

**CITY OF MILWAUKIE
DESIGN AND LANDMARKS COMMITTEE
NOTES**

**Milwaukie City Hall
10722 SE Main St
Monday, April 2, 2018
6:30 PM**

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Lauren Loosveldt, Chair
Cynthia Schuster, Vice Chair
Mary Neustadter
Kyle Simukka

MEMBERS ABSENT

None

STAFF PRESENT

Brett Kelter, Associate Planner (staff liaison)
Denny Egner, Planning Director

OTHERS PRESENT

Ben Weber, SERA Architects
Matt Arnold, SERA Architects
Elizabeth Decker, JET Planning

1.0 Call to Order – Procedural Matters

Chair Lauren Loosveldt called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

2.0 Design and Landmarks Committee Notes

2.1 March 5, 2018

Chair Loosveldt called for any revisions to the notes from the March meeting. There were none and the notes were approved unanimously.

3.0 Information Items – None

4.0 Audience Participation – None

5.0 Public Meetings – None

6.0 Worksession Items

6.1 Kickoff Workshop for Downtown Design Guidelines Assessment
Facilitators: Ben Weber and Matt Arnold, SERA Architects

Associate Planner Brett Kelter opened the worksession by calling for introductions around the room—everyone shared their name and association. **Matt Arnold** provided some background on SERA's engagement in the Downtown Design Guidelines (DDG) assessment project, referencing the firm's involvement in the Guardian development at the Bernard's Garage site but noting that his group had not been directly involved in that project. He indicated that he and Mr. Weber had some background in code but were more involved in urban design and planning.

Mr. Arnold proposed stepping back to look at the bigger picture of the City's needs for downtown design review before trying to move into the strikeout/underline level of changes. He outlined the agenda for this meeting, which included an overview of the proposed process timeline, discussion of issues, review of precedents and examples from other communities, consideration of the proposed new framework, discussion of vision and community character, look at design elements, and outline of next steps.

Ben Weber reviewed the proposed schedule, beginning with this first meeting to kick off the assessment by looking at a proposed framework and talking about community character. The

next two meetings would focus on discussion of specific design elements, and a final meeting in June would entail a discussion of a process for implementing any proposed amendments. The consultant team would deliver their work to-date and a memo with recommendations by the end of June, with the aim of setting up the Committee to continue the work beyond the timeframe of this short-term project.

Mr. Arnold noted that, from reviewing some of the Committee's work to date, the team had some ideas about what the big issues were but wanted to hear the group members' perspective as a starting point. **Vice Chair Cynthia Schuster** pointed to the disconnect between the design guidelines and design standards and noted that it seemed unclear how the design guidelines were supposed to help with the design process. It was hard to know which guidelines were applicable, and it seemed too easy for applicants to effectively opt out of meeting the guidelines by simply asserting that particular guidelines were not applicable to their project. She wondered about the possibility of giving applicants choices in the review; for example, to require them to meet 3 out of 5 particular standards.

Chair Loosveldt observed that the downtown development climate had changed over time, with the City's perspective shifting from making the design review process less rigorous to stimulate development to tightening the process and standards to ensure that all the interest in downtown resulted in good design. It seemed important to think about which guidelines to keep and which might be obsolete, as well as how to close any loopholes. She agreed that rethinking the overall framework was probably wise and wondered whether the guidelines were too loose and needed to be more specific. Perhaps the "recommended" and "not recommended" paradigm in the current guidelines document was not as useful as could be. She wondered how it could be made clearer which guidelines were applicable to which standards, for applicants and staff and reviewers.

Member Mary Neustadter added that there had been some group discussion about what the various guidelines meant. **Vice Chair Schuster** said she liked the Main Street principles, a nationwide set of 8 points produced by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. **Member Kyle Simukka** echoed Vice Chair Schuster's statements about the usability of the guidelines and Chair Loosveldt's point about closing loopholes. **Planning Director Denny Egner** asked for more clarification about the "loophole" concern—**Vice Chair Schuster** referred to the evaluation matrix the group had developed and the ongoing discussion about which guidelines were applicable to which standards. **Chair Loosveldt** added that the lack of guidance about applicability made it difficult to hold applicants accountable to the guidelines. **Member Simukka** observed that the Committee's role as only a recommending body without any formal decision-making authority seemed problematic. **Chair Loosveldt** suggested that the group think about the overall process of someone submitting an application and figure out how to make it clearer and more streamlined.

