



AIA/APA/ASLA Urban Design Panel

Portland and Oregon Chapters of the American Institute of Architects, American Planning Association and American Society of Landscape Architects

Date: May 1, 2014
To: Portland Design Commission
RE: Position Paper of the AIA/APA/ASLA Urban Design Panel

The **American Institute of Architects**/Portland Urban Design Panel (UDP) has had a long and distinguished history of involvement in both enhancing the quality of Portland's urban environment and supporting City staff and commissioners' endeavors to raise design awareness. The UDP is comprised of a multidisciplinary team of professionals who gather to review projects and policies related to our built environment, and have long included **American Planning Association** (APA) and **American Society of Landscape Architects** (ASLA) members. With approval of the Portland AIA Board, the UDP was established to provide relevant professional advice and testimony to project teams, local government agencies and the City of Portland Commissions for Design, Development, Planning, and Historic Preservation.

As the UDP has moved beyond its traditional boundaries, it has become clear that its governance should reflect the integrated nature of the urban issues facing the City and our region. In order to amplify its relevance and voice in the years to come, AIA/Portland joined forces in 2012 with the Oregon Chapters of the American Planning Association and American Society of Landscape Architects to create an umbrella organization to jointly administer the AIA/APA/ASLA UDP and other collective endeavors.

As that collaboration continues to grow both at the national level and local level, we are pleased to expand our interdisciplinary engagement as the **AIA/APA/ASLA Urban Design Panel** here in Portland. All three professional organizations have current Board representatives on the Executive Committee of the UDP, providing direct feedback among the organizations concerning current projects and future opportunities.

Executive Committee of the AIA/APA/ASLA Urban Design Panel

Paddy Tillett, FAIA, FAICP*

Brian Campbell, FAICP

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Robert Boileau, AIA, AICP

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Re: Proposed Discussion Agenda

Objectives:

Have an initial conversation between the Portland Design Commission (DC) and the Urban Design Panel (UDP) to identify issues with, and possible ways to improve, the Land Use DAR/Design Review process. Identify the best role for UDP in helping to improve the process.

UDP Comments on the Process:

- **Length and expense** – The process has become much longer, with total review times stretching out for many months, resulting in significant project delays and higher costs for applicants.
- **Design Guidelines** – Reviews include items that are not part of the Design Guidelines.
- **Overall quality of design** – Developers are using the Community Design Standards to avoid the DR process, and as a result design quality in Portland is suffering.

Initial Ideas for Improvements:

- **Simplify and speed up** the DAR process (45 min. per proposal, limit drawings), so that applicants will use it before investing in Design Development. (see sketch)
- **UDP involved at the early stage** prior to the submittal of the DAR (sketch and massing studies only), perhaps functioning as an additional review during early stages of the DAR process; provide bullet point summary of comments and advice to applicants and staff; no public testimony.
- **UDP is able to address contingent issues such as height, density, parking** and other design controls that fall outside the purview of the Design Commission.
- **Guidelines** - identify an objective basis for UDP advice to applicants. In the past we have used the Downtown Design Guidelines to define the limits of topics on which we advise.

Possible Outcomes:

- UDP to create a letter providing recommendations to the DC.
- UDP to provide a Design Workshop following the May 30th City Club Friday Forum with the past and present Design Review Chairs to explore discussion points and similar topics in greater depth.