WSBLE SDC Review Process and Tools

Seattle Design Commission

July 20, 2023

ST3 Light Rail Expansion Team

City of Seattle

Goals

- Support Seattle Design Commission in understanding your role in the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions design process and how your role is integral to informing project design
- Identify tools and processes that will support the Seattle Design Commission in timely, effective reviews

How did we get here?

- 2017 Partnering agreement
  - Establish a process for streamlined permit review and processing
  - Develop other measures so that the project development process runs smoothly and without surprises to either party
- 2019 City of Seattle leadership identified Seattle Design Commission as the project design review body
- Ongoing City staff, SDC, and Sound Transit coordination on project review process

What is the Seattle Design Commission's role?

SMC 3.58 - SEATTLE DESIGN COMMISSION

- **The Commission shall serve in an advisory capacity.** Its function is to advise and assist the City in the development and execution of capital improvement projects. Its role is that of recommending such aesthetic, environmental and design principles, and policies that it considers appropriate and advantageous in guiding the development of such projects. No City capital improvement project shall be designed, placed under contract for design or constructed without first being referred to the Commission for its review and recommendation.

- **The Seattle Design Commission will serve as the light rail project review body for West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions**

What will the SDC review?

Light Rail Stations

Station review milestones

- Preliminary Engineering
- 30% design
- 60% design
- 90% verification

What will the SDC review?

Other project elements

- Bridges
- Guideway segments
- Additional elements TBD

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How is Light Rail review different than a typical SDC review?

- Most extensive infrastructure investment in Seattle's history
- Designing guideway and stations in a built environment is technically complex
- Includes early/continuous coordination to support project delivery on-time and within budget
- Tools and processes developed with Seattle Design Commission guidance will streamline review and maximize value

2020 – 2024 WSBLE Permitting Plan

- COS, ST and SDC staff have worked together to create process and tools to address "pinch points" in the ST2 review process, key areas to be addressed
- Define the scope of each SDC review
- Engage agencies and stakeholders earlier in the process
- Engage the public and evolve the design in response to comments
- Create streamline permitting process

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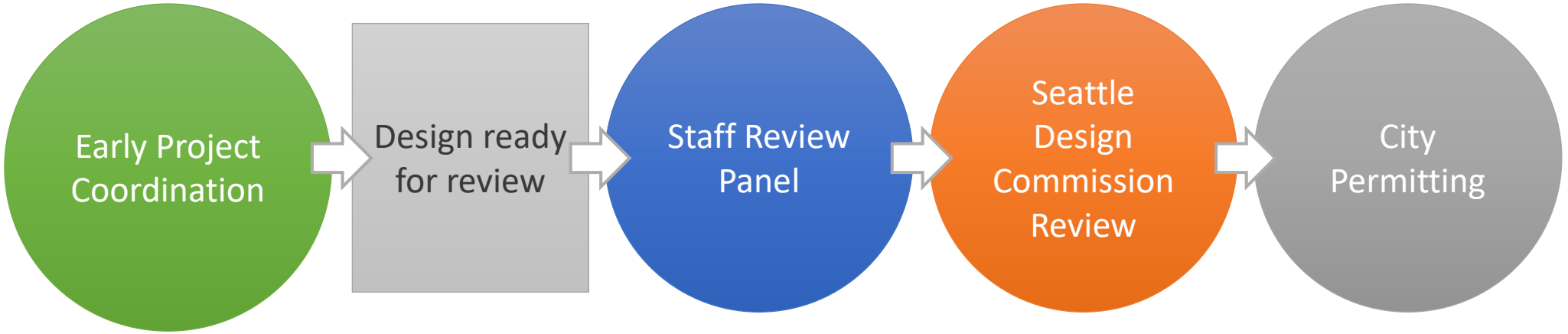
Where does the Seattle Design Commission fit into the design and permitting process?



