Urban Design Code Update Project
UDC Discussion & Information

October 22, 2025

Urban Design Code Update Project Background & Overview

Urban Design Commission Framework – MGO 33.24

- ## Urban Design Commission (UDC) Purpose and Intent

To assure the **highest quality of design for all public and private projects** in the city; **protect and improve** the general appearance of all buildings, structures, landscaping and open areas in the city; encourage the protection of economic values and proper use of properties; encourage and promote a **high quality** in the design of new buildings, developments, remodeling and additions so as to maintain and improve the established standards of property values within the city; foster civic pride in the beauty and nobler assets of the city and, in all other ways possible, **assure a functionally efficient and visually attractive city in the future**.

What does the UDC do?

Types of Projects	Review Purview	Role
Discretionary Referrals	Not specified / ad hoc	Advisory to referring/approving agency
Residential Building Complexes (two or more principal buildings on a lot)	Exterior design and appearance of all principal buildings or structures and landscape plans	Advisory to Plan Commission
Planned Developments (i.e. site-specific zoning districts)	PD Standards in MGO 28.098	Advisory to approving agency, Plan Commission and Common Council
Public Projects	All buildings proposed to be built or expanded	Approving
Projects within Downtown Core and Urban Mixed Use Zoning Districts	Downtown Urban Design Guidelines	Approving or Advisory depending on scale of project
Projects within Urban Design Districts	As outlined in the district guidelines and requirements in MGO 33.24	Approving
Signage	As outlined in MGO 31.043	Approving

