

Calgary



URBAN DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

REPORT TO COUNCIL

May 3rd, 2021

CITY OF CALGARY
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1. INTRODUCTION

1c - Mandate of the Urban Design Review Panel

Per Terms of Reference (TOR)

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



1. INTRODUCTION

1c - Mandate of the Urban Design Review Panel

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- The Panel's mandate is to **provide independent, professional design advice**, from an urban design and architecture perspective, on public and private development and major redevelopment proposals through pre-application enquiries, development permit applications, and development liaisons on sites citywide with significant impact on the public realm.
- Comments from the Panel are **provided as peer review** expert advice, directed to staff, the applicant and the development authority, and intended to encourage best practice approaches to development specific to a site's context that support the goals of the Municipal Development Plan. Advice from the Panel is to assist the applicant and their design team by **identifying areas for improvement to support the realization of better design outcomes**.



2. PANEL OVERVIEW & WORKLOAD

1a - Recent Policy Change & Feedback

-In addition to the typical Develop Permit applications, the Panel continues to review PEs and Land Use Amendments, as per the Terms of Reference. Early review of projects continues to be critical for the review to have impact on the development.

-The Panel continues to review electronic submissions which has reduced both proponent costs and the environmental impact, as well as provided a smoother transition to COVID-19 implications.

