

# Design Overlay Zone Assessment

Portland City Council

April 26, 2017



Bureau of Planning and Sustainability  
Bureau of Development Services

4/28/2017

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# Basic Structure of Portland Zoning

## PLAN DISTRICTS

(Central City Plan District, Gateway Plan District, Hollywood Plan District, Hillsdale Plan District, etc.)

## OVERLAY ZONES

(Design Overlay Zone, Environmental Zone, Historic Resource Overlay, Main Street Corridor, etc.)

## BASE ZONE

(Mixed Use Commercial, Single Dwelling Residential, Multi-Dwelling Residential, Industrial, etc.)

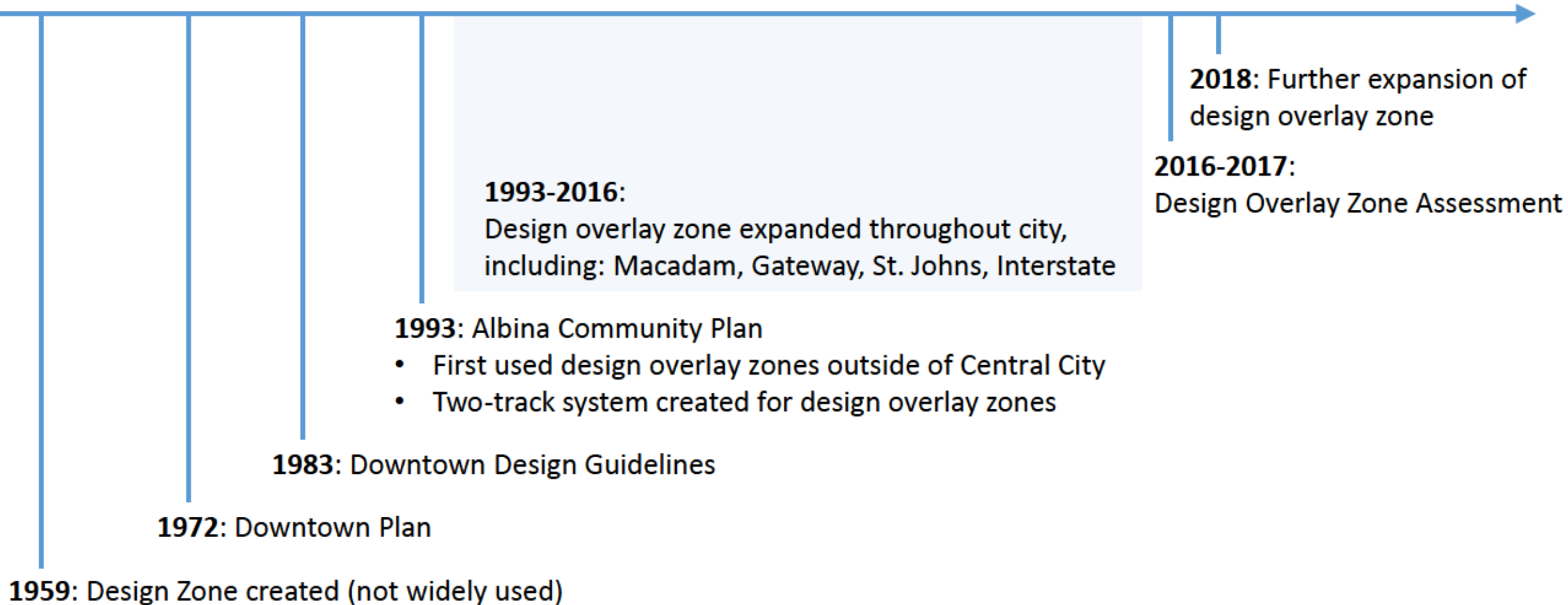
# Design Overlay Zone

The current **purpose** of **Design Overlay Zone (33.420)**

- For areas of the city with special scenic, architectural, or cultural value
- promotes conservation, enhancement, and vitality
- ensures that certain types of infill development will be compatible with the neighborhood and enhance the area
- promotes quality high-density development near transit stations