Mr. Weber asked about the group's use of yellow and red in the evaluation matrix to indicate where adjustments were needed, particularly whether there had been any accompanying decisions about what to do about particular guidelines or standards. **Member Simukka** responded that they had not developed specific solutions but had primarily indicated a need for further attention; **Chair Loosveldt** concurred. **Mr. Kelter** added that the red had been meant to clearly indicate that a guideline seemed inapplicable to a particular standard, which most likely meant that a new related standard was needed, unless the guideline seemed no longer relevant. He said the yellow indicated more of a sense that a specific standard or guideline (or both) may need adjustment.

Mr. Egner and **Mr. Kelter** observed that the recent updates to the design standards had unintentionally resulted in gaps. The idea had been to offer an option for the applicant to elect to

address all of the design guidelines, but the approval criteria kept an application focused on only those guidelines deemed to be applicable to a particular standard. Since not all of the guidelines were reflected in corresponding standards, this added uncertainty to the process and anchored the review in a limited number of guidelines instead of all of them.

Vice Chair Schuster said that it was hard to see the collection of Milwaukie Character guidelines as truly being useful as guidelines, that they might be more relevant as part of an overall preface or vision. This echoed a thought that **Mr. Arnold** had mentioned earlier in the discussion when describing a general framework for design review, where he had noted that the “community character” aspect of the guidelines was very different than the other design elements.

Mr. Arnold reiterated that the primary effort was to develop a clearer framework for the design review process, including consideration of the Committee’s role(s) in the process. He pointed to the list of overarching project goals and asked whether it seemed right to the group. The members agreed with the expressed principles of ensuring quality design, providing consistency between standards and guidelines, clarifying the process for all parties (including the Committee’s role), and honoring the group’s work to date.

Mr. Weber reviewed several examples of design review from other communities, emphasizing that they were intended to provide some insight or basis for discussion and should not be viewed as prescriptions for Milwaukie. In Redmond, Washington, a set of 10 principles is the basis for deriving specific design standards. **Elizabeth Decker** noted the importance of allowing for alternative solutions, where the process provides some direction about how you can meet the standards in a meaningful way. **Vice Chair Schuster** cited the example of Kirkland, Washington, where choices allow flexibility. **Ms. Decker** added that it was important to provide the right number and type of options, in consideration of costs and with some awareness that developers have to make their projects pencil out. In Boise, the code provides opportunities to depart from the standards while staying linked to the intent. **Mr. Weber** described an additive process for different levels of review, where greater impacts were linked to higher levels of review. **Vice Chair Schuster** suggested that the additive model might be an option to use for projects with larger impacts. It was noted that Milwaukie’s code provides an additive sort of process for multifamily design review—if the standards are met, the project gets Type I review; if the guidelines are used, then Type II review is applicable.

Mr. Arnold then presented the framework the consultant team was proposing for downtown Milwaukie. An introductory section would provide an overarching vision and principles to establish the “Why?” behind a collection of specific design elements. Many of the “Milwaukie Character” guidelines could likely be incorporated into this introductory vision. Each design element would provide a purpose or intent statement and then establish clear and measurable standards framed with a “shall.” For proposals that could not meet the specific standards, additional guidance would be provided that would establish “shoulds” used for more discretionary evaluation, pointing back to the purpose and intent of each guideline.

Mr. Arnold suggested that, if the design guidelines were to be pulled into the code, the vision and principles piece would need to be succinct; they could remain wide-ranging if left in a separate document. The suggestion was to pull everything into the code, similar to the design standards for multifamily housing. **Chair Loosveldt** asked whether that would mean the Downtown Design Guidelines would cease to be a stand-alone document; **Mr. Arnold** confirmed that would be the case. Noting that the guidelines had been understood to be a type of living document, **Chair Loosveldt** observed that it would then be more difficult to amend the guidelines; **Mr. Egner** confirmed.

