h a n d b o o k

championing civic design excellence in Seattle's public realm

S E A T T L E

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ROADMAP – for CIP projects

Step 1: Contact Commission staff to discuss your project.

- Provide an overview of project scope, budget and schedule.
- Request that a Commissioner participate in consultant selection process.
- Get advice on how many stages of review are likely.
- Inform project team.

Step 2: Schedule and prepare for first presentation.

- Identify time preference and presentation team members.
- If desired, schedule a prep session with Commission and other City staff to discuss key issues.
- Assemble materials according to the Presentation Checklist for that particular stage of review.

Step 3: Make a strong presentation.

- Come prepared with handouts and graphics.
- Plan for half the allotted time for your presentation, leaving half for comments and discussion by the Commission.
- Make active use of dialogue with Commission, noting key comments and concens.
- Review draft meeting minutes, prepared by Commission staff, for accuracy in capturing what was said.
- Receive final minutes distributed by Commission staff to document presentation.

Step 4: Contact Commission staff to debrief on past presentations and get guidance on next presentation.

- Provide any design updates.
- Discuss Actions from minutes.
- Review design materials and how they respond to Commission concerns.
- Discuss other key issues.

Step 5: Schedule and prepare for subsequent presentations.

- See Step 2 - 5 until project has been fully reviewed by Commission.

Skagit River Relicensing - Environmental Learning Center Reservoir Covering Project~Lake Washington Apartments~City Hall~Experience Music Project~Waterfront South Harborfront Project
ter Lot 2~Seattle Center Fun Forest Building~Seattle Center Flag Pavilion~Seattle Center Pavilion B~Interbay Family Golf Course~Design Review Program~Seattle Pacific University Interbay P
Center Expansion~Holly Park~Pipers Creek: Streets to Sound State Route 519 Intermodal Access Project~Pipers Creek: Streets to Sound~KOMO Alley Vacation~Ballpark Site Plan and Adjacent
Planning~West Police Precinct/911 Ballard Senior Center~Magnolia Pool~Ballpark Pedestrian Plan~TT Minor Miller Community Center Water Feature~Fairview Olmsted Park~Space Needle and
Way / Lake Union CSO Control~Ballpark Pedestrian Plan~Queen Anne Boulevard Restoration Plan and Design Guidelines~Terminal 18~Aquarium "Sound to Mountain" Exhibit~Space Needle a
ment Project, Phase 1 Sidewalk and Related Storm Drainage~Seattle Center Flag Pavilion~State Route 519~Haller Lake Maintenance Facilities~WSCTC Expansion Project~Aquarium Sound to
Convention Center Design Principles (SDC discussion)~Olmstead Interpretive Exhibit~Seattle Children's Theater Addition~Fun Forest Maintenance Building~Waterfront South East Pike Street a

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Overview

The Seattle Design Commission was established in 1968 to ensure that the citizens of Seattle benefit from the highest level of design excellence and livability in the city's public buildings and open spaces. This nine-member Commission is advisory, not regulatory, providing professional, multidisciplinary design expertise to the Mayor, City Council, and the City at large. The ordinance that defines the Commission's review function is included in the Appendix under "Commission's Advisory Role".

Through a relationship that may begin with consultant selection and continue through construction documents, Commissioners review the design goals and solutions for all projects that affect the civic environment. These include capital improvement projects from all city departments, private projects affecting the city's right of way, and signage installations in certain downtown areas. Projects are most commonly reviewed in Design Commission meetings where diverse constituents can explore, within a public setting, the issues raised by a particular project or design. Occasionally, smaller projects are reviewed by the Chair on behalf of the entire Commission. Staff pave the way for these meetings, providing advice on project development and assisting with interagency and interdepartmental coordination as they work with project proponents.

Beyond the review of specific projects, the Commission also performs a design advocacy function within the city. In addition to reviewing an extensive array of public and private projects, Commissioners and staff participate in a variety of discussions on compelling design issues with other departments and public agencies, committees and review boards. This broad exposure to development activities puts the Commission in a unique position to provide guidance on major trends and key issues that affect the city's physical environment.

Working Relationship

Seattle Design Commission

The Commission is a resource to City government and the citizens of Seattle. This nine-member, nonpartisan group encompasses a breadth of professional design expertise. The Commission includes two licensed architects, one professional fine artist, one urban or environmental designer, and one lay member, as well as at least one and no more than two of the following: professional urban planners, landscape architects, and licensed professional engineers. Commissioners are recommended by their professional peers and selected on the basis of their overall qualifications, experience with design review processes, and commitment to urban design; they are nominated by the Mayor and confirmed by City Council for renewable two-year terms. A Chair is designated by the Mayor and confirmed by City Council for a one-year term.

