

**City of Seattle**  
Design Review  
Program Overview

# Design Review Program

## Created in 1994 to...

- Encourage better design & site planning that enhances the character of the city & ensures that new development fits sensitively into neighborhoods
- Provide flexibility in the application of development standards
- Improve communication and participation among developers, neighbors, and the City early in the design and siting of new development

# Design Review Boards

- City is divided into 7 Boards
- Each Board has 5 members representing the following interests:
  1. community
  2. design
  3. development
  4. residential
  5. business
- All Board members are volunteers and are appointed by the Mayor and Council for a 2-year term that can be extended by 2 years



# Design Guidelines

## Design Guidelines are used ...

- As Code authority by the Design Review Program
- By Design Review Boards & City staff to judge the merits of proposed projects
- To inform the development of 18 sets of supplemental guidelines known as the Neighborhood Design Guidelines
- Apply to private property and the intersection with the ROW

## Seattle's Design Guidelines include ...

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

# Citywide Design Guidelines Related to Trees

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

## **D. PLANTS AND HABITAT**

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

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

## **E. WATER**

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

# Citywide Design Guidelines Related to Trees Continued...

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

## **A. NETWORK OF OPEN SPACES**

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

## **B. WALKWAYS AND CONNECTIONS**

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

## **C. OUTDOOR USES AND ACTIVITIES**

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

# Citywide Design Guidelines Related to Trees Continued...

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

## **C. DESIGN**

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

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

# Citywide Design Guidelines Related to Trees Continued...

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

## **D. TREES LANDSCAPE & HARDSCAPE MATERIALS**

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

**D2. Hardscape Materials:** Use exterior courtyards, plazas, and other hard surfaced areas as an opportunity to add color, texture, and/or pattern and enliven public areas through the use of distinctive and durable paving materials. Use permeable materials wherever possible.

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

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



# Design Review Thresholds

## SMC 23.41.004

ZONE	THRESHOLD
Lowrise 2 and 3 (LR2, LR3)	8 dwelling units
Midrise (MR)	20 dwelling units
Highrise (HR)	20 dwelling units
Neighborhood Commercial (NC1, NC2, NC3)	4 dwelling units or 4,000 sf
Commercial (C1, C2)	4 dwelling units or 12,000 sf +
Seattle Mixed (SM)	20 dwelling units or 12,000 sf
Industrial Commercial (IC) within urban villages and centers	12,000 sf
Master Planned Community (MPC)	20 dwelling units or 12,000 sf
For Downtown Zones, see Code	

# Design Review Departures

SMC 23.41.012

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

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

The Board makes a determination that a requested departure may be allowed if an applicant demonstrates that the design would result in a development that better meets the intent of adopted design guidelines.