- This process repeats for each station design milestone (PE, 30, and 60%)

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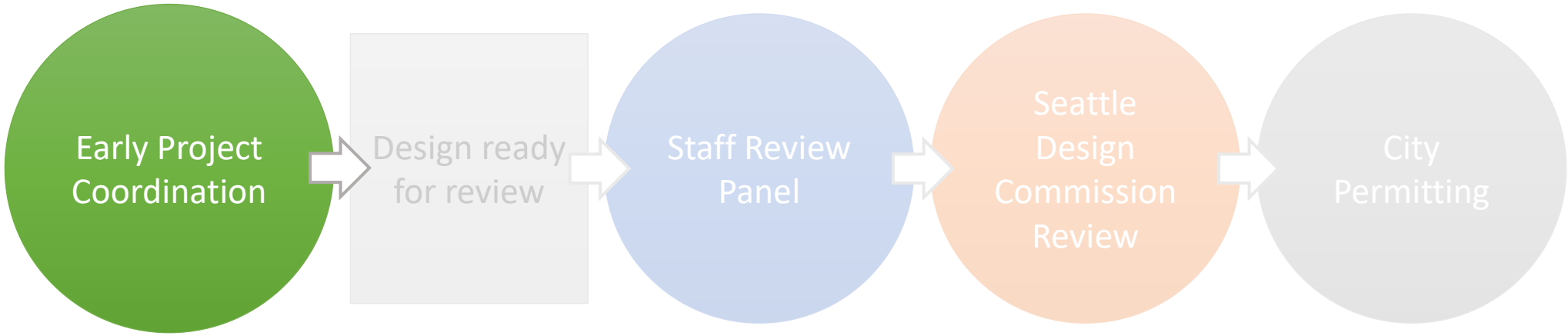

Early Project Coordination
A new pre-permitting coordination process to align on design direction and issue identification with City departments, partner agencies, and consult community, stakeholders, and the Seattle Design Commission

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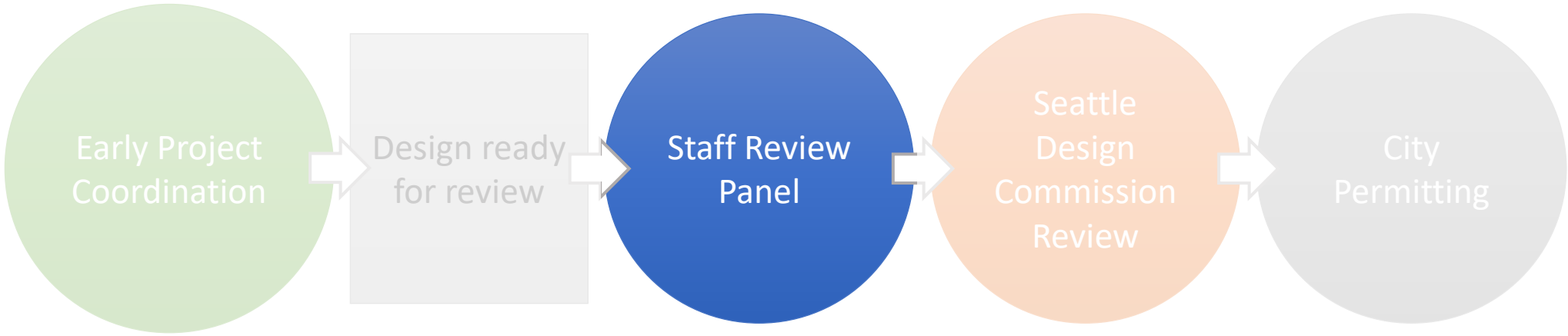

Staff Review Panel
A new coordination body that streamlines the review process in support of Seattle Design Commission, using new tools to ensure timely and values-driven review