1996
District 6

1995
District 5

District 4

1992
District 4

District 8

2009
District 7

1987
District 3

2006

District 1

District 2
1975

District 1
1975

District 1
1975

Lake Mendota

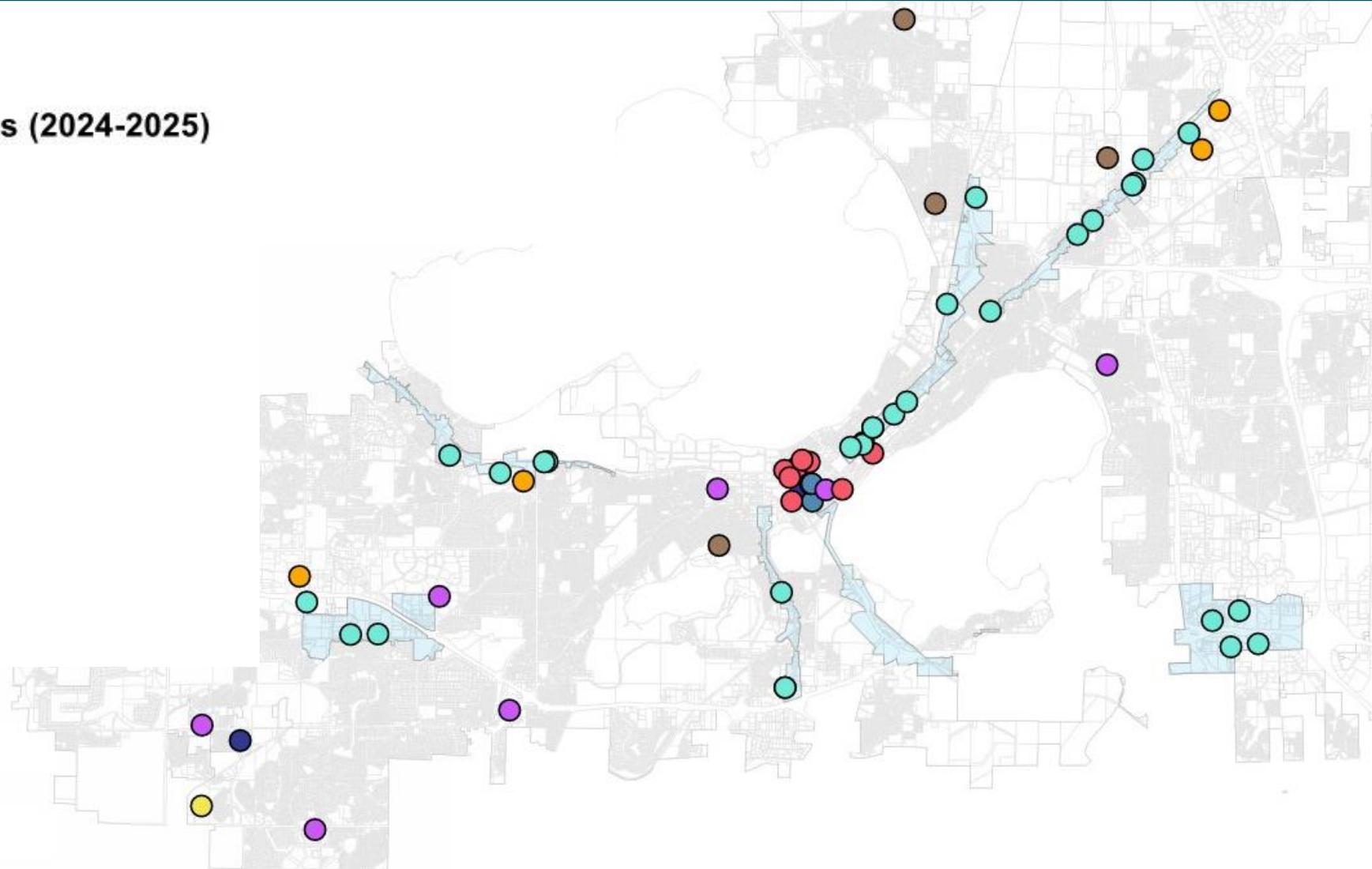Lake Monona

Lake Wingra

Lake Waubesa

What does the UDC do?

Legend

Urban Design Commission Requests (2024-2025)

- Alder Referral
- Campus Institutional (CI)
- DC/UMX Zoning
- PD
- Planned Multi-Use Site
- Public Building
- Residential Building Complex
- Urban Design Districts (UDDs)
- Urban Design Districts

Project Background - Overall Project Goals

- Antiquated code

- Create clarity, consistency, transparency and flexibility in process

  - Remove barriers to housing
  - Incorporate flexibility into process
  - Clarify/expand administrative roles, procedures, and purview
  - Codify UDC review/approval process
  - Clarify UDC's purview, especially when they are approving vs. advisory
  - Update policy and procedure manual

Project Background - Overall Project Goals

- Align with current city policies, Zoning & Sign Codes, adopted plans

  - Remove redundancies, update antiquated language, incorporate current best practices, etc.
  - Update guidelines and requirements to align with current policies, including Complete Green Streets, TOD Overlay, Area Plans recommendations, Inclusiveness and Diversity, etc.
  - Analysis of district boundaries

UDC Code Update 2.0
Phase 1 – The Diagnosis

Project Scope – Phase 1, The Diagnosis

- **Identifying Key Urban Design Concepts/Design Goals**
Recommendations for re-writing guidelines and requirements

- **Identifying new/existing Areas of Interest**
Recommendations for adjusting/eliminating existing district boundaries and recommendations for potential new districts

- **Identifying Potential Process Improvements**
Recommendations to clearly outline review/approval process

Internal Steering Committee

Mayor's Office

Sustainability Team

Equity Team

City Engineering

Planning – Area Plans Team

Traffic Engineering

Comprehensive Planning

Planning – Development Review

- Building consensus on key design concepts/urban design goals

- Identifying areas of interest

- Align UDC code section with current goals and policies (i.e., complete green streets, TOD overlay, etc.)

- Identify redundancies and most appropriate place for regulations to live

Identifying Key Urban Design Concepts

Identifying Key Urban Design Concepts

What are the city's urban design goals?

- What matters to you when you are walking down the street or enjoying a public space?
- Identification of key concepts - are there other design aspects we want to influence?
- Are there design aspects that we <u>don't want</u> to influence?
- Should certain design concepts be required vs. guided?

