

# Urban Design Initiative

Oct. 2019 update



The ODOT Urban Design Initiative Phase 2 is nearly complete. The project team met over the course of many months and is pleased to introduce the resulting document, **Blueprint for Urban Design**. The anticipated release is December 2019.

The Blueprint for Urban Design is a joint effort between the Statewide Project Delivery Branch, Active Transportation and Planning sections to bring a comprehensive and balanced approach to urban design standards and guidance. It is intended to create clarity around defining specific urban contexts and improve alignment between the planning and design disciplines.

Inside, you will find guiding principles that allow for flexibility in the design decision-making process and updated guidance and standards that reflect multimodal needs. This update will offer more direction and clarity to agency staff, stakeholders and customers when designing ODOT facilities in various urban and suburban state highway contexts and is intended to be used early in both the planning and scoping process.

## **This companion document:**

- Supplements and provides enhanced design guidance to the existing Highway Design Manual and other ODOT manuals until their updates can be completed
- Highlights design flexibility
- Identifies six urban contexts with defining characteristics
- Provides information on planning and design by urban context in addition to roadway classification and designation
- Gives instruction on performance-based design
- Starts at highest level of protection for vulnerable users
- Requires a new design documentation process

## **Background**

The Blueprint for Urban Design document was born from an initiative intended to lessen the gaps between ODOT's business lines and disciplines as well as between our agency and our local partners.

While ODOT has embraced context-based design since the 1990's, ODOT's urban planning concepts didn't always line up with current ODOT design standards and design standards didn't always meet current urban needs.

This practice led to a disconnect between our planning and engineering staff and between us and our local partners causing schedule delays, design exceptions and increased project costs.

Understanding and executing a performance-based approach enables informed decision-making about trade-offs. This is especially helpful when developing solutions in fiscally and physically constrained environments. National activities such as FHWA Performance-Based Practical Design and NCHRP Report 785: *Performance-Based Analysis of Geometric Design of Highways and Streets*, have resulted in a framework to better integrate design, operations, maintenance, and safety. The Blueprint for Urban Design integrates these national concepts into ODOT's work.

## **Stakeholder Engagement**

To ensure we created a document that serves the needs of our stakeholders, we surveyed other agencies, local jurisdictions, urban designers and stakeholder interest groups, collecting over 900 responses. We also reached out to our local government partners gathering feedback from four small focus groups.

## **Next Steps**

Now that the Blueprint for Urban Design is nearly complete, the next step is to develop a training schedule for ODOT (headquarter and region) planning and design staff to learn how to implement the information in the document into the project delivery process, then we will bring our new guidance to our local partners.

Rollout of the Blueprint for Urban Design is scheduled for December 2019. ODOT region staff workshops and training dates will be announced in early 2020.

## **Questions?**

Feel free to contact Rich Crossler-Laird, team lead at [Rich.Crossler-Laird@odot.state.or.us](mailto:Rich.Crossler-Laird@odot.state.or.us), or Adam Argo at [Adam.Argo@odot.state.or.us](mailto:Adam.Argo@odot.state.or.us). Or visit the [Urban Design website](#) for more information.