

Urban Design Review Framework Document



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**"The building of cities is one of man's greatest achievements."
*Edmund Bacon***

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Executive Summary

The purpose of the Urban Design Review Framework project is to achieve higher quality urban design outcomes through improvements to the urban design review process at the City of Calgary. The project focuses on refining the timing and effectiveness of urban design review within the application review process to ensure that design comments are consistently provided prior to significant design decisions being made, and to improve clarity and certainty for applicants and decision-makers.

Upon the direction of Council and with the guidance of the Next City Advisory Committee, the project Working Group, led by Community Planning, was augmented to include representatives of Calgary Approvals Coordination, Urban Design Review Panel and Calgary Planning Commission. The Working Group conducted a program of stakeholder engagement to build upon the information already collected through research of design review best practices in over thirty North American cities. The engagement included a series of three topic-specific discussion sessions that were consistently facilitated across four stakeholder groups which included Calgary Planning Commission, Urban Design Review Panel, Community Planning and a group of invited experts in relevant areas of design and development with considerable application experience. Feedback from each session was used to build subsequent sessions and was used as a key component in drafting the final recommendations included in this document.

Key ideas resulting from research and engagement indicate that to achieve better urban design outcomes, it is important to establish:

- A shared understanding amongst all participants in the application review process that urban design issues are of primary importance and must be addressed early;
- A clearly defined and consistently applied process which clarifies the path for design input and defines key decision points, aiming for the first Detailed Team Review as the end of design review;
- Reporting which contains clearly described, relevant and credible design recommendations which can contribute to a more efficient, informed and predictable process;
- A shared understanding of the role, scope, and purpose of each of the involved groups with regard to urban design review procedures and authority.

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Introduction

Understanding urban design is a critical component in the creation of a healthy, vibrant, and attractive city. Urban design involves the arrangement and design of buildings, public spaces, transportation systems, and services to entire neighbourhoods and the city itself. Urban design draws together the many strands of place-making, environmental stewardship, social equity and economic viability into the creation of memorable, livable places with distinct beauty and identity. Good urban design can offer significant benefits to the community, both tangible and intangible, while poor design can have adverse effects, environmentally, socially and economically. Good urban design can improve walkability and hence contribute to healthy lifestyles. Through better connectivity, good urban design can help make neighbourhoods feel more accessible and more secure. Good urban design can attract businesses and patrons, add to the distinctiveness of districts and neighbourhoods, and add to the value of adjacent housing. Good urban design can contribute to delivering a better quality of life which Communities value.

Good urban design is best achieved through the coordination of all related disciplines, including planning, architecture, transportation planning, engineering and landscape design. Safe, comfortable and interesting places are created through the successful design of the complex relationship between streets, buildings, and the spaces between them, while responding to use, context and climate. Good urban design is one of the seven goals of Calgary's *Municipal Development Plan* (MDP):

"Make Calgary a livable, attractive, memorable and functional city by recognizing its unique setting and dynamic urban character and creating a legacy of quality public and private developments for future generations."

The Purpose of Urban Design Review:

- Meet the goals of the Calgary *Municipal Development Plan* (MDP) and *Calgary Transportation Plan* (CTP) which support building a livable, memorable and functional city.
- Contribute to the development application process by promoting site and building design that contributes to high quality living environments and attractive, walkable, and diverse neighbourhoods and communities.
- Promote the enhancement of the public realm and increased pedestrian use through clear communication and understanding among communities, developers and The City around the coherent and collaborative design of streets, building interfaces and public spaces.

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The Urban Design Review Framework Project

At the direction of Calgary City Council, Administration has undertaken work to explore ways to achieve higher quality building, site and landscape design outcomes through improvements to the urban design review process. The intent of the Urban Design Review Framework project is to identify ways to improve the level of consistency, efficiency and predictability of urban design review within the application review process in order to achieve better design outcomes.

The project has involved research of best practice examples of urban design review in over 30 North American cities, and analysis of which process models might best suit the Calgary regulatory context (see Appendix 3, *Urban Design Review Processes and Practices: Lessons from Other Jurisdictions*). As well, extensive consultation was undertaken involving stakeholders with relevant experience, both internal and external to The City, in design and application review processes. The carefully targeted stakeholder groups included Calgary Planning Commission, the Urban Design Review Panel, members of the development industry with experience of a variety of project scales and types, and community stakeholders. A cross-representative working group was established to assist with this phase, including representatives from each primary stakeholder group.

Three **guiding principles** for the Urban Design Review Framework project emerged early in this work, initially informed through discussion and analysis of results achieved to date since the approval of the *Urban Design Framework* (2011), and reinforced by feedback received through early internal engagement and the best practice research. In order to ensure a clear, effective process which achieves improved design outcomes, it has become clear that the process must:

1. Provide for design input at the most effective point.
Urban design efforts must be coordinated and considered early when improvements can be identified and changes made with a minimum of wasted time, effort and expense.
2. Make the best use of local design expertise.
The certainty of high quality urban design outcomes is greatly enhanced when there is role clarity regarding design review of development applications and it is prioritized appropriately.
3. Support informed design decision-making.
Decision-making bodies need to feel confident that they are consistently receiving the complete, coordinated design review information necessary to make an informed assessment.

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Policy Context

Goal: Make Calgary an attractive, memorable and functional city by recognizing its unique setting and dynamic urban character and creating a legacy of quality public and private developments for future generations. Municipal Development Plan, 2.4.

The 2009 Calgary *Municipal Development Plan* (MDP), aligned with the corresponding *Calgary Transportation Plan* (CTP), both recognize the importance of excellent urban design in the creation of great communities and neighbourhoods and that street configuration and built form together play a critical role in defining the character and visual qualities of an area. These documents set out a collection of policies specific to built form, public realm design, and transportation choices which set a new and higher expectation for the design of both developed and developing areas.

The urban design review portion of all development application reviews employ these policies as the basis for providing guidance, supplemented by more detailed design guidelines for specific areas and typologies. The MDP includes a set of guiding principles, referred to as Thirteen Elements of Urban Design, against which all projects are to be measured:

Urban Design Elements

- **Creativity:** Encourage innovation; model best practices
- **Context:** Optimize built form with respect to mass and spacing of buildings, placement on site, response to adjacent uses, heights and densities
- **Connectivity:** Achieve visual and functional connections between buildings and places; ensure connection to existing and future networks
- **Integration:** Facilitate the conjunction of land-use, built form, landscaping and public realm design
- **Accessibility:** Ensure clear and simple access for all types of users
- **Scale:** Define street edges, ensure heights and building mass respect context; pay attention to scale
- **Safety:** Achieve a sense of comfort and create places that provide a sense of security at all times
- **Quality:** Encourage the use of durable and long lasting materials and details that will provide a legacy rather than a liability
- **Animation:** Encourage active uses; pay attention to details such as signage and way finding; add colour, wit and fun
- **Flexibility:** Develop planning and building concepts which allow adaptation to future uses, new technologies
- **Diversity:** Promote designs accommodating a broad range of users and uses
- **Sustainability:** Be aware of lifecycle costs and ecological footprints; incorporate sustainable practices and materials
- **Orientation:** Provide clear and consistent directional clues for urban navigation

Make Calgary a more beautiful, memorable city with a commitment to excellence in urban design. Municipal Development Plan, 2.4.1

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The *Urban Design Framework* was approved by Council in 2011 as a “collaboration agreement” between all participant business units within the City of Calgary, recognizing their shared role in the design of the public realm. It laid the foundation for improving the public realm in a coordinated and consistent manner while allowing for innovation by bringing together the appropriate groups; coordinating initiatives and aligning policies to forge a coordinated path.

This project builds upon the foundation established in the Urban Design Framework by further refining urban design review processes and practices to enhance clarity and consistency; to define when and how collaborations occur; and to help minimize overlaps and inefficiencies.

The Urban Design Review Framework project is aligned with current Corporate objectives and continues to focus on previously identified issues, including the need for:

- enhancing the understanding of the importance of urban design;
- clarifying responsibility for design decisions;
- improving certainty and predictability in the approach to public realm issues across business units through all levels of applications;
- improving collaboration between design review bodies; and
- clarifying roles and responsibilities of each of the City of Calgary internal groups, including the Urban Design Team and Corporate Planning Applications Group (CPAG), Calgary Planning Commission (CPC), and the external, volunteer Urban Design Review Panel (UDRP) to ensure that Calgary does not lag behind other cities in the quality of its urban environment and in the creativity and quality of its architecture.

