

# PLANNING AND URBAN MANAGEMENT AGENCY

## Design Review

Jan 2022

### Overview

Design Reviews assist the Planning and Urban Management Agency (PUMA) to provide consistent, accurate and relevant technical advice to applicants who will be submitting (or have submitted) Development Consent Applications (DCAs) for significant developments in Samoa. Developments that undergo a Design Review are generally of public significance; the process is intended to improve the quality of public spaces and benefit the community.

### Benefits of Design Review

Design Reviews offer feedback and observations that assist in improving (but not redesigning) a development, as well as offers confidence to decision makers that a development is well planned and designed. The process recognizes that provision of design advice *early on* in the statutory approvals process will help create better sustainable development outcomes in Samoa.

Feedback may assist applicants to:

- amend the concept design to better suit the site, neighbourhood and environment;
- consider unforeseen planning and design parameters;
- scope relevant issues for an Environmental Impact Assessment; and
- save time and money by identifying planning and design issues early in the process.

### Scope of a Design Review

A Design Review will be considered by PUMA for the following projects:

- developments with a capital value over \$1 million;
- nationally significant developments;
- major developments within the Apia urban area (including waterfront area); and/or
- any other developments required by PUMA.

### Timing

It is recommended that a Design Review be conducted before a formal DCA is submitted to PUMA as a 'pre-DCA submission'.

Should a pre-DCA submission not be submitted for a significant development, PUMA may require a Design Review as part of the DCA assessment process. This is in addition to (not in lieu of) the existing statutory referrals process to referral authorities.

### Submission requirements

The information required for a Design Review include the following documents at a minimum:

- brief description of the development proposal;
- site plan;
- floor plans;
- elevations;
- sections; and
- perspectives (if any).

Please refer to sheet 2.01 for detailed requirements of these documents.

### Design Review process

The PUMA case officer assigned to the development proposal, or the Assistant CEO of PUMA, will request a Design Review from an invited panel. Prior to each Design Review, panel members will review the submitted information and undertake a site visit to become fully aware of the site conditions, neighbourhood context and key issues.

The panel members will then meet to discuss feedback according to the design considerations outlined in Annex 1—Principles of Good Design and PUMA's Design Review Checklist.

PUMA will then issue written advice to the applicant with a list of recommendations informed by the views of the panel. This advice will be used by PUMA when determining a DCA and may be disseminated to relevant referral authorities as may be required.

### **Panel representation**

A Design Review panel will comprise relevant Government of Samoa representatives from Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment. From time to time, PUMA may invite representatives from other relevant agencies such as Ministry of Natural resources and Environment; Land Transport Authority; and Fire and Emergency Services Authority and internal MWTI divisions such as the Asset Management and Building to review nationally significant developments.

A minimum of three representatives and a maximum of five representatives shall be invited to form the panel.

### **Principles of Design Review**

An effective Technical Design Review is guided by a series of core principles that assist the Panel to provide useful feedback to the applicant that is:

- (i) **consistent** – advice is not contradictory and is agreed by all Panel representatives;
- (ii) **accurate** – reviews are carried out by suitably qualified representatives that are experienced in design;
- (iii) **relevant** – feedback must be clearly seen to benefit the development and/or the public by ensuring better sustainable development and design outcomes;
- (iv) **advisory** – reviews offer impartial advice and desired outcomes to the decision makers, but do not make the decisions or propose design solutions; and
- (v) **timely** – reviews need to take place as early as possible in the design process to ensure decisions or changes can be made without implications to cost or time.

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## **Principles of Good Design**

Good design is not simply about nice aesthetics and attractiveness.

Good urban design and building design (or architecture) in Samoa should embody the following principles.

### **Site-specific**

Good design responds to the specific subject site and its surroundings. It fits in well with the natural elements of the site and the surrounding built form elements. Overall, good design should contribute positively to the character of a place, village or urban area.

### **Functional**

Good design is functional and 'fit for purpose'. A development proposal should be efficiently designed and take consideration of the needs of people that will be living, working, visiting or accessing the development. Good design considers the required functions of a development and ensures they are enhanced through every detail of a design.

### **Inclusive**

Good design is inclusive for all, and includes consideration for people with disabilities, gender equality and the needs of the elderly and children. It promotes socially diverse communities in which locals feel connected to one another. Inclusive development also considers the needs and equity of all stakeholders including neighbours and adjacent landowners.

### **Resilient**

Good design is resilient to the effects of climate change, disaster and durability over time. Buildings and developments should be designed to suit the local conditions of Samoa, using low-maintenance and durable materials wherever possible. They should also be designed to mitigate and/or adapt to the effects of climate change and disaster, which will increasingly affect Samoa in future years.

### **Sustainable**

Good design is sustainable and minimises its effect on the environment. Development proposals should demonstrate passive (e.g. cross-ventilation, rain gardens and eave design) and active (e.g. water recycling systems, solar panels and wind turbines) sustainable design strategies to reduce resource requirements. Sustainable developments also ensure they do not negatively impact on the surrounding environment.

### **Safe**

Good design is safe for all site/building occupants, users and visitors. Safe spaces include considerations of fire safety, environmental health and prevention of personal injury.

### **Unique**

Good design is unique and innovative wherever possible. Showcasing Samoan culture through design should be supported and encouraged. This could be through innovative design of public spaces, building facades, landscaping or interiors.

### **Value-adding**

Good design adds value to the economy of the local community, village or nation. Places that are well designed will attract local interest and potential investors.