

# Seattle City Council Planning, Land Use & Zoning Committee August 1, 2017



## Today [August 1<sup>st</sup>]

- ▶ Design Review Program
- ▶ Proposal Development
- ▶ Overview of Recommendations

## Next Meeting [August 15<sup>th</sup>]

- ▶ Details of Thresholds Changes
- ▶ Details of Early Outreach



## What is Design Review?

- ▶ City program created in 1994
- ▶ Architectural quality and urban design of new buildings
- ▶ Volunteer board members and city staff
- ▶ Design guidelines

## Purpose

- ▶ Better design
- ▶ Flexibility
- ▶ Communication

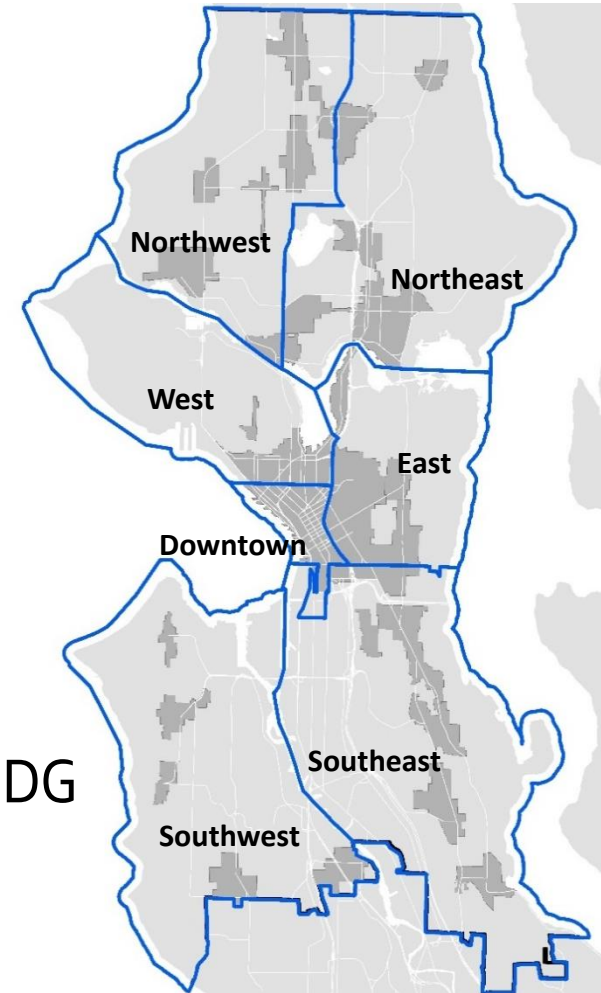


## Types of Design Review

- ▶ Board review (full)
- ▶ Administrative
- ▶ Streamlined

## Board Duties

- ▶ Synthesize community input
- ▶ Provide early design guidance
- ▶ Review design evolution in response to EDG
- ▶ Consider departure requests
- ▶ Recommend conditions
- ▶ Ensure fair and consistent application of guidelines



## What goes through Design Review?

- ▶ Most multi-family, mixed use and commercial buildings
- ▶ No public facilities, institutions, industrial, single-family

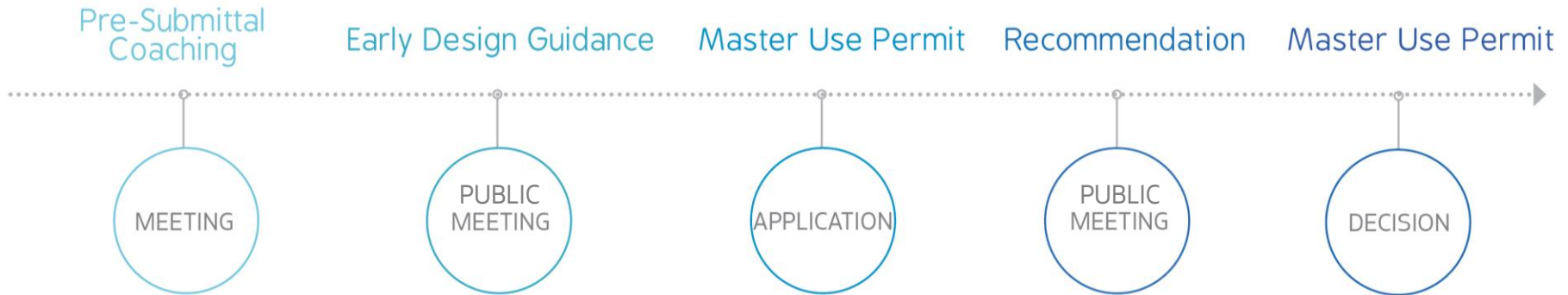
## Minimum thresholds

- ▶ Different for each zone
- ▶ Combination of:
  - ▶ square feet
  - ▶ # of housing units
  - ▶ type of housing units



