



Memorandum

PLANNING DIVISION
COMMUNITY & NEIGHBORHOODS

To: Salt Lake City Planning Commission

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Date: July 21, 2016

Re: Briefing on the Conditional Building and Site Design Review Program

BRIEFING

PURPOSE: The Salt Lake City Planning Division is conducting an evaluation of the Conditional Building and Site Design Review (CBSDR) process and standards. This effort will examine both the process and standards for review by the Planning Commission. This briefing outlines Planning Staff's process and timeline for this effort.

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION: City code defines the intent of the CBSDR as follows:

- "...to provide for the flexible implementation of the specific design requirements set forth within individual zoning districts," deferring specifics to the guidance provided by the purpose statement of each zoning district;
- "...to supplement the review and administrative procedures which are carried out under this title or other city ordinances and regulations;" and
- "...to help ensure that newly developed properties and redeveloped properties are designed to encourage pedestrian access, circulation and orientation while acknowledging the need for transit and automobile access." (21A.59.010)

Since 2012, there has been a steady increase in the number of projects that have either been required to submit to the CBSDR process or an applicant has chosen to submit to the process. The increase in applications has highlighted several issues with the CBSDR process related to the application and administration. These include:

Application

- Process is confusing for applicants and the public.
- Design standards are either too vague or too specific, leading to confusion for the applicant, public and Planning Commission.
- Presentation of standards is text only; no graphics to illustrate design concepts.
- Relationship between CBSDR, Special Exception and Planned Development is confusing.

- Design review is a perceived barrier by some applicants.

Administration

- Role of the Planning Commission is vague.
- Planning Commission has not received training on design review.
- Process is difficult to administer due to vague language of the ordinance.
- Standards of review do not related to the design standards that are triggering the process.
- Standards of review contain specific requirements that do not relate to the reasons the project is in the process, the purpose of the base zoning, or the local context.
- Scaleability/applicability of standards across neighborhoods is problematic.
- Design quality varies from project to project; better design is not a definitive outcome.
- Some zoning districts require all new development to submit a Planned Development application; design review may be more appropriate.
- CBSDR name is onerous and confusing.

A number of base zoning districts require certain projects to go through this process, such as buildings over a certain height, buildings over a certain square footage, or buildings that do not meet performance criteria (TSA district). In addition, a number of recent master plans identify high quality development, urban design, and building design as important feature of neighborhood character. These goals are not well served by the current process.

Questions for the Planning Commission:

1. What other issues or challenges are apparent in the CBSDR process or standards?
2. Considering recent CBSDR applications (Sugar House apartments, 9th and 9th, et al), what issues did the Planning Commission encounter? Could a change in the design review process or standards provide the Planning Commission with better guidance? What would that change be?
3. What factors or concepts does the Planning Commission want to consider in design review? How can design review be used to create a better city?
4. How much flexibility does the Planning Commission need to modify base zoning code standards through design review?
5. What aspects of building and site design should Planning Staff explore in our revisions to the design review program in addition to the following?
 - a. Building mass and scale, including articulation, height, setbacks, and setbacks
 - b. Building orientation with special consideration for corner conditions
 - c. Building materials and color
 - d. Landscape design, including useable outdoor spaces, street trees, and hardscape
 - e. Relationship of building to neighborhood context or future neighborhood character identified in master plans including architectural features, landmarks, and views
 - f. Pedestrian and vehicular access
 - g. Sustainability, adaptability, and reuse
 - h. Contributions to the public (or pedestrian) realm, including safety, comfort, and interest
 - i. Street frontage, activity, and rhythm
 - j. Architectural contributions to overall district or city, as appropriate

NEXT STEPS:

The analysis and revision of the CBSDR process and standards is expected to take two and a half months, including presentation to the Planning Commission for their recommendation. This effort consists of:

1. Comprehensive review of the CBSDR process and standards. (July)
2. Discussion of issues with the Planning Commission and public, including recent applicants and community council representatives. (July/August)
3. Research best practices in design review processes and standards. (August)
4. Develop recommendations for changes to CBSDR, including presentation to the public and Planning Commission. (September)