Current Urban Design Review Resources

Recognizing the importance of excellence in urban design, Calgary has two specific sources for urban design advice that are accessed during the application process:

The Urban Design Team

This group was created in 2008 with professional architecture and urban design expertise, to provide design guidance and leadership in a number of ways, including:

- Providing ongoing review of applications, including land-use, pre-application, and development permit applications for new projects and major redevelopments city-wide; (Appendix 4:*Local Area Planning & Implementation Specialists Checklist: Urban Design Team*)
- Working with the various business units represented within the Corporate Planning Applications Group (CPAG) process and can address urban design related questions raised during the process and at the time of decision.

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In addition, other urban design related responsibilities of the Urban Design Team include:

- Creating urban design guidelines for various contexts which inform the design review process;
- Providing guidance to various City departments regarding policy and guideline development where urban design content is required;
- Collaborating city-wide on the concept design and project management of public realm, public art, and infrastructure projects which impact the public realm;
- Consulting directly with various external stakeholders, including business and community groups and professionals, to ensure clarity around expectations and objectives regarding public realm design.

The Urban Design Review Panel (UDRP)

This group was established in 2003 to act as a peer review group of experienced design and planning practitioners who provide non-binding, 'best practice' expertise regarding urban design. They are an external volunteer group, nominated by their respective professional associations and appointed by Council, whose current mandate is to:

- Review, from an urban design perspective, new development and major redevelopment proposals within specific areas, including Centre City, Business Improvement Areas (BIA), Transit Oriented Development (TOD) areas or as referred to it by the Development Authority.
- Report directly to Calgary Planning Commission and as such works at 'arms length' from the City approval process. Review comments are forwarded through the Planning File Manager to Calgary Planning Applications Group (CPAG), as well as to the applicant, and form part of the report to Calgary Planning Commission (CPC). Only applications destined to be reviewed by CPC are currently seen by UDRP.

The Urban Design Team currently reviews approximately 120 files of the total 1500 Stream 4 files which go through the CPAG process (including all application types) annually. Of the files seen by Urban Design Team, approximately 30% will be seen by CPC, one half of which will have been reviewed by UDRP, who currently see on average 20 files per year.

Tables 1 and 2, below, summarize CPAG Stream 4 application activity for the years 2014 and 2015. These tables help illustrate that the typical scope of urban design review work city wide encompasses considerably more than those applications reviewed by UDRP and by Calgary Planning Commission. Given that the mandate of the Urban Design Team is city wide while that of UDRP is limited to specific geographic areas, there have been development applications submitted on strategic sites which have not benefitted from the additional expertise and arms length comment of UDRP because of the boundary limits of their terms of reference.

When UDRP was established in 2003, (prior to the establishment of the internal Urban Design Team) the focus of concern over the quality of design and architecture was primarily the Centre City. Since that time it has become clear that the same level of design direction is needed in all areas of the city. The Urban Design Team's mandate was expanded from Centre City to city wide in 2011 to address this, but no corresponding changes have been made to the mandate of UDRP.

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Table 1, Urban Design Review / CPAG Stream 4 Application Summary (2014)

Application Type	Applications received*	Reviewed by Urban Design Team	Reviewed by UDRP	Decision by Development Authority	Decision / Recommend by CPC
Pre-Application Enquiry	886	6	0	n/a	n/a
LOC	130	19	0	n/a	130
DP	474	82	18	448	26
DL	0	0	0	0	0
M-items	23	8	0	n/a	27

Table 2, Urban Design Review / CPAG Stream 4 Application Summary (2015)

Application Type	Applications received*	Reviewed by Urban Design Team	Reviewed by UDRP	Decision by Development Authority	Decision / Recommend by CPC
Pre-Application Enquiry	653	15	0	n/a	n/a
EXPLORE	37	3	0	n/a	n/a
LOC	68	37	0	n/a	91
DP	593	75	15	654	19
DL	8	1	0	0	0
M-items	21	3	0	n/a	16

*applications within Specialist Checklist: Urban Design Team criteria threshold

Calgary Planning Commission (CPC) advises Council with regard to... "the *planning of orderly and economical development and maintaining and improving the quality of the physical environment for human settlement within the City*"... including consideration of Outline Plans, advising Council on Land Use matters, and review and approval of certain development permit applications as a Development Authority. Urban Design recommendations included in planning reports to CPC are taken into account in their deliberations and decisions. As such, it is essential that Urban Design recommendations be clearly and thoroughly presented in order that CPC can be confident that both staff and the Urban Design Review Panel have been appropriately engaged. Current practice is for Urban Design Team comments to be woven into the report's planning text. Urban Design Review Panel recommendations are detailed in a table within reports to CPC which includes columns for the applicant's responding changes or their rationale for refusing to make the recommended changes.

In the past, Commission has periodically become confused over the two review groups and their relative roles and responsibilities, suggesting the need for a clearer reporting format with regard to urban design recommendations overall.

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Urban Design Review Framework Project

Methodology

The Urban Design Review Framework project is composed of three distinct areas of work:

1. A process review and refinement of internal design review procedures in alignment with ongoing work to improve the development application process generally;
2. A best practice review of how other North American cities manage urban design review and approval; and
3. Engagement with relevant industry and community stakeholders

1. Internal Process Review

A review of the Urban Design Team's role in application review has resulted in the identification of a series of internal process improvements which are in various stages of implementation.

- Improvements to internal urban design review processes are being tested, with an emphasis on ensuring that early design guidance, prior to formal development permit application, occurs on key project types or sites in alignment with CPAG processes.
- Embedding urban designers within Community Planning teams to foster ongoing design conversations as part of the day to day planning work to ensure consistent circulation of appropriate applications to the Urban Design Team and to promote ongoing communication of design principles, guidelines and expectations.
- More consistent reporting and early circulation is occurring and will continue to be discussed for all relevant project types.
- Refinements to formatting of all urban design comments within CPAG reviews and reports to ensure clear and transparent recording of design story.
- Formalizing urban design specialist and CPAG circulation criteria, and identified relevant public projects (currently identified as Miscellaneous items, or m-items, with no formal or consistent review process) that should receive urban design review.
- Outreach strategies to internal and external users of City Urban Design services - sharing how the available skills are best used in the process to achieve the desired outcomes – are in development.

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2. Best Practice Research

A 'best practice' review of over 30 North American cities was undertaken. A number of common key theme areas were identified and a comparative analysis was carried out to study differences between the various process models. This work compared Calgary to other cities with regard to the role, mandate, authority, membership and relationship of various bodies involved in the processing of development review applications, including internal design review teams, external design review teams, file managers, decision-making bodies, the overall policy context, and emphasis on early engagement with urban design (see Appendix 3, *Urban Design Review Processes and Practices: Lessons From Other Jurisdictions*). This analysis was synthesized into a number of process scenarios to promote discussion of refinements to the Calgary process, and a summary was shared with all stakeholders as part of the Engagement work.

A number of commonalities were identified through this research:

- Most cities have both a staff Urban Design Team and an external peer review panel.
- Most internal and external expert groups are positioned to clearly establish design expectations early in the application process before major design decisions have been made.
- In most cases, the external panel is advisory to staff, not to a separate decision-making body.
- The Urban Design Team most often manages and collaborates with the external panel in addressing specific issues and concerns.
- Urban design recommendations typically have some measure of authority. Applications moving forward without urban design support are at significant risk of refusal.
- Most decision-making bodies do not include political representation.
- Most decision-making bodies have specific expertise that aligns with their mandate.
- Many cities are currently examining their urban design review processes and referring to the processes of others to improve their position in achieving better urban design outcomes.

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3. Stakeholder Engagement

A working group was formed consisting of 10 members including Planning Strategy Manager, Partnership Services Manager, Urban Design Team Coordinator, Calgary Planning Commission member, Urban Design Review Panel chair and Engage Resource Unit members. This group met bi-weekly between July and December 2016 to explore key issues, offer input on stakeholder engagement, and develop the preliminary proposal, upon which the Recommendations to improve the design review processes at the City of Calgary are based. The stakeholder groups included:

- **Internal/External Experts**
twentytwo stakeholders including representatives of Community Planning and Legislative Services from the City of Calgary, along with industry professionals including architects, planners, developers, and community association representatives.
- **Urban Design Review Panel (UDRP)**
- **Calgary Planning Commission (CPC)**

Next City Advisory Committee:

This Administrative Committee of Council was engaged, at Council's direction, as an advisory group. Project updates were provided five times between April 2016 and February 2017 to discuss project objectives, research highlights and process models from other jurisdictions, the engagement plan, the preliminary analysis of the engagement results and the resulting recommendations.