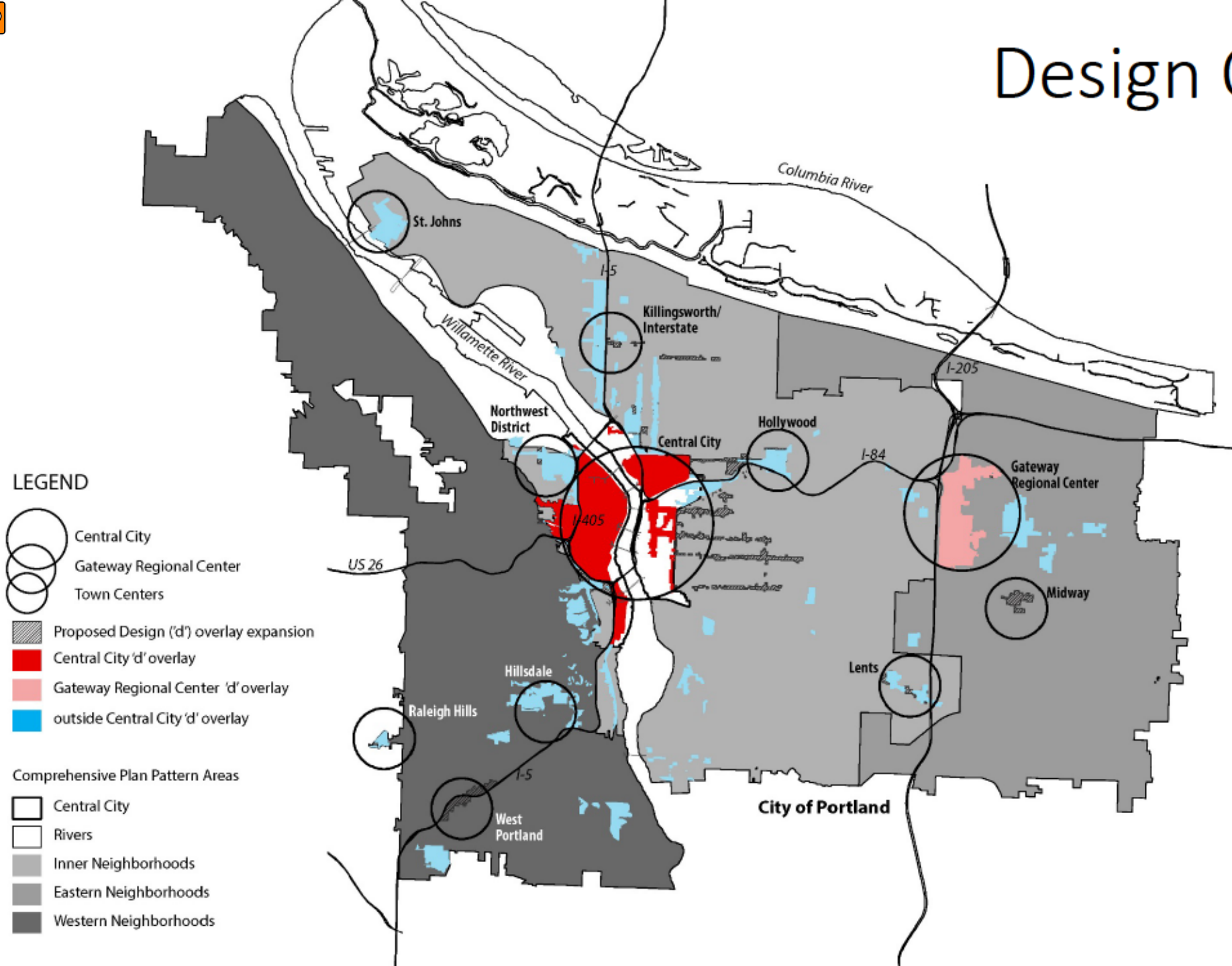
# Design Overlay Zone Milestones







# Design Overlay Zone in Portland



# City Development Review

	Required for all development proposals
Land use review	Depends on Zone/Use/Geography
Permitting	YES
Inspections	YES
Examples: Conditional Use Review, Land Division, Design Review Greenway Review, Historic Resource Review	

# Design Overlay Zone Regulations

Two-Track System for projects within design overlay zone

## Discretionary **Design Review**

- Land Use Review
- Required in Central City and Gateway
- Subjective; Requires judgement; flexibility
- Public Comment and potential Hearing with Design Commission
- Design **Guidelines**

## Clear and Objective **Plan Check**

- Building Permit
- Potential option everywhere else
- Objective; Does not require judgement; limits flexibility
- Limited public involvement
- Design **Standards** in Code

# Example

## Design Guidelines

### **A8: Contribute to a Vibrant Experience**

- Integrate building setbacks with adjacent sidewalks to increase the space for potential public use.
- Develop visual and physical connections into buildings' active interior spaces from adjacent sidewalks.
- Use architectural elements such as atriums, grand entries and large ground-level windows to reveal important interior spaces and activities.

## Design Standards

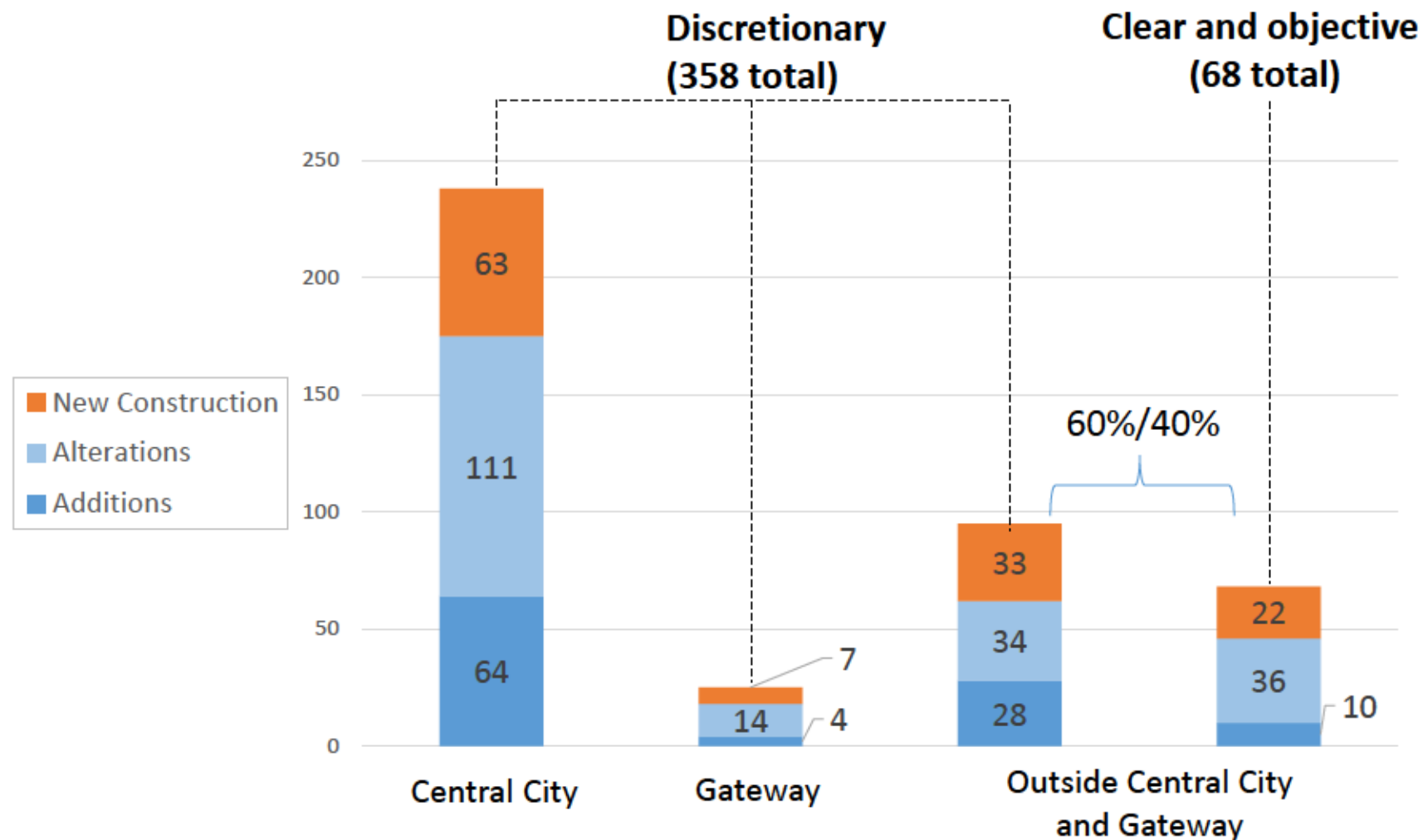
### **33.218.140 B1c**

For each 100 square feet of hard-surface area between the building and the street lot line at least one of the following amenities must be provided. Structures built within 2 feet of the street lot line are exempt from the requirements of this subparagraph.

- (1) A bench or other seating;
- (2) A tree;
- (3) A landscape planter;
- (4) A drinking fountain; or
- (5) A kiosk.



