

**DRAFT – URBAN DESIGN REVIEW PANEL  
REVISED TERMS OF REFERENCE AND PROTOCOL**

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**Revised Terms of Reference and Protocol**

*Note: the following is offered as a draft shell which reflects the recommendations contained within this document, for early engagement and discussion with stakeholders. It includes occasional commentary with regard to design panel configurations and procedures in other cities.*

**Benefits of the Urban Design Review Panel**

The Urban Design Review Panel process provides independent peer review from experienced practitioners in a variety of relevant professional disciplines, assisting Council in fulfilling Calgary's Municipal Development Plan goal of good urban design. Good urban design processes and outcomes add economic value to proposals over the lifetime of a project, as well as create positive spin-offs associated with successful and attractive streets and neighbourhoods.

The Panel process has the potential to minimise time delays by identifying and supporting the resolution of complex issues early on in the design process. Coupled with a focus on preliminary discussions at Concept Development phase by the Urban Design Team prior to formal development permit application, the urban design review process is structured to provide consistent recommendations, early identification of project challenges, and coordination of CPAG departments for resolution of inter-departmental conflicts where necessary.

Benefits of design panels include:

- Bringing an additional source and mix of design expertise to further complement the skills of the project team;
- Raising the profile of urban design by supporting Council, industry and communities in requiring more attention to design quality as it benefits the public realm;
- Providing decision makers with the confidence that they have the best recommendations on the design aspects of a project;
- Identifying project challenges at an early stage, when significant design changes can be made with relative ease and economy;
- Putting projects in perspective of the larger, city-wide picture;
- Offering opportunities to those observing design review for continued learning, especially how to assess good design.

### **Purpose of the Urban Design Review Panel**

The Urban Design Review Panel is an independent urban design advisory body which provides staff, the applicant and Calgary Planning Commission with professional design advice on public and private developments, recognizing the City's unique setting and dynamic urban character. The Panel's objective is to promote design excellence by focussing on the urban design issues of an application through the complex relationship between streets, buildings and the spaces between them, while responding to use, context and climate.

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

- Preliminary discussions with developers and City staff at Concept Development phase, preferably during preliminary project discussions, Land Use and Outline Plan permit phases, on large, complex or significant Plans, policies or development proposals, focusing on identifying issues for improvement to achieve better design outcomes;
- Subsequent review and recommendations if a development 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 Approving Authority, Planning Commission or Council on the design merits or challenges of development proposals brought forward for decision;
- Recommendations to staff and Planning Commission on proposed policy, outline plans, area structure plans and other tools that have an urban design impact and will shape the development of significant areas of the city.

Design considerations by the Panel are intended to encourage best practice approaches to development, specific to a site's context, that support the goals of the Municipal Development Plan. Recommendations from the Panel are to assist the applicant and their design team by identifying areas for improvement to support the realization of better design outcomes.

The recommendations of the Panel are in addition to the in-depth urban design review conducted by the Urban Design Team as part of the application review process, and consolidated into one, comprehensive urban design submission to the file manager for inclusion in reports the applicant or to the Approving Authority for decision, or Calgary Planning Commission for decision or recommendation to Council.

During the preliminary stages of the CPAG process, involvement of the Panel is voluntary, as are all pre-Development Permit processes. However, it is strongly recommended to applicants to request early engagement with the Urban Design Team and Urban Design Review Panel as it 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 for the benefit of creating a quality urban environment.

## Urban Design Principles

The Municipal Development Plan includes a set of guiding urban design principles, referred to as Thirteen Elements of Urban Design, which inform city policy and against which all project applications are to be measured. Through these urban design principles, UDRP will engage in a collaborative process with applicants and city staff that generates discussion and design recommendations focused on achieving excellent design outcomes. These principles should not be interpreted as a checklist; rather that UDRP will review how each project addresses the principles within the context of best practices of contemporary urban design.

### Thirteen Elements of Urban Design:

- **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

### Urban Design Review Panel Composition

The Urban Design Review Panel is comprised of 9 members (12 full + 1 adjunct in Toronto, 13 in Vancouver) appointed by Council on a volunteer basis for a term of 1 year (most places are 2 years).

- 4 architect members of the Alberta Association of Architects
- 2 members of the Alberta Association of Landscape Architects
- 1 member of the Association of professional Engineers, Geologists and Geophysicists of Alberta
- 2 members of the Canadian Institute of planners with an urban design background
- 1 Recognized Heritage Conservation Specialist (adjunct)

- 1 member representing art professionals
- Additional expertise in high rise or commercial development?

Any 3 (6 in Toronto, 5 in Mississauga) members can constitute a quorum. No member of Council or Administration may be appointed to the panel. The members of the panel appoint, from amongst their members, a Chairperson and Deputy chair. Adjunct members will participate in the review of items related to their expertise.

(Mississauga states: The Panel members will be selected by the Urban Design Coordinator from a pool of available members for each meeting, based on their availability, potential conflict of interests and the scope of the project being evaluated.)

### **Qualifications**

Criteria for Panel nomination includes a minimum of x (15 in Toronto) years of relevant professional expertise.