City of Seattle

New Tools and Streamline Structure

Integrated Permit Process

Staff Review Panel

Design Guidelines

Design Elements Matrix

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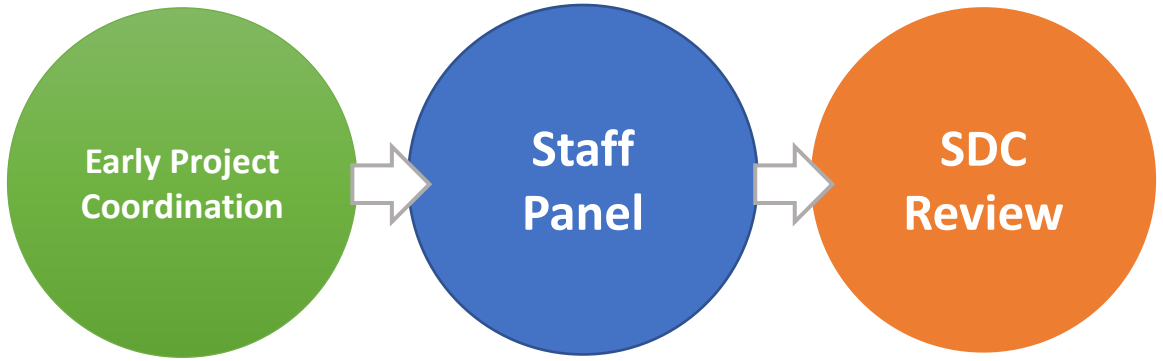
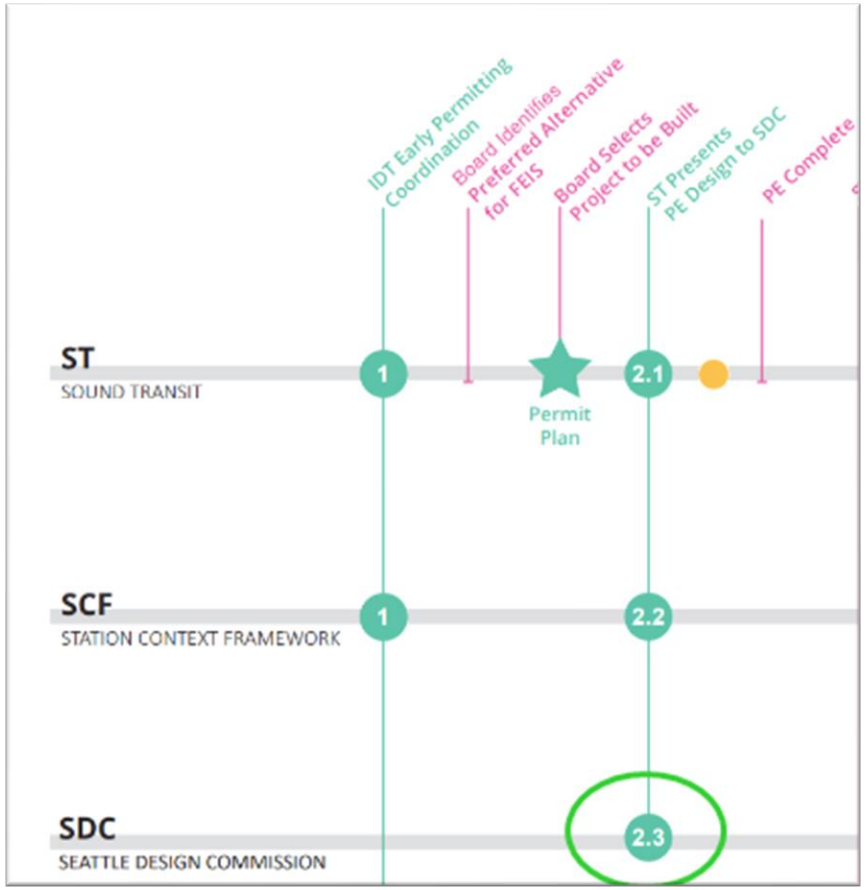
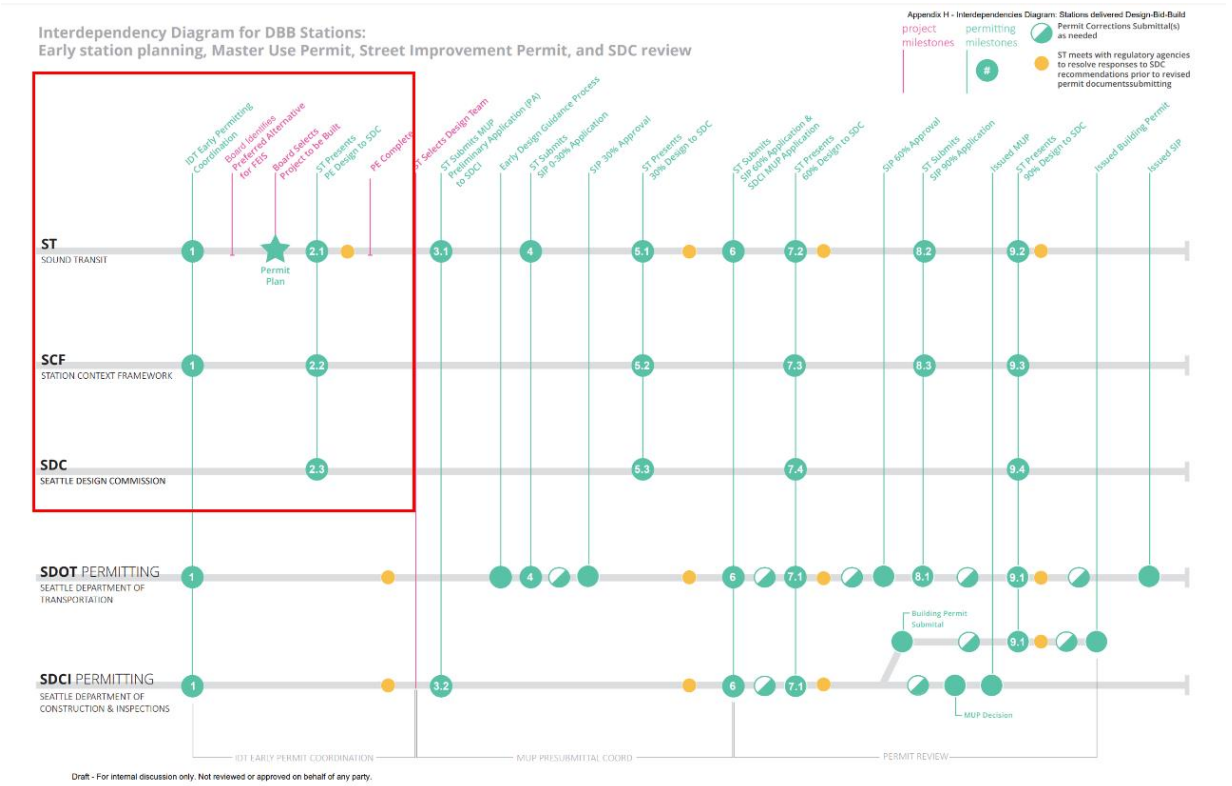


