



Land Use & Environment Committee

Urban Design Regulation Update

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Title

Urban Design Regulation Update

Recommended Action

Committee Recommendation:

Not referred to a committee.

City Manager Recommendation:

Receive the update on urban design regulations. Discussion only.

Report

Issue:

Whether to receive an update on the process to develop new design guidelines, including view protection regulations, in accordance with the Downtown Strategy.

Staff Contact:

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

Presenter(s):

Amy Buckler, Senior Planner

Background and Analysis:

One of the first recommended actions to implement the Downtown Strategy (DTS) is an update to the Downtown design guidelines. These are regulations that help ensure new development and significant rehabs achieve a level of design quality that is consistent with public objectives.

Design guidelines address functional as well as aesthetic issues. They influence site design, building orientation, massing, architecture and other building details, as well as historic preservation and view protection. They intend for development to be compatible with neighbors; promote safety, security and livability; be environmentally responsible; promote health and pedestrian activity; and upgrade the development's physical attractiveness.

The city has retained MAKERS consultants to assist with updating Downtown design guidelines. Since last April, the consultant and staff have been drafting and analyzing a new set of guidelines with help from a design technical work group (TWG) which has met six times this year (**participant**

names are attached). Staff and consultants have also gathered input from the public, the Design Review Board, Olympia Heritage Commission, and planning staff (**see attached comment summary**).

The following are the remaining steps in the process:

1. Planners complete review of Draft #2 (November)
2. Compose Draft #3 (by end of year)
3. Forward to Port of Olympia and Legal for review (January)
4. Engage development community (January-February)
5. Brief DRB, OHC, PRAC, ODA and PBI (November-February)
6. Public Open House (February-March)
7. Planning Commission briefing and Public Hearing (March)
8. Forward ordinance and OPC recommendation to City Council (April)

Staff will provide an overview of key changes this evening.

Encouraging Private Investment

The DTS recognizes that most change we see in downtown will occur through private investment, thus it is important to set the stage for feasible opportunities to develop in line with community goals. Good urban design helps to create an environment that functions well for people, drawing activity and investment. At the same time, provisions requiring high-quality materials or square footage devoted for setbacks, open space and building modulation, for example, can have an impact on a project's bottom line.

It is important to involve the development community in the process to update the guidelines so that potential impacts to design quality and cost can be considered and addressed. The design technical work group includes developers and architects (along with advisory board and community members), and this group has provided important insights leading to draft provisions. Staff also plans to reach out to additional members of the development community to highlight and get input on key provisions, such as:

- Specific requirements for DTS character areas (kept to a minimum, but some different building design and landscaping emphasis and allowances)
- Pedestrian Overlay Requirements
 - Ground floor setbacks (minimum distance between structure and curb)
 - Vehicle access and parking (limitations as to where)
 - Upper story step back (increasing from 8' to 15' in some cases)
 - Ground floor use (requiring non-residential use on certain streets)
 - Parking structure location (limitations as to where) and design (screening)
- Parking garage standards
- Service Areas and Mechanical provisions (provisions for siting solid waste)
- Street fronts for buildings featuring ground floor residential units (privacy provisions)
- Multifamily open space (requiring a certain amount/unit for new construction)
- Site security/crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) provisions
- Materials (types allowed vs. not allowed)

View Protection

The Downtown Strategy (DTS) recommends the City explore actions to protect important landmark views from three public observation points:

1. West Bay Park to Mt. Rainer
2. Deschutes Parkway to Mt. Rainier
3. East Bay Overlook to the Capitol Dome

Upon adoption of the DTS, the City Council guided staff to explore a range of options for each view, which could include taking no action or some combination of zoning and design guideline updates. Staff has completed further analysis of potential view impacts and will share new graphics along with general options this evening. Staff has also notified potentially affected property owners.

Available view protection options rest primarily with the zoning code; design guidelines may then be used to augment this. For example, to preserve a view it may be necessary to reduce the 2-story height bonus in the zoning code; at the same time, required building modulation in the design guidelines can be used to further augment the view. Due to this relationship, staff recommends view protection options in the zoning code be considered by the public, Planning Commission and City Council at the same time as consideration is given to the updated design guidelines.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

See attached comment summary. 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 (**See attachment**).

Options:

Discussion only.

Financial Impact:

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

Attachments:

Comment summary
Technical Work Group Participants
Downtown Strategy Webpage