



City of Portland

Design Commission

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A Guide to the City of Portland Design Review Process *Prepared by the members of the Design Commission – May 2016*

Design Commission

The Design Commission provides leadership and expertise on urban design, architecture and on maintaining and enhancing Portland's historical and architectural heritage. The Design Commission consists of seven volunteer members, appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the City Council, who serve a four-year term. The Commission includes a representative of the Regional Arts and Culture Council, one person representing the public at-large, and five members experienced in design, engineering, financing, construction or management of buildings, land development, or related disciplines.

The Design Commission reviews all Type III major projects, as well as all appeals of Type II reviews. Projects are classified based on location in the city and valuation. Minor projects are classified as Type I-II and go through an administrative staff-level review.

This guide is intended to facilitate successful completion of Portland's Type III Design Review process. It intends to increase the level of predictability for applicants by clarifying how the Design Commission upholds the Design Guidelines. Applicants who utilize this document and collaborate with Bureau of Development Services (BDS) Planning Staff throughout the process will reduce the need for redesign, number of submittal packets, and hearings before the Commission. This document will be updated periodically to reflect the current Commission membership.

BDS Planning Staff

BDS Planning Staff fully understand the Design Guidelines and how the current Design Commission upholds and emphasizes the guidelines. The role of Staff is to help applicants move through the review process efficiently. Listen to Staff and heed its advice. Design Commission consistently agrees with guideline issues identified by Staff. Utilizing Staff suggestions can reduce the number of Design Advice Requests/ hearings.

Design Advice Request (DAR)

Design Advice Requests (DARs) are voluntary opportunities for applicants to meet with the Design Commission to hear its feedback on early schematic design. Scheduling a DAR session early in your project schedule is strongly recommended. For large and/or complicated cases, multiple DAR sessions are often appropriate. These early meetings can result in guidance and clarity from Commission about specific site and program conditions. Appropriate topics for early conversations may include:

- Massing options
- Site organization
- Ground level - active ground level uses and transparency
- Parking and loading systems
- Circulation routes
- Landscape concept
- Utilities
- Preliminary material options

- Approach to Public Art
- Modifications, Adjustments, Exceptions, FAR bonus/transfer, and bonus height requests under consideration

DAR Submittal Components

The DAR process is not intended to be an exhaustive process for the applicant with regard to drawing submittals. Therefore, carefully consider which issues you would like feedback on from the Commission and work with BDS Planning Staff to clearly identify these issues. Share the design options that were explored and why the preferred design is the most responsive to its site and context and how it best meets the design guidelines. Sharing options can yield more productive discussions with the Commission.

DAR Presentations

Your DAR presentation should focus on introducing the Commission to the site and project with an emphasis on the above-referenced topics of conversation. The DAR is more casual than a hearing, so there will be plenty of opportunities for discussion and Q&A. To maximize the benefit of this time with Commission, please keep your presentation brief and on-point.

Concluding the presentation with a list of specific issues/questions you would like feedback on is helpful. Review this list and make sure you have received clear direction on each item before the conclusion of the DAR.

Receiving clear direction from the Commission through the DAR can significantly help the applicant through the formal Type III Design Review process. Thoroughly responding to Commission's DAR feedback can result in projects being approved after one Type III Hearing.

Neighborhood Association

Reaching out to the neighborhood during the DAR provides an opportunity for neighborhood residents to comment on proposals before a Type III application is submitted. Applicants should make every effort to meet with the applicable neighborhood association and show consideration for their concerns. The feedback from the neighborhood is not binding, but a collaborative approach is encouraged and may reduce the likelihood of appeals or testimonies in opposition to projects at Design Commission Hearings.

Type III Design Review

Submittal Components

Strive for clarity in drawings. Coordinate with BDS Planning Staff on content of design submittal components (see the Design Review Preferred Submittal Format at the end of this document). Include only information that is relevant, legible, and provides clarity. Do not include marketing pages or multiple context pages with dozens of photographs or stock images.

Drawing submittals should be specific for Design Commission review and not construction documents. Construction details that are provided need to be of sufficient size and legible to quickly convey their content to the Commission. Providing easily discernible information can result in fewer questions, less discussion, and more efficient hearings.