Contextual Elements
Active Streetscapes Elements
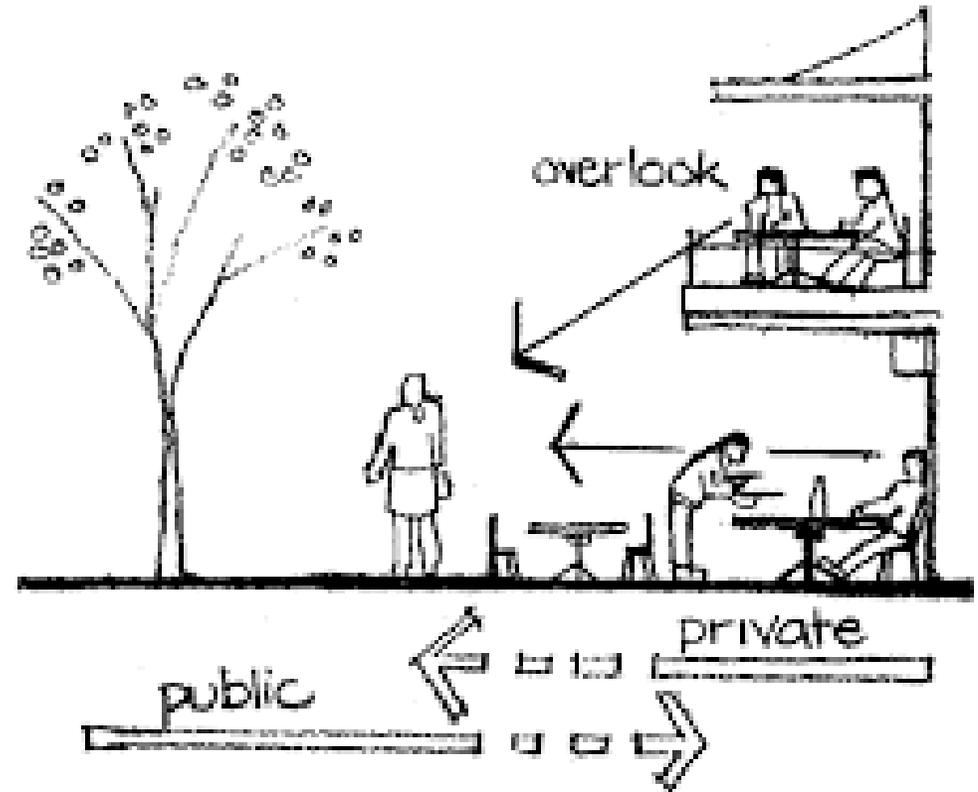Design Details Elements

Context Design Elements

- Overall building mass and scale related to larger context
  - Prominent location/major intersection
  - Topography
  - Visibility
  - Cityscape or long views

- Incorporating design cues from surrounding development
 - Materials and/or material detailing

The Depot, N Bedford & W Washington

Active Street Design Elements

- Maintaining positive building relationship with the street
  - Active building entrances/uses at the street
  - Locating service-oriented uses in the back of buildings
  - Opacity/transparency
  - Landscape
  - Site amenities
  - Connectivity
  - How the spaces between buildings are being used
  - Clearly define public/private interface

- Incorporating design elements to breakdown mass and scale
  - Articulation/modulation in building forms/footprints
  - Four-sided architecture
  - Horizontal/vertical rhythm

Design Detail Elements
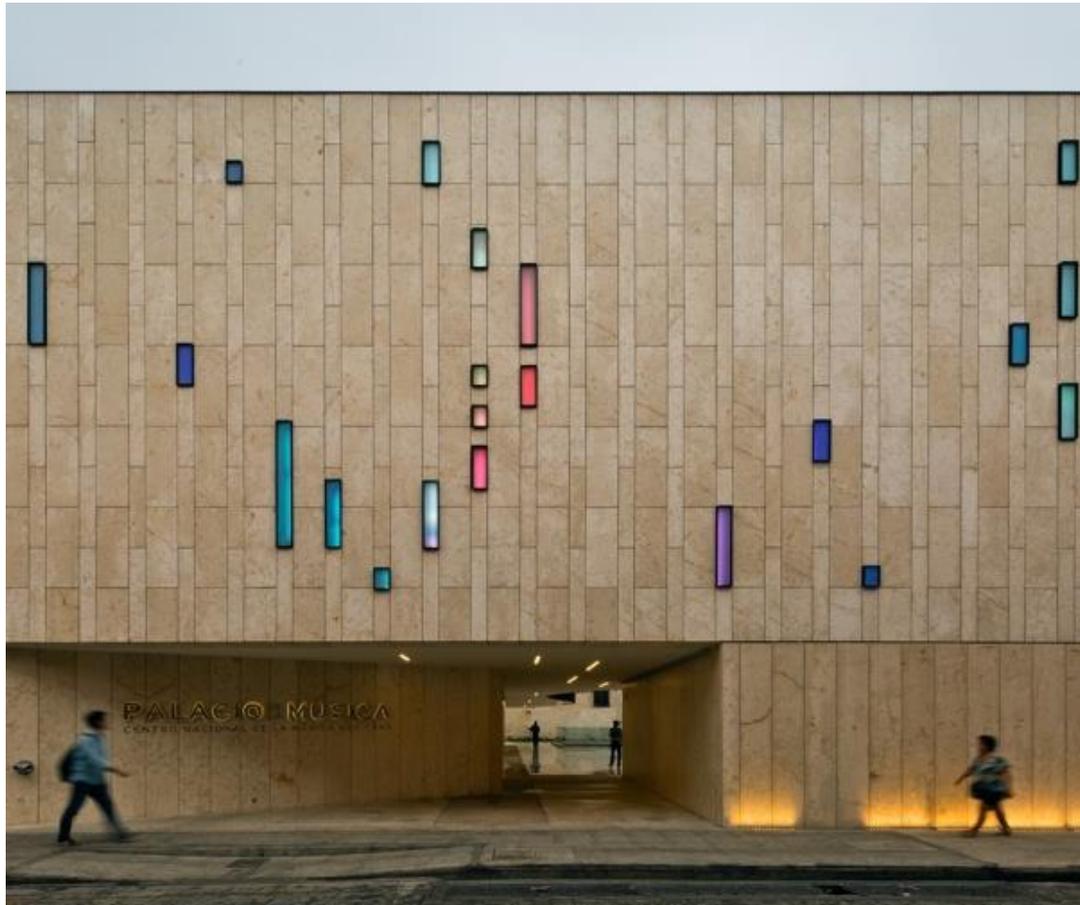
- Maintaining true to style details
  - Architectural styles have design details – stay true to them
  - Residential vs commercial design details

