MEETING: Project Advisory Group
PRESENTERS: Mesa Sherriff, Senior Planner, Planning and Development Services
Keith Walzak, VIA Architecture
Lee Einsweiler, Code Studio.
SUBJECT: Urban Design Studio
DATE: September 17, 2019

PRESENTATION TYPE:
Informational presentations followed by group discussions

SUMMARY:
At the meeting on September 17, 2019, the Project Advisory Group (PAG) reviewed and provided feedback on the Schedule, Code Audit Findings, Internal Operations Manual, and Design Guideline Framework

DISCUSSION:
The following topics were presented to the PAG for review

Code Audit
  • Site Standards
  • Building Design Standards
  • Development Review
  • Document Design
  • High and moderate recommendations

Internal Operations Manual
  • Revisions in Response to Comments:
  • Design Review Steps for Tacoma:
  • Coordinated Review Steps
  • Thresholds for Review
  • Staff Work Load Projections:

Design Guidelines Framework
7 Main Community Design Themes
  • Create compact mixed-use centers
  • Enhance neighborhood quality & promote compatible development
  • Design for pedestrians and bicycle access
  • Protect environmental resources
  • Provide for a variety of open spaces
  • Preserve historic resources
  • Promote innovative development on large sites

Draft Design Principles
  • Connectivity
  • Engaging Design
  • Healthy Community
  • Sustainable Design
  • Cultural Heritage
  • Adaptability
• Sense of Place
• Creativity
• Variety
• Accessibility

Guidelines Document Structure
Draft Table of Contents
Example Intent Statements
Phase I milestones -
  Confirmed mapping of key study area geographies
  Established thresholds – applicability / staff resourcing projections
  Code Audit findings – establishes the baseline for code improvements vs. guideline needs

NOTES:

- Should block standards be applied citywide?
  o Integrate with Mall Subarea Plan block standards
- Sections of Corridors are urban, other sections are Suburban
  o Guidelines to reflect context and provide good urbanism + good suburbanism
    • Zone transitions can be more abrupt in urban areas
    • Contextual vs. transitional
- Agreement with recommendation that parking as a principal use should be removed
- Windows, doors, roofs, façades should be high importance
- Open Space Plan areas / standards may be inconsistent
- Do regulations adequately address slope / topography issues? (Front door and service areas)
- Pedestrian street edge seems to work, but other died or back street edges may not work as well.
- Stepped townhouse - side yard conditions
  - May need to look at grading regulations
- Overlaps between other programs (Commercial Zone Update, etc) should be in collaboration
- Support for mandatory pre-application meeting
  o Allows design community to incorporate Design Review requirements early in project design
  o Provides applicants a roadmap to the review/permitting process
- Integration with the design process is key, drawings submitted for permit are often times lacking details that would be in the scope of Design Review (finish materials and details, etc.)
- Need to provide clarity of what is approved through the process
- How do affordable housing projects get processed when significant changes occur, sometimes last minute (loss/change of funding streams, etc.)
  o Should they be only subject to administrative review unless seeking alternative compliance
- Staff should be providing initial findings/recommendations to board
- Important for comprehensive review of text/pictures as they will be influential in how document is interpreted.
- Will subdivision plats be prat of the design review process? - Need to reference (cite) back to subdivision regulations.
- Replace the term ‘design variance’ with ‘departure’ or ‘Alternative Compliance’ as it relates to the design review process. ‘Variance’ - is a regulatory code term.
Review the Foss Design Review guidance and process. What works, what doesn’t
- Thresholds: need to look at other criteria – beyond building sq. ft. (5,000 – 10,000)
- High profile corner lots, building frontage, corridor character transitions
- The question was raised whether the design guidelines should apply to all development in the area? i.e Coffee kiosk
- Standards vs guidelines – Should standards be included in the Guidance policy?
- Need to update the proposed DRB timeline….
  - Permit Set follows Final Review (decision)
  - SEPA review (s applicable) may be initiated following Pre-Ap
- Support for how the UNIVERSAL URBAN DESIGN PRINCIPLES have developed, and that they encourage variety, diversity and flexibility.
  - Would like to see how that translates into the standards and find that many current standards tend to make those concepts difficult to attain, mostly due to their prescriptive nature.
- Good design can become subjective and can lose out to the control of the standards and the review board.
- It is very important to note that buildings are rarely if never viewed 2-dimensionally. Judging by a flat elevation drawing does not give you an adequate sense of what it will really look like. Perspective views are much more informative about overall design.