Provide line drawings of all exterior elevations – no shade, shadows, entourage, etc. Distinguish the various materials and building massing with good, old-fashioned line quality. Distinguish between clear glass and other types of spandrel glass. Clearly identify each and every building material (by name – not number) and provide the percentage of each material per exterior elevation on the same page.

Label plans with street names, provide north arrow, scale, section lines, and page numbers. Provide overall dimensions and key dimensions on the site plan, floor plans, elevations, and sections. Provide different colors for the various program elements on the floor plans.

Provide clear concept diagrams to explain your design – this should only require one or two pages. If you provide images of architectural precedents that relate to your concept be sure your design proposal clearly incorporates them. If not, leave them out.

Applicant Presentations at Hearings

You will have no more than 15-20 minutes to make your presentation. This is a strict time limit. Please rehearse your presentation in advance so you are able to abide by the audible/visual timer. Large, highly complex projects may be allowed more time for presentations with Commission approval, through an advance request of BDS staff.

Do not repeat Staff information. Avoid long introductions, marketing images, extended explanations of design concepts, extended discussions about project constraints, or community benefits that are not ultimately related to the approval criteria. Commission has reviewed the design submittal in detail prior to the hearing and has often conducted site visits. The Commission is familiar with the project, the context and the guidelines, and does not need extensive narratives. Applicant questions and/or issues should align with the Staff Report. Your presentation should focus on the design and issues that are germane to the land use process. Clarity and brevity are hallmarks of an effective presentation. Present the minimum amount of information necessary and have back-up information on hand to address Commissioner questions.

Ensure that the design packets submitted to staff for Design Commission to review prior to the hearing are consistent with your digital presentation. Commission frequently references drawings by page number – make sure the digital presentation is identical to the packet in front of Commission.

Physical material samples are required. Material samples must represent the correct texture and color of the specified material. The Commission discourages bringing multiple samples to convey different aspects of a single material (such as one sample for the stucco texture and a different sample of the stucco color). Plan ahead to get these from your rep/contractor in advance of your hearing date. If you absolutely cannot obtain a window sample that accurately reflects your specified unit, please work with Staff to come up with an acceptable alternative. Provide glass samples, especially if a low-e coating or reflectivity is proposed. If there is a glass spandrel condition, mock up the spandrel condition next to the vision glass condition.

New Information at Hearings

Commissioners review the materials submitted to the City during the week prior to the hearing. Do not submit day-of-hearing changes or revisions to your project and expect the Commission to respond during the hearing, or to vote to approve the project without having had sufficient time to review new information. If there are changes to the proposal close to the hearing date, BDS Planning Staff will decide on the best course of action. Substantive changes may require a revision to the staff report, which would trigger a follow-up hearing. It may therefore be better to reschedule your hearing and submit a revised package. If changes are minor, do not require Staff Report revisions, and are moving the design in a direction that is consistent with previous Commission direction, the Commission may review this new information on a case-by-case basis.

Additional Hearings and Submittal Packets

If returning for an additional hearing, your presentation should focus on Commissioners' comments and issues raised at previous hearings/DARs. Describe how each issue individually has been resolved. Do not repeat introductory context/location information. Clearly address each issue individually and include the

prior design alongside the revised design on the same page of the submittal and in the same slide image in your presentation. All changes made since the last hearing must be noted in the presentation and the drawings.

Conditions of Approval

It is not uncommon for a project to be approved with a few conditions of approval. However, please be aware that the Commission will not approve projects that require lengthy or complex conditions of approval. In particular, we do not use conditions of approval to correct/clarify errors and inconsistencies in drawings. Please do a thorough review before submitting your drawing packet to Staff. If your hearing results in Commission support, but numerous small changes are requested to get to a final approval, the Commission will ask the Applicant to revise the drawings and return at the next possible hearing date to finalize with a vote.

Modifications and Adjustments

While it is common for the Commission to approve staff-recommended Modifications, applicants must demonstrate how the specific Design Guideline is better met by the Modification or Adjustment request, as detailed in the Zoning Code Sections 33.825.040 (Modification approval criteria), and 33.805.040 (Adjustment approval criteria).

