

From: Esther Day <Dayesther214@outlook.com>
Sent: Monday, May 6, 2024 9:21 PM
To: City Clerk's Office
Cc: Ushka, Catherine; Daniels, Kiara; Bushnell, Joe; Woodards, Victoria; Hines, John; Rumbaugh, Sarah; Diaz, Olgy; Scott, Jamika
Subject: CITY COUNCIL MEETING (5/7/24): Public Comments for Ordinance No. 28966

Dear Mayor Woodards, Deputy Mayor Hines and Council Members,

I am writing to urge you to NOT APPROVE this Ordinance No. 28966 as written.. that includes the creation of an 'Urban Design Project Review

Permit' and the establishment of an 'Urban Design (UD) Board'. The statements written pertaining to amendments of Title 13 of the Tacoma Municipal Code (relating to the Land Use Regulatory Code)...particularly the new Chapter 13.19 (entitled 'Urban Design Board and Permit Review') are misleading, contradictory and vague. Please allow additional time to review and better understand the purpose and true intent of the future use of this new land use permit.

While the Planners, Planning Commissioners and Permit Advisory Group members have devoted a significant amount of time on presentations and community discussions on the Urban Design Concepts (and includes the use of a Design Manual), very little time has been spent to review and address any questions specifically on this new 'Chapter 13.19 TMC. Instead, just a few highlighted portions of this Chapter 13.19 and the associated amendments to Chapter 13.05 were shared with the City Council members and residents during the Planners' presentations over the past year.

The following sections of this 'Urban Design Board and Permit Review' (Chapter 13.19) are particularly alarming due to contradictions/inconsistencies, the PDS Department's broad sharing of authority with this UD Board and the wide range of 'variances' (referred to now as: 'Departures') legally allowed using this REQUIRED 'Urban Design Project Review' permit process in certain 'mixed-use' areas of Tacoma:

+13.19.020 B:. Authority and Responsibilities--Urban Design Board

+13.19.030 C.4: Composition of the Board--Temporary Vacancies (with reference to "Board Bylaws"?)

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b.'Departures' from TMC 13.05 available for buildings less than 10,000 sq ft..and, NOT included in the REQUIRED UDPR permit process.

These lower-sized projects would be "eligible for design departure requests" as well.

+13.19.040 F.2.a.(4) (Permit Processes...Urban Design Board Decision..Concept Design Package review:

"The Urban Design Board may authorize the Director to conduct the Final Design Review and make the Final Decision..subject to the requirements of Type 1 application processes")

G.2.b(Design Departure Criteria...Aspects of Development that may be considered in support of proposed design departures includes:)

G.2.b.(1): ."mitigation of impacts to and/or preservation of natural and built features including, but, not limited to, trees and other vegetation, natural grade and historic or cultural artifacts and public views of landmarks"

G.2 b.(3):."supports relevant adopted City goals and/or policies"

+13.19.040 H. (Appeals)

1.& 2. "Appeals of both Type 1 and 2 decisions are referred to the Hearing Examiner for public hearing.

These UD Board and Administrative reviews lack consistency with the review of permit applications. There are a large number of 'Departures' included with this type of permit review process (includes 20+ departures). The use of this UD Board has a broad and not yet entirely known list of duties and powers. With the way this Chapter 13.19 is written, the City Council would not have the authority/edit to review the content in the Design Manual..or, even make process changes.

Due to these examples of alarming statements in this new Chapter 13.19, the Council members need to further review and scrutinize all of the sections in this 'Urban Design Board and Permit Review' proposal. At this time, too many vague and misleading statements exist in this Chapter 13.19 TMC.

Please vote to postpone a vote on an approval of this new UDPR Board and Permit process. However, The Urban Design Concepts have been recognized for at least the past 8 years and have already been incorporated to some degree into regional mixed-use growth areas in Tacoma (please refer to the '2015 Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Growth Subarea'). The continued use of 'Urban Design Studio Concepts' and rules seems reasonable to continue.

With the recent Statewide drought declarations, the overdue updates with the 'South Tacoma Groundwater Protection District' need to be prioritized ahead of the approval and start of any new permitting system in Tacoma! Design changes may, in fact, may need to be incorporated into this new UD Board and Permit Review Process to protect the City's back-up drinking water source. In addition, this new proposed use of the 'Urban Design Board' members could have the authority to prevent a full study (and accurate, best science-based) from taking place.

Respectfully submitted,

Esther Day
Tacoma – Southend

From: Heidi S. <heidigs@hotmail.com>
Sent: Monday, May 6, 2024 5:01 PM
To: City Clerk's Office
Subject: Public Comment Re: ORD 28966

**Public Comments Submitted 4/22/24 for the
May 7, 2024 Public Hearing**

Re: ORD 28966 / Urban Design Project Review permit process

The Action Memorandum, attached to this week's City Council meeting, offers three alternative options.

I urge you to select #1 (deny the entire proposal), or at least pause it.