Commissioners are supported in their work by staff who manage day-to-day operations and work with project proponents. Supplemental assistance is provided by urban design staff from CityDesign, the City's urban design office that works in partnership with the Commission and the Design Review Program to promote design excellence.

To facilitate the development of outstanding design projects and advocate for a livable city, Commission and staff responsibilities include the following:

Preparation for Commission reviews

Commission staff help proponents prepare for reviews by working with proponents and City staff early in the formulation of a project; asking questions about project purpose, scope, and stage of design; and obtaining materials to assess the full spectrum of design issues.

Commission staff bring Commissioners up-to-date on projects with briefings, conducted before each Commission meeting, that summarize project review status and previous Commission concerns.

Review of projects

Ordinarily, projects are presented at Commission meetings, which occur on the first and third Thursdays of each month. After the presentation by project proponents (and, if appropriate, comments by city staff and community members), Commissioners provide direction on the design. For capital improvement projects or right-of-way projects, a designated Commissioner summarizes individual comments as an official "action," or recommendation, from the Commission as a whole. The action specifies that the Commission: a) accepts the design, b) accepts the design with minor conditions, c) accepts the design with substantial conditions, or d) rejects the design. Additionally, the action identifies areas of strengths and weaknesses. For more informal reviews or briefings, a summary statement including highlights of the discussion is crafted instead of a formal action. Actions or summaries are ratified and appear in the minutes as the basis for future dialogue between proponents and Commissioners. In cases where projects are reviewed solely by the Chair, proponents work with staff to present pertinent materials and similarly receive an official recommendation on their projects.

Public records of Commission meetings

A detailed record of all Commission meetings is maintained in the form of meeting minutes. Draft minutes are sent to the presentation team for review and comment generally within two weeks of the meeting date. Final minutes are approved by the Commission and distributed to the City Council, Mayor, and appropriate city staff, as well as to the proponents, meeting attendees, and other interested parties. The minutes, along with copies of the proponents' presentation materials, form an official record of the meeting and are available to the public for review. When the Chair alone reviews a project on behalf of the Commission, a memorandum summarizing that review is prepared and distributed in the same manner.

Project Implementation

In cooperation with staff, Commissioners continue to track project development into implementation to ensure that capital improvement and right-of-way projects deliver on their promise of design excellence. In setting standards of excellence for new development, Commissioners frequently reference completed exemplary projects as precedents, but they also encourage new, innovative approaches. The Commission's advocacy role is enriched by its ongoing role of observing project trends and identifying key issues that help shape civic space in Seattle.

Project Proponents

Project proponents include the managers of capital improvement projects, right-of-way projects, and signage installations. Their vision and leadership are essential to completing a successful project that meets the functional needs of the users, while also improving the quality of the public realm. To take advantage of the Commission's input, proponents are encouraged to assume the following responsibilities:

Early involvement

Project proponents should initiate a dialogue with the Commission early on, when projects are first being developed. Thereafter, they should present design work on a schedule appropriate to the project, determined in consultation with Commission staff.

Design consultant selection

In selecting design consultants, proponents should give high priority to their demonstrated design achievements and/or their potential for design innovation. For capital improvement projects, proponents are encouraged to include a Commissioner on the selection team, as well as others who are experienced in judging such achievements.

Preparation for Commission reviews

As a project develops, project proponents should contact Commission staff several weeks in advance to schedule a review and seek advice on the presentation.

Project presentations

Presentations should address design principles for the project, guided by the principles articulated in this handbook and by the proponents own declared goals. Proponents should provide a clear understanding of the urban context and proposed design alternatives represented by diagrams, drawings, models, and photographs. Presentation materials may vary in finished quality, but they should be easily understandable and legible from a distance of at least twelve feet. The Commission prefers a style of presentation that facilitates interactive and iterative study of the materials, and discourages reliance on slide or computer generated presentations.

Capital Improvement Projects

The Commission reviews a range of capital improvement projects, from major civic buildings to community centers, playgrounds, maintenance facilities, substations, standpipes, and combined sewer outfalls. For the purpose of Commission reviews, a capital improvement project is defined as any facility or physical improvement that is constructed on city property and/or is funded by the city. The Appendix includes a more complete definition, taken from the ordinance governing capital improvement projects.

Commission's Role

Review rationale

Capital improvement projects touch the lives of all Seattle citizens, as users, passersby, or tax payers; they represent an investment of public resources in the city's future functional, aesthetic, social, and civic needs. Seattle's civic environment should embrace the dignity and aspirations of all its citizens, while conserving and expressing the unique man-made and natural qualities of the region. Design excellence and a clear understanding of the long-term implications of design decisions are critical to ensuring that public resources are being wisely invested to make this a "beloved place" for future generations.

