

When is Design Review Required?

Design Review is a review and approval process for the visual aspects of commercial, industrial and certain residential development projects within the Urban Growth Areas (UGA) of Olympia, Lacey and Tumwater.

The purpose of Design Review is to ensure that the overall site and building design fosters attractiveness, creativity and functional utility in an effort to raise the quality of the built environment.

The Design Review standards and applicability within the Olympia, Lacey and Tumwater UGA vary. Refer to the appropriate code provision for specific standards and applicability.

Lacey Urban Growth Area – Title 21

Tumwater Urban Growth Area – Title 22

Olympia Urban Growth Area – Title 23

Projects within the Olympia, Lacey and Tumwater UGA may require other land use approvals in conjunction with Design Review. Design Review is conducted concurrently with the underlying land use permit.

How Do I Apply?

Submit a completed application package to the Building Development Center with the applicable fee. Complete package requirements are outlined in the application.

Review Process and Timing (TCC 18.10)

Design Review is evaluated under the Type 1 procedure. This means that the review time can be up to 58 days. Public notification is not required. The approval authority is staff.

Note: The review time listed above may take longer if a request for additional information is required or if an underlying land use permit takes longer. Workload may also affect the timeline.

Is a Presubmission Conference Required?

A Presubmission Conference is optional, but certainly recommended, for all Design Review projects.

A Presubmission Conference is a meeting scheduled with a representative from all reviewing departments and the applicant and/or applicant's representative to discuss preliminary studies, sketches and the review process. The conference should take place prior to detailed work by an engineer or architect and prior to making an application for Design Review. A request for Presubmission Conference with the applicable fee must be submitted to the Building Development Center.

Will The Application Require Environmental Review (SEPA)?

Design Review itself does not require SEPA. However, if the project meets any of the following thresholds, Design Review cannot be completed until the SEPA for the underlying land use permit is completed.

- Any work conducted over water or in the water
- Commercial buildings greater than 8,000 square feet
- Filling or excavation of greater than 500 cubic yards
- Agricultural buildings greater than 20,000 square feet
- Parking lot with more than 30 spaces
- Underground gas tanks over 10,000 gallons

If your proposal requires SEPA, an Environmental Checklist must be completed and submitted with your underlying project proposal. You can obtain the checklist at the Thurston County Permit Assistance Center or online at the website address referenced at the bottom of the page.

Note: A Critical Area Administrative Review (CAAR) is required if critical areas exist on the subject property but the underlying proposal does not require SEPA. A CAAR application can also be obtained at the Building Development Center or online.

Design Review Approval

Each reviewing department will make a recommendation for preliminary approval after it has been determined that the applicable code requirements for that department have been satisfactorily addressed. Planning will then issue a final approval letter which outlines the conditions and requirements from each department that must be satisfied prior to issuance of a building permit and/or prior to issuance of a certificate of occupancy.

Duration of Approval

Final approval for projects within the Lacey and Tumwater UGA is effective for two years from the date of approval. Final approval for projects within the Olympia UGA is effective for one year. A one year extension may be granted upon request prior to expiration.

Appeals

All decisions may be appealed. An appeal form and associated appeal fee must be submitted within 14 days from the date of the decision. Administrative decisions are appealed to the Hearing Examiner for Thurston County. Appeal forms are submitted to the Building Development Center.

I Still Have Questions...

The information in this bulletin is a general guideline of the procedures and rules. You should not rely on this bulletin to identify the specific requirements for your project. For additional information, speak with a staff member at the Building Development Center. Contact information is listed below. You may also review all Thurston County Codes online on the County website referenced at the bottom of this page.

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