

Urban Design Review Panel Terms of Reference

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Purpose of the Urban Design Review Panel

The Urban Design Review Panel, created in 2004 by resolution for a 3 year trial period, was established as an independent urban design advisory body on a permanent basis by Council resolution in 2007 (report C2007-71). The objective of the Urban Design Review Panel (the Panel) is to encourage the achievement of design excellence by focusing on the architecture and urban design issues of development applications. The Panel provides “best practice” design guidance which recognizes the complex relationship between streets, buildings and the spaces between them while responding to use, context and climate.

Input from the Panel will be requested on select applications, outlined in the accompanying Urban Design Review Protocol. Administration will engage Urban Design Review Panel at the earliest stage to ensure the provision of urban design guidance at the most effective point in the project design process as well as the timely review of applications to meet existing Corporate Planning Applications Group (CPAG) timelines.

1.1 Mandate

The Panel’s mandate is to provide independent, professional design advice, from an urban design and architecture perspective, on public and private development and major redevelopment proposals through pre-application enquiries development permit applications and development liaisons on sites citywide with significant impact on the public realm.

Comments from the Panel are provided as peer review expert advice, directed to staff, the applicant and the development authority, and intended to encourage best practice approaches to development specific to a site’s context that support the goals of the Municipal Development Plan. Advice from the Panel is to assist the applicant and their design team by identifying areas for improvement to support the realization of better design outcomes.

The advice of the Panel is in addition to the in-depth urban design review conducted by City Wide Urban Design, specialists in urban design within Administration, as part of the application review process. Urban design comments from both the Panel and City Wide Urban Design will be received by the planning file manager for inclusion in reports to the applicant, to the Development Authority for decision or for recommendation to Council. City Wide Urban Design will work in collaboration with the Panel, assisting them in understanding the policy and guideline context of specific applications as requested without directing the Panel’s recommendations. The effectiveness of the Panel, as an adjunct to internal design review, is in their ability to comment through the lens of current design practice and, in some cases, more broadly than existing policy may allow. Any conflicts that arise will be clearly identified and resulting recommendations described in the appropriate reports.

During the preliminary stages of the CPAG process involvement of the Panel is voluntary, as is the pre-application enquiry process generally. However it is strongly recommended to applicants to request early engagement with City Wide Urban Design and the Urban Design Review Panel to support the identification and resolution of urban design issues at the beginning of the design process when they are more easily resolved. Appropriate applications will receive review by the Urban Design Review Panel during the development permit phase if not engaged earlier in the process.

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The Panel's advice is not binding, but is nonetheless an important benchmark for the assessment of quality development proposals and should be considered for the benefit of creating a quality urban environment.

Periodically the Panel may, based on their application review experience over time, wish to comment or make recommendations to the Development Authority for regulatory or guideline changes that may be outside the scope of applications but should be considered for the benefit of creating a quality urban environment. These recommendations will be made through separate submissions by the Panel which do not tie the recommendations to specific applications.

2. Definitions

- a. **"Urban Design"** means the practice of giving form, shape and character to the arrangement of buildings, or whole neighbourhoods, or the city. At the more detailed level, it involves the shaping of the external spaces between buildings, and the design of their detail and finishes to respond to use, context, climate, and building form (*Urban Design Framework*, City of Calgary, 2011).
- b. **"Public Realm"** means all external areas of the city (on public or private land) to which the public has regular access. This includes, for example, sidewalks, squares, plazas, as well as +15 bridges, walkways and associated outdoor spaces (*Urban Design Framework*, City of Calgary, 2011).
- c. **"Development Authority"** means a planning authority provided by council bylaw to exercise development powers and perform duties on behalf of the municipality, and may include one or more of the following: A designated officer; a municipal planning commission; any other person or organization (*Municipal Government Act*, Province of Alberta, 2017).
- d. **"Concept Review"** means the phase in a project's evolution equivalent to the architect's services in Pre-design Phase described by the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, prior to the traditional building design services which assist the client in establishing a functional program, which describes various criteria and data for a project, including design objectives, site requirements and constraints, spatial requirements and relationships, as well as the project scope (*A Guide to Determining Appropriate Fees for the Services of an Architect*, The Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, 2009).
- e. **"Schematic Design Phase"** means the phase in a project's evolution equivalent to the architect's services in Schematic Design Phase described by the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, wherein the architect shall review the program requirements furnished by the client and characteristics of the site; review alternative approaches to the design of the project, and prepare design documents that illustrate the scale and character of the project and how the parts of the project functionally relate to each other (*A Guide to Determining Appropriate Fees for the Services of an Architect*, The Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, 2009).

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f. “**Design Development**” means the phase in a project’s evolution equivalent to the architect’s services in Design Development Phase described by the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, wherein, based on client approval of schematic design documents, the architect shall prepare design development documents consisting of drawings and other documents to describe the size and character of the entire project, including the architectural, structural, mechanical and electrical systems, materials and such other elements as may be appropriate (*A Guide to Determining Appropriate Fees for the Services of an Architect*, The Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, 2009).