# Discretionary vs. Clear and Objective 2013 – 2015







# What is DOZA?

## Design Overlay Zone Assessment

**Purpose:** To undertake an independent and comprehensive assessment of the City of Portland's design overlay zone and make recommendations

### Questions:

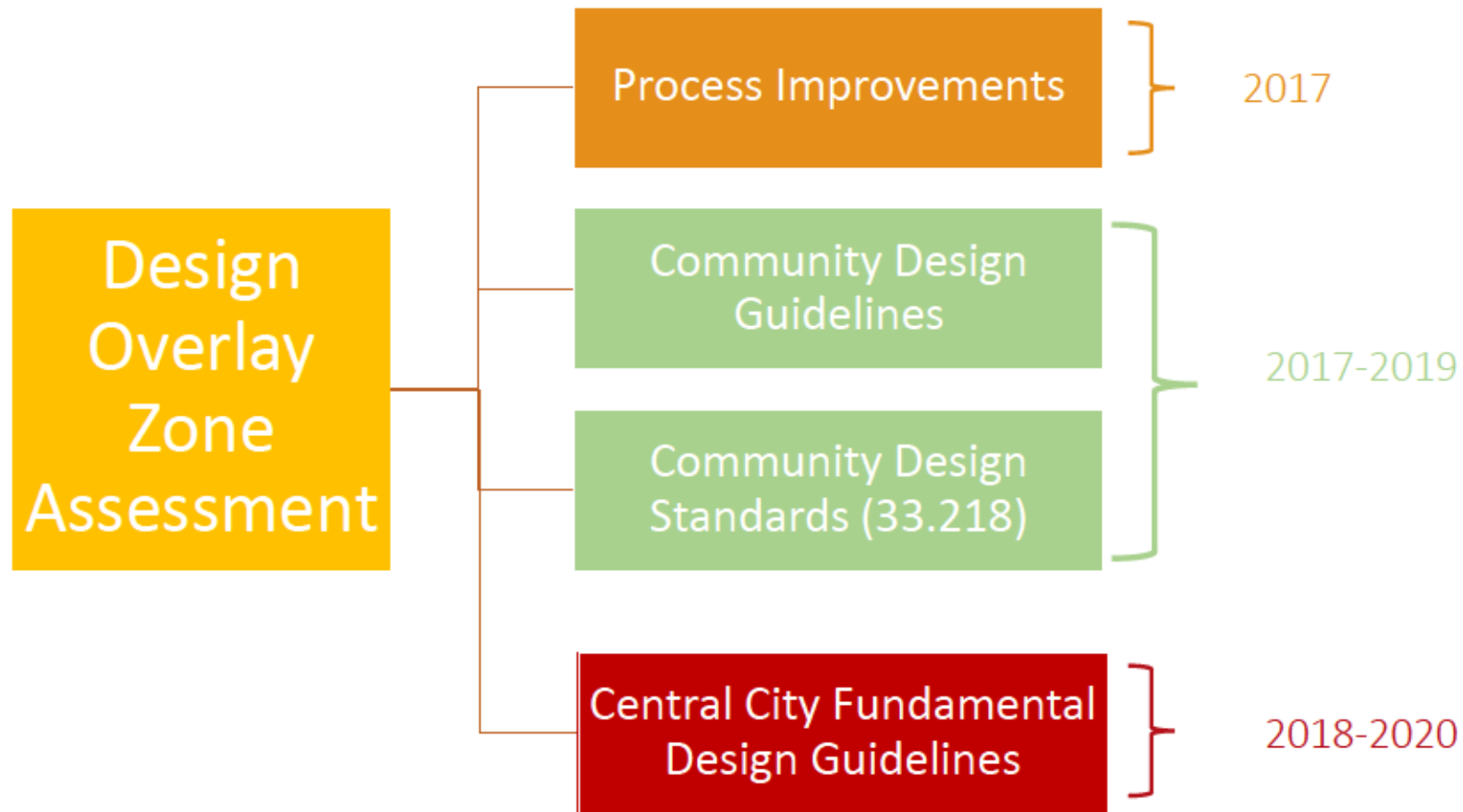
- How can design review evolve to better respond to the changing development environment?
- What improvements could be made to both the processes and tools to allow for the greatest benefit and least burden to all stakeholders?



# DOZA | PROJECT TIMELINE



# Post DOZA Work Plan



## DESIGN OVERLAY ZONE ASSESSMENT (DOZA)

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### KEY FINDINGS

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### 1. PORTLAND IS A MODEL OF GOOD URBAN DESIGN BUT NEEDS A “REFRESH”

**Place-specific results** being discouraged by current procedures and standards of review.





## KEY FINDINGS

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### 2. CURRENT D-OVLERAY DOESN'T PREVENT GOOD DESIGN, BUT DOESN'T GUARANTEE IT

