



SEATTLE DESIGN REVIEW

WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT THE DESIGN REVIEW PROCESS AND ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

August 31, 2012

Design Review focuses on urban and architectural design.

The Design Review process focuses on the architecture and urban design of a proposed development within a neighborhood. The process influences the definition of design elements and aesthetic qualities such as site planning, exterior materials, building bulk & scale, design themes & architectural detailing.

The Design Review process includes public meetings during which priorities and guidelines for the design are set by the Board, and proposals are reviewed by a design review board over the course of two or more meetings. The process results in recommendations that become a part of the City's official decision-making.

Participants in Design Review meetings are always informed that the meeting purview is limited to design topics and not environmental impact topics. This continues to be the case. Because of this focus, at the beginning of each meeting, staff asks participants to direct their comments only toward the design-related aspects of the development proposal.

Staff also explains that comments or questions related to environmental impacts should be addressed to staff via written communication following Master Use Permit application, during environmental review.

WHO TO CONTACT?

You may wish to follow up with the DPD staff planner assigned to evaluate the development proposal with questions about these changes. You can also visit the DPD website for more information: <http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/online-services> and click on "permit status."

What is environmental review (SEPA) and how is this changing?

Environmental review, also referred to as SEPA, is a separate part of City decision-making. It is about identifying the actual risk of significant impacts upon the environment. Recent changes by the City Council mean that fewer development proposals will receive environmental review in certain Urban Centers, and Urban Villages that contain light rail station areas. See the back of this flier for the sizes of affected development.

- The City's plans encourage growth in these neighborhoods; and the presence of good transit service and utilities mean that significant environmental impacts are less likely.
- Also, other City rules already address most environmental protection interests, such as noise and construction time limits, drainage controls, and critical area regulations.
- Traffic issues will continue to be studied and impacts addressed through the Land Use Code.
- SEPA review will continue to occur as it has in the past outside the affected Urban Centers and Urban Villages, and also will continue for commercial, industrial, and the largest category of residential and mixed-use developments.

The neighborhoods where the new, higher environmental review thresholds are in effect include:

- Urban Centers: Downtown, Northgate, South Lake Union
- Urban Villages: Roosevelt, Rainier Beach, Beacon Hill, and North Rainier

In the neighborhoods where the growth target has been met or exceeded, lower environmental review thresholds will remain in effect, including:

- Urban Centers: First Hill, Capitol Hill, University District, Uptown Queen Anne
- Urban Villages: Columbia City, Othello

For maps of the City's urban centers and villages, please visit: http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Seattle_s_Comprehensive_Plan/Comprehensive-Plan/default.asp (shortened URL: <http://1.usa.gov/Nx5oDQ>) and click on "Future Land Use Map."



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MINIMUM ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW THRESHOLDS FOR RESIDENTIAL USES			
Above these levels, SEPA environmental review will occur.			
Zone	Number of Exempt Dwelling Units		
	Outside of Urban Centers, and Outside of Urban Villages Containing SAODs	Within Urban Centers, or Urban Villages Containing SAODs	Within Urban Centers, or Urban Villages Containing SAODs if Growth Targets Have Been Exceeded
SF, RSL	4	4	4
LR1	4	200(1)	20
LR2	6	200(1)	20
LR3	8	200(1)	20
NC1, NC2, NC3, C1, C2	4	200(1)	20
MR, HR, SM	20	200(1)	20
Downtown zones	NA	250(1)	20
Industrial zones	4	4	4

SAOD = Station Area Overlay District. Urban centers, urban villages as identified in the Seattle Comprehensive Plan.
Note: (1) The higher thresholds apply to identified areas that have not reached growth targets specified in the Comprehensive Plan.

MINIMUM ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW THRESHOLDS FOR NON-RESIDENTIAL USES			
Zone	Exempt Area of Use (square feet of gross floor area)		
	Outside of Urban Centers and Urban Villages Containing SAODs	Within Urban Centers, or Urban Villages Containing SAODs	Within Urban Centers, or Urban Villages Containing SAODs if Growth Targets Have Been Exceeded
SF, RSL, LR1	4,000	4,000	4,000
LR2, LR3	4,000	12,000(1) or 30,000	12,000
MR, HR, NC1, NC2, NC3	4,000	12,000(1) or 30,000	12,000
C1, C2, SM zones	12,000	12,000(1) or 30,000	12,000
Industrial zones	12,000	12,000	12,000
Downtown zones	Not Applicable	12,000(1) or 30,000	12,000

Note: (1) If part of mixed-use development in an eligible growth area, the SEPA threshold for commercial uses is 30,000. If it is single-use commercial development in these growth areas, there is a 12,000 square foot threshold.