



December 13, 2022

Dear Mayor Harrell and Councilmembers,

AIA Seattle, a membership organization of more than 2600 architects, planners, designers, and allied professionals, supports meaningful Design Review reform and welcomes today's legislation to remove barriers to create affordable housing. For decades, AIA Seattle has advocated for Design Review that is efficient, transparent, and consistent, and currently participates in the Stakeholder Group convened by request of City Council to SDCI to provide a report on Design Review program outcomes, process improvements, and equity. The strategic imperatives of AIA Seattle are climate, housing, and JEDI (Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion) which inform our recommendations.

AIA Seattle

Center for Architecture
& Design
1010 Western Ave
Seattle, WA 98104

T (206) 448 4938

aiaseattle.org

The findings brought forward by the Racial Equity Toolkit (RET) demonstrate the need to align the intentions of Design Review with the way it is practiced and experienced. AIA Seattle recommends transformational change around the tenets brought forward through the RET and transactional change.

Transformational Change Recommendations

AIA Seattle recommends a Design Review process which centers racial equity, work that leads with race to achieve equity, defined as just and fair access to opportunity and resources in which all can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential. In the context of Design Review, racial equity requires a process which will:

1. **Identify neighborhoods with high disparities, especially in housing, health, and socioeconomic measurements.**
2. **Build community capacity in high disparity neighborhoods.**
 - a. Establish community relationships before the pre-submittal conference.
 - b. Coordinate public process through Community Liaisons paid by the City and selected from the community.
 - c. Clarify the process and communications in place-based engagements.
 - d. Use an inclusive framework for community engagement.
3. **Reward projects which can demonstrate responsiveness to community-driven needs and center lived experiences.**

The City should develop Equity Guidelines and reward projects which can demonstrate consideration of the Guidelines with expedited process and flexibility. Equity Guidelines should support design responsive to:

- Discriminatory historic zoning practices

- Housing affordability and ownership
- Climate change
- Livability of neighborhoods in the context of displacement
- Access and connectivity to services and infrastructure
- Issues most relevant to the neighborhood and site

4. Support housing affordability and ownership.

- a. Shorten review time - expedited review with predictable timeframe.
- b. Exempt rental and homeownership affordable housing projects from design review.

AIA Seattle

Center for Architecture
& Design
1010 Western Ave
Seattle, WA 98104

T (206) 448 4938

aiaseattle.org

Transactional Change Recommendations

AIA Seattle recommends a Design Review process which addresses persistent process problems. The process should deliver quality design, eliminate extra costs and reduce the amount of time it takes for projects to be approved. In addition, it should identify thresholds for minimum performance to reward good design with expedited process and flexibility. Effective Design Review process change will:

1. Reduce

- a. the overall review timeline and number of meetings for projects.
- b. packet requirements and focus on the design of a single alternative.
- c. the number of Design Guidelines, identify priority guidelines during the pre-submittal conference and remove the neighborhood guidelines.

2. Provide

- a. opportunity for the applicant to present within the Administrative Design Review process to remove the current “black box” process.
- b. an Ombudsperson who oversees the process and coordinates with other departments.
- c. better alignment with other departments such as SDOT and SPU.

3. Include

- a. planner and board member training focused on creating efficiency, predictability and consistency while reducing subjectivity with focus on the established priority Design Guidelines.
- b. a single consolidated board to produce more efficiency, predictability, and consistency.

- c. thresholds for minimum performance to reward better design and more sustainable design with expedited process and flexibility to meet code.

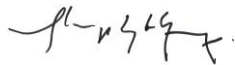
AIA Seattle has participated for decades in advocating for Design Review reform and provides these recommendations with the intention of seeing real transformational and transactional change in the process. AIA Seattle is prepared to work hand in hand on administrative and legislative changes with the SDCl, OPCD, the Mayor's office and Seattle City Council to ensure that meaningful change occurs. AIA Seattle urges reforms which will center racial equity and lead to an efficient, transparent, and consistent process for all stakeholders.

AIA Seattle

Center for Architecture
& Design
1010 Western Ave
Seattle, WA 98104

T (206) 448 4938

aiaseattle.org

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gladys Ly-Au Young".

Gladys Ly-Au Young, AIA, NOMA
SLI Stakeholder Group Representative
Co-chair, AIA Seattle Honor Awards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matt Hutchins".

Matt Hutchins, AIA, CPHD
Co-chair, AIA Seattle Public Policy Board
AIA Seattle Board of Directors
AIA Strategic Council