Many factors drive design solutions

Considerations of cost: time and materials

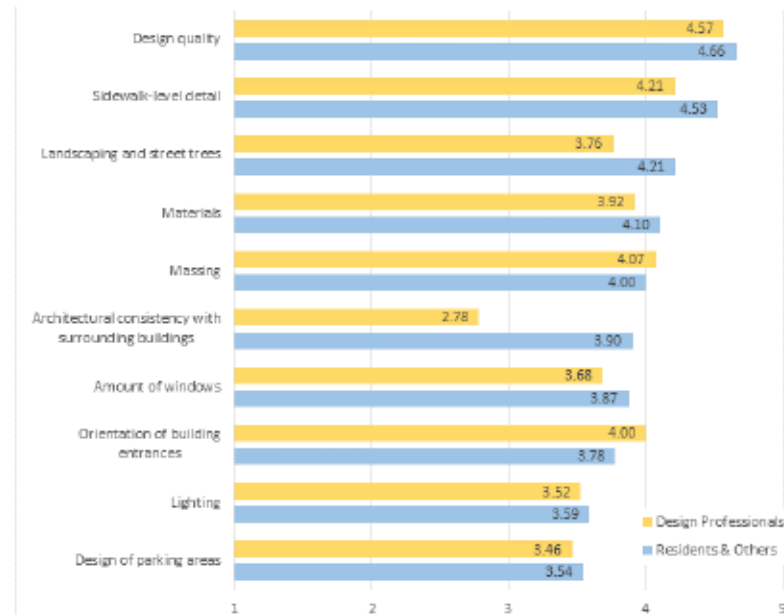


## KEY FINDINGS

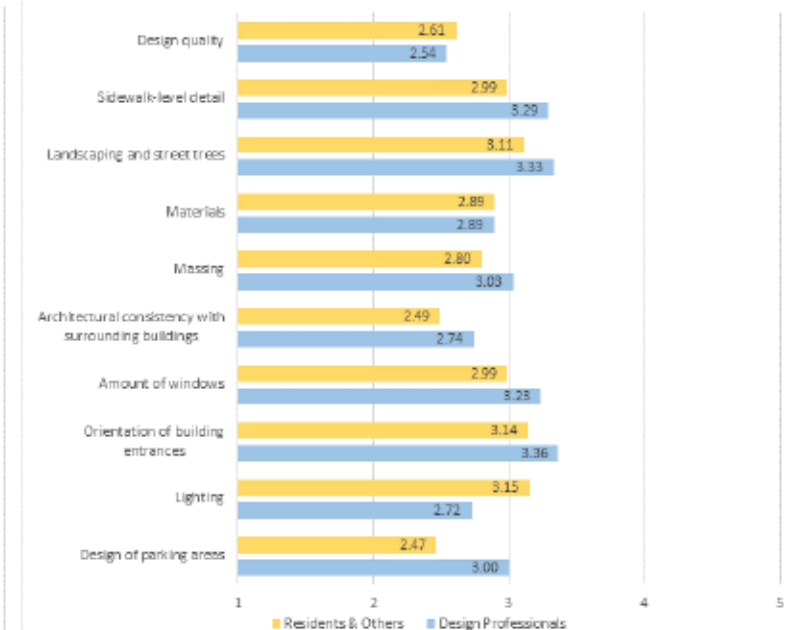
### 3. THERE IS PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR GOOD DESIGN, BUT PERCEPTION OF RESULTS IS MIXED

Tools, such as a d-overlay, have not been linked to **community-driven urban design planning**.

**Importance of characteristics of a desirable built environment**



**How well does the design review process achieve high-quality development characteristics?**



## KEY FINDINGS

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### 4. CURRENT SYSTEM DOESN'T REFLECT DIFFERENT SCALES OF DEVELOPMENT

Thresholds of review could be tied to **scale of impact**





## KEY FINDINGS

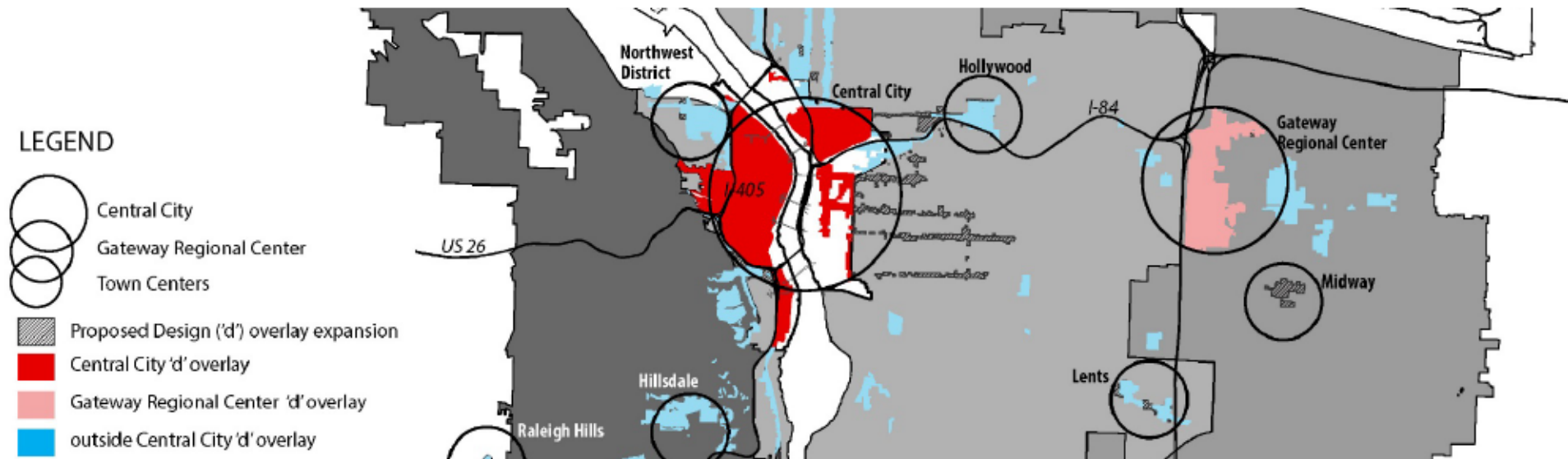
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### 5. CENTRAL CITY HAS BENEFITTED FROM D-OVERLAY; OUTER AREAS LESS SO

**Guidelines and standards for areas outside Central City in dire need of updating**

### 6. CURRENT STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES APPLIED OUTSIDE CENTRAL CITY ARE IMPEDING BETTER DESIGN

**Revise, consolidate, simplify, and recognize different contexts**

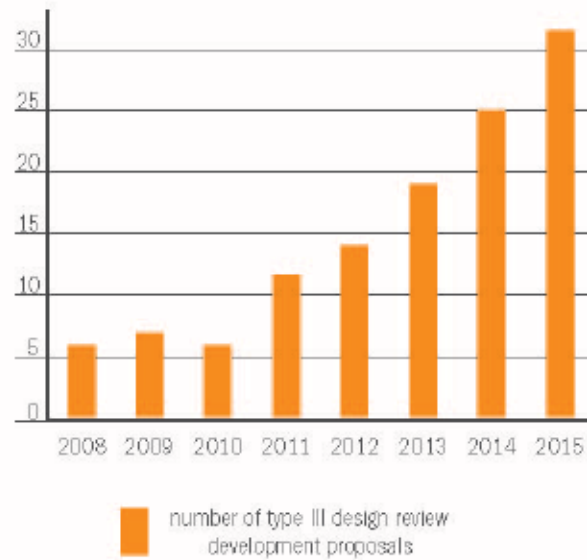


## KEY FINDINGS

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### 7. HIGH VOLUME OF PROJECTS IS THWARTING GOOD INTENTIONS

Speaks to better methods of reducing workload and managing meetings





## KEY FINDINGS

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### 8. SHIFT TOWARD DETAILS AND AWAY FROM BIG PICTURE

Time spent on building components is taking away from **discussion of context and public realm.**



## KEY FINDINGS

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### 9. ATTITUDE OF COLLABORATION IS IMPORTANT FOR SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES

**Mutual respect** between all parties



## **DESIGN OVERLAY ZONE ASSESSMENT (DOZA)**

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### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

## A. PROCESS RECOMMENDATIONS | OUTLINE

### 1. **Adjust the thresholds for design review to provide a high level of review for larger projects in d-overlay districts but lessen the level of review for smaller projects.**

- a. Restructure the thresholds based on two geographies: 1) Central City and 2) Neighborhoods: Inner, Western and Eastern – including Gateway.
- b. Modify thresholds for design review to reflect a tiered approach based on the magnitude of change

### 2. **Improve the review processes with a charter, better management of meetings, and training for both the Design Commission and staff.**

- a. Adopt a new charter for the Design Commission.
- b. Manage Commission meetings more effectively.
- c. Provide training for staff.
- d. Convene regular Design Commission retreats.