Design principles

Capital improvement projects are public works, and as such, the Commission strongly encourages proponents to consider the long-term implications of the changes they are proposing. In particular, proponents should provide compelling evidence of how a diverse citizenry will use and perceive the city's public realm as a result of the project. It is important that proponents situate their design within the urban or architectural context and show how it will contribute positively to that context.

In reviewing capital improvement projects, the Commission looks to the following three design principles:

Projects shall have a civic scale and character,

- Expressing a sense of permanence through their scale, physical presence, social significance, and use of materials;
- Serving as a stage for civic life that accommodates both the planned and spontaneous rituals of the city's diverse populace; and
- Exceeding the functional demands of the project to engage the users' imaginations and create a sense of place.

Projects shall express the city's socio-cultural identity and diversity,

- Incorporating different perspectives through a genuine public participation process;
- Integrating art as an expression of the city's past, present, and future; and
- Being responsive to the surrounding neighborhood and local identity, while also connecting to a larger civic realm

Projects shall be sustainable over time,

- Exemplifying environmentally sensitive design;
- Conserving significant historic, cultural, and ecological resources;
- Conserving economic resources; and
- Being inclusive of the city's most vulnerable populations, including children, the homeless, and the elderly.

Value Added by the Review Process

Commission involvement in capital improvement projects often results in an exploration of alternatives and design opportunities that might otherwise be overlooked. At the outset of a project, the Commission's input can be useful in establishing design objectives that result in a strong fit within the larger urban fabric. The Commission can also provide suggestions for integrating all elements of a design solution, from urban and site planning to landscape, engineering, art, and architecture. Finally, the Commission's public review of projects can help them become more appropriately scaled, culturally responsive, and environmentally sustainable.

Proponents' Role

Proponents of capital improvement projects should work with Commission staff to tailor the review process to the scope of their particular project. Proponents of larger projects that have significant urban design issues and community impact will be asked to participate in reviews in all the phases of design that are described in this section. Typically, proponents of smaller projects will be scheduled for fewer reviews. However, all proponents are strongly encouraged to engage the Commission early in project development. Proponents should consult with Commission staff for assistance in outlining the optimal number of reviews and the best timing for these. The stages of review and ideal sequence are outlined on the following pages.

Proponents are also strongly encouraged to develop, and to continually revisit and refine a set of design goals and objectives for the project that are more specific than the Commission's design principles. These goals and objectives can be used, beginning with consultant selection and continuing throughout the review process, to facilitate dialogue between Commissioners and proponents.

Consultant Selection

The consultant selection process is the first opportunity for project proponents to establish a working relationship with the Commission that will result in a successful developmental process. Proponents will find that the Commission represents many years of multidisciplinary experience in design professions that include architecture, landscape architecture, urban planning, art, and engineering. Proponents should involve Commissioners as participants in the selection of design teams for major capital improvement projects, which will help ensure comprehensive evaluation by professional peers and coordination with projects in other city departments.

To ensure the best design quality and value when selecting a consultant for capital improvement projects, proponents are strongly encouraged to take the following measures:

- Include preliminary design goals and objectives in the project scope
- Comprehensively scope the project to include adequate design budgets and schedules
- Include a Commissioner on the selection team
- Invite submissions from a wide range of firms, including new firms and minority- and women-owned firms
- Solicit firms with a record of, or potential for, design excellence.
- Assess the firms' design expertise and values, their managerial and interpersonal competence, and their enthusiasm for the project

Pre-design

The pre-design review is an opportunity for proponents to provide Commissioners with background information on a project. During this briefing session, proponents can expect to receive multidisciplinary advice about the project scope, general project issues, potential opportunities, and the expected review steps for the project. Proponents should schedule this review after establishing the preliminary project scope and budget.

Discussion Topics

Proponents should include the following items in their presentation:

- project history
- project scope
- site context and neighborhood analysis
- socio-cultural responsiveness
- project feasibility, longevity, and environmental sustainability
- consultant and artist interaction, city agency interaction
- public process and community involvement
- project budget
- project management

Presentation Checklist

Proponents should include the following items in their presentation materials:

- background information, as appropriate
- scope of work and program requirements
- site description and photos, plan of the surrounding area (a minimum of 9-square blocks or its equivalent), analysis of urban design conditions
- expectations for socio-cultural responsiveness
- expectations for value engineering
- expectations for consultant, artist, agency involvement
- expectations for public participation
- rough budget for design, construction, and art program.
- design and construction schedule with a project timeline

Concept Design

The concept design review is an opportunity for proponents to present an analysis of the urban and historical contexts, existing infrastructures, and natural environment of the project. Proponents should use this analysis to set forth the design goals and objectives for the project, demonstrates its context, and present a conceptual design that achieves the goals and objectives. Proponents should present alternative schemes for discussion.