Common Modification and Adjustment Requests:

- **Ground Floor Window | Active Ground Floor Use:** Requests for a Modification to the Ground Floor Window standard are frequently accompanied by additional Modifications to the Active Ground Floor Use standard. Replacing active ground floor use and/or transparency with parking/loading, display windows, back of house functions (e.g. electrical or sprinkler rooms) or bike parking rooms is not supported by Design Commission.
- **Commercial spaces less than 25-foot deep** are discouraged and reviewed on a case-by-case basis for compliance with the relevant guidelines.
- **Dimensions of automobile and bike parking spaces** (for wall mounted bikes – reduction from 24" to 18" width) are typically approved by Commission.
- **Modifications to Loading Zones** have been approved by the Design Commission when supported by Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT).

Working with Approval Criteria

The Design Commission and BDS Planning Staff work with multiple sets of approval criteria. Based on the location of the project, Staff will inform applicants of the hierarchy of relevant approval criteria. These may include Community Design Guidelines (CDG), Central City Fundamental Design Guidelines (CCFDG), and relevant district or plan area guidelines such as the Central Eastside Design Guidelines (CEDG). Below is a list of typical design challenges as they relate to a project's approval criteria.

Floor Area Ratio Transfers and Height Bonuses: The Commission sets a very high bar for granting FAR transfers above the allowed bonus and residential height bonuses. Applicants should understand the Commission strongly believes the required "public benefit" should apply to the immediate adjacent blocks and/or neighborhood. Physical improvements are often required to meet the approval criteria.

Arcade District: (CEDG A5-1) Projects within the East Burnside Arcade District should include an arcade – or at least a significant interpretation of the arcade guideline (e.g. bSIDE6 at East Burnside and SE 6th).

Conway District: Projects in the Conway District should respect the design guidelines for pedestrian zones, parks, and designated plazas identified in the Master Plan. The Design Commission does not support locating buildings or cantilevered building floors into these zones or privatizing these public spaces.

Automobiles: (CCFDG A5, A8, B1, B2, B3, C2, C6, C8, C9) Locate automobiles entirely within the building structure and wrap them with active uses to eliminate negative impacts to the ground floor and exterior building facades. Modifications that result in the reduction of active ground floor uses for parking, loading, or similar functions are not supported by Commission.

Parking Garages: (CCFDG A5, A8, B1, B2, B3, C2)

Ground level - In a walkable city, garages and loading bays often create extended dead space adjacent to public sidewalks. The Commission is very intent on minimizing the length and impact of these zones on the pedestrian experience. Applicants should clearly identify the materiality of these doors/gates, their scale and placement, and the placement of their alarms, lights, strobes, exhaust vents, and other associated systems. Provide sufficient wall area to accommodate all of these utilitarian elements in an organized manner. Commission supports overhead doors with translucent glass panels which often continue the glass storefront appearance at the ground level. Garage doors with an open grille are not supported by Design Commission. Solve fresh air intake issues in a different manner. When a speed door is required by PBOT it may have a combination of solid and tight perforated metal slats but Design Commission does not support clear plastic slats. Consider screening the glare from interior lighting through garage doors (doors with tight perforated metal or translucent glass) and include cut-offs or internally directed light fixtures. For security reasons, Commission supports garage and loading doors to be at the exterior wall, not recessed. When warranted, Commission has approved a 4'-0" maximum recess depth for garage doors and loading bay doors.

Above Grade Parking expressed on a building's exterior - This condition is generally discouraged. If it is proposed, it should be mechanically ventilated and screened with predominate building materials and architectural elements. Good examples of successful building screening include The Gregory at NW 10th and Glisan and the Hilton Executive Tower at SW Taylor and 6th.

Ground Floor Active Use: (CCFDG A2, A4, A5, A8, B1, B4, B6, C2, C6, C7, C8, C9) The Commission emphasizes these guideline and views active storefronts and pedestrian zones as more appropriate ground floor uses than parking, loading, or back-of-house functions. Commercial corridor ground floor active uses include retail, commercial, or true live work units (e.g. Streetcar Lofts at 1030 NW 12th Avenue). Ground floor housing-only residential units are not considered active use.