- Maintaining simplicity in design
  - Climate appropriate, durable materials
  - Intentional use of color or textures

- Incorporating design details to breakdown mass/scale
  - Canopies/awning
  - Landscape/site amenities
  - Articulation or changes in plane where materials transition
  - Material textures
  - Minimizing blank walls
  - Lighting

What are the city's urban design goals?

- What matters to you when you are walking down the street or enjoying a public space?

- Identification of key concepts - are there other design aspects we want to influence?

- Are there design aspects that we don't want to influence?

- Should certain design concepts be required vs. guided?

Identifying Areas of Interest

Identifying Areas of Interest

What areas of the city do we want to influence?

- City-wide?
- Targeted areas – If so, how do we identify them?
- Are there different/unique key concepts for specific areas?
- Are there specific areas that we <u>do not</u> want to influence?
- Public spaces?

Areas where design **should be** Influenced

Some feedback we have heard from the staff Steering Committee to date includes:

Within UDC Purview

- East Towne Mall area (UDD 5 and planned multi-use site)
- West Towne Mall area (planned multi-use site)
- Oscar Mayer Area (UDD 4)
- Downtown (DC/UMX or PD)
- S Park Street (UDD 7)
- Alliant Energy Center (UDD 1)

Outside UDC Purview

- Pedestrian corridors – Monroe Street, Regent Street, Johnson Street, Williamson Street
- Oscar Mayer Area (outside UDD 4)
- Large-scale employment areas/centers (American Center, Old Sauk Trails, UWRP, etc.)
- Northport Drive
- Downtown areas not zoned DC/UMX

Areas where design should not be Influenced

Some feedback we have heard from the staff Steering Committee to date includes:

Within UDC Purview

- UDD 1 near Stoughton Road and W Broadway
- UDD 2 Schroeder Road corridor
- District 3 – identify areas where walkability is desired
- Public projects
- UDD 6 – Hilldale to University Row
- UDD 5 – Re-evaluate NEAP recommendations

Outside UDC Purview

- Areas planned for industrial development
- Areas planned for auto-oriented uses (i.e., drive-thrus, shopping centers)