### **Duties**

- To regularly attend meetings of the Urban Design Review Panel. These meetings will be held every 2 weeks throughout the year and special meetings may be convened when necessary. The meetings are normally held on Wednesdays commencing at 1:30 pm.
- To conduct a thorough review of submission materials prior to each Panel meeting.
- To provide the Chair with impartial, professional advice on the proposed design or policy affecting the City's physical environment.
- To assist the Planning Department in the formulation of design policy and criteria.
- To ensure that the efforts to improve the quality of urban design through application review are achieved within the context of an effective and timely process.

Advice should take into account the planning and physical context of the proposal, with consideration of council approved policies, including the Municipal Development Plan and other documentation where available (e.g. Outline Plans, urban design guidelines, streetscape studies).

In providing recommendations, the Panellist will place an emphasis upon the quality of the design and refrain from expressing subjective views regarding style or taste. If Conflict of Interest arises, the identified panel member must excuse him/herself from the meeting.

Members of the Urban Design Review Panel will resist lobbying by the applicants and refrain from making professional overtures to the clients of applicants.

### **Scope of Work**

The scope and nature of the criteria used may vary with the size or special circumstances of a project. The intent is not to judge the design or propose solutions in any form but rather to articulate the issues. It is incumbent upon the applicant to provide clarifications and solutions.

The Urban Design Team determines whether an application should be reviewed by the Panel, with the final decision by Urban Design Coordinator, based on the following criteria:

### **Circulation Criteria**

- All development, streetscape, parks and infrastructure projects in Centre City
- Area Structure Plans and Outline Plans
- All development on identified Main Streets
- All development in TOD areas
- All developments in Gateway locations
- All precedent setting projects
- All projects endeavouring to achieve Design Excellence bonusing
- All projects that will be referred to CPC for recommendation or decision
- Any projects at the discretion of Urban Design Team / “City Architect”
- New or revised policy with urban design implications
- Public projects city-wide with urban design impact, at the discretion of the “City Architect”

### **Meeting Procedure**

The objectives of these recommended procedures are to:

- Establish and help ensure a predictably consistent and transparent application review process;
- Help ensure a fair, effective and open forum for design review;
- Encourage well-documented commentary detailing issues discussed; and
- Enable applicants to know in advance the principles against which their application will be evaluated.

For each item under consideration, the following procedures should be in place:

1. The Planner or Urban Design Team member will present, in the presence of the applicant, the general scheme and outline the City’s reactions and concerns with reference to location, context, background, bylaw, policy and applicable urban design guidelines.
2. Prior to further detailed examination of the display materials, the UDRP may ask further questions of the applicant.
3. The Chair will ask each Panel member to speak and give their comments based on the merits of the project and to give advice on the specific questions raised. The Chair will formulate the various comments to develop a succinct, final recommendation and accompanying comments for the project.
4. The final minutes will be forwarded to the Urban Design Team for inclusion in formal CPAG comments.
5. One of the Panel recommendations could be that the proponent return to a future Panel meeting with the recommendations and comments addressed.

6. It will be incumbent on the applicant to advise the Urban Design Team of the actions taken as a result of these recommendations at subsequent stages of the application review process.

### **Record of Meetings**

Meetings of the Urban Design Review Panel are minuted by Administration. The Panel Chair also provides a summary of the Panel's key points of consensus; these points are included within the minutes where they become part of the public record of that meeting.

### **Presentation Materials**

Project presentation material must be submitted not less than 2 weeks in advance of the meeting, to the satisfaction of the Urban Design coordinator.

The presentation material should provide enough detail to be informative to the Panel members. This should include the following minimum information:

- Project brief
- Nature of the site and the project
- Key plan, context plan and site analysis showing relation of the site to surroundings, public transport and street and path networks
- Historical evolution analysis (if applicable)
- Description of how each of the urban design elements listed above is addressed through the proposal.

The following plan information for proposals to UDRP is required:

16 complete sets of plans in 11x17" format, folded and stapled, which shall include the following in each package:

1. Site plan at a legible scale including locations of adjacent buildings, road classification of adjacent thoroughfares.
2. Detailed landscaping plan indicating planting, paving materials, street furniture, lighting, proposed public art locations if applicable. A cross-section landscape detail should also be provided to identify the landscape relationship between the site and street grades.
3. Main floor plan and other sample floor plans as relevant to public realm, including dimensions of all public sidewalks, arcades and terrace elevations. A parking plan should be provided if it is at grade or is incorporated within the public realm.
4. Elevations – all 4 sides of the building. Enlarged elevation drawings of the pedestrian realm.
5. Coloured renderings of the building.
6. Aerial photos of the site and context.
7. Complete context photos and context map.
8. Streetscape showing the adjacent properties and how the property fits in.
9. Street level perspective renderings clearly illustrating the building's interface with the pedestrian realm/public space.
10. Detailed description, images and samples of the proposed cladding materials including all glazing types.

11. Three dimensional drawings to indicate selected views of the project.
12. A full scale set of Development Permit plans to be supplied to the panel prior to the presentation.
13. Project data sheet.