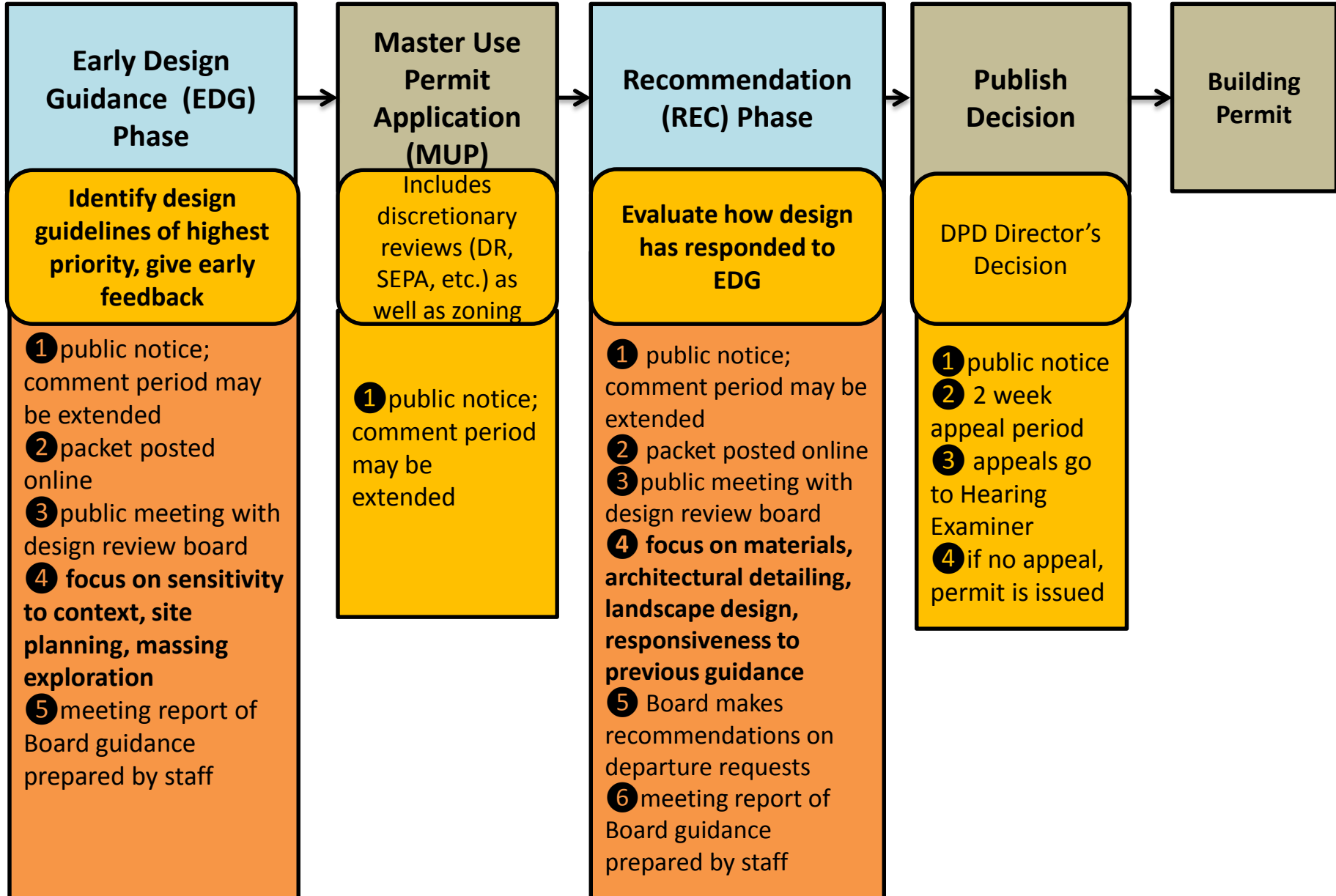
# 3 Types of Design Review:

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

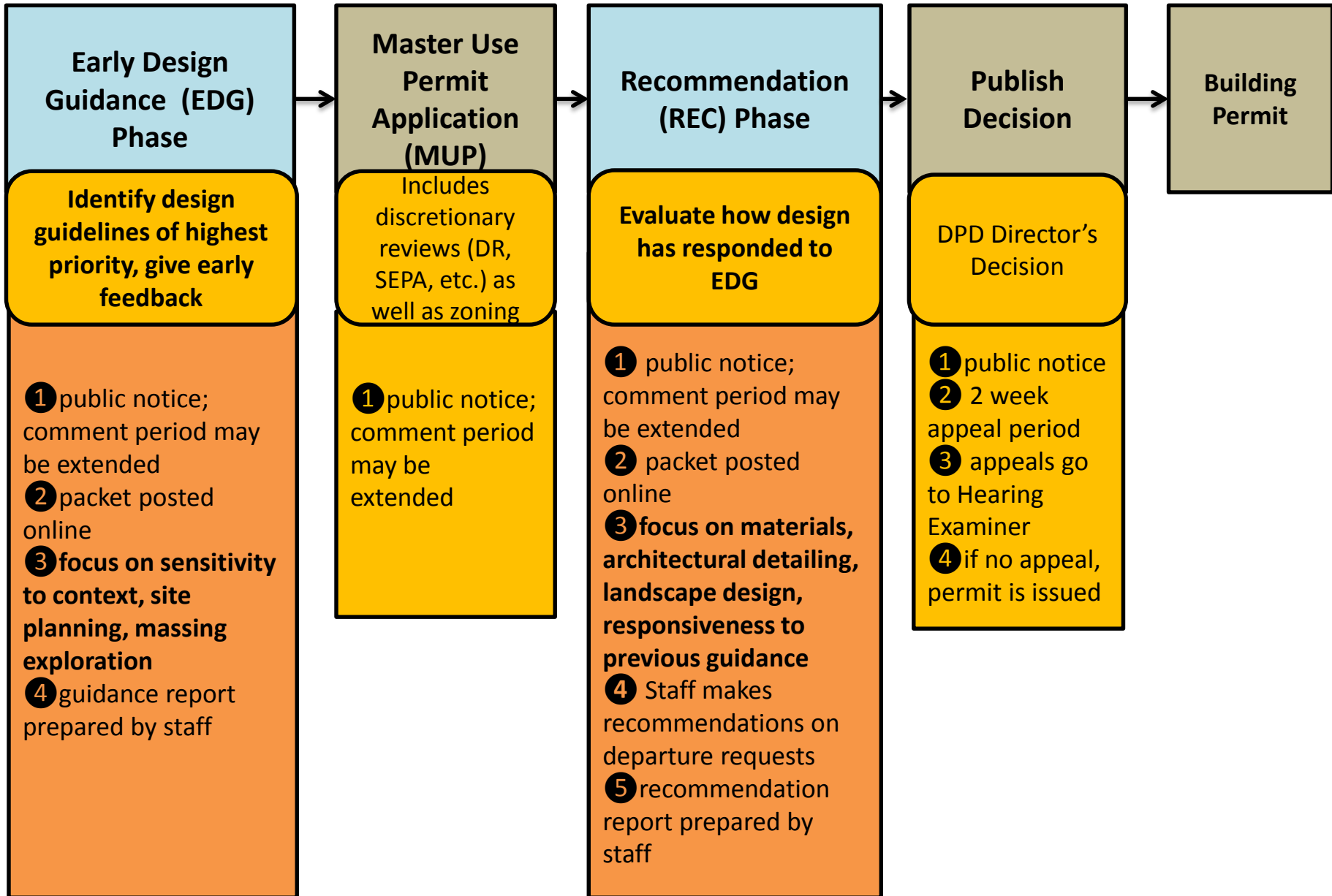
**2/Administrative Design Review** –staff review (optional for projects under the SEPA thresholds and for certain projects containing SEDU's)

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

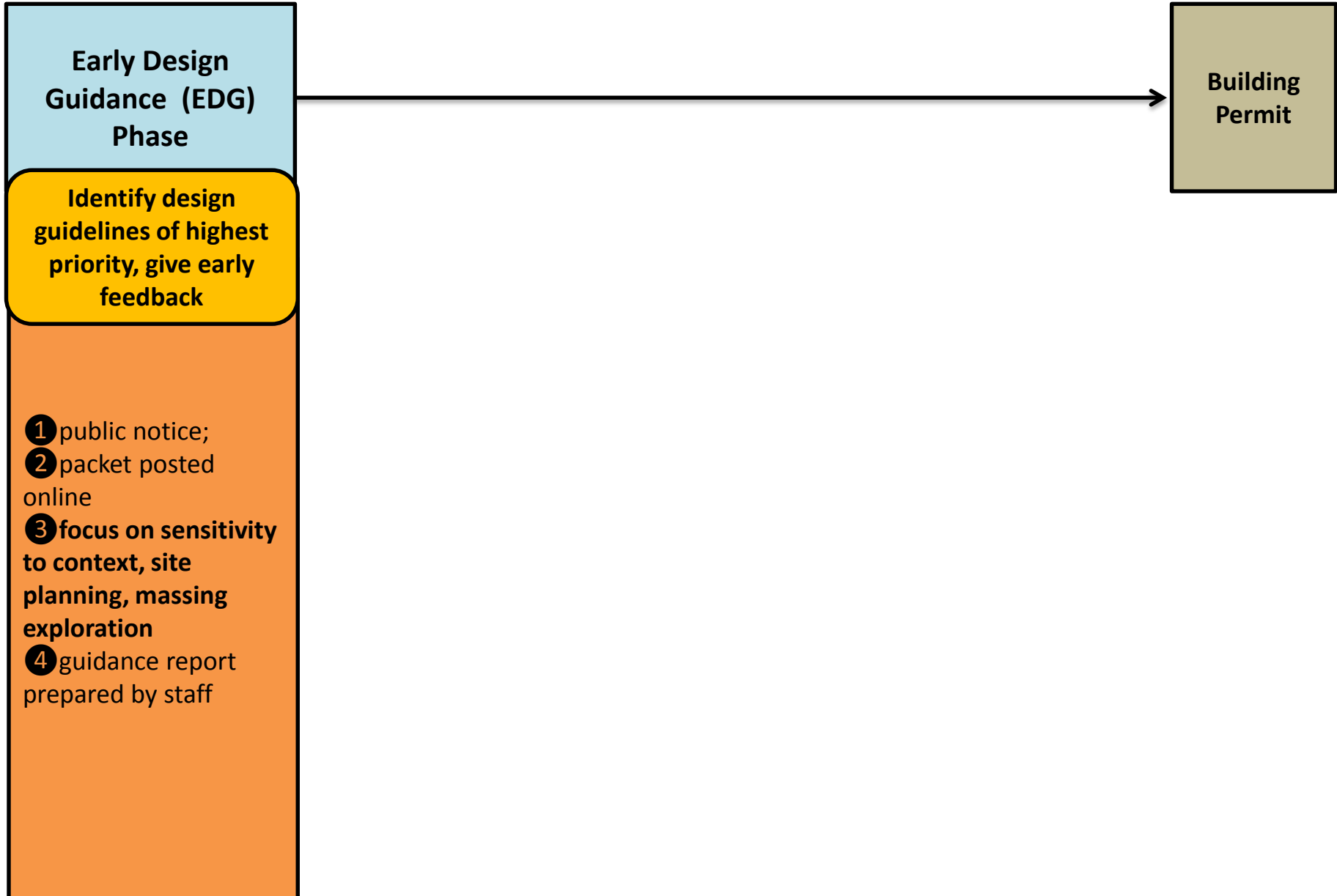
# Full Design Review (DR)



