



Planning and Urban Development Department

To: Design Manual Working Group
Subject: Summary Memo Meeting #1: Document Structure, General Design Standards
Written by: Caitlin Cameron, Urban Designer, Kevin Kraft, Deputy Director
Date: Thursday, March 4, 2021

Working Group Members: Julia Tate, Maggie Stanley, Erin Cooperider, Justin Barker, Julie Larry, Hans Breaux, Will Savage, Kara Wilbur

The Design Manual Working Group's first meeting (Meeting #1) focused on the structure of the revised Design Manual. To begin the meeting staff gave an overview of the existing Design Manual and Design Standards current structures and locations. Staff explained that Design standards currently appear in four different locations: Ch 14 Site Plan Ordinance, Ch 14 zones, the City of Portland Design Manual, and neighborhood plans. As part of the overhaul process Planning staff proposes to consolidate these standards into the Site Plan Ordinance and the Design Manual with the goal of improving and enhancing their usability.

Action Items:

- Schedule remaining meetings

Design Manual Structure

Discussion:

- Interaction with other policy documents
 - o What is the interaction with this process and the Recode? What would happen if Recode removes or dramatically changes zones?
 - o Tech Manual/Site Plan standards vs. Design Manual
 - When possible, the intent is to remove from the Design Manual any regulation that is already covered by other documents (lighting, landscape, parking, signage, nuisance)
- Document Structure
 - o Clarify difference between standards in the Site Plan ordinance and Design Manual?
 - The Design Manual is proposed to be the central location for all design standards. The Site Plan ordinance would enable the design manual and list applicability.
 - Still some questions about content of the Site Plan ordinance, but would not be separate/different information than Design Manual
 - o Would appendices remain?
 - What are currently called appendices would be transferred into General Design Standards or Special Design Districts
 - Some appendices would remain as references (View Corridor Protection Map, PAD map)
 - o Support General Design Standards, separation by zone/use/type
 - How to handle institutional and industrial uses?
 - This is undetermined, further discussion is needed.

- Does general applicability create standards that overreach or currently don't apply? Too much one-size fits all? Changes in design outcome with this approach?
 - Other communities have removed design standards from Site Plan ordinance – what would it take to remove design standards from Ch 14?
 - Not sure legally we want to do that – believe that Council-adopted Site Plan language is stronger. Site Plan ordinance would not contain design standards but might contain principle statements or vision statements
 - Similar approach in Design Manual to a form-based code – is complexity added by including bulk, height, massing, scale in the design standards rather than zoning dimensional standards? Are there conflicts between the allowed zoning and design standards?
 - Keep an eye on this question throughout work on design standards. Are there conflicts with zoning dimensional standards or purpose statements? Possibility of recommendations to come out of this process to inform Recode II.
 - Zoning dimensional standards and design standards are intended to work together as complementary regulations and it is critical that they support each other. However, zoning dimensional standards will not be revised or adjusted as part of the Design Manual overhaul process. The interaction between Design Standards and Zoning Dimensional Standards is critical and will be considered how they interact.
- Highlight steps of review and who has authority
- Zone envelope vs. Design Standards
 - Do some design standards belong in zoning instead?
 - How to clarify for applicants that zone envelope is not the same as final massing/scale/form, not a given?
- Special Design Districts
 - Explore PRUD standards further, currently specific, consider adding more flexibility?
- Do the standards preclude or create conflicts between sustainable design and context compatibility? Flexibility for sustainable practices? Stronger statement that both should/can be met? Make sure standards don't preclude accessibility/sustainability
 - Create process for deviations from standards
- Precedents
 - What precedents have been looked at
 - WG members offer some examples

Action Items

- Create a repository for precedents/Working Group members to share precedents
- Create a shared document for general comments/questions

General Design Standards

The group reviewed the proposed list of nine proposed design principle categories. This discussion will continue in meeting #2 where the content of the General Design Standards will be reviewed with final determination on the appropriate principle categories based on existing standards.

Principle Categories (as presented)

1. Context Relationship
2. Public Realm
3. Massing

4. Orientation
5. Form
6. Façade Composition
7. Articulation/Massing Variation
8. Materials
9. Garages/Parking

Discussion:

- Discussion related to specificity vs. flexibility
 - o From applicant's perspective, the more specific the better to plan for approvable outcomes. If there are expectations for certain materials, forms, etc. clearly express that desired outcome
 - o Form Based Code approach describes what is expected
 - o Prescriptive vs Interpretive/context-based: How to describe what is expected to applicant but not curtail design creativity?
- Combining standards for multiple zones
 - o When combining zones, lose specificity of context character – design regulation then requires more interpretation, possible subjectivity
- Zoning vs. Design Standards
 - o Where to address issues with building scale resulting from lot aggregation, lot coverage?
 - o Can any of these standards be translated into zoning? This would provide clear expectations for those items (scale, fenestration, setbacks)
- Context Relationship
 - o "Neighborhood" should appear in this category
 - o Regarding "Neighborhood" definition of two-block radius – use and building type should be a consideration in addition to scale/form
 - o Add "fabric" as part of the description
 - o Refer to Comprehensive Plan/policy documents descriptions of context and vision
 - o What is the role of this category? Is there a danger in too broad statements related to context character?
 - o Where are more contemporary/flexible designs acceptable, where is the compatibility interpretation more conservative? (referring to zones or neighborhoods)
 - o Do standards related to placement and scale belong here?
- Façade Composition – too general? May not need to be its own category
- Massing + Form could be combined into one category
- Orientation should be moved higher up on the list, after Context/Public Realm
- Could some categories become broader? For example Parking/Garages becomes Transportation
- Is there an opportunity to address accessibility/equity in the principle categories? Do the standards proliferate any tensions between context compatibility and accessibility?

Action Items

- Review/revise principle categories based on discussion
- Present draft General Design Standards for WG meeting #2

Public Attendance:

The first Working Group Meeting was held via Zoom and was open to Public attendance. There were approximately nine to 11 members of the public in attendance. Public comment was not taken.