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FROM: Peter Huffman, Director, Planning and Development Services
COPY: Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability Committee; Kurtis Kingsolver, P.E.,
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PRESENTERS: Stephen Antupit, Senior Planner, Planning and Development Services
Carl Metz, Senior Planner, Planning and Development Services
SUBJECT: Design Review Program
DATE: May 11, 2022

PRESENTATION TYPE:
Informational Briefing

SUMMARY:

On May 11, 2022, Planning and Development Services staff will provide the Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability (IPS) Committee with an update on the development of the Design Review Program.

BACKGROUND:

The City of Tacoma is developing a comprehensive design review program to enhance the quality of the built environment throughout the City. The City currently operates two narrowly focused design review systems, one for historic districts and buildings, and the other for the Foss Waterway redevelopment area. Throughout the One Tacoma Comprehensive Plan and Tacoma 2025, policy guidance highlights design review as an opportunity to help create unique places, promote innovation and quality, and imbue public space with features and amenities that promote the health and vitality of residents and visitors. Over the last several years, the City Council has provided resources to initiate a Design Review Program, including the establishment of the Urban Design Studio in 2018.

The Urban Design Studio works with the community, development partners, and other departments and agencies to advance the design quality of places citywide. The Urban Design Studio's mission is to build upon Tacoma's unique setting and history, our special character and our changing population, to elevate the quality of public and private spaces and create an equitable, more vibrant, livable, walkable, and resilient city. Implementing design review is a major undertaking of the Urban Design Studio in Planning and Development Services.

The Urban Design Studio would oversee the Design Review Program and work to translate community visions and adopted City policy into projects built throughout the city. Information on the work of the Urban Design Studio can be found at www.cityoftacoma.org/urbandesign.

ISSUE:

This briefing will provide Councilmembers a re-introduction and current status of the development of the Design Review Program. Work on this new program was on hold for much of 2021 due to staff departure. Before the project's pause, City staff and consultants worked with a Technical Advisory Committee, a Project Advisory Group (PAG), the Planning Commission, and the IPS Committee to develop a set of draft documents including a Summary Report, Internal Operations Manual, System Handbook and Standards and Guidelines Manual.



New staff have been hired and assigned to complete the Design Review Program project, which is expected to include the set of design guidance documents listed above, administrative procedures, Land Use Regulatory Code amendments, and the establishment of a Design Review Board.

A reconvened and expanded PAG has held regular meetings over the past few months to provide stakeholder input and expertise through this final phase of the project.

Staff will provide the Committee an overview of the project as it has been developed thus far, a summary of staff's recent work with the PAG, and Planning Commission and draft project timeline. Staff seeks questions and input from the Committee.

ALTERNATIVES:

This is an information briefing only. There are no alternatives presented.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This is an information briefing only. There is no fiscal impact.

RECOMMENDATION:

This is an information briefing only. There is no recommendation.