Discussion Topics

Proponents should discuss the following topics in their presentation:

- site analysis (addressing history, functional patterns, socio-cultural make-up, ecological resources)
- project analysis (addressing scale, contextual fit, public art, resource conservation, social equity)
- implementation issues (such as neighborhood planning, public participation, management, fiscal responsibility)
- design goals and objectives based on these analyses
- conceptual spatial relationships/aesthetic expression/bulk and form
- alternative approaches to the site and project

Presentation Checklist

Proponents should include the following items in their presentation materials:

- early analysis of the site, project, and implementation issues
- photos of the site and context
- plan of the surrounding area (a minimum of 9-square blocks or its equivalent)
- list of design goals and objectives
- conceptual site plan showing the project and its context
- conceptual architectural plans and sections showing program functions
- conceptual art plan
- study models
- alternative schemes

Schematic Design

The schematic design review is an opportunity for proponents to explain whether the development and refinement of the conceptual design has led to the affirmation or revision of the design goals and objectives. Proponents should present alternative schemes for discussion and explain their criteria for selecting a preferred alternative.

Discussion Topics

Proponents should discuss the following topics in their presentation:

- refined analysis of the civic, socio-cultural, and environmental issues for the site and project, if appropriate
- affirmation or revision of the design goals and objectives
- previous Commission recommendations
- schematic approach to the site (such as neighborhood fit, spatial organization, sociocultural responsiveness, ecological responsiveness)
- schematic approach to the project (addressing scale, massing, contextual fit, spatial organization energy conservation, public art, social equity)
- schematic approach to project implementation (such as neighborhood planning, public participation, management, fiscal responsibility)

Presentation Checklist

Proponents should include the following items in their presentation materials:

- further analysis of site, project, and implementation issues
- plan of the surrounding area (a minimum of 9-square blocks or its equivalent)
- list of design goals and objectives
- list of Commission recommendations
- list of programmatic elements
- schematic site plan showing the project and context
- schematic architectural plans and sections with program allocations
- schematic landscape plan
- schematic art plan
- perspective sketches and/or study models
- alternative schemes and an indication of the preferred alternative

Design Development

The design development review is an opportunity for proponents to present refinement of the preferred alternative and show the integration of all aspects of the project, including urban and site planning, architecture, landscape, engineering, and public art, as appropriate.

Discussion Topics

Proponents should discuss the following topics in their presentation:

- review of the design goals and objectives
- previous Commission recommendations
- site development (e.g. neighborhood fit, spatial organization, landscape, public art)
- project development (e.g. scale, massing, contextual fit, spatial organization, selection of materials, value engineering, public art)
- implementation development (e.g. management, fiscal responsibility, scheduling)

Presentation Checklist

Proponents should include the following items in their presentation materials:

- list of the design goals and objectives
- list of previous Commission recommendations
- development of the urban and site plan with photos
- development of the architectural plans, sections, elevations
- development of the landscape plan
- development of the art plan
- perspective sketches and/or a model
- development of the implementation plan

Construction Documents

The construction documents review is necessary only in rare instances, usually with large and complex projects. It is an opportunity for the proponents to explain how Commission concerns have been addressed, or changes made, in the final design solution. It is also appropriate for proponents to explain whether the comments of other review bodies have resulted in significant design changes.

Discussion Topics

Proponents should discuss the following topics in their presentation:

- review of the design goals and objectives
- previous Commission recommendations
- adherence to, or deviation from those recommendations
- input from other review bodies

Presentation Checklist

Proponents should include the following items in their presentation materials:

- list of the design goals and objectives
- list of Commission recommendations with an indication of adherence/deviation
- visual materials necessary to convey response to Commission recommendations
- specifications (e.g. for materials, landscape, color, art), as appropriate
- design details, as appropriate
- model, if available

Right-of-way Projects

The Commission reviews projects that affect the city's right of way, defined as land that is legally platted for public use by pedestrians, vehicles, and utilities (including the space above and below the ground). Right-of-way projects can range from skybridges to special paving patterns, permanent street vacations or special objects.

Commission's Role

Design Rationale

Right-of-way projects have a profound effect on the quality and character of Seattle's public domain because they alter the function and appearance of the city. Streets and alleys are used for the distribution of utilities and as pedestrian and vehicular routes, lingering spaces, and public gathering places. They not only shape behavior, but they also affect perceptions of safety, openness, and order. Given their functional, esthetic, social, and civic importance, it is essential that the city's streetscapes be conceived, constructed, and maintained in a manner that responds to the diversity of individual neighborhoods, while contributing civic elements that can unify the public realm as the city grows and changes.