Engagement Process:

Each group was separately engaged three times from September to December 2016 through a process which included three topic-specific discussion sessions that were consistently facilitated across the four stakeholder groups. Feedback from each session was used to build subsequent sessions and was used as a key component in drafting the final recommendations. The sessions were organized as follows:

- **Session 1:** Captured the unique issues and challenges experienced in the current approval process.
- **Session 2:** Focused on generating ideas about how the process could be improved through a discussion of benefits and challenges in the design review processes of other jurisdictions, and identification of aspects of an 'ideal' development review process.
- **Synthesis:** The Working Group convened a full day workshop session to review all feedback and develop a process that would address the issues and challenges identified by all groups. This development session was also attended by members of the Urban Design Team staff.
- **Session 3:** The preliminary recommendations proposal, prepared by the Working Group and based on input from stakeholders during sessions 1 and 2, was presented for discussion and feedback.

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Stakeholder Engagement Results – Key Themes

The following summarizes the feedback received during all sessions, with each key stakeholder group identified and the common themes that arose summarized. (Detailed Engagement results available upon request.)

Stakeholder Engagement Session 1: Identify Issues and Challenges

The most frequently heard comments from the stakeholder groups demonstrate that the value of urban design review within the City is recognized and supported, and that further refinements are needed to optimize the role of urban design review in achieving great design outcomes.

Stakeholders identified these common issues and challenges:

- urban design review does not always occur at the most effective point(s) in the process;
- urban design review is not given the appropriate emphasis in application discussions given its importance to the outcome;
- the respective roles of the Urban Design Team and the Urban Design Review Panel should be better defined to clarify understanding and improve coordination of their functions; and
- the question of authority for design decisions and when those decisions are best made during the process points to concerns that the Calgary Planning Commission's role in design review is not well understood, impacting applicant confidence in the entire review process.

Stakeholder Engagement Session 2: Compare Scenarios and Generate ideas

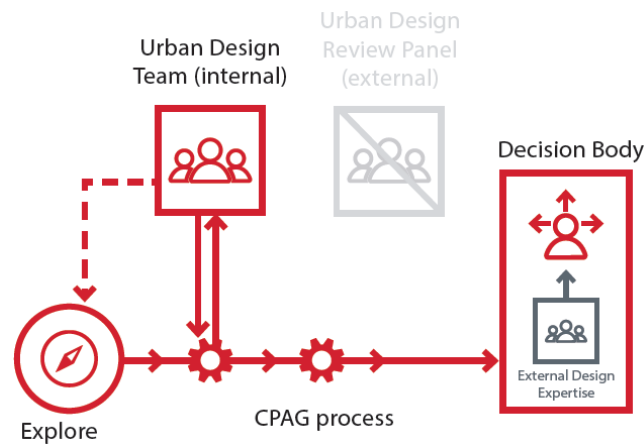
Industry and internal experts reviewed 4 possible scenarios based on design review practice and authority for design decisions in other jurisdictions and were asked to provide comments based on their own experience with the current Calgary process. The responses were typically less focussed on the scenarios themselves than on the issues with the current system and ideas regarding how they might be addressed and the process improved.

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Process Scenarios:

Scenario 1: Embedded Design Expertise

This process model proposed the elimination of a separate external Urban Design Review Panel, instead placing specific industry expertise directly on Calgary Planning Commission in order to ensure that the design expertise is available at the time of final decision-making.



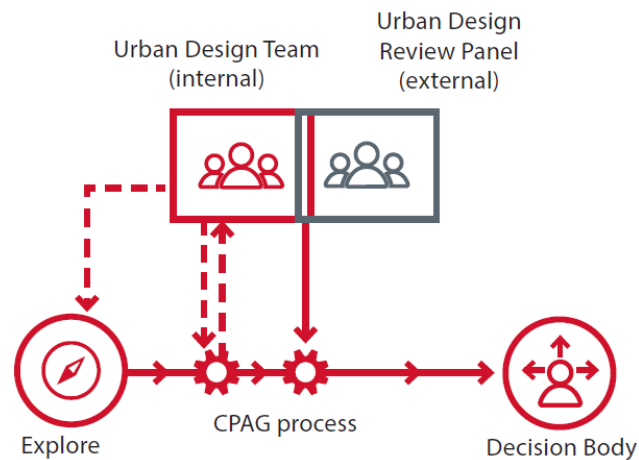
Stakeholder feedback:

There was a strongly negative response to this scenario from all stakeholder groups given its removal of the “arms length” nature of UDRP, and the assumption that, by embedding design expertise onto CPC, there would be greater potential for discussion of design issues to occur at the end of the process- when it is far too late to make revisions without significant negative impact to applicants. The possibility of early review by CPC was suggested to provide initial guidance on specific files of significant scale and impact. Generally, this scenario was seen as lacking the balance provided by an outside professional peer review group while potentially resulting in the greatest risk for applicants of major design changes late in the process.

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Scenario 2: Collaborative Design Expertise

This process model proposed a more collaborative relationship between the internal and external urban design review bodies, allowing for early integration of the external Urban Design Review Panel into the design review process and the possibility of multiple discussion points if appropriate. It suggests the result could be a coordinated design recommendation resulting in a higher level of confidence at the time of decision. This collaborative relationship is apparent in the majority of cities studied, including Portland, Vancouver, Toronto, San Diego, Ottawa, Winnipeg, and Victoria.



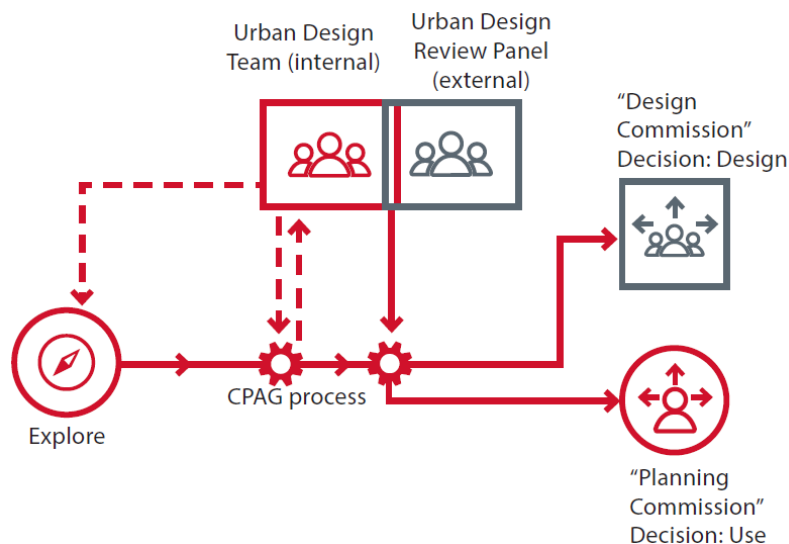
Stakeholder Feedback:

This model drew universally positive responses for its potential of collaboration between the internal and external urban design experts, and its suggestion that the design discussion begin very early in the process. The proposal of a coordinated urban design recommendation from the two review bodies was felt to reduce the chance of conflict and repetition while allowing for joint problem solving. It was also felt that there should be the opportunity for UDRP involvement at the outset of the application process (Pre-application stage or earlier).

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Scenario 3: Collaborative + Distinct Decision-making

Although the Urban Design Review Framework project scope deals primarily with the review portion of the process, and not the final decision-making aspect, there was a strong response from stakeholders that the role, scope and mandate of the decision-making bodies is still a key part of the discussion. As one response, this process model assumes the more collaborative relationship between the internal and external urban design review bodies suggested in the previous scenario and goes a step further to suggest a separation of the current Calgary Planning Commission into two bodies which would deal separately with design (development permit) and land use issues. This would allow each “commission” to be stacked with very specific expertise. This is a model followed by several prominent cities studied, including Portland, Seattle, Vancouver, and Halifax.