- Roadmap for permitting
- Choreographs the dependencies between SIP, MUP, community engagement and SDC reviews
- Optimize timing of SDC reviews to provide feedback when it can inform design
- COS technical vetting of designs in advance of SDC Reviews
- Carries objectives of early project coordination through to the SDC
- Articulates key design goals

New Tools and Streamline Structure

Integrated Permit Process

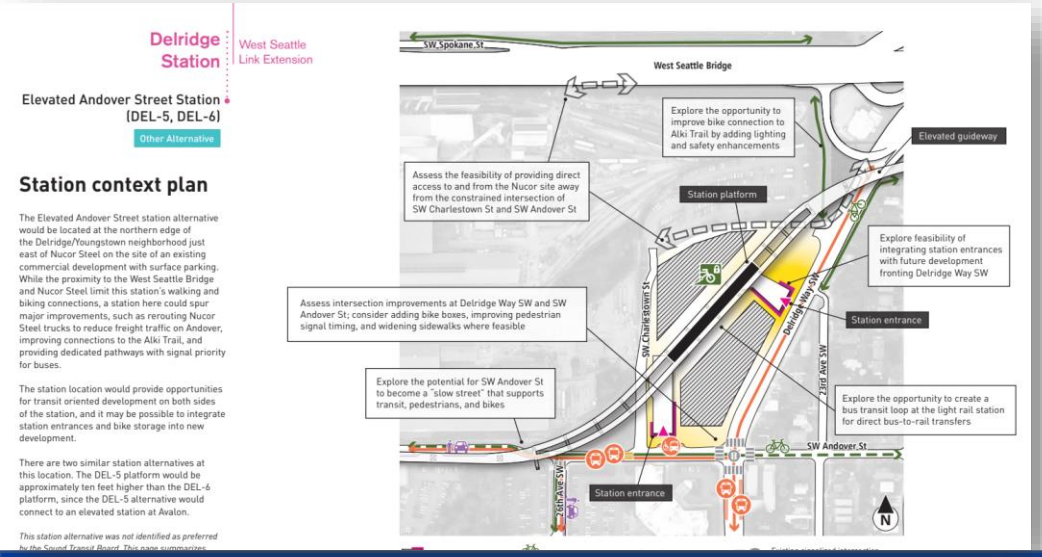




New Tools and Streamline Structure

Example review sequence: **Delridge Station**

Station design review anticipated Q3 2024



1. **Agencies engage in early project coordination and communities inform early design**
   - Station location, access, community-supportive features
2. **Staff review panel**
   - A multi-departmental team that engages in technical vetting, using design guidelines and design elements matrix share design objectives, public feedback
3. **SDC review and recommendations**
   - Centered on design guidelines and topics identified in the Design Elements Matrix
4. **Recommendations forwarded to permitting agencies**
   - SDCI, SDOT, and other permitting authorities integrate SDC recommendations as appropriate into permit review processes