Design Principles

Interventions in the public right of way must be assessed against a long-range vision of the city. Since these projects affect public life so acutely, the Commission strongly encourages proponents to consider the long-term implications of the changes they are proposing. In particular, proponents should provide compelling public benefits, showing how the changes will enhance the way citizens use and perceive the city's public realm. It is imperative that proponents present their design in its urban context and show how it will positively contribute to its surroundings.

The Commission relies on the following three design principles to help project proponents create places with strong public benefits:

The public can benefit from an enhanced civic scale and character,

- Experiencing a sense of permanence through a project's scale, physical presence, social significance, and use of materials;
- Gaining a stage for civic life that accommodates both the planned and spontaneous rituals of the city's diverse populace; and
- Going beyond functionality to engage the users' imaginations and create a sense of place.

The public can benefit from an experience of the city's socio-cultural identity and diversity,

- Reflecting different cultural perspectives and a range of accessibility needs;
- Enjoying art as an expression of the city's past, present, and future; and
- Seeing identifying elements of one's neighborhood and local character, while also understanding its connection to a larger civic realm.

The public can benefit from projects that are sustainable over time,

- Exemplifying environmentally sensitive design;
- Conserving significant historic, cultural, and ecological resources; and
- Being inclusive of the city's most vulnerable populations, including children, the homeless, and the elderly.

Value Added by the Review Process

Commission involvement in right-of-way projects often results in an exploration of alternatives and design opportunities that might otherwise be overlooked. At the outset of a project, the Commission's input can assist proponents in establishing design objectives that can result in strong public benefits. The Commission can also provide suggestions for integrating all elements of a design solution, from urban and site planning to landscape, engineering, art, and architecture. Finally, the Commission's public review of projects can help them become more appropriately scaled, culturally responsive, and environmentally sustainable.

Proponents' Role

Right-of-way projects are generally required to be reviewed by the Design Commission, at the request of the City Council, SeaTran, or the Department of Design, Construction, and Land Use. Because the Commission's review in these cases focuses on the specific element that affects the right-of-way and not on the entire project, proponents will not be asked to present all phases of design development. Rather, they should focus on relevant design information to fully explain the right of way issue. Proponents should consult with Commission staff for assistance in determining the precise timing and number of reviews. The "Roadmap for Right-of-Way" projects on the inside cover of this document provides a good outline of the recommended steps for working with the Design Commission.

In some instances, but not all, projects will require review by the appropriate Design Review Board, as well. Every effort is made by Commission staff to ensure that reviews by these two groups are closely aligned and well coordinated. Proponents should consult with Commission staff early on about the possibility of concurrent reviews, and to clarify roles and the optimal sequence of meetings. Proponents can expect that the first review will be with the Commission; a preliminary briefing to the Commission is typically scheduled before the Design Review Board's initial Early Design Guidance meeting.

Proponents can expect a review for any of the types of projects affecting the Right of Way that are described in this section.

Street Use Permits

Proponents can expect Design Commission review of their project, at the discretion of various City agencies with jurisdiction in the right of way, if it deviates from the city's adopted streetscape standard, which specifies paving, trees, furniture, and signage. Proponents will be asked to contribute to the generous development of Seattle's streetscape as significant public open space. Commission review will occur at an early design stage. The Appendix includes an excerpt from the Seattle Municipal Code that specifies the required circumstances for seeking "Street Use Permits".

Discussion Topics

Proponents should discuss the following topics in their presentation:

- design objectives
- analysis of current public uses of the site
- character of the proposed project addressing neighborhood fit, spatial organization, landscape, and scaled massing
- public benefits expressed in terms of the Commission's design principles
- compliance with city ordinances
- abutting property owner's position on the proposal

Presentation Checklist

Proponents should include the following items in their presentation materials:

- list of the design objectives
- photos of the site and surrounding context
- plan of the surrounding area (a minimum of 9-square blocks or its equivalent), analysis of urban design conditions
- proposed site plan
- architectural plans, sections, elevations,
- perspectives and/or a model, if available

Skybridge Permits

Proponents can expect Design Commission review for proposed skybridges, as required by the Seattle Municipal Code Title 15, Chapter 64, Section 50. In this capacity, the Commission advises SeaTran, DCLU and the City at large. Proponents will be asked to ensure that any proposed skybridge will be in the best interest of the public, will provide a long-term benefit to the general public, and will not negatively affect pedestrian activity at street level or views. A more detailed description of "Skybridge Permits" is included in the Appendix, taken from the ordinance governing these permits.

