjunction with the planning and economic development staff, considers the compatibility of a project with its surroundings in terms of massing, height, materials, ornamentation, fenestration, landscaping, and access.

The elements of ongoing design review include:

- Project Schematics,
- Design Development plans,
- Contract Document plans, and
- Construction Inspection,

Design review often begins prior to the submission of a Letter of Intent, and is fully engaged in the early stages of schematic design.

Projects larger than a single site will generally be asked to include a larger context area in their urban design analysis, showing relationships and connections to the neighborhood or district, its uses, its character, and its infrastructure.

As part of the design review process, certain projects are subject to Article 28 of the Code – Boston Civic Design Commission (“BCDC”) review. BCDC review considers the relationship of a proposed project to the public realm of the City of Boston. Generally those projects at or over 100,000 gross square feet, or located within PDAs or IMP areas, are subject to review by the BCDC. The BCDC may also, at its discretion, choose to review proposed projects of somewhat less than 100,000 SF if such are determined to have a significant potential impact upon the public realm of the neighborhood or City. The BCDC is advisory to the BRA and must act on a project before approvals may be obtained through the BRA. In general, both BCDC and BRA Article 80 review take place during the development of the schematic design for a given project.