### 3. **Align the City's review process with the design process.**

- a. Organize the City's review process to correspond to a project's typical design process.
- b. Focus deliberations.
- c. Require DARs for Type III reviews for larger projects in the Central City.
- d. Expect a collaborative attitude from all participants.

### 4. **Better communicate the role of urban design and the d - overlay tool.**

- a. Improve public information and education.
- b. Hold applicant orientation "primers" on a regular basis.

### 5. **Improve the public involvement system.**

- a. Post large signs noting impending reviews.
- b. Increase mailed notices for Type II and Type III reviews.
- c. Require applicants to document community input.
- d. Ensure inclusivity in decision-making process.

### 6. **Monitor and evaluate these amendments.**

- a. Document where changes are occurring and what the impacts are. The analysis should be evaluated by BPS, BDS, Design Commission, and Planning and Sustainability.
- b. Formalize the annual reporting in the Design Commission's "State of Design".

### 7. **Consider establishing more than one Design Commission following a period of evaluation.**

## A. PROCESS

### RECOMMENDATION 1

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#### **PRIORITY**

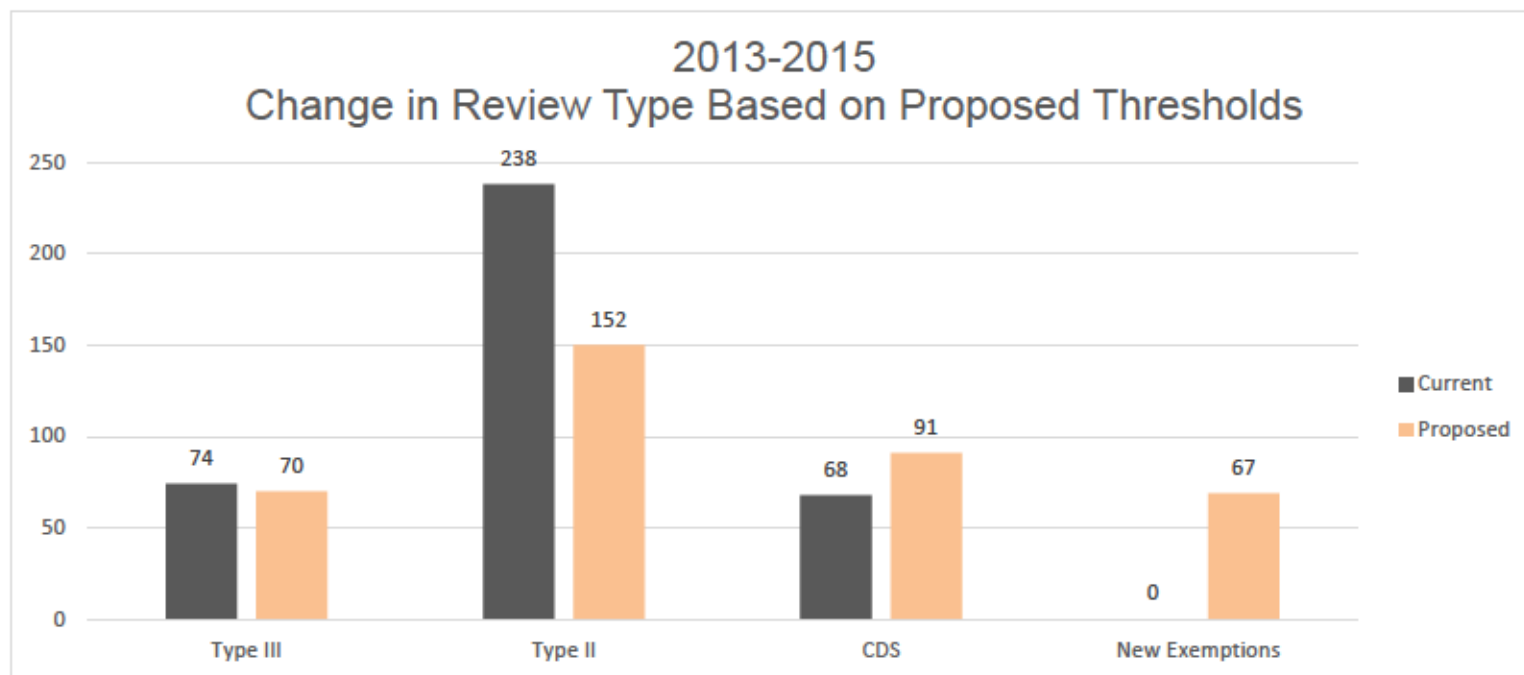
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  - b. Modify thresholds for design review to reflect a tiered approach based on the magnitude of change



## A. PROCESS

### OVERALL EFFECT

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## A. PROCESS

### RECOMMENDATION 2

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Improve the review processes with a charter, better management of meetings and training for both the Design Commission and staff.

#### PRIORITY

a. Adopt a New Charter for the Design Commission.

#### PRIORITY

b. Manage Commission meetings more effectively.

c. Provide training for staff.

d. Convene Regular Design Commission Retreats.

## A. PROCESS

### RECOMMENDATION 3

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Align the City's review process with the design process.

- a. Organize the City's review process to correspond to a project's typical design process.

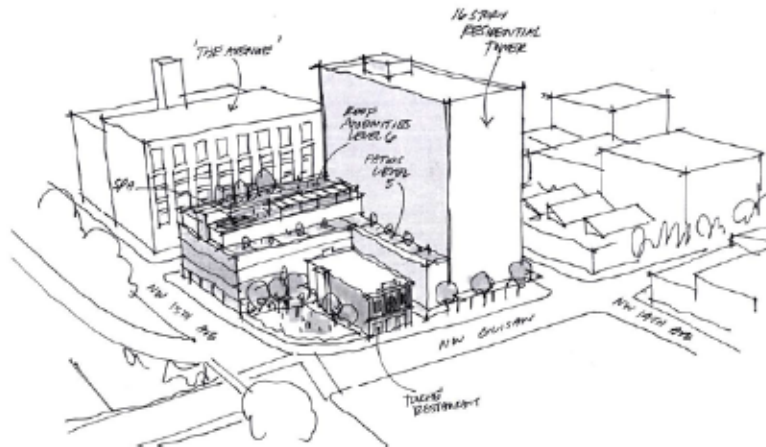
PRIORITY

- b. Focus deliberations.

