



MEMORANDUM

PLANNING DIVISION
DEPARTMENT *of* COMMUNITY *and* NEIGHBORHOODS

To: Salt Lake City Planning Commission

From: Molly Robinson
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Date: May 17, 2017

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

ACTION REQUIRED: Briefing/Worksession. Planning Commission is asked to confirm proposed direction for the Conditional Building and Site Design Review (CBSDR) text amendment. Staff is proposing a change from design standards to design guidelines for projects seeking Planning Commission approval.

KEY QUESTIONS:

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION:

What is the project?

The Salt Lake City Planning Division is making changes to the Conditional Building and Site Design Review (CBSDR) process and standards. Some proposed buildings can't meet the strict rules of the zoning district for a variety of reasons. A handful of zoning districts require projects to submit their drawings for design review because of the proposed building height or square footage. The CBSDR process enables the strict rules on building height, square footage, setbacks, and other design standards to provide flexibility in the implementation of the zoning standards as long as the project meets the design intent of the neighborhood (as specified in the zoning code).

There are multiple problems that the current CBSDR process presents to applicants and city staff. This project will review the CBSDR's purpose, process, and standards and propose changes to the Planning Commission.

Staff will also consider regulations in the GMU (Gateway Mixed Use) and CS (Community Shopping) zoning districts. Currently, in these zones new construction projects are reviewed as planned developments. In some cases, the design review process may be the more appropriate review process.

Why make the changes?

Since 2012, there has been a steady increase in the number of projects that have submitted to the CBSDR process. This increase has highlighted several issues with the CBSDR process, including:

- Process is confusing for applicants and the public.
- Process is cumbersome for projects seeking minor modifications to a design standard.
- Design review is a perceived barrier due to unpredictability of timing and approval.
- Design standards are either too vague or too prescriptive, making it difficult for designers, staff, and the community.
- Presentation of standards is text only; no graphics to illustrate design concepts.

- Conflicts between Standards for Design Review (21A.59.060) and zoning district where the project is located.
- Some zoning districts require all new development to submit a Planned Development application; design review may be more appropriate.
- Use of the word “conditional” may hinder affordable housing projects due to federal lending rules.
- There is a need to coordinate with the Redevelopment Agency’s design review.

A number of base zoning districts (see maps below for full list) 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.

Who initiated the proposed text changes?

The Salt Lake City Council approved a Legislative Action requesting review of the Conditional Building and Site Design Review (CBSDR) process (21A.59 of the Salt Lake City Zoning Ordinance) in August 2015.

What are the proposed changes?

1. *Splitting the process into two clear paths for review: Administrative and Planning Commission*
Administrative review (Planning Director review) is a shorter process (typically a few weeks). Eligible projects voluntarily seek modification to one or more of the design standards of the base zoning district. Most design standards would be eligible for modification such as requirements for ground floor glass and upper floor setbacks up to a certain percent or measurement. Applicants would be required to demonstrate how their project meets the intent of the design standard(s) to be modified. Modifications to front yard setbacks where the new construction would align with existing buildings on the block would be eligible for administrative review. Modifications to height would not be eligible for administrative review.

Planning Commission review is a longer process (typically a few months). Projects required to go through Planning Commission review seek additional building height (above the as-of-right height, as allowed by zoning), building mass or volume, or cannot otherwise be approved administratively. Zoning districts that require projects over a predetermined height or size to seek design review approval would apply for Planning Commission review. Applicants would be required to demonstrate how their project meets the criteria for review and applicable design guidelines (see below).

2. *Replacing the “Standards for Design Review”*

Clear criteria for review are proposed for both the Administrative and Planning Commission reviews. These criteria provide guidance to the Planning Commission and planning staff about how to evaluate a design review application. Applicants would need to demonstrate how their project meets the intent of each criteria by following applicable guidelines. The role of guidelines is to illustrate what constitutes compatibility with the neighborhood and city goals.

- Criteria for Administrative (Planning Director) Modifications:
 - The proposed modification is generally consistent with the purpose statement for the zoning district of the property.
 - The proposed modification is generally consistent with the intent of the specific design standard(s) that is proposed to be modified.
 - The proposed modification would result in a development that is substantially similar to the development pattern of the area, the development pattern identified

in an applicable master plan, and any adopted design guidelines that may apply to the property.

- Criteria for Planning Commission Review (each subcategory listed below will be further developed as a criterion for review with rationale and include supporting design guidelines):
 - Site Design
 - Orientation and Layout (topography, neighborhood patterns, orientation)
 - Landmarks, Public View Corridors, and Focal Points (recognized landmark buildings, established/adopted views, creation of focal points)
 - Connectivity and Access (transit, bicycle, midblock walkways, private streets)
 - Parking, Vehicle Circulation, and Service Access (parking location, vehicle circulation, pedestrian safety)
 - Utilities and Services (location, screening)
 - Public Life
 - Public and Semi-public Spaces (location and access, shape and orientation, physical comfort and social activity)
 - Active Frontage (transparency, street wall, outdoor dining, windows displays, differentiated base)
 - Public-private Transitions (setbacks, floor levels, secondary elements)
 - Neighborhood character (hardscape materials, landscape and trees)
 - Sustainability (durability, daylighting, natural systems, microclimate)
 - Architecture
 - Building Scale and Massing (modulation, articulation, division of volume, neighborhood proportion)
 - Building Height (microclimate impacts, perceived scale, roofline or parapet composition, enclosure)
 - Façade Composition and Patterning (base/middle/top, window patterning, neighborhood pattern)
 - Building Materials (durability, cladding scale and context, texture)
 - Signage Composition (sign locations/organization, coordination, pedestrian orientation)
 - Lighting Composition (pedestrian comfort/safety, coordination, light pollution)

Discussion Questions

- When reviewing CBSDR projects, what has been problematic with the process?
- Are the criteria for Administrative Review complete?
- What information do you need to evaluate a project effectively?
- What design criteria are important to encourage good design?
- How can the process address reviewer objectivity?
- How should a project be evaluated: stand alone or within its site context?
- How should unique neighborhood conditions be addressed in the criteria or guidelines?
- What criteria would you add/take away from the Site Design list?
- What criteria would you add/take away from the Public Life list?
- What criteria would you add/take away from the Architecture list?