Discussion Topics

Proponents must demonstrate familiarity with City skybridge policies and be prepared to discuss:

- consequences for any views along designated view corridors
- topographic and functional conditions that require pedestrian circulation above or below the street or whether an unsafe or congested condition exists at street level
- consequences of grade separation; should not reduce or detract from a reasonable level of pedestrian activity on the street
- how direct physical and visual access will be provided to and from the facility and adjacent sidewalks, open spaces, or public plazas

Presentation Checklist

Proponents should include the following items in their presentation materials:

- a written explanation of the need for a skybridge
- a written statement of the design objectives
- photos of the site and surrounding context
- plan of the surrounding area (a minimum of 9-square blocks or its equivalent), analysis of urban design conditions
- proposed site plan
- architectural plans, sections, elevations
- perspectives and/or a model
- alternatives to the skybridge

Street and Alley Vacations

Proponents can expect Design Commission review of proposed street and alley vacations at the discretion of SeaTran and/or City Council. Proponents will be asked to ensure that any proposed street or alley vacation serves the public interest and provides a long term public benefit. The components of the public interest, all of which must be present for any vacation, include:

- protection of the public benefits derived from the street or alley, which include circulation, access, light, air, open space, and view,
- alternative public benefit within the civic environment, and
- protection from adverse land use effects.

Discussion Topics

Proponents should be prepared to present both the existing and future uses of the proposed vacation. To justify the need for the vacation and show proposed public benefits, the presentation should include the following components:

Urban Design Analysis

- a detailed site analysis that includes circulation, services, utilities, and effects on views, light, and air
- demonstration of local need and community support
- study of resultant changes in height, bulk and scale
- long term consequences both with and without the vacation

Public Benefits Analysis

- response to design principles for right-of-way projects
- a public benefits package that offers a distinct set of features, beyond existing conditions and as-of-right development
  - public open space accessible throughout the day and linked to nearby paths, trails, or routes
  - streetscape amenities that enliven use by the public

Presentation Checklist

Proponents should include the following in their presentation materials:

- a written explanation of the need for a vacation and overall design objectives
- summary by type of all bonus components and summary of the public benefits package
- photos of the site and surrounding context
- a plan and urban design analysis of the surrounding area (a minimum of 9-square blocks or its equivalent)
- a proposed site plan clearly showing streets or alleys to be vacated or rededicated and resulting traffic patterns
- architectural plans, sections, and elevations
- perspectives or a model to demonstrate spatial impacts
- studies of alternatives to the vacation including those that preserve use of the street or alley, and a "no-vacation" alternative

Objects in the Right-of-way

Proponents can expect a Commission review for proposed Objects in the Right-of-Way, at the discretion of the Street Use Permit staff of SeaTran and according to the guidelines and prevailing City codes that apply to the right of way. Objects in the Right-of-Way include privately funded or gifted public art, objects that serve as symbols for advertising adjacent retail, commemorative plaques, memorials, automated pay toilets, bus shelters, special furnishings, wayfinding signage and community bulletin boards.

SeaTran staff will evaluate applications, with advice from the Commission, and serve as the first point of contact for proponents. SeaTran will also serve as the coordinating agency between the Design Commission, Arts Commission, Office of Urban Conservation, and other review authorities, as may be appropriate to the location of the proposed object.

Proponents should seek early involvement and review of the project by the Commission and any other agency that might hold a role of review. They will be asked to address comprehensively a range of issues related to the public realm, as well as object design, material, fabrication, siting and eventual removal, maintenance, and life-safety.

Discussion Topics

Proponents should be prepared to show how their proposal:

- maintains the public character of downtown streetscapes by limiting the visual and physical extension of private property into the public right-of-way
- minimizes clutter and crowding of the sidewalk, particularly in the downtown area
- provides a public amenity that enhances the pedestrian activity at street level
- considers costs and plans for removal since all SeaTran permits allowing Objects in the Right-of-Way are temporary in nature

Presentation Checklist

Proponents should include the following items in their presentation materials:

- a written description of the object and reason for its placement in the right-of-way
- a list of the design objectives
- photos of the site and surrounding context
- a plan and urban design analysis of the surrounding 9-block area
- conceptual design sketches and drawings of the object
- a site plan showing the object in its proposed location(s)
- perspectives or a model

Sign Permit Special Exceptions

The Seattle Design Commission reviews Sign Permit Special Exceptions in Downtown Zones as part of the Land Use Code requirements. Sign permit special exception applications must be approved by the Director of DCLU. In downtown zones, the Director consults with the Seattle Design Commission before issuance of the special exception decision.