PRIORITY

- c. Require DARs for Type III reviews for larger projects in the Central City.

- d. Expect a collaborative attitude from all participants



## A. PROCESS

### INTEGRATING REVIEW WITH DESIGN PROCESS

STAGE	SUBJECT	SUBMITTALS
Pre-App (with staff)	Pre-design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Site &amp; Program</li><li>• Issues Identification</li><li>• Services/Utilities</li></ul>
DAR (see note; with Design Commission)	Early Schematic Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Context Analysis</li><li>• Initial Concepts</li><li>• Configuration</li><li>• Massing</li><li>• Overall Site Plan</li></ul>
First Review (with Design Commission)	End of Schematic Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Concept</li><li>• Elevations</li><li>• Ground Level</li><li>• Public Spaces</li><li>• Public Involvement Update</li></ul>
Decision Review (if necessary, with Design Commission)	End of Design Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complete Design</li><li>• Refined Design</li><li>• Materials</li><li>• Details</li><li>• Exterior Lighting</li></ul>
Building Permit (with staff)	Construction Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• CDs</li></ul>

*Note: for projects over a certain size or geographic location, a DAR would be required.*

## A. PROCESS

### RECOMMENDATION 4

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**Better communicate the role of urban design and the d-overlay tool.**

#### **PRIORITY**

- a. **Improve public information and education.**
- b. **Hold applicant orientation “primers” on a regular basis.**



## A. PROCESS

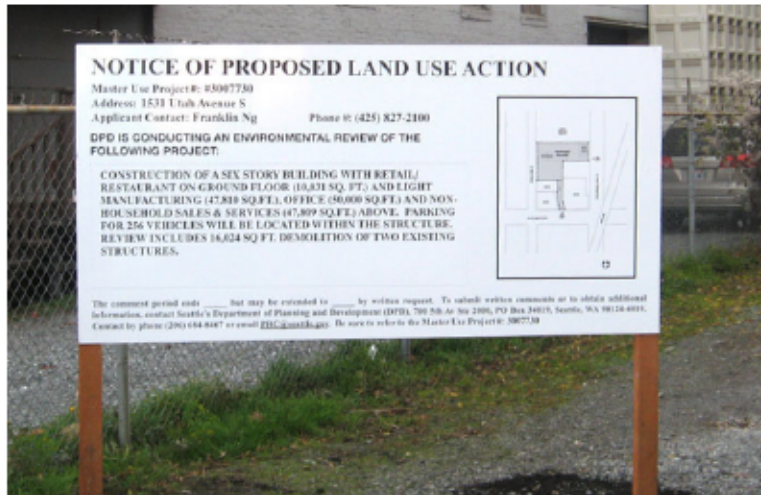
### RECOMMENDATION 5

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Improve the public involvement system.

#### PRIORITY

- a. Post large signs noting impending reviews.
- b. Increase mailed notices for Type II and Type III reviews.
- c. Require applicants to document community input.
- d. Ensure inclusivity in decision-making process.



Review noticeboard example - Seattle

## **A. PROCESS**

### **RECOMMENDATION 6**

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**Monitor and evaluate these amendments.**

- a. Document where changes are occurring and what the impacts are. The analysis should be evaluated by BPS, BDS, Design Commission, and Planning and Sustainability Commission.**
- b. Formalize the annual reporting in Design Commission's "State of Design."**

### **RECOMMENDATION 7**

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**Consider establishing more than one Design Commission following a period of evaluation.**

## B. TOOLS RECOMMENDATIONS | OUTLINE

### 1. General | Clarify and revise the purpose and scope of the d-overlay.

- a. Revise the purpose statement for d-overlay to reflect current thinking.
- b. Simplify d-overlay terminology.
- c. Clarify the scope of design review.

### 2. General | Sync the standards and guidelines.

- a. Use a parallel structure for standards and guidelines.
- b. Combine the standards and guidelines into one document.
- c. Create a consistent format.
- d. Separate out historic review criteria.

### 3. General | Use the three tenets of design to simplify, consolidate, and revise the standards and guidelines.

- a. Respond to context.
- b. Elevate the public realm.
- c. Expand "quality and permanence"

### 4. General | Broaden "base/middle/top" to encompass other design approaches.

### 5. General | Recognize the unique role of civic buildings in urban design.

### 6. Community Design Standards:

**Ensure that the CDS add value to recently adopted base zoning codes.**

### 7. Community Design Standards

**Provide for optional ways of meeting standards.**

### 8. Community Design Standards

**Craft appropriate standards for the Gateway area.**

### 9. Community Design Guidelines

**In recrafting the Community Design Guidelines, recognize the changing nature of the city.**

### 10. Central City Fundamental Design Guidelines

**Collate special district design guidelines into one citywide set.**

### 11. Central City Fundamental Design Guidelines

**Revisit and simplify some of the guidelines.**

### 12. Central City Fundamental Design Guidelines

**Collate the subdistrict guidelines into the Central City Fundamental Design Guidelines.**

## B. TOOLS

### RECOMMENDATION 1

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#### **PRIORITY**

**General | Clarify and revise the purpose and scope of the d-overlay.**

- a. Revise the purpose statement for d-overlay to reflect current thinking.**
- b. Simplify d-overlay terminology.**
- c. Clarify the scope of design review.**

## B. TOOLS

### RECOMMENDATION 2

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General | Sync the standards and guidelines.

- a. Use a parallel structure for standards and guidelines.
- b. Combine the standards and guidelines into one document.
- c. Create a consistent format.
- d. Separate out historic review criteria.



## B. TOOLS

### RECOMMENDATION 3

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#### **PRIORITY**

**General | Use the three tenets of design to simplify, consolidate, and revise the standards and guidelines.**

- a. Respond to context.**
- b. Elevate the public realm.**
- c. Expand “quality and permanence”**

## B. TOOLS

### RECOMMENDATION 4

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General | Broaden “base/middle/top” to encompass other design approaches.