# DESIGN REVIEW PROGRAM

## Steps in the “full” design review process



### Administrative design review

- ▶ Similar steps, but review is done by staff (no public board meetings)

### Streamlined design review

- ▶ Staff review, shorter process (no public board meetings)



# DESIGN REVIEW PROGRAM

**190** Projects Reviewed Each Year\*

**120** Full  
Board Review

**10** Administrative  
Design Review

**60** Streamlined  
Design Review



\* Approximate, based on average number of projects reviewed in 2014-2015



## History of Program

- ▶ Created in 1994
- ▶ Administrative design review added in 1998
- ▶ Streamlined design review added in 2010
- ▶ Various updates and changes over the years



No comprehensive  
reform  
since program was  
created in 1994





## Why Make Changes?

- ▶ New tools and resources are available
- ▶ Calls for a review by stakeholders
  - ▶ Neighborhood and community groups
  - ▶ Business and developer groups
  - ▶ Professional design organizations
- ▶ City Council direction
- ▶ Housing Affordability and Livability Agenda

predictability and consistency



## Project Goals



Cultivate the program's purpose of encouraging better design



Improve the level of consistency, efficiency and predictability in how the City administers the program



Set clear expectations



Support communication and dialogue

## What do other cities do?

- ▶ Tacoma
- ▶ Kirkland
- ▶ Bellevue
- ▶ Vancouver, BC
- ▶ Portland, OR
- ▶ San Francisco, CA
- ▶ Denver, CO
- ▶ Boston, MA



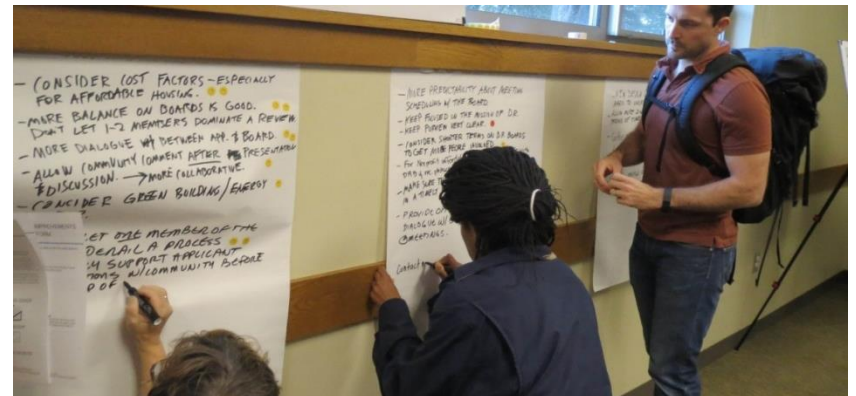
# PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT

## Project Timeline

2015



### Housing Affordability and Livability Agenda (HALA)



# PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT

## Project Timeline

2016-2017



## What We've Heard

- ▶ Community input is important
- ▶ Keep design review focused on design
- ▶ Increase predictability and expediency
- ▶ Increase dialogue and communication
- ▶ Use a variety of outreach tools