# Administrative Design Review (ADR)



# Streamlined Design Review (SDR)



# Design Review Program Updates

## August 2017

### Overview

- **Project Thresholds**
  - Simplify thresholds
  - Raise thresholds / eliminate Streamline DR
  - New consideration of project complexity
  - Review for certain development in industrial areas
  - Include more types of institutional uses
- **Early Community Outreach**
  - Applicants must conduct community outreach before beginning design review
  - In addition to existing public notice and public comment opportunities
  - Purpose to improve dialogue between the applicant and communities and improve applicant's understanding of the local context
- **Administrative Review & Hybrid Process**
  - New "Hybrid" Process - One stage of review by staff, the other by the boards. Used for smaller projects that are complex and larger projects that are not complex
  - More administrative process where both stages of review done by SDCI staff
  - Use for smaller projects that are not complex
  - Default process for affordable housing
- **Other Changes**
  - **Exceptional Trees** - Clarify and update the option of going through design review as a way to remove an "exceptional" tree in lowrise, midrise, or commercial zones (SMC 25.11.070 and 25.11.080). An applicant would either need to meet the criteria in the Tree Ordinance for removing a protected tree, or would be able to opt into the Design Review Program to pursue departures from the Land Use Code to develop the site in a way that would retain the exceptional tree.

# Design Review Website

<http://www.seattle.gov/DPD/aboutus/whoweare/designreview/program/>

The screenshot shows the Seattle Department of Construction & Inspections website. At the top, there is a blue header with the Seattle.gov logo, Mayor Edward B. Murray's name, a search bar, and a menu icon. Below the header, the main title is "Seattle Department of Construction & Inspections" with Nathan Torgelson, Director, listed below it. A navigation bar contains three tabs: "PERMITS", "CODES & RULES", and "TOOLS & RESOURCES". A yellow banner below the navigation bar states: "Seattle DPD is now the Seattle Department of Construction & Inspections. DPD's City Planning division is now the Office of Planning & Community Development". The breadcrumb trail reads: "Home / About Us / Who We Are / Design Review / Program". The main heading is "Design Review", with sub-links for "Program", "Boards & Staff", and "Design Guidelines". A graphic features a city skyline with the text "WHAT'S SHAPING SEATTLE? FIND OUT ON OUR NEW MAP!" and "SHAPING SEATTLE: BUILDINGS SEATTLE.GOV/DPD/SHAPINGSEATTLE". Below this is a button that says "CLICK HERE TO VIEW THE MAP". The "Program" section includes a paragraph: "Our Design Review Program and its boards review private development projects in Seattle. We review multiple aspects of a building and its site, including some of the following:" followed by a bulleted list: "• The overall appearance of the building", "• How your proposal relates to adjacent sites and the overall street frontage", "• How your proposal relates to unusual aspects of the site, like views or slopes", "• Pedestrian and vehicular access to the site", and "• Quality of materials, open space, and". To the right of the text is a "DESIGN REVIEW" logo and a photograph of a modern building. On the right side of the page, there are two sections: "What Do You Want To Do?" with links for "View Design Review Calendar", "Search Project Reviews", "Research My Property", "Comment on a Project", "Check Permit Status", "Submit Your Packet", and "Download the instructions"; and "Still Need Help?" with "Ask Us" (including address and hours) and "Online" (with links for "Design Review Permit - Full Review", "Design Review Permit - Administrative Review", and "Design Review Permit - Streamlined Review").