## B. TOOLS

### RECOMMENDATION 5

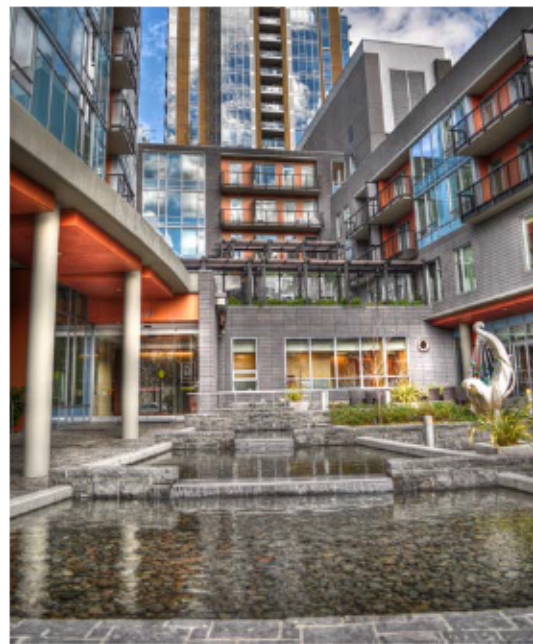
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General | Recognize the unique role of civic buildings in urban design.





# Questions?

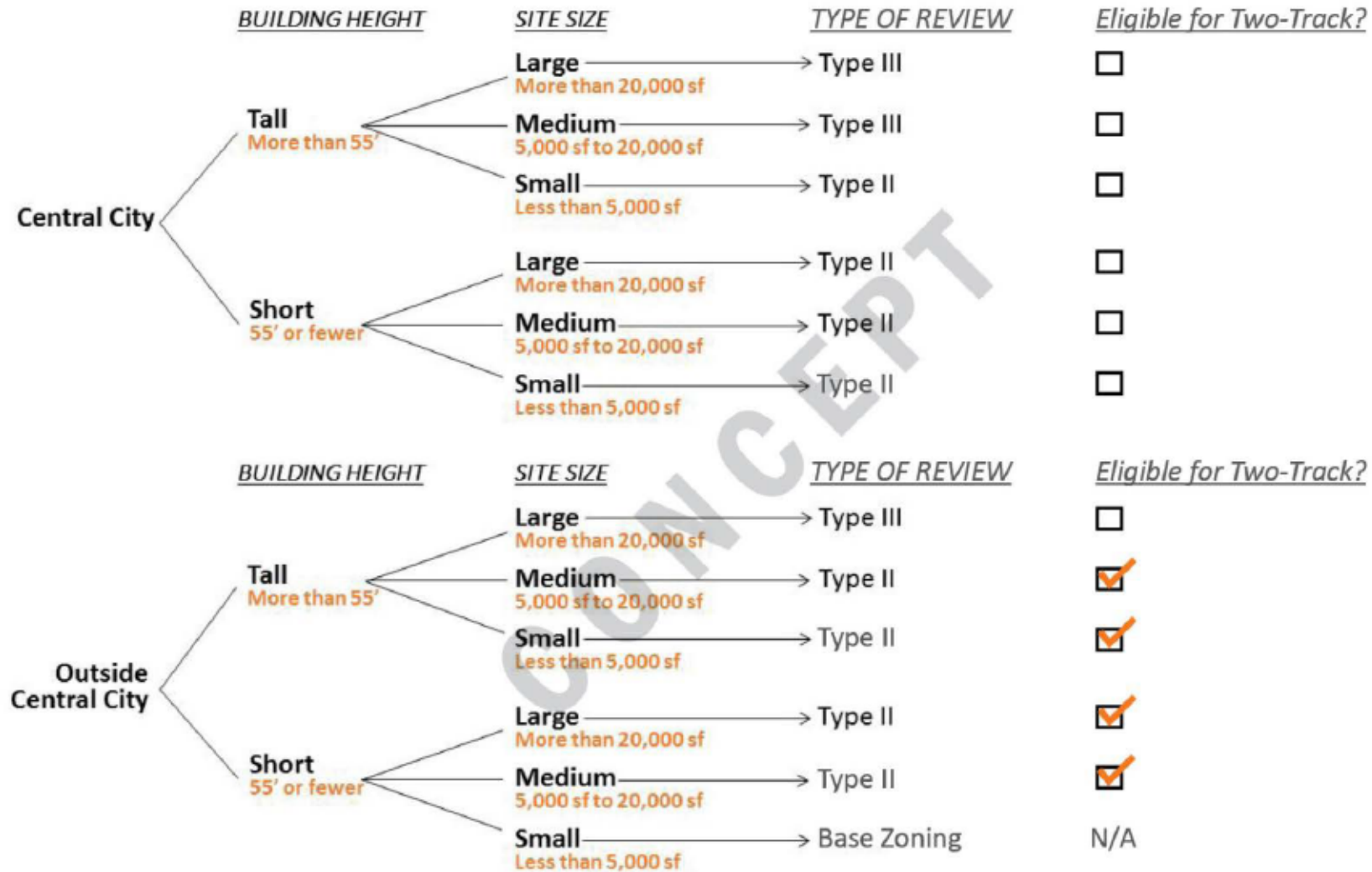






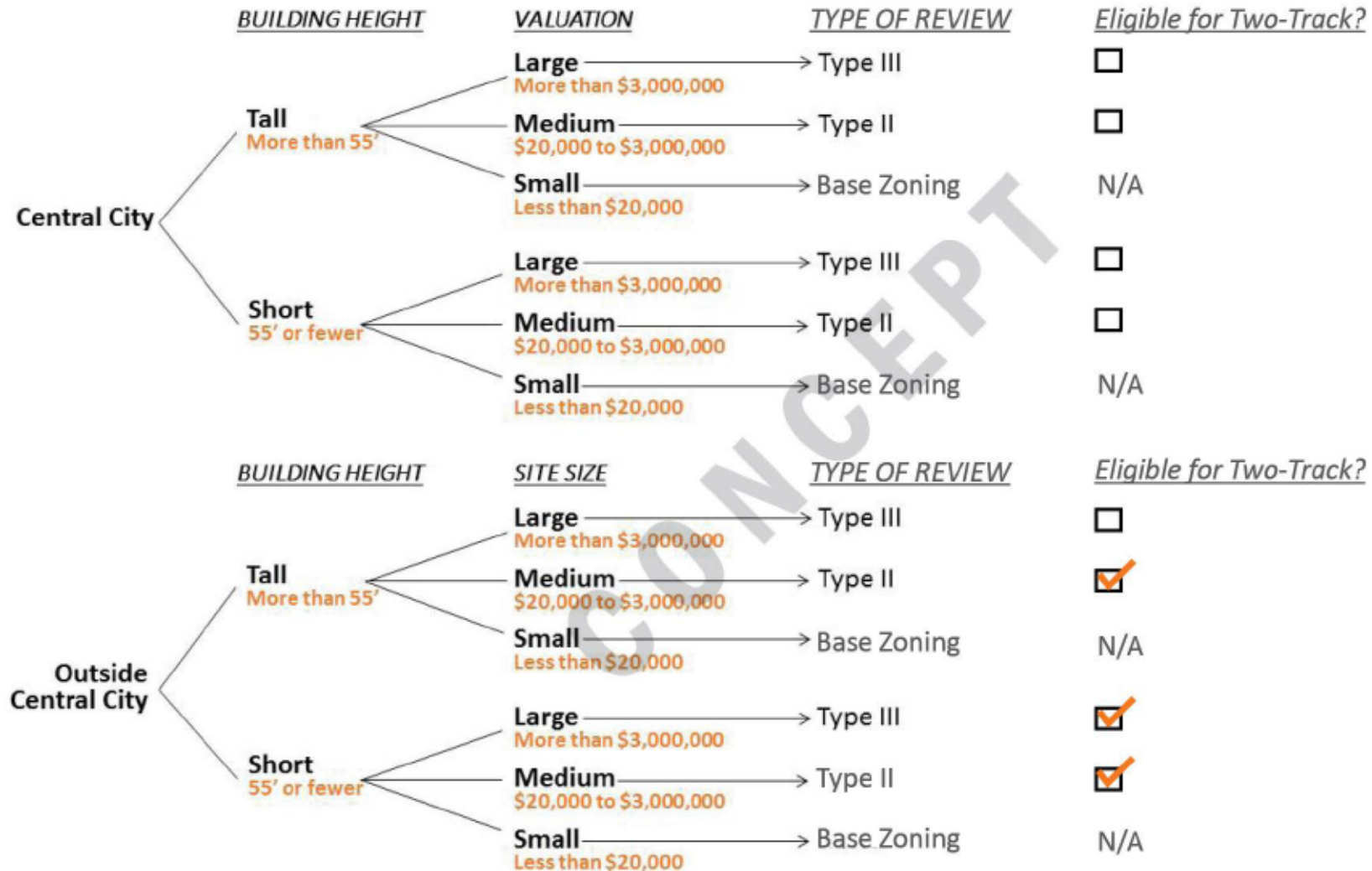
## A. PROCESS

### THRESHOLDS: NEW CONSTRUCTION



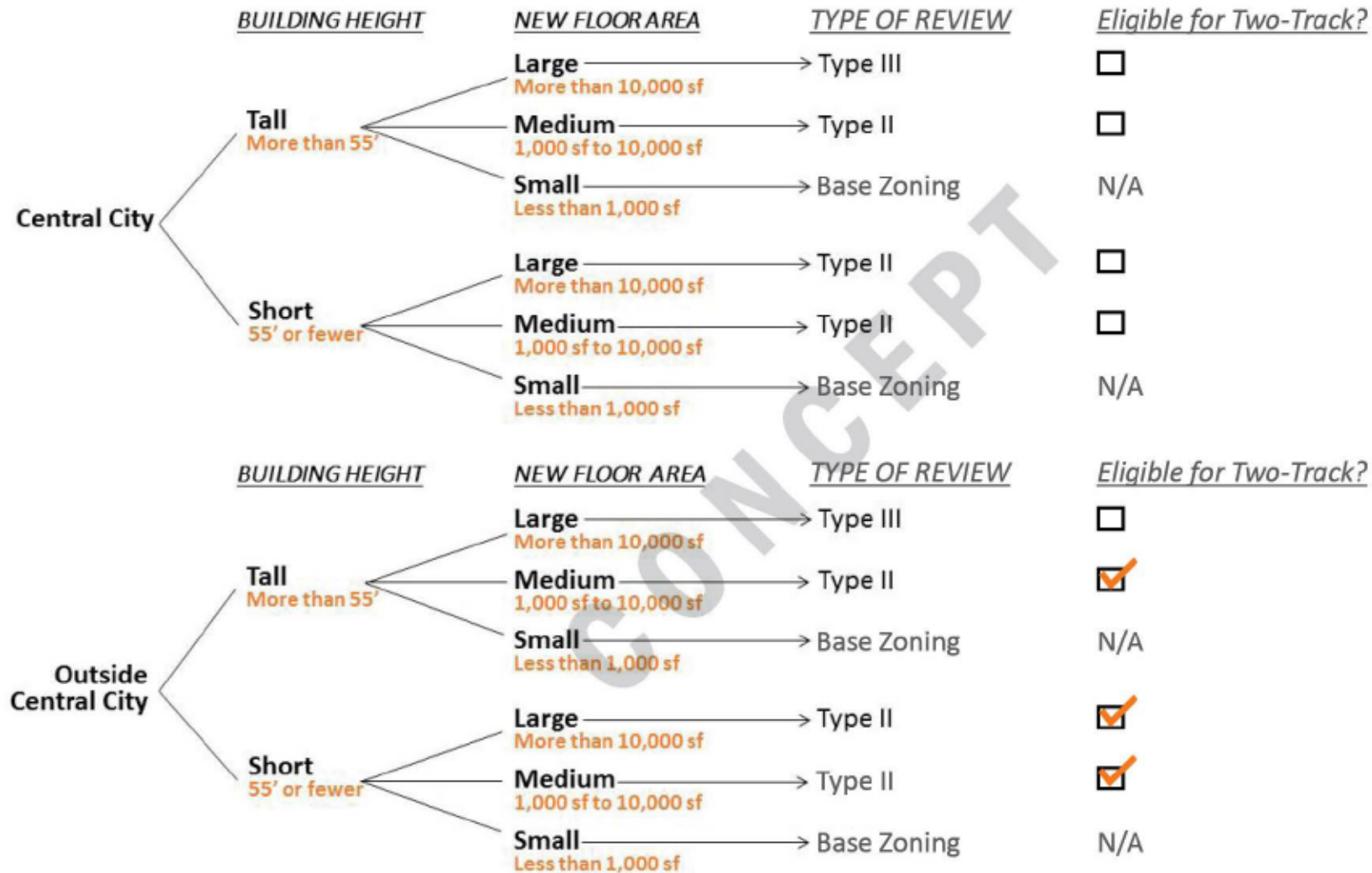
## A. PROCESS

### THRESHOLDS: ALTERATIONS



## A. PROCESS

### THRESHOLDS: ADDITIONS



## A. PROCESS

### OVERALL EFFECT

**Figure 3.4: 2013-2015 Change in Review Type Based on Proposed Thresholds  
OVERALL**

STAGE	TOTAL		NET CHANGE
	Current	Proposed	Number of Cases
Type III	74	70	-4
Type II	238	152	-86
CDS	68	91	23
New Exemptions	0	67	-67
Total	380	380	New Total # of Cases: 313

#### Effects:

**20%** fewer cases overall

**37%** fewer Type II reviews

**30%** more CDS reviews