Mr. Arnold walked through an example of the framework using “Exterior Building Materials.” **Mr. Egner** suggested that developing the proposed framework model might indeed yield the kind of product that would be helpful to the group and the City. **Mr. Arnold** spoke to the list of items that the team had arranged in a Design Elements catalog, largely using the current structure of element groupings in the current Downtown Design Guidelines document. He asked for feedback from the group on the framework concept.

Vice Chair Schuster said she liked the idea of pulling the downtown design review process into the code, appreciating the consistency it would have with the current design review structure for multifamily housing. But she also liked the idea of having a separate brochure with photos of good examples of the kind of design that was desired. **Member Simukka** wondered whether such a brochure could be a supplement to the code; **Mr. Arnold** suggested that it would only be reference document and would not have the same regulatory authority as the code.

Member Neustadter asked whether it would be more work to pull the design guidelines into the code. **Mr. Egner** responded that it may not be more work than whatever needs to be done to improve the guidelines in general, and that more resources could be identified to help. He suggested that the framework idea could help in the examination of connections and gaps. **Chair Loosveldt** observed that pulling the guidelines into Title 19 would be a bigger change than what was originally intended and that it would need support from the Planning Commission and City Council. She asked what the group thought about the framework idea and the suggestion to pull it into the code—the other members indicated agreement with the idea.

Mr. Egner confirmed that it was within the Committee’s purview to give advice about the design review process, so it was appropriate for the group to propose amendments. **Mr. Arnold** recommended forming a working group with commissioners and councilors, to keep them up to speed on the proposal as it evolved. **Mr. Egner** noted that the Commission and Council were composed of people who had previously served on the Committee and/or Commission, so there would be a high level of familiarity and understanding of the issues. He suggested that the Committee members be prepared to advocate at every level for whatever amendments they propose.

Mr. Egner observed that the downtown development standards were about building form and wondered how they could be blended with the design standards and guidelines. **Vice Chair Schuster** suggested that the group keep in mind the possibility of providing opportunities ground-floor residential development when thinking about form. **Ms. Decker** noted that she liked to group site design and building design standards together. **Mr. Egner** suggested that the group make it a priority to flesh out the design element framework for architectural features, pedestrian environment, and remaining site elements, leaving signage for a little later.

Mr. Arnold confirmed Mr. Egner’s sense of need to sort through the “catalog” of design elements to set priorities, and he brought the focus back to identifying next steps in the work by checking his understanding that the group seemed cautiously optimistic about the proposed framework. There are some structural pieces that need to be figured out related to the development standards and how they relate to design standards and guidelines; there are questions about which of the design elements to prioritize; and there are political considerations related to keeping the Planning Commission and City Council informed. **Chair Loosveldt** suggested that the group keep the Planning Commission informed and updated along the way, beginning with the next Commission meeting on April 10. **Mr. Weber** said they could provide a condensed version of the slides from tonight’s meeting if that would be helpful to share at the April 10 meeting.

The group discussed the upcoming schedule of Committee meetings and agreed to insert one extra meeting on April 17, with regular meetings to follow on May 7 (at the Pond House) and June 4. **Mr. Arnold** outlined the consultant team's to-do list, noting that they would not work on the introductory (vision) part for now but would instead focus on developing the standards and guidance for several of the design elements. He suggested that they could let the group know which design elements they were working on so that staff and the group members could work on others if they chose. **Chair Loosveldt** and **Member Simukka** expressed interest in working on the green architecture element. **Chair Loosveldt** encouraged the consultant team to use the group's work on the evaluation matrix as a guide. **Mr. Egner** suggested that everyone look at the Downtown and Riverfront Framework plan for additional background in the meantime.

7.0 Other Business/Updates – None

8.0 Design and Landmarks Committee Discussion Items – None

9.0 Forecast for Future Meetings:

April 17, 2018	DDG Assessment, Meeting #2 (City Hall)
May 7, 2018	DDG Assessment, Meeting #3 (at Pond House)
June 4, 2018	DDG Assessment, Meeting #4 (City Hall)

Chair Loosveldt adjourned the meeting at 8:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Brett Kelter, Associate Planner



Lauren Loosveldt, Chair