New Tools and Streamline Structure

Integrated Permit Process

Staff Review Panel

Design Guidelines

Design Elements Matrix

- A new City staff structure that supports the SDC
- Ensures continuity of early project coordination through SDC review process
- Leverages and supports SDC's public-facing project review role for better design outcomes
- Engages City Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) in advance of SDC reviews
- Shares Departments' key design aspirations for SDC consideration

New Tools and Streamline Structure

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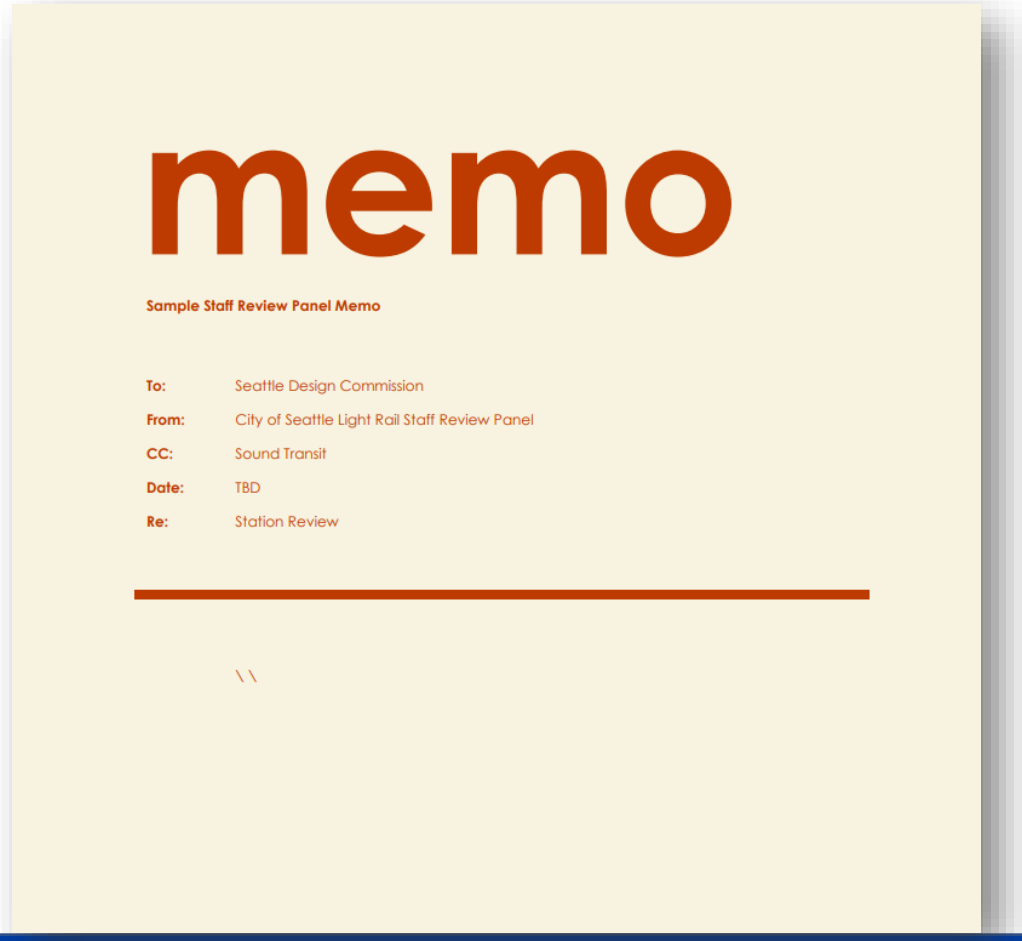

memo

Sample Staff Review Panel Memo

To: Seattle Design Commission

From: City of Seattle Light Rail Staff Review Panel

CC: Sound Transit

Date: TBD

Re: Station Review

New Tools and Streamline Structure

Integrated Permit Process

Staff Review Panel

Design Guidelines

Design Elements Matrix

- ***New*** Light Rail Design Guidelines used by Sound Transit, City staff, and the Seattle Design Commission during the review process
- Focus on context and includes qualitative design measures
- Incorporate RET Outcomes for station, station environment design, and ROW design
- Staff Review Panel will elevate Key Design Guidelines at each review milestone for special focus