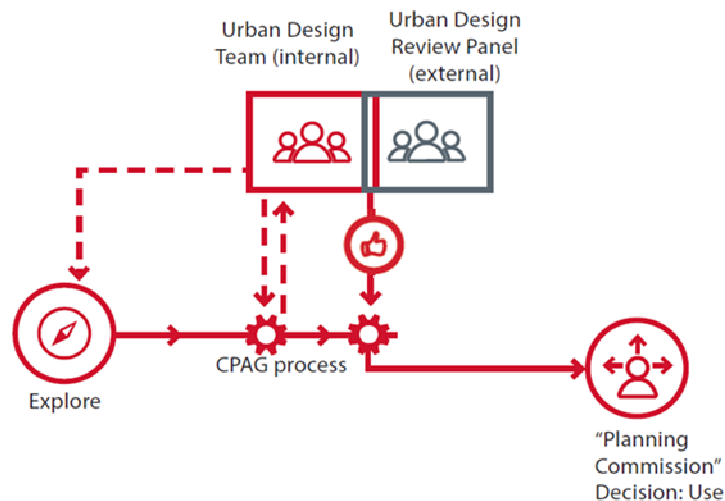
Stakeholder Feedback:

This scenario did not find strong support from any stakeholder group. While it was acknowledged that this could be an effective way to elevate the authority of design recommendations, many saw it as adding an additional layer of complication to the process, and that it could create more confusion between the roles of CPC and UDRP with regard to commenting on design. The concerns with regard to applicant risk expressed over Scenario 1 were re-expressed.

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Scenario 4: Collaborative + Design Authority

Like the previous, this process model retains the more collaborative relationship between the internal and external urban design review bodies. In response to stakeholder concerns over lack of clarity with regard to authority for design recommendations and decisions, it tested the additional idea of an urban design “authority” which could provide an urban design pass/fail for development permit applications prior to the final Planning recommendation. This would ensure that the final recommendation meets all design expert criteria for success prior to moving forward. A supporting design recommendation in order to proceed through the review process to decision is required in Edmonton, Toronto, Montreal, Austin, and Milwaukee.



Stakeholder Feedback:

Stakeholders felt that, although the idea of a design pass/fail would provide more weight to the urban design discussion with applicants, more clarification was needed as to how this would impact the development application generally, how timelines may be affected, and with whom this authority would reside. The idea of getting to a tentative project “refusal” much earlier in the process was generally supported. There were concerns that, in order to be clear with applicants about what might generate a pass or fail, more prescriptive design/policy guidance may be required for all application types.

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Stakeholder Engagement Session 3: Summarize Issues and Review Proposed Actions

The following issues were identified consistently by stakeholders of all four groups during the engagement process, and the following proposed actions were discussed with each group. A complete listing of the stakeholder responses can be provided upon request.

Stakeholder Issue	Proposed Action
The importance of urban design, and urban design review, in achieving better design outcomes is not well appreciated.	Shift the culture to recognize the importance of urban design in achieving great outcomes. (<i>recommendation 1</i>) Ensure that the input of both the Urban Design Team and the Urban Design Review Panel are treated with similar priority to other disciplines within the approvals process. (<i>recommendations 1, 3</i>)
Urban design review does not always occur at the most effective time in the process.	Ensure that initial urban design review occurs early with some form of follow-up. (<i>recommendation 2</i>) Identify which projects (by type, location, scale) should receive multiple design reviews. (<i>recommendations 2, 3</i>) Define industry's role in being accountable for timely design feedback. (<i>recommendation 3</i>) Ensure that current required timelines are maintained if multiple design reviews are implemented. (<i>recommendation 3</i>)
Understanding/communication of internal urban design review processes is inconsistent.	Improve collaboration through Corporate Planning Applications Group (CPAG) process. (<i>recommendation 3</i>) Refine / reinforce circulation criteria to include civic projects such as parks, bridges, etc. (<i>recommendations 1, 3</i>) Reinforce urban design objectives/principles and the need for urban design review through all relevant policy documents. (<i>recommendation 1</i>)
Urban Design Review Panel submissions by applicants do not always provide relevant information to enable effective review.	Create/implement Presentation Materials list appropriate for early urban design review (see <i>Appendix 5 – Revised Terms of Reference</i>). (<i>recommendation 2</i>) Position Urban Design Team to steward application reviews through the UDRP process, including pre-view of submission materials for quality and completeness. (<i>recommendation 3</i>)

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Stakeholder Issue	Proposed Action
	<p>Request that applicants illustrate revisions resulting from design recommendations. <i>(recommendation 1)</i></p> <p>Require DP applicants to be registered architects / landscape architects. <i>(recommendation 1)</i></p>
<p>Roles of Urban Design Team and Urban Design Review Panel are overlapping</p>	<p>Work in collaboration rather than independently, including determining those items that should have additional UDRP or Urban Design Team input. <i>(recommendation 2)</i></p> <p>Review management of UDRP by Urban Design Team rather than planning. <i>(recommendation 3)</i></p> <p>Consolidate urban design comments in reports using a consistent format. <i>(recommendation 3)</i></p> <p>Review the role, scope and membership credentials of UDRP to maximize the panel's effectiveness. <i>(recommendation 4)</i></p>
<p>Design Issues are often given Lower priority in the CPAG process, but figure prominently at Calgary Planning Commission</p>	<p>Need clearer indication of the priority needed to re-inforce urban design recommendations. <i>(recommendation 1)</i></p> <p>Consider tracking/presenting design comments and their resolution clearly, resulting in a design recommendation of "support" or "non-support" that would go forward to the decision-maker. <i>(recommendation 4)</i></p>
<p>Lack of clarity in reporting of urban design recommendations in reviews and reports</p>	<p>Provide clear articulation of design recommendations rather than "weaving in" with general planning discussion. <i>(recommendation 3)</i></p> <p>Address how urban design comments are prioritized within decision-making: should a project move forward to a planning approval if the urban design recommendations are not addressed? Urban design comments would be more clearly represented as a separate specialization within Planning comments. <i>(recommendation 1)</i></p>
<p>The role and scope of CPC is unclear to both applicants and staff with regard to design issues/decisions.</p>	<p>Design discussions at CPC are often too late in the process; ineffective and costly for applicants. <i>(recommendation 4)</i></p> <p>Ensure that recommendations to CPC instill clarity and confidence that a full design discussion has occurred with the appropriate experts at the table to allow for an informed decision. <i>(recommendations 1, 2, 3, 4)</i></p>

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Engagement Results:

The Preferred Scenario - *Collaborative Urban Design Review*

Scenario 2, *Collaborative Design Expertise*, was by far the most strongly supported process model tested during the stakeholder engagement. Analysis of this and other results of both the research and engagement strongly suggest that, as in other cities, Calgary should be moving toward a more collaborative model of urban design review which prioritizes design discussions early in the application process. (see Figure 1, *Process Summary*, following)

The *Collaborative Design Expertise* model encourages both early and iterative discussion which includes both internal staff and external UDRP expertise. Benefits of early and ongoing design involvement were identified by the stakeholders:

- Reduce time delays by identifying and supporting the resolution of complex issues early on in the design process.
- Consistently bring an additional source and mix of design expertise to further complement the skills of the CPAG team.
- Identify project challenges at an early stage, when significant design changes can be made with relative ease and economy.
- Provide decision makers with the confidence that they have the best recommendations on the design aspects of a project.

In order to make the most effective use of the external expertise provided by the Urban Design Review Panel, and to foster a collaborative result, it was felt that the Terms of Reference for the panel should be revised. The intent would be to facilitate earlier involvement and to allow for the possibility of more than one review by the Panel in certain circumstances. As well, the current geographical limits of the UDRP scope (Centre City, TOD areas) do not require their involvement city wide although the significance of an application may suggest it, and this does not align with the city wide role of the Urban Design Team. In a collaborative model, the recommendations of the Panel are adjunct to (not overlapping) the in-depth urban design review conducted by the Urban Design Team and both are consolidated into one, comprehensive urban design submission to the file manager. In the event that there is disagreement between UDRP and other review bodies this would still be indicated in the report.

This scenario will be most effective when applicants request early engagement with the Urban Design Team and Urban Design Review Panel, as this is intended to support the identification and resolution of urban design issues at the start of the design process when they are more easily resolved. The Panel's recommendations are non-statutory, but are nonetheless an important benchmark for the assessment of quality development proposals and should be considered another important tool in creating a quality urban environment.

