

Briefing on a Template for Design Guidelines: Purpose, Structure and Content



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summary

This discussion is intended to be philosophical: its purpose is to give the Planning Board an overview of urban design, the relationship between urban design and master plans, the role guidelines should play in the development process and realistic expectations for such a document.

The following are three working definitions for urban design and urban design guidelines to facilitate the Planning Board's discussion.

- Urban design is concerned with the physical characteristics of place and with the quality and structure of the public realm: the public faces of buildings, interior public spaces, streets, sidewalks, parks and plazas that provide the space for casual public interaction as well as venues for a multiplicity of activities.
- Urban design is a tool that integrates and coordinates how various public and private development proposals, including transportation and public infrastructure, will define a place.
- Urban design guidelines are a statement of intent with examples or strategies that illustrate how the intent can be accomplished.

background

In 2008, the Planning Board decided to develop urban design guidelines, which had been included in master plans, as a separate document and directed staff to prepare ones for three pending master plans: White Flint, Germantown Town Center, and Great Seneca Science Center. After the County Council and M-NCPPC approved and adopted the plans, the Planning Board approved Urban Design Guidelines for each. While the structure of these guidelines was comparable, the degree of detail varied. To address this, in April 2010, the Department engaged the services of Arun Jain, a consultant in urban design and planning, to help the staff develop a way of thinking about design guidelines as a separate document that would be applicable to all master or sector plans.

This effort began before the reorganization of the Department and involved the Urban Design Division. There were six multi-day workshops over a twelve month period during which staff considered two things: what guidelines should contain and effective ways to link master plan recommendations and urban design guidelines. After the reorganization, the workshops were

expanded to include the teams working on the Chevy Chase Lake, Long Branch and East County Science Center.

Biographical Sketch of the Consultant: Arun Jain

Arun Jain is an urban designer with over 25 years of national and international experience in practice and academia. Most recently he was Portland, Oregon's first Chief Urban Designer, a position he held for six years.

During this time he worked to integrate the city's diverse administrative territories to create unified strategies that would better improve the city's public spaces and places. His work there culminated in a comprehensive urban design framework for Portland's Central City. This 25 year blueprint for the future is intended to focus public resources and instill confidence in private development to build cumulative quality.

Professionally and as a consultant of many years, Arun works across a wide range of scales, geographies, and cultural landscapes around the world. From small nation-level decision-making tools to new towns to main streets, his approach considers context and integration to foster uniqueness and counter uncertainty.

As a teacher and mentor, Arun has several publications and book contributions to his credit. He has contributed and spoken in over 70 major conferences, seminars, workshops and at universities around the world. He is also an Adjunct Associate professor at the University of Oregon's urban architecture program in Portland. Earlier he taught for over 10 years at the University of California, Berkeley. Arun continues to be invited to teach and speak at universities around the world.

Arun regularly facilitates development issues and creative thinking in several international forums and settings. In 2007, he was elected the US representative to the International Federation of Housing and Planning's (IFHP) Bureau. Most recently in Portland he was awarded the Daily Journal of Commerce's Newsmaker Award for 2009.

Trained as an architect, Arun holds two masters degrees from the University of Pennsylvania's Urban Design Program. Professionally and philosophically, he continues to search for better balance between the environmental, economic, and ethical dimensions of sustainability.