New Tools and Streamline Structure

Integrated Permit Process

Staff Review Panel

Design Guidelines

Design Elements Matrix


CITY OF SEATTLE

LIGHT RAIL DESIGN GUIDELINES

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DF DESIGN FUNDAMENTALS

DF1 Center Equity in Design

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Design Elements Matrix

- A ***new*** tool that cllarifies which elements are ripe for review at each design milestone (PE/30/60/90%)
- Identifies the results of public engagement and RET as a topic for each meeting
- Helps ensure that SDC input is integrated at the right phase of the project
- Sound Transit design team, Design Commissioners, and City refer to the DEM to shape each milestone review focus and discussion

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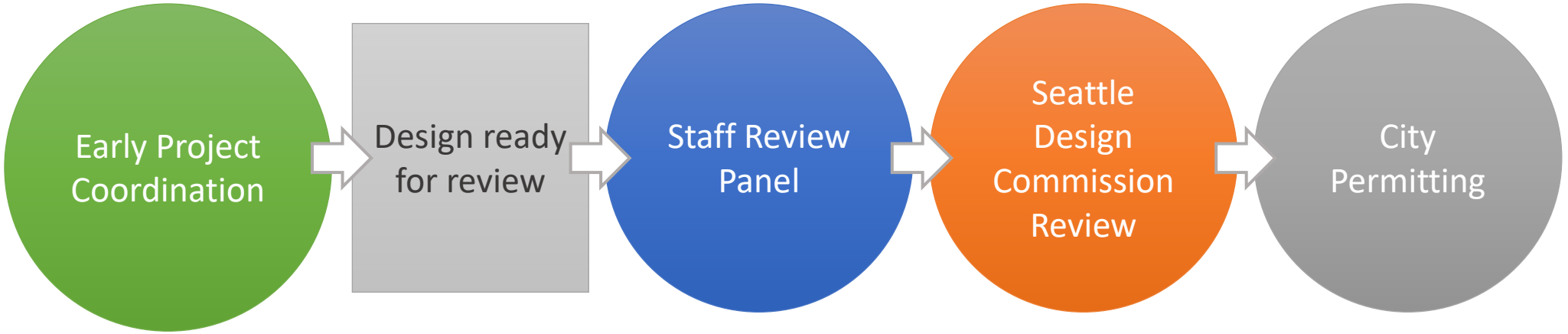
		Permitting Entity	Preliminary Engineering Design Review	30% Review [SIP 0-30% will be complete at this time]	60% Review	90% Review
14	Materials & finishes	SDCI	Standard materials could be mentioned, but not shown in detail Initial ideas for materials that will be used to achieve experiential quality/character of the -station that is proposed in the design concept.	Initial selections identified; how materials reinforce design concept	Materials and finishes selected and rendered	Materials and finishes detailed and specified – changes at this stage must be minimal
15	Lighting	SDCI/SDOT	Identify requirements, general locations, general approach, typologies, opportunities for special features	Locations and general lighting fixture types; how lighting reinforces design concept and wayfinding	Fixtures and draft specs defined	*N/A – determined and folded into architectural drawings and specifications*
16	Equipment location & integration	SDCI	Equipment needs and general locations identified, anticipated design approach for equipment interfacing with public areas	Overall equipment rooms and spaces calibrated and locations within stations identified with required equipment	Further details on required equipment and rooms/space details	*N/A – determined and folded into architectural drawings and specifications*
17	Façade design	SDCI	Overall building massing reflecting required program defined Initial ideas on design approach for façade, including how massing, secondary features, and materials work together to reinforce the design concept	Façade material selections identified	Façade details and public art interface (where applicable) selected; concept detail developed with draft spec	*N/A – determined and folded into architectural drawings and specifications*
18	Blank wall treatments	SDCI	Identification of any long walls on public ROW	Any blank walls could be identified	Blank wall treatment shown	*N/A – determined and folded into architectural drawings and specifications*
20	Overhead weather protection	SDCI/SDOT	Initial extent of weather protection indicated	Extent of weather protection indicated in plan Initial ideas on design approach, materials, form	Weather protection shown and rendered	*N/A – determined and folded into architectural drawings and specifications*
21	User essentials & services (including restrooms, retail, etc.)	SDCI/SDOT	Program approach and locations: list of essential services, conceptual approach to location within the station/station	General locations identified	Locations finalized, enclosures/materials included	Detailed