Design Rationale

Signs have a profound effect on the visual quality of Seattle's public domain. It is essential that signs provide a cohesive look with the neighborhood, as well as the buildings to which they are applied. Careful consideration should also go into the design of the hardware that will hold the signs in place. The hardware should blend well with the building, but also minimize potential damage to the building façade if the signs are ever removed.

Design Principles

The Commission offers design advice on proposed Special Exception Sign Permits in Downtown Zones at the request of the DCLU Director. The Commission will advise the DCLU Director, according to these three criteria from the Land Use Code:

- the sign plan shows an exceptional effort to create visual harmony with other building elements through a consistent design theme,
- the sign plan will preserve a desirable existing design or siting pattern for signs in the area, and
- the sign plan will not reduce views of historic landmarks any more than is permitted without a special exception.

Evaluation Methods

After at least one of the above design principles is met, the following characteristics will be used to evaluate the sign proposal.

The sign:

- unifies the project as a whole or contributes to a comprehensive building and tenant signage plan,
- is compatible with the building facade, scale, size, height, and location,
- adds interest to the streetscape, while identifying upper level businesses,
- helps orient pedestrians and motorists at street level in the vicinity, and
- integrates support fixtures, wiring, switches, and other mounting apparatus into the building architecture.

Presentations for a sign permit special exception should include detailed drawings for both proposed and code compliant alternatives and:

- a written statement describing how the proposal is consistent with the criteria listed above;
- contextual site photos
- 9-block area analysis showing pedestrian and traffic flow;
- applicable site and floor plans;
- detailed street elevations showing signage for all levels, **code compliant and proposed**.

Proponents' Role in Sign Permit Special Exceptions in Downtown Zones

Proponent seeking Sign Permit Special Exceptions in Downtown Zone projects undergo a Commission review at the discretion of the Director of the Department of Design, Construction, and Land Use. Proponents should consult with Commission staff for assistance in determining the precise timing and number of reviews. The Roadmap for Sign Permit Special Exceptions projects on the inside cover of this document provides a guide on how to best engage the Commission.

Of the 11 land use districts downtown, the seven listed below, and shown on the map below, are subject to Design Commission review for special exception to the regulations of the sign code.

- Office Core-1 (DOC-1)
- Office Core-2 (DOC-2)
- Retail Core (DRC)
- Mixed Commercial (DMC)
- Harborfront 1 (DH-1)
- Harborfront 2 (DH-2)

Appendix

Excerpts from Seattle Municipal Code (SMC), related City ordinances and City policies

Commission's Advisory Role

SMC 3.58.080 (Ordinance 96897, Section 5, 1968)

The advisory and review function of the Commission shall include:

A. Recommending to appropriate City officials those project designers and/or design teams that, in its opinion, should be selected and commissioned to provide design services for the execution of capital improvement projects. The Commission shall establish procedures for obtaining the credentials and experience of such design professionals, and procedures for evaluating the relative capabilities of said professionals for specific projects;

B. Study of projects prior to commencement of design. Such study to include formulation of recommended aesthetic, environmental and design principles and objectives that the Commission believes should be sought in the development of the project. These recommendations should be discussed with the project designer and appropriate City officials prior to commencement of design work;

C. Review projects from time to time during the design period and recommend approval upon completion of the schematic design phase, the design development phase and the construction document phase. It shall be the function of the Commission to advise and assist the project designer and appropriate City officials in the development of the project. The Commission may recommend changes in the project designer's work or may recommend approval. Commission review of the construction document phase shall mean review relative to compliance with previously determined environmental and aesthetic objectives.

Capital Improvement Project (CIP)

Definition - SMC 3.58.020 (Ordinance 96897 Section 2, 1968)

"Capital improvement project" shall mean any on or above-grade structure including buildings and additions to buildings, bridges, viaducts, streets, arterial and highway improvements, park developments, landscaping, fencing gates, lamp standards, signs, street furniture, and all similar installations including below-grade structures which are regularly visible to the public including tunnels, arcades and underground passageways, to be erected on land belonging to the City, financed in whole or in part with City funds, or subject to the approval of the City.

Right of Way Projects

Street Use Permits - STD Director's Rule 95-1

A use permit is required prior to engaging in an activity that would constitute a "use" of the public place, as that term is defined in SMC 15.02.048. Anyone wanting to engage in an activity that would constitute a "use" of the public place (including "the exercise of dominion or control over or occupation of all or part of the public place") must first obtain a use permit.

Skybridge Permits - SMC 15.64.010 Purpose and Intent Statement

B. It is the intent of the City Council to limit the proliferation and adverse effects of skybridges. It is intended that proposed skybridges shall be reviewed with regard to how well they serve the public interest and their relationship to the cityscape.