3. Panel Structure and Expertise

3.1 Classification

The Urban Design Review Panel is classified as an Interest Group as defined in the Council Policy on Governance and Appointments of Boards, Commission and Committees (CP2016-03).

3.2 Eligibility of Public Members

The Urban Design Review Panel is comprised of 12 members and one adjunct member (see below), nominated by their professional associations. As well, BILD Calgary Region and NAIOP will each nominate from within their membership one registered design professional from any of the Associations referred to below. The complete list of nominations will be considered by Council who will appoint the Panel members, by resolution, at the annual Organizational Meeting of Council.

The Panel will consist of:

- Five Architect members of the Alberta Association of Architects, four of which have specific expertise in at least one of the following categories: Urban design; high-rise design; commercial building design; civic building design; accessible design; sustainable design; large scale development projects. No more than one architect member may be non-practicing.
- Three members of the Alberta Association of Landscape Architects with expertise in diverse landscapes representing the public realm.
- Two members of the Association of Professional Engineers, Geologists and Geophysicists of Alberta with expertise in multi-modal transportation, complete streets and tactical urbanism.
- Two members of the Alberta Professional Planners Institute with expertise in urban design.

In addition:

- One recognized Heritage Conservation Architect, adjunct member (available on call to participate as requested on specialized files).

3.3 Selection Criteria

Panel members are selected for their individual experience and qualifications, and are expected to be leaders in their professions, with experience in delivering high quality design outcomes.

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The Panel overall should represent a broad range of experience which, in addition to urban design should include high-rise design, commercial building design, civic building design, accessible design, sustainable design, and experience with large scale development projects. The Chief Urban Designer and Urban Design Review Panel Chair will review the list of nominations provided by the Professional Associations and submit a short-list recommendation which will be considered, together with the entire list, to inform Council's decision, in accordance with Council Policy CP2016-03. No more than one member of any particular firm may be allowed to sit on the Panel at the same time.

3.4 Quorum

Any seven members (50% +1) can constitute a quorum during a regular Panel meeting. In the case of additional meetings attended by a sub-panel (see section 6.6), three members who appropriately represent the Panel make up may constitute a quorum.

3.5 Duties of Panel Members

- To regularly attend meetings of the Urban Design Review Panel. In accepting appointment to the UDRP, the Panel member acknowledges that they have suitable flexibility to attend regularly scheduled Panel meetings.
- To know and understand Council policy.
- To understand the approval process for land use and development applications and to ensure that Panel commentary is provided within CPAG review timelines.
- To conduct a thorough review of submission materials prior to each Panel meeting.
- To provide the applicant with impartial, professional advice on proposed designs with respect to improving their impact on the city's physical environment.
- To consider, in providing design guidance, the *Thirteen Elements of Urban Design* as described in the Calgary Municipal Development Plan and set out in Part 4 of this Terms of Reference.
- To assist in the recruiting of new Panel members through active promotion of The Panel, its work, and its importance to the design review process at The City of Calgary.
- Adjunct members will be willing to be available as requested to participate in the review of items related to their expertise.

3.6 Duties of Panel Chair

The Panel Chair and Vice-Chair are chosen by the Panel members from amongst their members annually at the first meeting following the Organizational Meeting of Council. The Chair may delegate these responsibilities to any of the Panel members if necessary. General duties of the Chair are defined in the Council Policy on Governance and Appointments of Boards, Commission and Committees (CP2016-03). Additionally the Chair:

Manages the meeting to ensure the Meeting Procedures are adhered to and that comments from the Panel are consistent with its mandate and objective to provide direction from an urban design perspective.

Summarizes Panel commentary utilizing an established template and sends directly to the File Manager, copy to the Chief Urban Design, within two to five days of the meeting. The File Manager will communicate this commentary, unedited, to the applicant, as soon as possible.

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Represents the Panel when Urban Design Review Panel representation is required outside of regular Panel duties, including being periodically available to address questions of clarification. The Vice-Chair assists in these duties in the absence of the Chair.

3.7 Attendance by Non-members

The Applicant and/or their representative (non-voting) will be available to:

- Present the overall design rationale and physical context of the proposal, and, as relevant, the project's history.
- Answer questions raised by the Panel.

The Chief Urban Designer or designate (non-voting) will be available at Panel meetings to:

- Provide applicable urban design context at the request of the Panel.
- Provide any previous urban design direction given on the project and/or site.
- Advise the Panel with regard to potential policy conflicts arising from their comments.
- Answer other questions raised by the Panel.

The File Manager/Project Planner (non-voting) will be available to:

- Present the relevant planning context of the proposal and relevant process considerations as requested by the Panel.
- Answer questions raised by the Panel.