Where does the Seattle Design Commission fit into the design and permitting process?



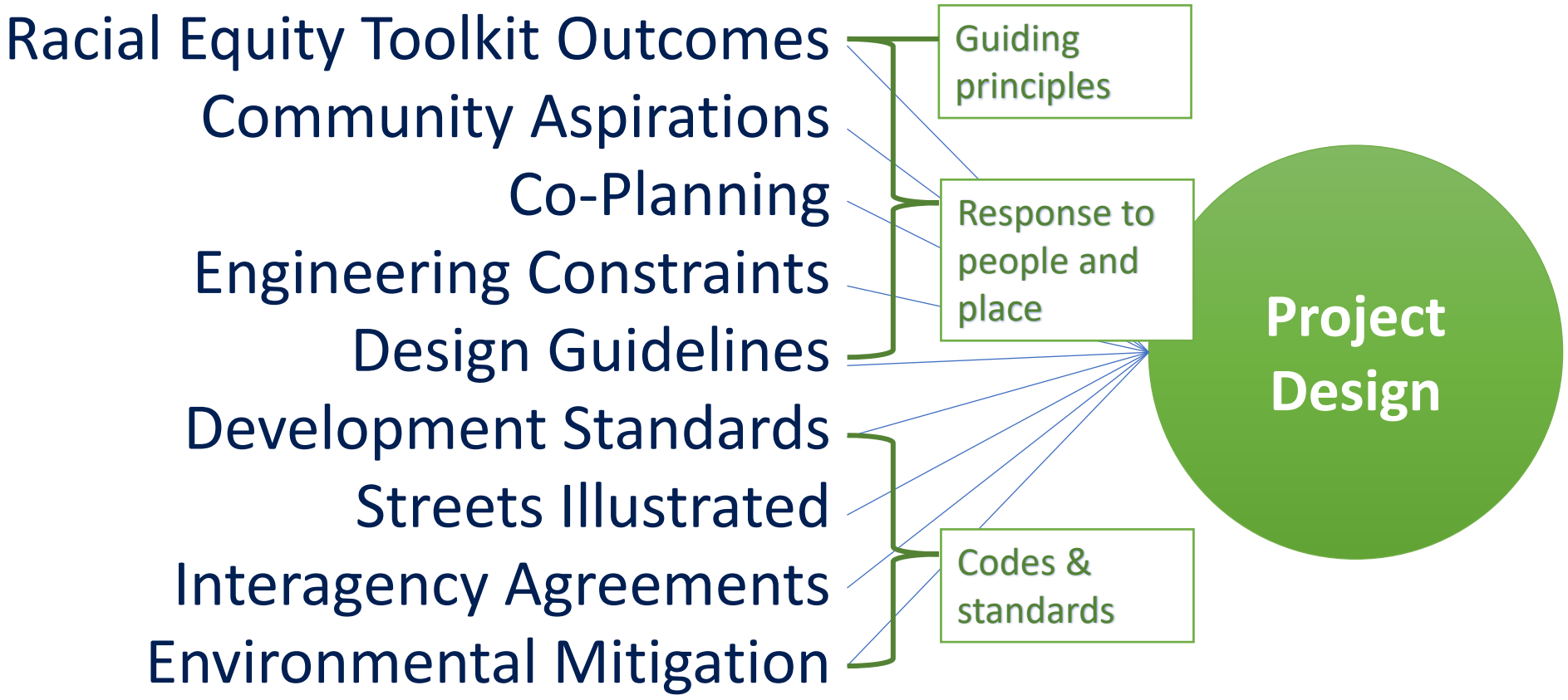
- This process repeats for each station design milestone (PE, 30, 60, and 90%)