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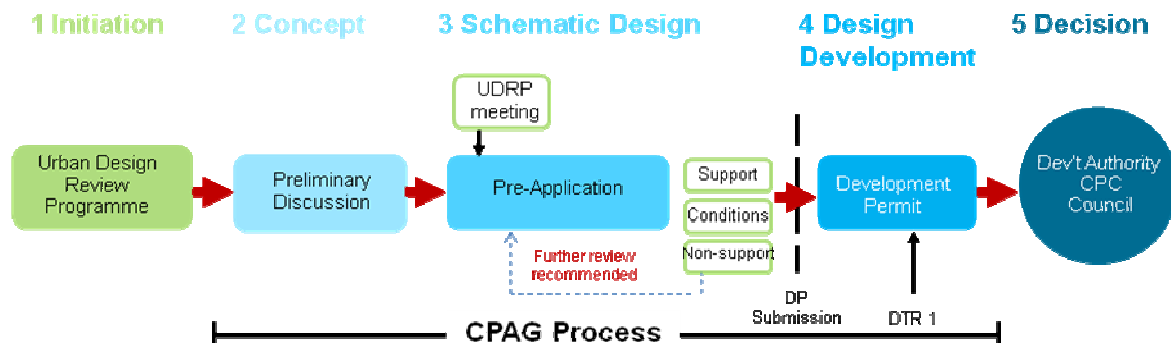
Process Summary

The following graphic summarizes the ideal urban design review process suggested by these recommendations, from initial contact to CPC review of the Planning recommendation, emphasizing early initiation of the design discussion. It is important to stress that, although this process assumes early engagement and a formal Pre-Application, these are not mandatory requirements. They will, however, be strongly and actively encouraged to ensure that design expectations are communicated at the earliest possible time and that design discussions occur at the most effective point in each project's process. Applicants who choose to not take advantage of the early design review will still be subject to review by Urban Design and/or Urban Design Review Panel and be required to meet urban design expectations despite the disadvantages of receiving input later in the application and design processes.

The graphic below aligns the stages of this urban design review process with the typical industry standard project stages of concept design, schematic design and design development to illustrate the intent to ensure that these discussions occur before project designs are fixed. In CPAG process terms, the aim will be to resolve significant urban design issues prior to Detailed Team Review (DTR) #1.

For additional process detail, refer also to Appendix 1, Figure 2, Page 31, *Urban Design Review Process – Step by Step*

Figure 1, Process summary



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Recommendations

How best do we incorporate design review to achieve great outcomes?

Through analysis of the best practice research and the results of the stakeholder engagement process described previously, a number of recurring themes were identified which suggest several general directions for improvement of the urban design review process:

- Nurture a shared understanding amongst all participants in the application review process that urban design issues are of primary importance and must be addressed early.
- Clearly define and consistently apply a design review stream within the CPAG application review process which clarifies the path for design input and defines key decision points, aiming for Detailed Team Review #1 as the end of design review.
- Ensure that the approval process creates trust through clarity and clear design expectations which are communicated at the beginning of the process and reiterated throughout.
- Develop a shared understanding among all participants of the role, scope, and purpose of each of the involved groups (Calgary Planning Commission, Community Planning, Corporate Planning Applications Group, Urban Design Team and Urban Design Review Panel) with regard to urban design review procedures and authority.
- Enhance reporting to contain clearly described, relevant and credible design recommendations which can contribute to a more efficient, informed and predictable process.

The following are more specific recommendations for actions emerging from these general directions and reflecting the guiding principles set out at the initiation of the Urban Design Review Framework project. The four recommendations are summarized below and described in greater detail following.

Recommendation #1

Champion the importance of urban design and urban design review

Recommendation #2

Ensure early and ongoing urban design involvement

Recommendation #3

Refine relationships and processes

Recommendation #4

Consider scope, mandate and structure

Urban Design Review Framework Document

Recommendation #1:

Champion the importance of urban design/urban design review

Direction: Nurture a shared understanding amongst all participants in the application review process that urban design issues are of primary importance and must be addressed early.

Issues:

1. The importance of urban design, and urban design review, in achieving better outcomes is not equally appreciated by all of the participants in the application review process.
2. There is no clear agreement over responsibility for design direction regarding development applications.

Actions:

- Acknowledge the need for champions of urban design at all levels
- Raise the profile of urban design as a discipline within the City of Calgary:
 - Recognize formally the Urban Design Team as the specialist group responsible for coordinating and guiding urban design matters city-wide, as indicated in the *Urban Design Framework*.
 - Integrate the Urban Design Team more fully into the CPAG process as a readily available resource for file managers, fostering frequent dialogue over design issues. (currently underway)
 - Promote the Urban Design Team within the organization to clarify its city wide role and strengthen the understanding that the skills and services it provides are available across Business Units and Departments.
 - Prioritize urban design advocacy, both internally and externally, through frequent engagements on process refinements, new policy or guidelines, and celebration of City of Calgary urban design successes.
 - Ensure the Urban Design Team is adequately resourced to fulfill the expected mandate.
- Broaden the understanding of urban design to highlight its role in connecting and contributing to significant City goals, including notions of social equity, sustainability, healthy city design, aging in place, and accessibility.
- Work to align CPAG standards across relevant business units with urban design objectives.
 - Identify areas of conflict
 - Develop protocol to deal with misalignment

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Recommendation #2:

Ensure early and ongoing urban design involvement

Direction: Ensure that the approval process creates trust through clarity and clear design expectations communicated at the beginning of and re-iterated throughout the process.

Issues:

1. Concern over confusion expressed by Planning staff, by industry and by members of Calgary Planning Commission regarding the respective roles of the different groups involved in urban design review, when each group should be most effectively engaged, and generally what issues are addressed through this review.
2. Agreement that urban design review does not always occur at the most effective time in the process.
3. Applicants and industry have expressed concern over the lack of predictability regarding at what point in the application process design direction is delivered.

Actions:

- Strongly encourage all applications with significant urban design impact to request early engagement with the Urban Design Team and, where appropriate, Urban Design Review Panel, through pre-application process or other early project initiation processes that align with the start of the design process. Benefits include:
 - The clear advantage of receiving information regarding critical policy and urban design guideline expectations as early in the process as possible, including early indications as to where an application may run into approvals issues.
 - The potential timeline advantages created through dealing with issues early in the process which could create problems later if not resolved.
 - The timing advantage gained through early knowledge of potential issues which could require long lead times and multiple participants to resolve.
- Initiate process refinements to facilitate early design discussion, including :
 - Consultation between Planning file managers and the Urban Design Team to decide which projects require an Urban Design Team/Urban Design Review Panel review on a city-wide basis based on clear criteria. (Appendix 5: *Revised Urban Design Review Panel Terms of Reference*.)
 - Work closely with Calgary Approvals Coordination to communicate process changes and to ensure alignment with their work to improve CPAG application review processes.
 - Articulate and communicate the criteria to industry to ensure transparency of expectations, in particular through the provision to applicants of urban design principles and policies as well as UDRP submission expectations at the earliest point.
- Track all applications to determine the split between those seeking pre-application and not and devise ways to target and encourage certain applicants and application types to follow the revised process on future applications.
- Develop metrics to track and analyze the differences in timeline and outcome resulting from early initiation of design review to help illustrate the value of early urban design involvement.

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Recommendation #3: Refine relationships and processes

Direction: A clearly defined and consistently applied process which clarifies the authority for design approvals and defines key decision points, aiming for the first Detailed Team Review as the end of design review.

Issues:

1. Understanding and communication of urban design review processes is inconsistent.
2. Urban Design Review Panel submissions by applicants do not always provide relevant information to enable effective review.
3. Roles of Urban Design Team and Urban Design Review Panel are overlapping; dual sets of comments cause confusion for both applicants and CPC.

Actions:

- Clarify and expand urban design review thresholds:
 - Re-evaluate design review thresholds to ensure that all appropriate development types and site contexts are covered.
 - Clarify thresholds, in collaboration with Community Planning and Calgary Approvals Coordination, to appropriately align with bylaw and policy definitions.
 - Review circulation metrics to ensure clear, easy determination.
 - Develop and initiate training to update staff on threshold changes.
- Establish a collaborative relationship between the Urban Design Team and Urban Design Review Panel:
 - Delegate management of the design review portion of the application process to the Urban Design Team in consultation with the Planning file manager and within CPAG process requirements. Responsibilities would include:
 - Confirmation of the need for UDRP involvement on specific files;
 - Advance review of the information package submitted and confirmation that it meets UDRP requirements;
 - Review, in advance, of applications and identification of issues in particular need of review and of policy or bylaw conflicts and technical responses to ensure a full understanding of issues;
 - Consolidation of Urban Design Team and Urban Design Review Panel comments into one comprehensive urban design submission to the file manager. UDRP assesses the project as “Support”, “Support with Conditions” or “Further Review Required” prior to the first Detailed Team Review.
 - Through the file manager, the Urban Design Team stewards the project for resolution of the design recommendations throughout its evolution in an iterative process.
 - Providing support to the File Manager in presenting and clarifying the urban design recommendations at CPC; a representative of the Urban Design Team to be present for all CPC discussions of applications with urban design content and to represent both Team and UDRP positions.