Areas where design
should/should not be Influenced

Map Note: DRAFT Summary of Initial Responses - For Discussion Purposes Only

Legend

- Areas to Influence Design
- Areas Not to Influence Design
- Industrial Land Recommendation (Comprehensive Plan)
- Urban Design Districts
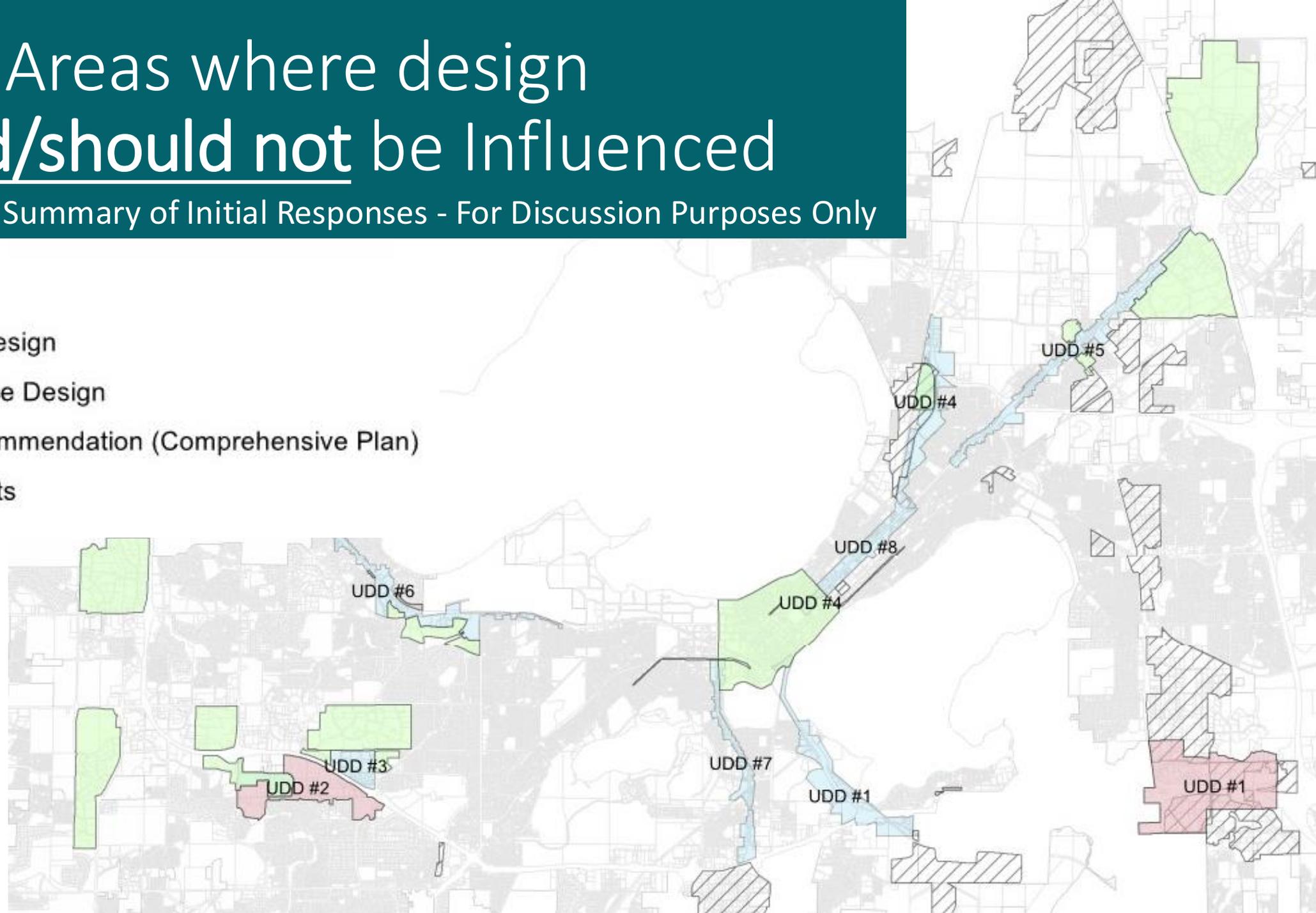
UDD #4
UDD #5
UDD #8
UDD #6
UDD #4
UDD #3
UDD #7
UDD #2
UDD #1
UDD #1

What areas of the city do we want to influence?

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Phase 1 – Project Timeline
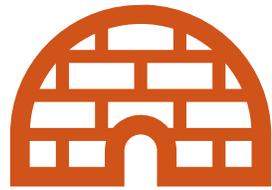
Project Timeline – Phase 1, The Diagnosis

Summer 2025

Develop Internal Coordination – Staff Steering Committee (July-December)

Fall 2025

Stakeholder Engagement – Workshop

Stakeholder Engagement - Survey

Stakeholder Engagement – UDC & PC Discussions

MPT Check-in (November)

Project Timeline – Phase 1, The Diagnosis

Winter 2025 – Year End Deliverable

Summary of input received (i.e., design goals, process)

Staff recommendations for potential code changes (i.e., design standards, process, other opportunities)

MPT Check-in (December)

2026

Prepare and introduce ordinance(s) to implement recommendations

Next Steps - Phase 1, The Diagnosis

- **How should the city regulate design; explore:**
  - Adding clarity and in creating transparency, predictability, flexibility
  - Guidelines (shoulds) vs requirements (shalls)
  - Role of the UDC in the review of projects (advisory vs approving)

- **Individual Agency Collaboration**
  - Do other agencies have design requirements or a design review process?
  - Is there overlap with the UDC process, guidelines, requirements?
  - Explore whether overlap needs to be changed.

Questions & Comments

Thank you!

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