Early Project Coordination

Racial Equity Toolkit Outcomes
Community Aspirations
Co-Planning
Engineering Constraints
Design Guidelines
Development Standards
Streets Illustrated
Interagency Agreements
Environmental Mitigation

City of Seattle

Early Project Coordination



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- Fulfills promise of the City's Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI)
- Maximize benefits and avoid harms to Communities of Color
- Serve as the project's north star
- Shaped by engagement with communities
- Key project decisions should align with Racial Equity Toolkit (RET) Outcomes
- **Seattle Design Commission should reference RET Outcomes in design recommendations**

Early Project Coordination

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- Involve communities in project design so that the process and project addresses community needs
- Interpret and apply Racial Equity Toolkit Outcomes for recognizable benefits for Communities of Color
- Inform place-based design direction for stations and project elements that intersect with communities
- Inform public realm design and programming, transportation network elements (e.g., bus stop locations, bike parking, pedestrian amenities)
- Guide Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) program and outcomes
- Help shape regulatory framework for light rail projects (e.g., Design Guidelines and Development Standards)

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- An ambitious project schedule calls for innovative approaches to getting light rail delivered faster than ever before
- A new planning process that solicits ***early*** subject matter expertise and community input to inform station design development
- Since 2019 the City, Sound Transit, KC Metro, the Port, and community members have come together to collaboratively develop station design
- City Co-Planning team includes OCPD, SDOT, SDCI, DON, Parks, SPU, SCL, and others and have informed Sound Transit's design approach
- Also informs City policies that are responsive to this major investment (e.g., bike parking quantity and location)

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- WSBLE is a very challenging technical project to be designed and constructed within a highly developed urban environment
- Engineering standards and constraints guide decision-making early in the design process and form the foundation of downstream design decisions
- Involve intensive interagency and interdisciplinary coordination to ensure engineering decisions don't preclude key community aspirations
- Portions of the design are driven by technical constraints that in some cases limit flexibility

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- A ***new*** review tool to help implement the City's vision, guiding principles, and objectives for light rail
- Shares the City's expectations for station and public realm design
- Provides a consistent evaluation framework for SDC review
- Improves predictability for Sound Transit and City and provides focus for designers and planners
- Supplements the City's various adopted guidance and standards for station and right-of-way design
- Developed through an interagency process created by the City (including SDC) and Sound Transit, bringing a consensus approach to project review

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- A package of ***new*** light rail-specific development standards that streamline permitting by applying a consistent set of codes to all stations
- Exempts light rail from meeting 19 different zone by zone standards
- Looks for streamlining opportunities, clarity, mutually beneficial guidance
- Like Engineering Constraints, form the basis for certain design outcomes that are set at the time of SDC review (e.g., bike parking quantity, setbacks, etc.)

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- Right-of-Way (ROW) standards that establish required size, placement, and design of public realm and modal facilities
- Create safe pedestrian environments with coordinated transition to the ROW
- Require street improvements based on City regulations
- Like Development Standards, form the basis for certain design outcomes that are set at the time of SDC review (e.g., ROW program)

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- Agreement between City of Seattle Sound Transit, and possibly other agencies, specifying mutually agreed upon design outcomes
- Are station or site-specific
- Particularly useful for design outcomes that can meet RET Outcomes and community aspirations and/or where code is not supportive or applicable

Early Project Coordination

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- Topic and location-specific measures that mitigate for unavoidable project impacts (e.g., noise and vibration)
- Some mitigation measures may have design outcomes (e.g., visual impacts)
- Impacts and mitigation requirements are narrowly defined by the Federal Transportation Administration (FTA), National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and the Washington State Environmental Protection Act (SEPA)
- Requires action through environmental procedure (may be less flexible than non-mitigation-related design outcomes)

Next Steps

- Deep dive discussion with SDC about new tools
- Community Engagement, SDC Input, & City Legislation
  - New Light Rail Design Guidelines
  - New Light Rail Development Standards
- Interim Briefings on West Seattle Link Preliminary Engineering
- West Seattle Link Preliminary Engineering formal SDC review anticipated in 2024

Questions

- How will the SDC approach reviews to prioritize equitable outcomes in line with the Racial Equity Toolkit?
- What questions do you have about the proposed review process and new tools?
- What additional topics would SDC benefit from being briefed on?