## Changes in 2016

- ▶ Require early outreach
- ▶ Keep existing districts

## Changes in 2017

- ▶ Types of complex projects
- ▶ Hybrid process pilot



# RECOMMENDATIONS



①

Project  
Thresholds



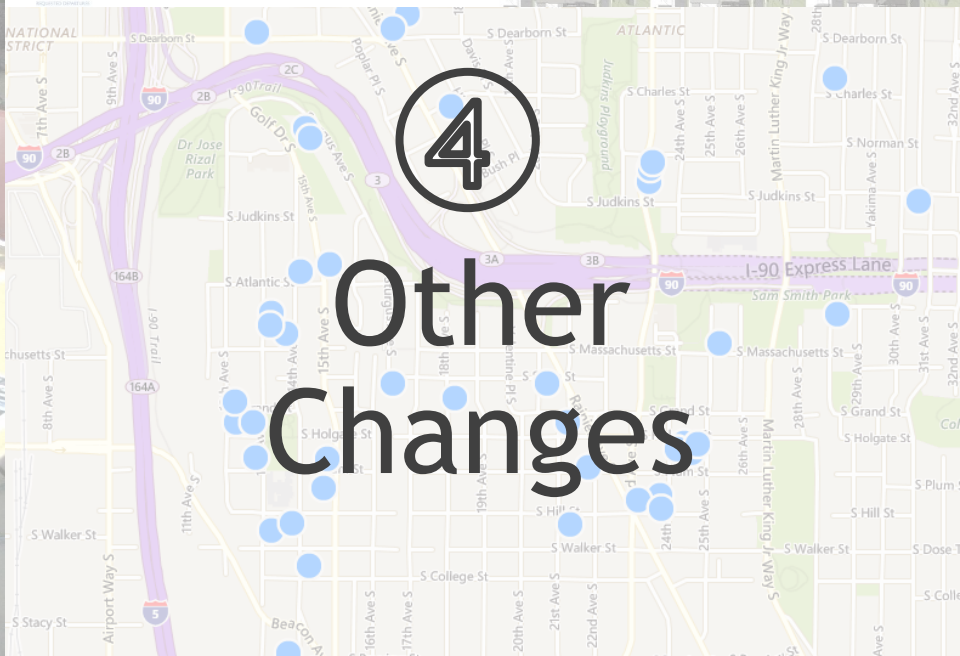
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Early Community  
Outreach



②

Administrative  
Reviews



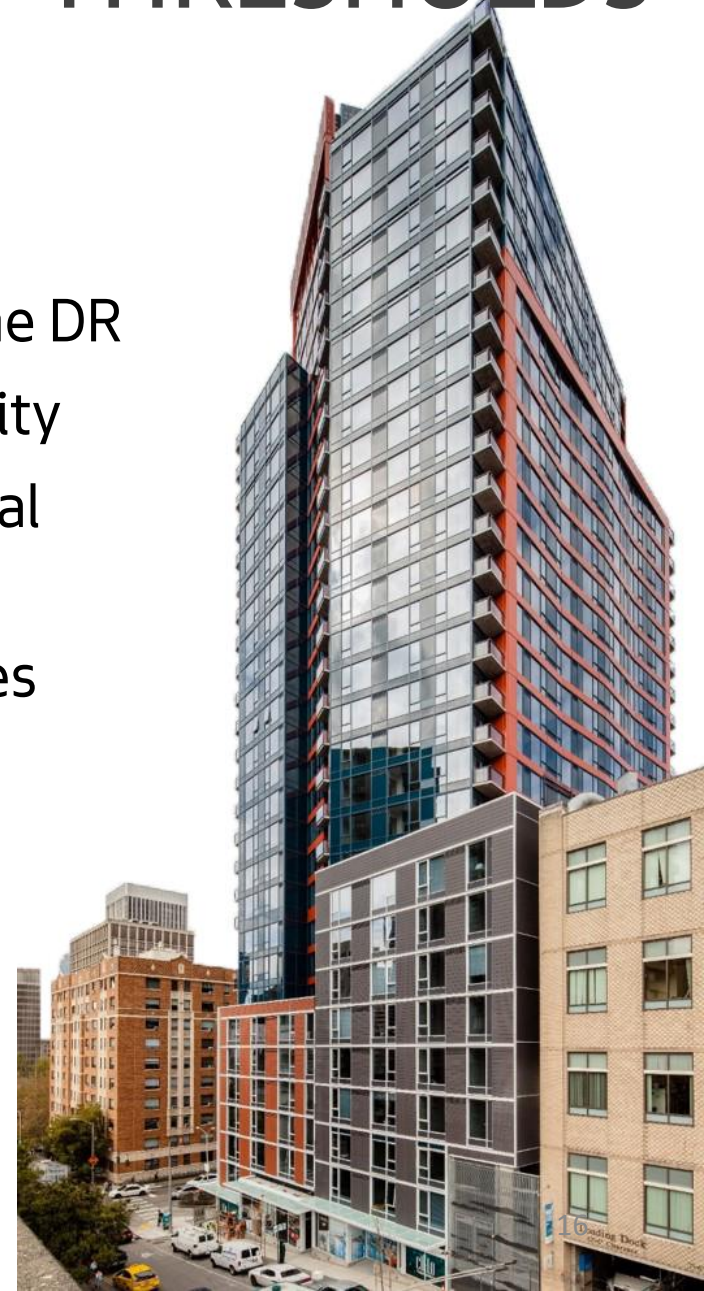
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Other  
Changes

# PROJECT THRESHOLDS

## Overview

- ▶ Simplify thresholds
- ▶ Raise thresholds / eliminate Streamline DR
- ▶ New consideration of project complexity
- ▶ Review for commercial and institutional developments in industrial areas
- ▶ Include more types of institutional uses