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- Enhance existing tools and develop new techniques to support the Urban Design Review Panel, which could include, but are not be limited to:
 - Review and revise the format for Urban Design Review Panel meetings to achieve efficiencies and effective use of volunteer expert time and to improve dialogue between The Panel and applicants;
 - Develop/implement an urban design review template to guide review discussions, provide applicants with advance information regarding expectations and to create comment consistency; (underway)
 - Provide more training for panel members and staff with regard to revised processes and other relevant urban design topics;
 - Provide more publicly accessible information online regarding design review process and UDRP submission expectations.
- Strengthen the collaborative relationship between Urban Design Team, Planning File Managers, and CPAG:
 - Re-evaluate and clarify circulation lists and procedures to ensure consistent circulation of all appropriate applications to the Urban Design Team at the initial stage; establish required urban design representative attendance at pre-application sessions; (underway)
 - Urban Design Team to work closely with CPAG File Manager to ensure that urban design priorities are clearly communicated and responses/rationales recorded as early in the process as possible and, at the latest, prior to the first Detailed Team Review; (underway)
 - Review the format and consistency of urban design comments included within CPC and Council reports in order to respond to requests for more clarity and agree to revisions to the report format which specifically highlight urban design comments in a titled section;
 - Reinforce the understanding within Community Planning that the Urban Design Team can be accessed throughout the application process regarding conflict resolution and revision.
 - Develop and implement training programs to communicate to all CPAG participants revisions to the design review process and to reinforce expectations around urban design review.
- Ensure informed decision-making and improve certainty for applicants, with a clear, consistent review process:
 - Provide a clear design “story” and recommendations for consideration by the Approving Authority or CPC to consider before exercising their authority to approve/reject/recommend confidently;
 - Promote a clearer understanding of the Urban Design Team / UDRP roles including a shared understanding of scope and the definition of urban design in this context through enhanced training sessions with Calgary Planning Commission regarding the roles and responsibilities of file managers (Planners), Urban Design Team, Urban Design Review Panel and all CPAG participants, including discussions of design review scope, guidelines and principles.

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Recommendation #4: Review scope, mandate and structure

Direction: Clarification and broad understanding of the role, scope, and purpose of each of the groups involved in application review and decision-making with regard to urban design review procedures and authority.

Issues:

1. Lack of clarity with regard to final responsibility for design decisions results in confusion and erosion of confidence in the process among applicants.
2. The role and scope of Urban Design Review Panel currently limits their input to applications in particular contexts and geographic areas which has resulted in their expertise not being utilized on certain significant sites.
3. Calgary Planning Commission's role with regard to design review and the timing of design recommendations is not clearly or commonly understood; requests by CPC for major design revisions after an application has been through significant design review can create confusion and impacts applicant confidence in the process.

Actions:

Recommendations regarding changes to scope or terms of reference will require Council support and approval:

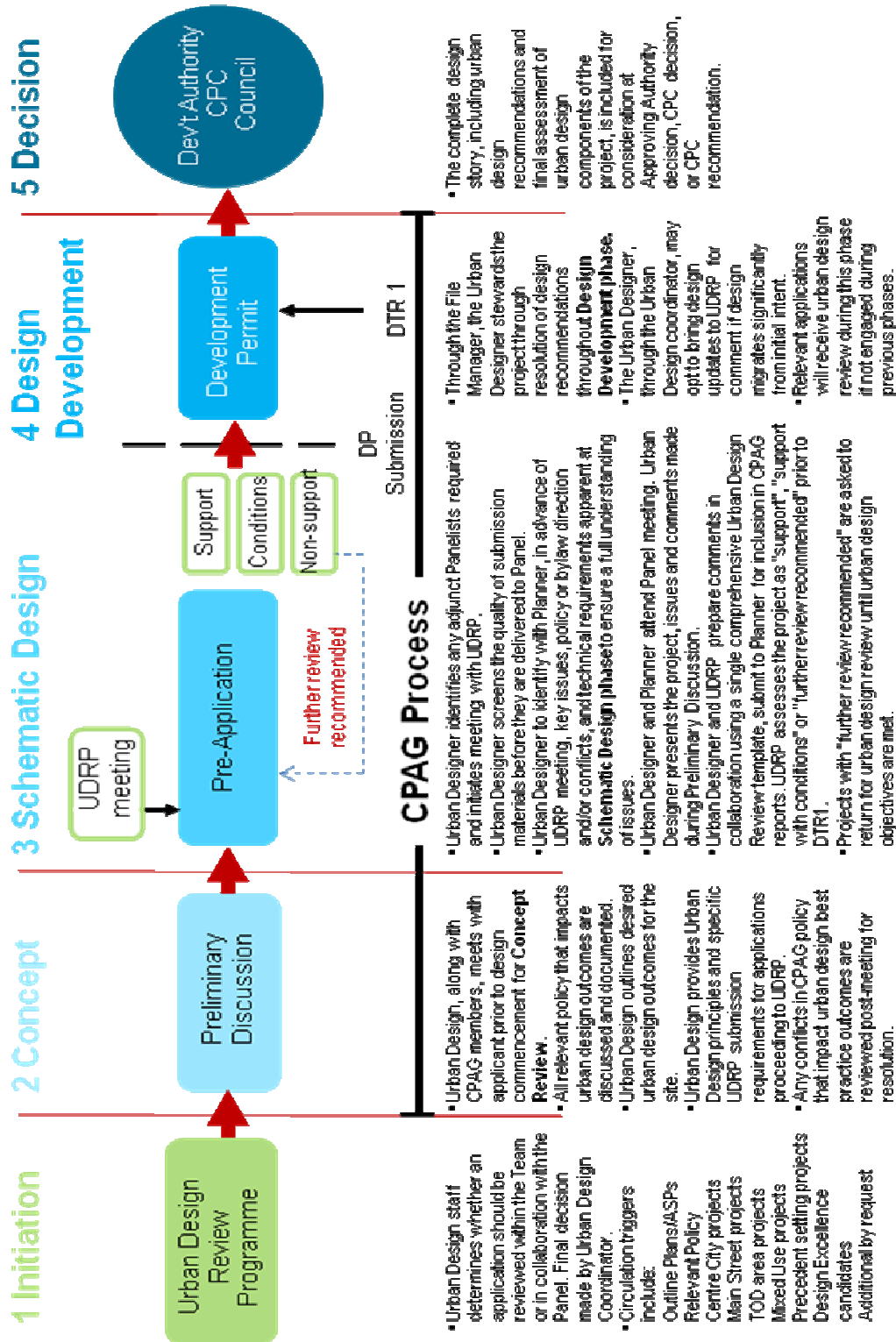
- Work with Calgary Planning Commission and Legislative Services to clarify and communicate to all participants in the application review process the role of CPC with regard to design review to ensure that staff and applicants are providing the best possible information per application type for the purposes of Commission's review.
- Review and revise the Terms of Reference for Urban Design Review Panel (through a Resolution of Council) to:
 - Expand the Panel's geographic scope to include advising on significant applications city-wide;
 - Consider expanding the scope of UDRP to comment more comprehensively on architectural elements in addition to Urban Design;
 - Allow staff to access UDRP as needed on all important sites to align more closely with the work of the Urban Design Team; and
 - Review Urban Design Review Panel composition, nominating criteria and/or membership approval to ensure the full spectrum of relevant expertise is available.

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2017 Implementation Plan

Recommendation	Action	underway	Q2	Q3
Champion the importance of urban design and urban design review	Acknowledge the need for champion of urban design at all levels		√	
	Raise the profile of urban design within the City of Calgary	√		
	Broaden the understanding of urban design	√		
	Work to align CPAG standards across relevant business units with urban design objectives			√
	Initiate outreach program to applicants and consultants to demonstrate the value of urban design and of early design discussion		√	
Ensure early and ongoing urban design involvement	Strongly encourage applicants with significant urban design impact to request early urban design engagement	√		
	Initiate process refinements to facilitate early design discussion	√		
	Track application data to assess the split between those seeking pre-application and those not;			√
	Develop metrics to track and analyze the differences in timeline and outcome resulting from early initiation of design review			√
Refine relationships and processes	Clarify and expand urban design review thresholds	√		
	Establish a collaborative relationship between the Urban Design Team and the Urban Design Review Panel	√		
	Enhance tools and develop techniques to support the Urban Design Review Panel		√	
	Strengthen the relationships between Urban Design Team, Planning File Managers and CPAG	√		
	Embed Urban Designers within Community Planning teams	√		
	Ensure informed decision-making and improve certainty with a clear, consistent review process and reporting	√		
	Develop and deliver learning tools for each of the groups involved in application review with regard to revised Urban Design review processes and information.			√
Consider scope, mandate and structure	Clarify the role of Calgary Planning Commission in design review aspects and to ensure best possible information is provided for decision			√
	Review and revise Terms of Reference for Urban Design Review Panel		√	

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Appendix 2

Frequently asked questions

1. What is the definition of urban design; is it being revised through this project?

Urban Design is a field of professional practice, defined in the *Urban Design Framework* (2011) as “the practice of giving form, shape and character to the arrangement of buildings, of 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.”