Street Vacation Policies – SMC 15.62. (Resolution #28605, 1992)

The City Council will weigh the public trust and land use effects of a vacation, mitigating measures, and the public benefit provided by the vacation to determine whether or not the vacation is in the public interest. In balancing these elements of the public interest, the Council will place primary importance upon protecting the public trust it holds in public right-of-way.

Proposed vacations may be approved only when they provide a long-term public benefit. Vacations will not be approved to achieve short-term public benefits or for the sole benefit of individuals. Mitigation of the adverse effects of a vacation does not in itself constitute a public benefit.

Sign Permit Exceptions - SMC 23.55.040 (Amended via Ord. 118888, 1998)

The director may authorize exceptions to the regulations for the size, number, type, height, and depth of projection of on-premises signs in Neighborhood Commercial, Commercial, Downtown Office Core, Downtown Retail Core, downtown Mixed commercial, and Downtown Harborfront zones as a special exception pursuant to Chapter 23.76 of the SMC.

ROADMAP - for Right-of-Way Projects

Step 1: Contact Commission staff to discuss your project.

- Provide an overview of project scope, budget and schedule.
- Identify department or agency who recommended Commission review.
- Get advice on appropriate type of review and how many reviews are likely.
- Discuss the scope and scale of project with Commission Staff to determine the type of review required and likely process.
- Inform project team.

Step 2: Schedule and prepare for first presentation or review.

- Identify time preferences and presentation team members.
- If desired, schedule prep session with Commission staff and other City departments.
- Assemble materials per Presentation Checklist.

Step 3: Make a strong presentation or provide a complete set of documents for review.

- For presentations, plan for half the allotted time for your team to present, leaving half for comments and discussion by the Commission.
- For reviews by the Chair (generally smaller projects), present all the necessary information including full contact information if questions arise.
- For presentations, make active use of opportunity to dialogue with the Commission.
- For review by Chair alone, receive memo documenting Commission comments and any concerns.
- For presentations, review draft meeting minutes for accuracy in capturing what was said at meeting.
- For presentations, receive final minutes distributed by Commission staff to document presentation.

Step 4: Contact Commission staff to debrief on meeting or review.

- Provide any design updates.
- Discuss Actions from minutes.
- Review design materials and how they respond to Commission concerns.
- Discuss other key issues.

Step 5: Schedule and prepare for subsequent reviews, as needed.

- See Steps 2 - 5 until project elements have been fully reviewed by Commission.

ROADMAP – for Sign Permit Special Exceptions

Step 1: Contact Commission staff to discuss your project.

- Working with DCLU Land Use Planner, determine that the project is eligible for special exception.
- From Commission Staff, get advice on appropriate type of review and how many reviews are likely.
- Develop Code Compliant alternative and proposed alternative and present materials to Commission staff and Land Use Planner.

Step 2: Schedule and prepare for presentation ore review.

- Assemble materials according to the Presentation Checklist for review.
- Schedule time to deliver presentation material to Commission staff.
- If administrative review, Commission will send follow-up letter to applicant and Land Use Planner with recommendations.

Step 3: Schedule and prepare for subsequent reviews, as needed.

- If full Commission review, follow Steps 3, 4 and 5 in Right of Way review until project has been fully reviewed by Commission.

: Alaskan Way from University Street to Broad Street~Rainier Playfields~Interbay Family Golf Course~Seattle Pacific University Interbay Playfield~Seattle Center East Quadrant Overview~Seat
layfield~Green Lake Park Boating Center Lakeside Erosion Control~Alaskan Way TIB~Arboretum Master Plan~Sakuma View Point~Park Stone View Village~Washington State Trade and Conven
Street Improvements~Monorail Signage~Holly Park Boyer~Fuhrman Street Reconstruction~Magnolia Pool~Seattle Center: Intiman Theater at the Intiman Playhouse~Seattle Center Mercer C
l Broad Street Improvements~Atlantic Street Center~Experience Music Project~Rainier Playfields Seattle University~12th Avenue Street Improvements~Harbor Steps Development /Post Alley D
nd Broad Street Improvements~Pacific Place~Holly Park Community Facilities~Holly Park Community Facilities~University Townhouses~Seattle Public Utilities Irrigation Program~Pike Street I
Mountains Exhibit~Terminal 18~Washington State Convention and Trade Center Expansion~Princeton Bridge~Seattle Center Broad Street Improvements~Weller Street Bridge~Lincoln Reserv
at 10th and 11th Avenues~Football Northwest RTA Street Vacations~WSCTC Expansion West Lake Union Corridor Improvement Project~Intiman Playhouse WSCTC Expansion (Action Review) Ho

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