No member of Council or Administration may be appointed to the Panel. The meetings are not open to the members of the public; however, applicants will be requested to present the project and address questions of the Urban Design Review Panel (further detail of the conduct of Panel meetings is set out in the Urban Design Review Protocol).

Administration will arrange venues and agendas, and distribute submission materials to the UDRP members.

4. Appointment Term

Panel members will be appointed on a volunteer basis for a term of two years, which may be renewed up to two times. Individual term expirations will be staggered to ensure an orderly transition of the new members.

5. Code of Conduct

Members of the Urban Design Review Panel must complete a *Declaration* form upon their appointment to The Panel which states that they will abide by the *Code of Conduct for Citizen Members Appointed to Council Established Boards, Commissions and Committees* (CC045). Members of the Urban Design Review Panel will conduct their assessments in a collaborative and transparent manner with the applicant.

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6. Assessment Process

6.1 Scope of Work

The scope and nature of the criteria used may vary with the size or special circumstances of a project. The intent for the Panel is to identify design issues and appropriate urban design principles to consider, not to propose specific design solutions. It is incumbent upon the applicant to provide clarifications when questioned by the Panel and propose potential solutions.

Design review by the Panel can be accessed for the following purposes:

- Preliminary discussions with developers and City Wide Urban Design at the concept development phase, preferably during preliminary project discussions, on large, complex or development proposals, focusing on identifying issues for improvement to achieve better design outcomes.
- Subsequent advice and review if an application has varied significantly from its original intent or in cases where further design review by the Panel has been recommended.
- Design recommendations to the development authority or Council based on the design merits or challenges of development proposals brought forward for decision.
- Review and provide advice to Administration with regard to significant planning and design issues, not associated with specific applications, which may impact multiple sites or have broad policy impacts.

The Panel will focus their design advice on the application in front of them and provide design guidance appropriate to the proposed project type with clear reference to those areas of the proposal which they feel deficient and reasons why.

6.2 Urban Design Principles

The Municipal Development Plan includes a set of guiding urban design principles that contribute to achieving excellent design outcomes, referred to as *Thirteen Elements of Urban Design*, which inform City policy and against which all project applications are to be measured (MDP 2.4, Urban Design Review Protocol Section 3). The Urban Design Review Panel will review how each project addresses the principles within the context of best practices of contemporary urban design.

6.3 Project Review Stages

Recognizing that some design issues are not resolved at the pre-application stages and that some often remain to be resolved once a formal application has been submitted, projects within the Urban Design Review process may be seen twice by the Panel, as follows:

Pre-Application/Schematic Design Advice

The first design discussion, intended to align with Pre-Design or Schematic Design phase, should be scheduled early enough during the initial functional design stages, or during policy development, to afford the possibility of significant changes, if advised by the Panel.

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Development Permit/Design Development Review

The second (final) review is intended to occur after revisions have been made, and is intended to focus on design details at the outset of the development permit process. If an applicant does not engage in schematic design review at pre-application stages, full schematic and design development review by the Panel will occur at this time. A proposal will not be requested to be seen by the Panel three or more times.

6.4 Panel Position

The Panel will strive to reach consensus to determine its position on the project at the end of each project review. The Panel may vote to determine its position; the position relates only to the design issues discussed during the review and is not connected to the City's development approvals process. Panel positions include "endorse" and "further review recommended". A project which receives "endorse" would likely not be requested to be seen a second time by the Panel; in the case of "further review recommended" the Panel will decide whether a subsequent presentation to the Panel is requested or whether any further review will be handled internally only by City Wide Urban Design.

6.5 Frequency of Meetings

Urban Design Review Panel meetings will be held every two weeks throughout the year on Tuesday afternoons commencing at 1:30 pm. Special meetings may be convened when necessary to handle high file volume or to hold discussion sessions on topics of interest or concern. (See below)

6.6 Additional Sessions

The Panel may establish a sub-panel, if required to accommodate exceptionally high file volume within CPAG timelines, to assist the Panel in the performance of its duties. Each sub-panel will consist of half of the representatives of each of the above-noted member groups, and will meet bi-weekly, on alternating weeks, at the regular meeting time. Any three members who appropriately represent the make-up of the Panel can constitute quorum.

6.7 Training / Update Sessions

Annually upon appointment of new panel members, an introductory information session will be provided by the Chief Urban Designer and Panel Chair. Panel members may also be requested to attend periodic update sessions on urban design projects and issues. These may include attendance by other city groups such as Calgary Planning Commission, and will be organized by City Wide Urban Design.

7.0 Record of Meetings

Comments of the Urban Design Review Panel are noted by the Chair or Deputy Chair and formalized within an established template after the conclusion of the meeting with the assistance of Administration as required. No new material or information will be introduced into the comments that were not discussed in the open portion of the meeting.