Entrances to Ground Floor Housing Units: (CCFDG A5, A7, A8, B1, B4, C2, C6, C8) Where ground floor housing is permitted by the Commission, a street-facing exterior entrance should be provided to each unit located on the ground floor. (e.g. north-facing Eliot Tower units at 1221 SW 10th Avenue, north-facing Streetcar Lofts units at 1030 NW 12th Avenue).

Projects with Multiple Buildings: (CCFDG A5, C2, C4) When multiple buildings are proposed as part of the same project, Commission intends that each building have unique characteristics.

Weather Protection: (CCFDG B6) Weather protection is desired for all pedestrians. Therefore, weather protection in the form of canopies extending from the building, is required, at a minimum, at all building and lease space entrances. Canopies can also be combined with building recesses to form a more generous entrance. Projects along heavy pedestrian streets should include additional weather protection for the passing pedestrian, while not being compromised by storefront "spill out" activities. Ensure the canopy height is in scale with the building composition. Be generous in meeting this guideline.

Design for Coherency: (CCFDG C5) Design Commission seeks consistency in the applicant's design concept - from massing, to composition, material selection and application, and into the details. Overly complicated

proposals with inconsistent application of the applicant's own concept, or designs that do not respond to the site or context, or that appear to rely on graphic design rather than architecture to form facades are the projects that often require significant changes.

Quality and Permanence: (CCFDG C2) Longevity of building materials and attention to detailing are critical measures of a project's long term success. Design Commission strongly supports the selection of high quality materials such as brick, stone, pre-cast concrete, glass-fiber-reinforced concrete, and composite metal panel systems with concealed fastener systems. Thin brick/stone systems, cement wood board, and synthetic stucco have proven not to hold up to our climate and are not favorably received by the Commission.

- Metal wall cladding – Metal cladding needs to be a high quality finish and thickness to ensure rigidity and avoid “oil-canning” or “pillowing” of the exterior surfaces.
- Fiber cement – Although fiber cement siding and panels are not supported by all Commissioners, thick/sturdy examples may be approved when limited in application. Fiber cement materials perform best within recessed areas of the building (e.g. at recessed balconies, or between oriel windows), surrounded by more permanent materials. Fiber cement should not be proposed on the ground floor. Utilize concealed, rather than exposed fasteners, along with pre-manufactured channels at all edges.
- Wood – Wood should be used in a manner that protects it from direct contact with rain and is not supported as a primary wall cladding material. Acceptable applications include areas protected by a ceiling, building overhang, deck, or within a building setback. In addition, it should be raised off of the ground-plane enough so as not to be degraded by water on the adjacent sidewalk surface.
- Weathered Steel – Weathered steel (aka CorTen) should not be used within the pedestrian ‘touch zone.’ When used, it should be in locations where the occurring rust will not stain adjacent materials.
- Details - Details for any material should be designed for durability and to perform with minimal maintenance over time.
- End Walls - Should be considered and clad with higher quality materials. A delay in cladding the end wall may be acceptable if an adjacent project is pending.

Public Art: (CCFDG A5, A8, B1, C2) When art is required as part of a Public Percent for Art project, or encouraged through Design Guidelines, the applicant must submit details about the urban design criteria, budget, selection process, and timeline for the art installation. Applicants should meet EARLY with the Public Art Staff of the Regional Arts and Cultural Council (RACC), The Oregon Arts Commission, or the regulatory body charged with the project's art administration *prior* to their first DAR presentation before Design Commission. Contact: <https://racc.org/>

Mechanical/Utilities: (CCFDG B2, C1, C2, C5, C11)

- Through-Wall HVAC Units – Not preferred, but if proposed, integrate into the window and door systems and provide a high quality, custom louver of similar finish to the windows and doors.
- Rooftop/Penthouse Screening of Mechanical Systems - Generally not necessary for a few small to mid-size rooftop units. However, large units and/or large quantities of units, along with associated mechanical/electrical/plumbing systems, will likely need screening. These systems should be

organized and located to minimize their visual impact on adjacent buildings, views from above and from afar. Typically, the screen is the same color as the body of the building.