None of the summary documents included the actual policy which is intended to become a new section of the Tacoma Municipal Code. Presentations have not stated clearly (even in the ordinance, itself) that this new board has much more than just "limited authority" for design "review" only.

Just because this has been in the works for years is no reason to rush to approve it, if you haven't read the complete code. yourself and fully understand it... and the general public also still doesn't know about or understand it.

In fact, when presented to the Community Council in April of 2022, design standards were all that was discussed. Sometime since then, but never fully presented in any of the staff presentations, is an entire new section of the TMC, detailing the addition of an appointed non-elected board of mostly developers which you, the City Council, will be abdicating approval permission to... but you will reportedly be accountable for.

In the August 16th Planning Commission public hearing, not a single person submitted written comments about the "UDPR permit process" (not because people don't care: residents, who are actively involved in planning updates, say they are only just now hearing of it, and most others still never have) nor did agenda packet include a copy of the proposed code amendments (so I am troubled by their "recommendation" without that).

For the April 23rd City Council public hearing, it was stated that 24K+ notices were mailed, but this should have been made known to the entire city. Reportedly 300+ emails were sent to "organizations and individuals previously engaged through project outreach" but are still unknown what groups those were, since Neighborhood Councils were not presented to nor recall being notified, despite (once again) South Tacoma seemingly another "sacrifice zone" with two of the largest areas after downtown for largest development of buildings greater than 100,000 sq ft (roughly the size of a city block).

Only two (of the 10 written comments submitted in April) were supportive of the UDPR proposal (two of the architects who were part of the advisory group creating it, I believe). This board will not only have review design permit approval ability, but to update their own manual and make broad exceptions to the maximums (so what's the point of maximums)?

Seattle recently denied a proposal to allow for exceptions, but this code will encompass broad "departures" we will be setting ourselves up to once again be told "nothing we can do about it now"...

There's no reason this can't be pause until questions are answered and it's fully understood, However, if approved this week, then you are willingly contributing to the problem we were told you would work to correct (that of willingly allowing code which will later contribute to more "nothing we can do" hand-tying), instead making it a thousand times worse... greater than 100,000sq ft worse.

From: Cathie Raine <cjrrd@hotmail.com>
Sent: Monday, May 6, 2024 4:52 PM
To: City Clerk's Office
Cc: Ushka, Catherine; Daniels, Kiara; Bushnell, Joe; Woodards, Victoria; Hines, John; Rumbaugh, Sarah; Diaz, Olgy; Scott, Jamika
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Please contact me if you have questions.

Respectfully submitted,

Cathie (Raine) Urwin
South Tacoma resident
Phone #: (253) 431-6689

From: Kit Burns <kburns.wcb@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 7, 2024 9:21 AM
To: City Clerk's Office
Subject: City Council - ORD 28966 Urban Design Review Board - Recommendation - REJECT

ORD 28966 Urban Design Review Board
- Recommendation - **REJECT**

Dear Mayor and City Council,

I recommend that you reject this unnecessary Urban Design Review Board.

It does not improve the permit process.

The members would meet 10 times each year, about 20 to 30 hours, and somehow understand the needs of a project?

It adds to confusion of the permit process and requirements to be completed.

The documents submitted don't show how this will actually "improve permitting" timelines. It adds another layer that will likely slow the process for approvals.

What slows the permit process is most often incomplete submittals by the developer/applicant. Also when the applicant fails to respond to the City review Comments and fails to repeatedly respond.

As an Architect I have submitted plans for large and complex middle school and high school projects in different jurisdictions. Seattle, Bellevue, Olympia, Tacoma, and King County. It can be done without this additional "layer" which adds nothing to the requirements except complexity.

I noticed that the proposal does not say the cost of outside consultants nor the cost of in-house labor to date.

It says the cost going forward 'is already budgeted' but does not name the cost amount. What will that be?

The Board allows members outside of the city to be on it. If the board is not full, they proceed anyway. . . .

A part time review board is not what the city needs.

Large complex projects often take several years to develop the project and knowledge of the best solutions. This can be done within the current building review structure.

The Urban Design Review Board is like adding a "new" building department within the existing building department. Not a good idea.

Please reject this proposal. Send the authors back to the drawing boards. They need to explain clearly the cost to date and for the future. Staffing requirements within the city. And how this improves review timelines showing accountability.

At what cost to the city?

It just sounds like a good idea with all the 'happy talk' but in reality and in the long term will

harm rather than help the community.

The city of Tacoma should have other priorities.

Such as impact fees as in other jurisdictions.

Protection requirements for Critical Area Recharge Areas.

Tree Canopy requirements and funding, and an actual plan for 2030.

The proposal needs to be tabled and further discussion showing costs, project timelines, project review flows, and effects of de-regulation on development.

Sincerely,

Kit Burns
Architect - Retired
Tacoma

--

William Burns
PO Box 2341
Tacoma WA 98401

"I believe all of our lives would be better if each of you would carry a book in your knapsack. . . "

Gabriel Garcia Marquez

"Things don't just happen. They are made to happen." **John F. Kennedy**