



Planning Commission

Briefing on Downtown Design Guidelines Update

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Title

Briefing on Downtown Design Guidelines Update

Recommended Action

Hear the briefing followed by discussion

Report

Issue:

Briefing regarding the preliminary scope and timeline for updating Downtown design guidelines

Staff Contact:

Amy Buckler, Senior Planner, Community Planning & Development, (360) 570-5847

Presenter(s):

John Owen, MAKERS Architecture and Urban Design
Amy Buckler, Senior Planner

Background and Analysis:

One of the first recommended actions to implement the Downtown Strategy (DTS) is an update to Downtown design guidelines. The city has retained MAKERS consultants to assist in this effort. Over the next 8 months, updated guidelines will be prepared, and the Planning Commission will then hold a public hearing and make a recommendation to the City Council regarding adoption.

The design guidelines will be influenced by the Comprehensive Plan and priorities identified in the Downtown Strategy (**attachment 1**). The guidelines influence site design, building orientation, massing, architecture and other details, as well as historic preservation and view protection. As part of the DTS, the City asked MAKERS to prepare an analysis and preliminary recommendations for the update (**Attachment 2**).

In summary:

- Organize Downtown guidelines into one section so that applicants can access all relevant guidelines in one place

- Make sure guidelines are focused and clear; not onerous. They should be flexible enough to allow for departures when this would result in something better.
- Avoid vague language. Discuss and update the existing use and definitions of “shall” and “should” to help better meet objectives
- Various updates to address site planning and design, pedestrian access, amenities, open space, and building design
- Reinforce unique character areas. While basic standards should apply throughout Downtown, some variation should be applied.
- Craft new mixed use guidelines
- Improve historic guidelines, including incorporate Secretary of the Interior standards that apply to alterations of existing historic structures
- Update requirements for nonresidential storefronts, considering essential locations where these should be required and design to promote active streetscapes
- Incorporate more Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (C-TED) measures
- Consider doing away with, or simplifying, ratios as these are difficult to apply on smaller sites (as currently in Pedestrian Street Overlay)
- Update view protection guidelines and include moderate measures to protect and enhance three important views, from: West Bay Park to Mt. Rainier, Deschutes Parkway to Mt. Rainier, and East Bay Overlook to the Capitol Dome
- Illustrate with photos, sketches, and diagrams, showing a variety of ways to meet the standards. Where used as good examples, make sure they are exemplary development examples consistent with the desired character for Downtown. Make sure the graphics are internally consistent.

The scope of this update does **not** include:

- Streetscape design, which will be covered in a subsequent update to the Engineering Development and Design Standards (EDDS)
- Park improvements, which are guided by a separate Parks, Arts & Rec Plan
- Sign design, which will be included as part of the 2017 sign code update
- Changes to the review *process*, such as to the joint DRB/OHC process; however it may examine whether that is necessary and what it would take resource-wise to make a recommended change.

The Design Review Board reviewed the preliminary analysis and scope on Feb 9, 2017. See a

summary of their comments in **attachment 3**. Staff will brief the Heritage Commission on March 22.

Update Process

The design guideline update will be guided by a technical work group (see **attachment 4**). The timeline **attachment 5** includes the following steps in 2017:

- Guidance on next steps from Land Use & Environment Committee (March)
- Convene technical work group
- Public Open House re: project purpose, work plan and preferences (TBD)
- Briefings for Design Review Board & Heritage Commission
- Planning Commission briefing, public hearing and recommendation (Fall)
- City Council adoption

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

An estimated 3,500 people engaged in formation of the Downtown Strategy through workshops and online, including input about overall urban design preferences for Downtown. The DTS summary is available online (**Attachment 6**).

Options:

Hear the briefing and ask any questions

Financial Impact:

Included as part of the \$50,000 budget for updating Downtown design guidelines

Attachments:

- 1 - Goals and priorities
- 2 - Preliminary analysis & recommendations
- 3 - Notes from Feb 9 DRB meeting
- 4 - Draft charter for technical work group
- 5 - Draft timeline for update process
- 6 - Link to Downtown Strategy webpage