- The Calgary Municipal Development Plan includes *Thirteen Elements of Urban Design* which provide principle level guidance as to how ideas about urban design are reflected in policy and applied through application review.
- High quality urban design is achieved through the coordination of all related disciplines, including planning, transportation planning, architecture, engineering, and landscape design to achieve striking and effective results.
- The current practice of urban design review (not the definition itself) is the subject of revision through this project. A more consistently applied design review process, with more clearly defined roles, scope and mandate of the various groups involved in development application review and approval is the intent. As well, a consistently reported and clearly described design story will assist in the achievement of more informed design decisions.

2. Who has authority over urban design decisions?

The responsibility for the provision of informed urban design recommendations which are consistent with City policy rests with the Urban Design Team. As well, the Urban Design Review Panel provides “best practice” professional design advice which augments the internal recommendations. These recommendations, together with many other inputs, are provided through the team-based CPAG application review process which is managed by a Planning file manager who must ultimately provide the collective team recommendation. Decision making authority rests with the Development Authority, with CPC, or with Council, depending on the application type. Urban design decisions must be considered in the context of all the various requirements being placed on a particular site and context. This document includes recommendations that design be given a higher priority during decision making than it has in past application processes.

3. What changes are anticipated for Urban Design Review Panel?

Revising the Terms of Reference for Urban Design Review Panel is recommended to:

- Clarify management of workload and scheduling to involve the Urban Design Team;
- Establish a collaborative relationship with the Urban Design Team staff ;
- Expand geographic scope and range of application types;
- Amend timing of UDRP review to align preliminary design discussions;
- Revise formatting of comments;
- Enable recommendation of “Support”, “support with conditions”, or “non-support – further review recommended”
Expand scope to include aspects of project architecture

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4. Will Urban Design Review Panel have less independence with these changes?

Although a more collaborative relationship between UDRP and city staff is envisioned through these changes, it is important to maintain the “arms length” nature of their role. Part of the collaborative approach will be to ensure that UDRP is more familiar with the policy context in which staff are responding in order to ensure that they are fully aware of a site’s constraints, however, UDRP will still be able to comment on policy or guideline issues if they feel it appropriate.

5. What are the anticipated impacts on development application timelines?

The process revisions under consideration are refinements of existing processes; no negative impact on overall timelines are anticipated, any new procedures are intended to fit within prescribed timelines. The expectation is that when urban design expectations for a site are established early in a project, during industry defined phases of Concept Design and/or Schematic Design, significant time savings can be realized through the Development Permit process. Best practice research supports the time savings result; metrics will be developed to track within Calgary’s approval process.

6. What are the “most effective points in the review process” for urban design input to be provided?

There are many points through the process when design input would be beneficial, however, the recommendation of this project is that beginning the design discussion early has advantages to every application type. Whether at the scale of ASP or Outline Plan, or at the detail of Development Permit, identifying potential issues and clarifying policy and principle expectations can save time for applicants by avoiding surprises later in the process.

7. Will the role, scope and mandate of CPC be revised through this project?

Making specific recommendations about the role, scope and mandate of Calgary Planning Commission is beyond the scope of this project as their role is mandated by the Provincial Government through the Municipal Government Act. The Urban Design Review Framework project has focused on refining processes to ensure the best design recommendations are provided to each decision making body, in a way that clearly shows the urban design issues have been satisfactorily addressed. Through the engagement a number of concerns with the role and mandate of CPC were identified, which this project addresses by emphasising the importance of early design discussion and ensuring that the appropriate expertise is brought to bear on every application. The Urban Design Review Framework Document recommends that the roles of all participants in the design review process be clarified, including that of CPC, and that this be broadly communicated to ensure a shared understanding.

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Appendix 3

Urban design review processes and practices: Lessons from other jurisdictions

Research conducted on urban design review within the development review process across a broad cross section of North American cities shows that most jurisdictions emphasise early design discussions, and connect the internal and external urban design review bodies in order to provide early input and coordinated advice. One of the areas where the models differ from one another is in the decision-making body, in terms of its composition, focus and authority.

A number of key themes were identified:

1. Most cities have both an internal Urban Design Team and an external peer review panel

- Calgary – external Urban Design Review Panel focuses on best practice with related professional expertise; Urban Design Team works within approved Policy and Guideline framework, as a specialist to the Planning Department and independent of the Panel
- Edmonton – external panel works within policy framework with additional bylaw referencing best practice principles; internal team focuses on proactive, strategic urban design advocacy and consultation
- Toronto – Design Review Panel is advisory to planning staff, based on publicly approved criteria
- Vancouver – external Urban Design Panel provides best practice recommendations within policy framework, internal Urban Design Division leads application review
- Portland – external Urban Design Panel provides best practice recommendations within policy framework, is engaged by internal Urban Design Team which focuses on creating urban design strategies and design guidelines
- Seattle – Design Review Board provides best practice recommendations within policy framework, internal team
- Halifax – Design Review Committee provides best practice recommendations within policy framework. Urban Design Team provides urban design expertise to all departments, including mayor and Chief Administrative Officer (city manager)
- Winnipeg – external Urban Design Advisory Committee is distinct from Urban Design Team with distinct mandates
- Ottawa – external Urban Design Review Panel is best practice focussed, internal team
- Victoria – external Advisory Design Panel is best practice focussed, internal team
- San Diego – AIA Urban Design Committee San Diego is an on-call architectural consulting / urban design peer review service for all large-scale projects in downtown and for San Diego's Centre City Development Corporation
- Los Angeles – internal Urban Design Studio and on-call Design Review Boards

2. Most internal and external urban design review groups are positioned to provide either mandatory or “strongly encouraged” early review and comment before major design decisions have been made. i.e. prior to Development Permit application

- Calgary – Urban Design Team contacted at discretion of applicant; optional inclusion in pre-development permit assessments.

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- Edmonton – strongly encouraged pre-application consultation
- Toronto – initial consultation with Design Review Panel takes place in initial functional design stages or during policy development. Second review occurs during detailed design finessing stage.
- Vancouver – Urban Design Panel review early conceptual stages when project first comes to the Department; revisions to the proposed development; substantial changes to approved development
- Portland – mandatory internal urban design review; optional consultation with Design Commission
- Seattle – technical pre-submittal review required for all 3 streams of Design Review. Mandatory design guidance during early design and recommendation phases for projects within Full review stream.
- Halifax – initial inquiry meeting, followed by pre-application meeting
- Winnipeg – mandatory
- Ottawa – mandatory Urban Design Team review, option to include Urban Design Review Panel
- Victoria – no
- Los Angeles – optional preliminary review, mandatory final review. A separate technical review may also be requested.

3. Urban design expectations are established early through a range of administrative tools

- Calgary – design expectations for an application are established at earliest application stage.
- Edmonton – pre-assessment consultation focuses on principle-based recommendations that are clearly defined and elaborated through a series of questions for consideration that guide applicants in explaining how their project addresses relevant principles and best practices.
- Toronto – schematic review during functional design stage is integrated within the development approvals process, applicants are explicitly directed through Design Review Panel Terms of Reference to present how the proposal responds to its surrounding context; advice is based on publicly approved built form and public realm policies within the *Official Plan*.
- Vancouver – Urban Design Panel assists in the creation of urban design policy, articulates urban design issues in pre-application assessment, re-zoning applications and development permit applications.
- Portland – The Portland Plan and other visionary documents focus on people, not land use. Design discussion through the pre-application process is mandatory at early phases, adhering to all applicable Design Guidelines is mandatory.
- Seattle – Development review process includes an Early Design Guidance phase, in which a site plan, context analysis and alternative massing options are presented to the Design Review Board, and a Design Recommendation phase, in which the architectural design developed in response to Early Design Guidance commentary is presented.
- Halifax – Design expectations are included in the Land Use Bylaw, and all aspects must be addressed for applications within the Downtown Halifax area. Decisions rendered on all applications within Downtown Halifax are made by the Design

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Review Committee, with defined Terms of Reference that states specifically what can be addressed.