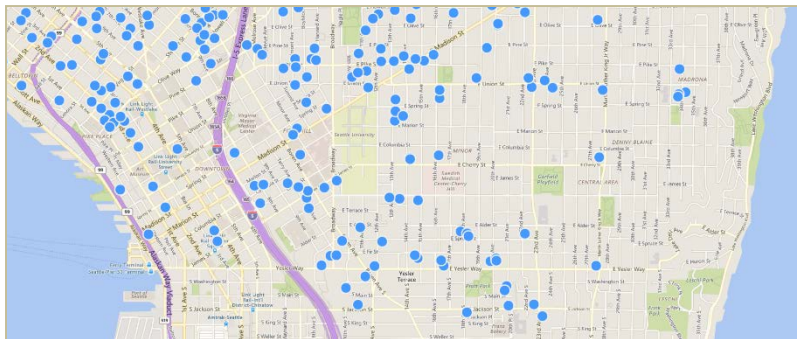
# Find Out Where New Buildings are Proposed: Shaping Seattle




**WHAT'S SHAPING SEATTLE?  
FIND OUT ON OUR NEW MAP!**

Use our new map for more details about this project, current active Seattle Design Review projects, plus much more!

**VISIT SHAPING SEATTLE: BUILDINGS**  
[SEATTLE.GOV/DPD/SHAPINGSEATTLE](http://SEATTLE.GOV/DPD/SHAPINGSEATTLE)



### 3501 RAINIER AVE S



Project #3020850: Land Use Application to allow a six story, 91 unit apartment building. Parking for four vehicles to be located in a one story, detached garage. Existing structures to be demolished.

[View Design Proposal \(48 MB\)](#)

#### Project Timeline

- Early Design Guidance
- Application Accepted
- Project Under Review**  
Project reviews can include additional design and architectural analysis, and environmental (SEPA), geotechnical, and zoning reviews.
- Decision Published
- Construction Permit Issued
- Construction Completed

#### Project Documents

Key project documents:

- [Decision/Recommendation \(178 KB\)](#)
- [Design Proposal \(48 MB\)](#)
- [Public Notice \(361 KB\)](#)
- [Meeting Report \(180 KB\)](#)

[See all project documents](#)

[Make a Comment](#)

[Attend a Meeting](#)

[Share link](#)

find, learn  
&  
comment

#### Make a Comment

You can submit comments about this project below. Your email address and comments, in their entirety, will be entered into the public record for this project and posted on our website.

Email address

Comment

#### Attend a Meeting

**Early Design Guidance Meeting**  
An early design guidance meeting is held during the first phase of the Design Review process. In this meeting, the Design Review Board evaluates the proposed site and context analysis, the massing concepts, and early design considerations.

Sep 15, 2016 06:30 PM  
West Seattle Senior Center  
4217 SW Oregon St Hatten Hall

# Other Resources

## Land Use Code, Chapter 23.41

[https://www2.municode.com/library/wa/seattle/codes/municipal\\_code?nodeId=TIT23LAUSCO\\_SUBTITLE\\_III\\_LAUSRE\\_CH23.41\\_DERE](https://www2.municode.com/library/wa/seattle/codes/municipal_code?nodeId=TIT23LAUSCO_SUBTITLE_III_LAUSRE_CH23.41_DERE)

## Tip 238 (explains the Design Review process steps)

<http://www.seattle.gov/DPD/Publications/CAM/cam238.pdf>

## Shaping Seattle Map App

<http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/shapingseattle/map.aspx>