



Pittsburgh Department of City Planning

DESIGN REVIEW PROCESS

ABOUT DESIGN REVIEW

Design Review is an important part of the permitting process in the Department of City Planning. In this process, architects and developers work with staff, panels and commissions to help ensure high-quality development in Pittsburgh. Successful design improves quality of life, enhances neighborhood character, and provides economic and environmental benefits.

Pittsburgh's Zoning Code requires Design Review for many types of projects, based on size and zoning district. Design Review is a component of Zoning Development Review processes, such as Site Plan Review, Project Development Review. **All projects requiring a Development Review Application must undergo Design Review.** These projects can include new commercial construction; new residential construction of 4 or more units; master plans; high wall signs; projects in Downtown, Oakland, or the North Shore; projects in other select neighborhoods; and others as required by the Zoning Code or the Zoning Administrator.

Design Review is a collaborative process between City Planning and the project representative. It is an iterative process, meaning that Staff works continuously with the applicant to address the Urban Design Targets until these goals are being met and design-related zoning requirements are satisfied.

THE DESIGN REVIEW PROCESS

Application

Prior to filing an application, applicants may request a pre-application meeting with staff to discuss the project concept and the approval process.

Applicants should begin the Design Review process at an early stage of project development when changes in the project can still be made. To begin, applicants submit a completed Development Review Application for the applicable Zoning Development Review process, such as Site Plan Review, Project Development Review. The Design Review will be a part of that review process.

The extent of the Design Review process can vary depending on the location, scale and scope of the project, necessary review, and what urban design issues or criteria are present in the project.

Staff Design Review

All Design Review starts at the staff level. After a Development Review Application is filed, City Planning design staff and the appropriate neighborhood planner make an initial evaluation of the project. The Staff Design Review is an internal meeting for staff to review the proposed design.

During this initial review, City Planning design staff assigns Urban Design Targets for the project. In developing each set of targets, staff draws from the neighborhood context, relevant master plans and design guidelines. The Urban Design Targets are specific to the project but are broad, not prescriptive, to serve as goals for the applicant. They guide the project throughout the Design Review process.

Staff will send the Urban Design Targets to the applicant and confirm the next steps in the review process. In some cases, a project may meet some or all of the Urban Design Targets on initial submission, and no further Design Review will be necessary.

For projects that do not meet all the Urban Design Targets, Staff will recommend one of two paths: continued review by staff or review by the Contextual Design Advisory Panel (CDAP).

If the Design Review remains with staff, applicant will work to respond to and meet the Urban Design Targets and the staff's design comments. The Design Review process is complete when the applicant has met all the design-related zoning requirements and incorporated the Urban Design Targets to the fullest extent possible. All other Zoning Code requirements will have to be met prior to the issuance of zoning approval for a project.

The Contextual Design Advisory Panel (CDAP) Review

The Contextual Design Advisory Panel (CDAP) is comprised of eight members with expertise in the physical development of the city. The typical composition for the panel is four architects, one landscape architect, one construction/materials specialist and two other members. Together with Staff Design Review, this multi-disciplinary team provides pro-bono design and planning assistance within each of their professional fields.



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The panel's mission is "promoting quality of life in the City of Pittsburgh through professional, voluntary design assistance to maximize the economic, civic, contextual, and aesthetic value of new development projects which significantly impact the public realm." To fulfill this mission, CDAP provides assistance to the Department of City Planning by reviewing and providing design guidance on selected, higher profile projects throughout the city.

Regular CDAP meetings are held every other Tuesday from 4 PM to 6 PM in the Department of City Planning, 200 Ross Street, 4th Floor. Staff will work with the applicant to schedule a time on the CDAP agenda for the project presentation and review.

Projects that are identified by staff as those recommended for CDAP review, will first be reviewed by staff and have Urban Design Targets assigned, as described above. CDAP review is voluntary, but highly recommended for some projects. The applicant will update the design to address the Urban Design Targets and incorporate the staff's comments, in preparation for the CDAP meeting.

Occasionally, Staff or the applicant will suggest a CDAP workshop, in lieu of, or prior to the standard review meeting. The CDAP workshop is a collaborative, charrette style meeting, and usually used very early in the design, to help resolve unusual or complicated design issues. The project representative brings their project goals and current design, and the CDAP provide design guidance and give suggestions for ways to meet the project objectives while creating successful urban spaces. After the CDAP workshop, staff will work with the applicant to determine if a subsequent CDAP review (as described below) is necessary.

The CDAP review is a more traditional meeting style with a presentation by the application and comments or suggestions given by the CDAP members. At the CDAP review, the project representative explains the project, surrounding context, and design concepts. CDAP members ask questions and make recommendations to the project representative. The Urban Design Targets set by Staff Design Review guide the review at CDAP meetings. Discussion will focus on the targets, which will provide consistency to the process and benchmarks to evaluate progress.

After the CDAP meeting, Staff sends a summary of the comments to the applicant. The applicant then follows up

with staff to reply and respond to the comments by updating the design accordingly. For projects requiring approval by Planning Commission, staff will write a summary of the Design Review process, including the Staff Design Review, CDAP, and subsequent design changes, to be included in the staff report to the Planning Commission. For all other projects, the staff will convey the Design Review process through the Zoning Administrator and/or staff.

The Design Review process is complete when the applicant has met all the design-related zoning requirements and incorporated the Urban Design Targets to the fullest extent possible. All other Zoning Code requirements will have to be met prior to the issuance of zoning approval for a project.

SUBMISSIONS REQUIREMENTS

Please see the supplemental handout "Design Review Submission Requirements" for a list of what drawings and renderings are required, based on the type of submission and the stage of review.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information, contact William Gregory, Planner 2 (Design Review), at william.gregory@pittsburghpa.gov or 412-255-2470 Ex. 4.