- Winnipeg – Design expectations are established through early consultation meeting. Urban Design principles are embodied in design guidelines and promoted through city website.
- Ottawa – early meeting with Urban Design team to discuss design expectations is mandatory, UDRP involvement is optional.

4. In most cases, the external panel is advisory to staff rather than to a separate decision-making body

- Calgary – Urban Design Review Panel is advisory to Calgary Planning Commission
- Edmonton – Edmonton Design Committee is advisory to staff
- Toronto – Design Review Panel is advisory to staff
- Vancouver – advises Council and staff, advises Director of Development Permit Board in public meetings on any matter where urban design is involved.
- Portland – Urban Design Panel is advisory to Design Commission
- Seattle – Design Review Board works with Urban Design Team
- Halifax – Design Review Committee works with Urban Design Team
- Winnipeg – Urban Design Advisory Committee is advisory to Director of Planning who makes final decision regarding urban design approval
- Ottawa – Urban Design Review Panel is advisory to Planning Department
- Victoria – Advisory Design Panel, Heritage Advisory Committee, Advisory Planning Commission are advisory to Council and Standing Committee
- Los Angeles – Design Review Board is advisory to Director and Planning Commission

5. The Urban Design Team most often manages and collaborates with the external panel in addressing specific issues and concerns

- Calgary – independent bodies with similar mandates
- Edmonton – review of mandates to find possible synergies between Edmonton Design Committee and Urban Design Team underway
- Toronto – collaborative: staff develops questions on key issues related to the application that they would like the Design Review Panel to address during the project review. Questions are also circulated to the proponent prior to the meeting so that they are able to address these key issues within their presentation. Staff then evaluates the advice of the DRP in context of other considerations.
- Vancouver – collaborative: Urban Design and Development staff can ask for specific direction on contentious or complicated issues, generally prepare 3-5 questions per review. Panel addresses larger issues, staff handles details.
- Portland – internal urban design group works to implement mandatory design guidelines created by Urban Design Panel
- Seattle – collaborative: the planner attends and helps facilitate the meetings of the Design Review Board and documents deliberations, prepares and distributes report
- Halifax – collaborative: Urban design staff prepares report for the Design Review Committee, asks questions, seeks clarification, facilitates Design Review Committee meetings
- Winnipeg – independent bodies with distinct mandates. Architectural review by external Committee only.

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- Ottawa – collaborative: in consultation with management, Urban Design staff and Planner file lead, prepare 4-5 questions for the Urban Design Review Panel to address
- Victoria – collaborative
- Pittsburgh – Contextual Design Advisory Panel discussion is limited to the broad targets established by City Planning design staff in order to provide consistency to the process and benchmarks to evaluate progress, holds workshop-style meetings with applicant.

6. In many places, urban design recommendations have some measure of authority. Applications moving forward without Urban Design support are at significant risk of refusal.

- Calgary – Urban design recommendations are taken into consideration, written recommendations and applicant's response are included in report to Planning Commission.
- Edmonton – Edmonton Design Committee votes to support, not support or makes recommendations for improvements. An application cannot move forward to decision until EDC is satisfied.
- Toronto – Design Review Panel votes to recommend an application is of sufficient quality to proceed without major changes or identifies elements of sufficient significance to warrant re-design. The vote only relates to the design issues discussed during the review.
- Vancouver – Chair of Urban Design Panel is present at, and provides design opinion to, the Development Permit Board which is the decision making body for development permit applications with significant impact or community controversy.
- Portland – Policy context prioritizes people, not land use. Early design discussion is mandatory for certain application types. Implementation of Design Guidelines is mandatory.
- Seattle – If the recommendation made by the Design Review Board is offered by at least 4 members it must be adopted.
- Halifax – Design Review Committee is the Approving Authority for projects within defined area and for all bonusing items. Council does not get involved unless there is an appeal, or an amendment is requested. Note – amendments are rare because Council has squarely committed to supporting this process.
- Winnipeg – Urban Design Advisory Committee is advisory to Director of Planning who makes final decision regarding urban design approval.
- Ottawa – City enacted Design Bylaw; Urban Design Review Panel's written recommendations and applicant's response are included in report to Planning Commission.
- Victoria – Advisory Design Panel is advises Council and Standing Committee on the design merits of applications presented to them.
- Montreal – Urban Planning Advisory Committee is not a decision making body, but the legislator has established UPAC's support as a prerequisite for approval.
- Milwaukee - Architectural Review Board issues Certificate of Appropriateness, which is one requirement for a project to receive a Building Permit

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7. Most decision-making bodies do not include political representation

- Calgary – Commission composed of elected officials, citizen members, General Managers.
- Edmonton – Development Officer makes decisions for all conforming applications.
- Toronto – City Council for "complex" applications, through public meeting at Community Council and/or Planning and Growth Management Committee. Community Council is 28 Councillor members organized into 4 panels corresponding to geographic boundaries.
- Vancouver – Development Permit Board - 4 Sr Staff, Director of Development Services, General Manager of Engineering Services, Deputy City Manager, Director of Planning.
- Portland – Commission members may not hold public elected office
- Seattle – Commission members may not hold public elected office
- Halifax – Design Review Committee is approving authority for projects within defined area and bonusing items. Community Council, composed entirely of elected officials, is approving authority for projects outside of geographic boundary.
- Winnipeg – Director of Planning makes final decision regarding urban design approval, overall decision rendered by Standing Policy Committee of Council composed entirely of elected officials
- Ottawa – Committee or Council, depending on application type. Both are composed entirely of elected officials.
- Victoria – City Council
- Chicago – Chicago Plan Commission is 11 aldermen and 10 appointees. Applications are introduced at Council at intake, referred to Committee on Zoning for review, return for decision as required.

8. Most decision-making bodies have specific expertise that aligns with their mandate

- Calgary – Development Authority makes decisions on applications to a certain threshold, Planning Commission and Council are Approving Authority on applications exceeding that threshold.
- Edmonton – Edmonton Design Committee must be satisfied before application moves to decision by Development Officer or Executive Committee of Council for relaxations that trigger re-zoning. Reports to Council include full design story and recommendation of each business unit, including trade-offs made resulting in final project.
- Toronto – Design Review Panel 12 members with minimum 15 years relevant professional experience
- Vancouver – Development Permit Board hears recommendations of DP Advisory Panel at decision meetings (Advisory Panel membership: Chairs of Urban Design Panel and Heritage Commission, 2 development industry professionals, 1 design professional, 4 members of general public)
- Portland – distinct Design, Planning and Historic Landmarks Commissions. Represent Public with experience in design, engineering, finance, construction, construction management or land development.
- Seattle – Design Commission gives advice through all stages of design and project execution on all capital projects; distinct Design and Planning Commissions

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- Halifax – Design Review Committee is approving authority for projects within defined area. Members must hold professional degree in their respective fields; however a license is not required.
- Winnipeg –
- Ottawa – Committee, Council
- Victoria – City Council
- Austin - Design Commission provides advisory recommendations on architectural excellence to the City Council. Completes review before Planning or Zoning Commission takes final action

9. Many cities are currently examining their Urban Design review processes and referring to the processes of others to improve their position in achieving better urban design outcomes.

- Calgary – in progress, initiated 2015
- Edmonton – Planning and Design Section created within Urban Planning and Environment Branch 2014. Urban Design Framework published November 2015
- Toronto – revised 2011 following 2 year pilot
- Vancouver – revised 2013
- Portland – 2014
- Seattle – Design Review Program Improvements recommended March 2016
- Halifax – Design Review Committee with approving authority established 2009
- Winnipeg – 2004
- Ottawa – most recent structural changes to Urban Design Review Panel 2014
- Victoria – design thresholds currently under review

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Appendix 4

Local Area Planning & Implementation Specialists checklist: Urban Design Team
Approved January 5, 2016

Required for Pre-applications/Explore, Development Permits, Development Liaison, Land Use Amendment Applications and Outline Plans:

1. All developments being referred to CPC for information or decision
2. All developments located within an MDP defined TOD area, Centre City, Urban Corridor, Neighbourhood Corridor, Activity Centre, Entranceway or Gateway
3. All residential buildings 4 storeys and above with 20 or more dwelling units or sleeping accommodation units.
4. All projects that include a live-work use.
5. All projects of significant complexity where urban design input is desired.