- Gas Meters – Locate within the building. The gas regulator can be located within a secondary building/door recess that fronts a pedestrian zone.
- Transformers - Commission supports transformer vaults underground in the right-of-way. An acceptable vault cover has now been developed and approved by PBOT. Transformers located within buildings at exterior walls are not supported.
- Ground Level Louvers – Exhaust at the ground level is discouraged. Provide the cubic feet per minute of air movement (intake and exhaust) for louvers located at the ground level. High quality, custom louvers/grilles are recommended by the Commission when located within the pedestrian zone. Always minimize the scale of the louvers when possible.

Skybridges (CCFDG C10): Skybridges are discouraged.

Design Review Submittal Format

The following is the format for Type III and large Type II Design Review submittals. A consistent submittal format provides predictability for applicants before the land use review begins. Utilizing this format will provide consistency among the numerous submittals reviewed by BDS Planning Staff and the Design Commission before and during hearings increasing efficiency.

Please adhere to the following format:

- One staple in upper left corner (not bound)
- Label all sheets at lower right corner: *Land Use Review # (LU 16-_____-DZ, plus other reviews M, AD) Exhibit C.xx*
- Provide one electronic copy (disc, flash drive or link via email)
- Labeling and notes on the drawings should be at least 12-point type
- Review all color quality in the submittal as it should accurately represent the colors intended.
- Revisions to the submittal made after a prior hearing should be illustrated and clearly marked in a side by side comparison.
- Conduct a thorough review before submitting your drawing packet. Errors or inconsistencies in your drawing set may result in an additional hearing, as the Commission cannot correct these oversights through conditions of approval.

11" x 17" FORMAT:

Architectural drawings (to architect/engineering scale) & cut sheets - "C" Exhibits (number consecutively C.1, C.2, C.3,):

- Title Page
- Table of Contents
- C.1,... Site Plan
- C.x Floor and Roof Plans - roof plan should show all rooftop elements, including mechanical
- C.x Elevations - B/W and color, and without shade or shadows, if project is close to or touching its neighbors, include street-facing elevations in their immediate context, including adjacent buildings
- C.x Building Sections - Include some depicting relationships to adjacent buildings
- C.x Sightlines - sightline drawings from relevant vantage points, vantage points should remain consistent between submittals
- C.x Building Details - for all window types, storefronts, canopies, balconies, signage and their attachments, etc., control joints, seismic joints, and other visible construction details such as exposed fasteners must be clearly noted on the drawings
- C.x Materials / Colors - clearly identify each and every building material by name
- C.x Landscape Plans
- C.x Lighting Plans
- C.x Civil Plans
- C.x Cut Sheets - only pertinent product info like thickness, finish, color, dimensions

Appendix (number consecutively APP.1, APP.2, APP.3,...):

- APP.1, Renderings - day and night in context, must be simple and not enhanced, marketing-type images, avoid dramatic lighting effects
- APP.x Vicinity and Context
- APP.x Material Photos and Examples - addresses of other local buildings where your proposed

are used may be very helpful, especially if the materials have been in place for more than a few years

- APP.x Massing / Design Concept
- APP.x Miscellaneous Diagrams - FAR, ground floor windows, clear vs. spandrel panels, height, Modifications, Adjustments, etc.
- APP.x Responses to DAR (diagram)

8.5" x 11" FORMAT (word.doc):

- Project team and Project cost
- Project narrative
- Zoning summary
- Response to Design Guidelines
- Modifications and Adjustments requests & approval criteria responses
- Response to DAR (narrative)
- Sustainable features/green technology / LEED goals, etc.

Thank you for taking the time to review this important Guide to the City's Design Review Process.

Signed, the 2016 Portland Design Commission



David Wark, Chair



Tad Savinar, Vice Chair



Jessica Molinar



Don Vallaster



Julie Livingston



Andrew Clarke



Sam Rodriguez