## New “Hybrid” Process

- ▶ One stage of review by staff, the other by the boards
- ▶ Used for:
  - ▶ smaller projects that are complex
  - ▶ larger projects that are not complex
- ▶ Includes a new pilot program option

## More Administrative process

- ▶ Existing process, both stages of review done by SDCI staff
- ▶ Use for smaller projects that are not complex
- ▶ Default process for affordable housing



## New Required Community Outreach

- ▶ Applicants must conduct community outreach before beginning design review
- ▶ In addition to existing public notice and public comment opportunities

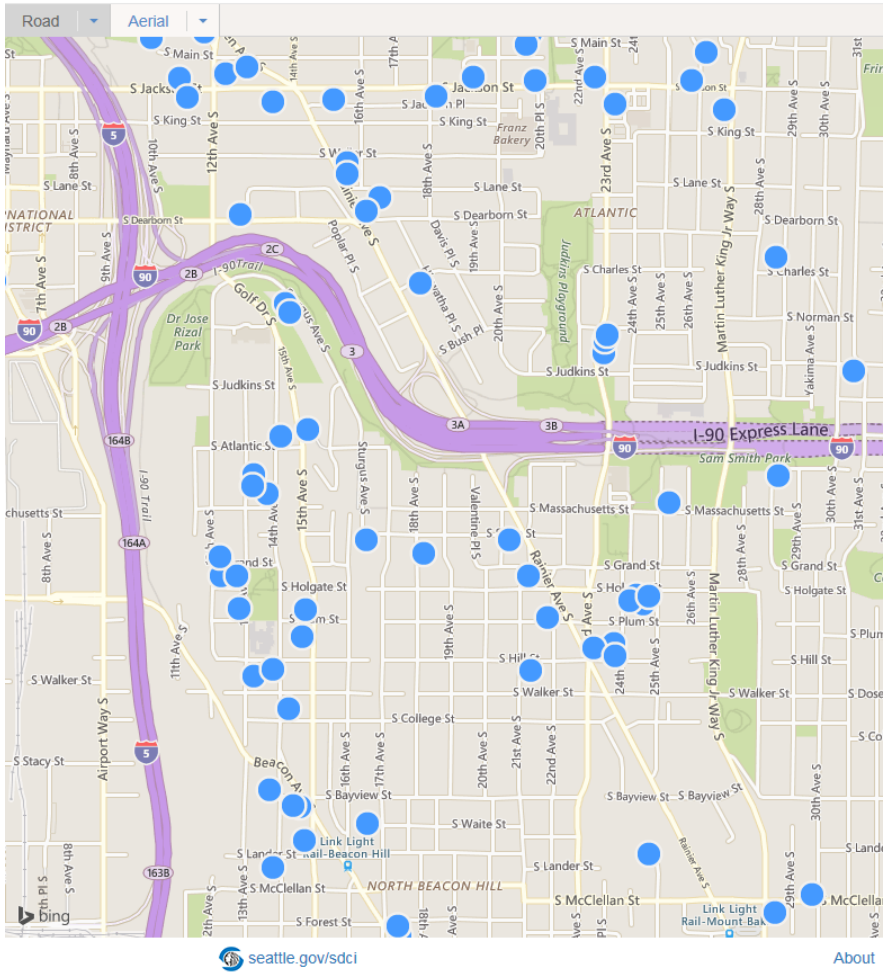
## Purpose

- ▶ Improve dialogue between the applicant and communities
- ▶ Improve applicant's understanding of the local context



# OTHER CHANGES

Shaping Seattle: Buildings



- ▶ Minor changes to board composition
- ▶ Meeting limits for some projects
- ▶ Technology improvements
- ▶ Revised meeting formats
- ▶ Additional training
- ▶ Audio recordings
- ▶ Exceptional trees
- ▶ Minor communication facilities
- ▶ Cleanup and clarify



## Meeting The Goals



- ▶ No change to board districts
- ▶ Earlier dialogue with community improves 'fit' in neighborhoods



- ▶ Estimated 4 - 8 week timeline reduction on average
- ▶ Reduces review volume for overloaded boards
- ▶ New tools & techniques improve consistency



- ▶ Early dialogue allows meetings to focus more on design
- ▶ More training for board and staff establishes clearer protocols for design review process



- ▶ Early engagement improves dialogue with communities
- ▶ Broadens participation with web-based tools
- ▶ Modified board meeting procedures to improve 2-way dialogue

# Thank you

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