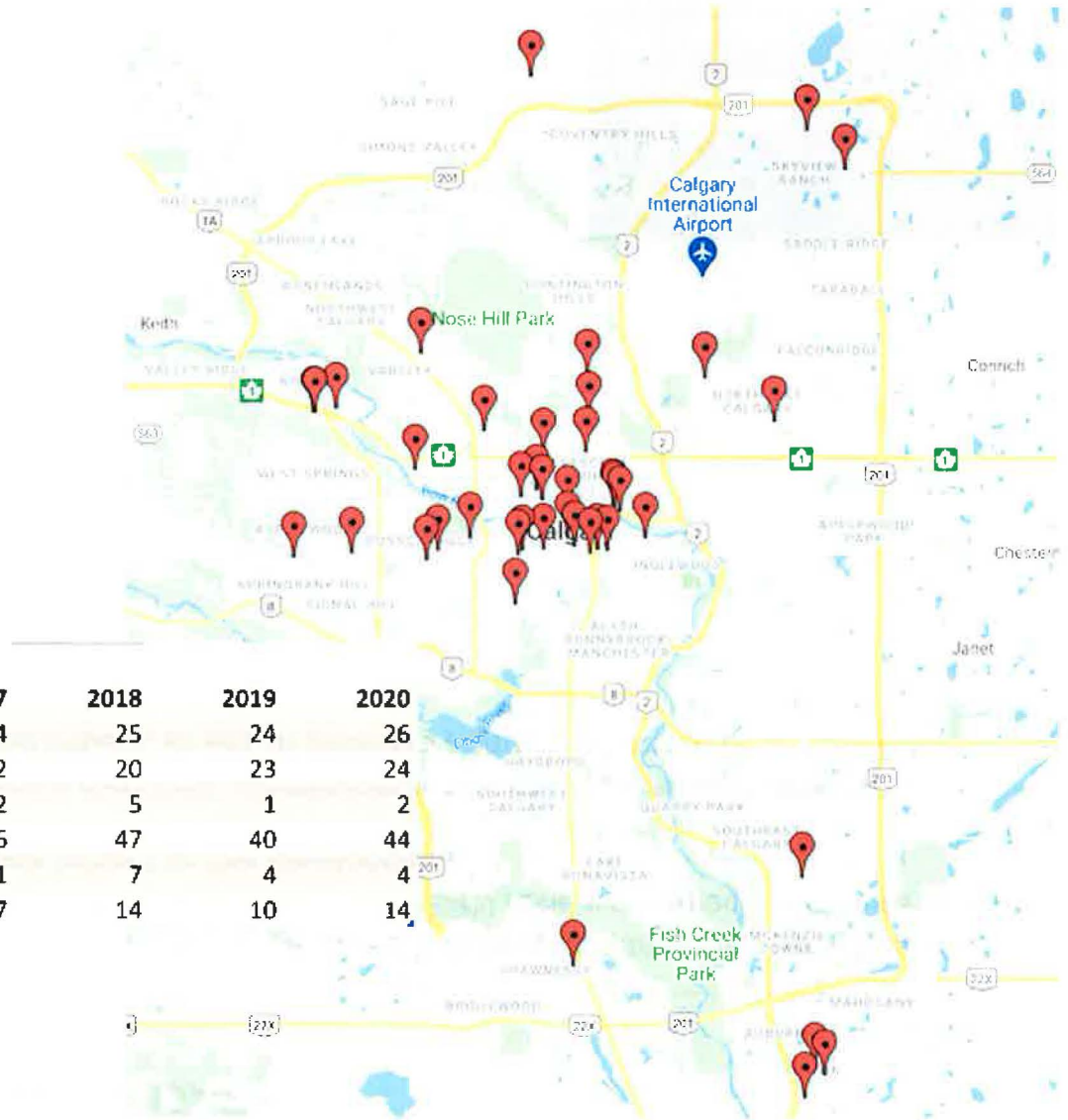




2. PANEL OVERVIEW & WORKLOAD

2b - Summary of Work

- The chart outlines the UDRP activities itemized by meeting type comparing yearly statistics from 2017 to 2020. The map locates all the applications that were reviewed in 2020.



UDRP Statistics	2017	2018	2019	2020
UDRP Meetings Held	24	25	24	26
Regular Scheduled Sessions	22	20	23	24
Special Sessions	2	5	1	2
Projects Reviewed	46	47	40	44
Land Use Amendments	1	7	4	4
Pre-Application/Schematic Review	7	14	10	14

2. PANEL OVERVIEW & WORKLOAD

2c - Outline of Work Plan

- The Panel continues to meet every two weeks (pending on applicant submissions and application review timelines). COVID-19 did not interrupt scheduled review sessions as the Panel immediately transitioned to Teams. While this change took some adjustment for all participants, it has proven to still be effective in the review of applications.
- Meeting format begins with approximately thirty minutes of general administrative items, followed by review of one, two or three submissions per session.
- Each individual presentation and Panel review lasts one hour in duration. The Panel consolidates comments verbalized during the meeting, distributes draft internally for member review and comment, required revisions/additions are integrated and then forwarded to Administration for circulation to the applicants. Final comments are completed within one week after the presentation review session.
- Timing to revert the current Microsoft Teams format back to in-person meetings is unknown and will only occur when it is safe and advisable to do so. Until that time, the Panel continues to function in the adjusted format and meet the defined UDRP objectives.



2. PANEL OVERVIEW & WORKLOAD

2d - Challenges + Solutions for Mandate Fulfillment

Submission Quality

Challenge: Submission packages presented to the Panel vary in completeness and quality dramatically. Although the Panel welcomes the opportunity to review projects early in their development some packages do not have enough information to inform the discussion.

Solution: UDRP is working with administration for consistency. To be noted, PE applications are granted greater flexibility of content to encourage early engagement.

Feedback

Challenge: There is no formal feedback loop between UDRP and CPC or Council. UDRP has no information as to the results of the applications other than viewing all CPC and Council meetings. Without feedback, it is difficult to understand how effective the UDRP comments are at improving results.

Solution: UDRP inquires about specific applications and outcomes, which are reported back to the Panel. Moving forward, a greater effort to download CPC and Council discussions/decisions on projects reviewed by UDRP should be regularly scheduled. This format adjustment to the administrative portion of UDRP sessions is being discussed and is anticipated for immediate implementation.

Takeaway: An annual report or survey of CPC/Council as to whether UDRP comments are referenced, relevant, informative, etc. could be formally implemented to ensure the current process is effective and resulting outcomes of Panel volunteer time are leveraged to the greatest extent possible.



3. OTHER INFORMATION

3a - Urban Design Elements

- One of seven goals in Calgary's Municipal Development Plan is to "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." In addition to a number of urban design objectives, the Municipal Development Plan includes a set of guiding urban design principles that contribute to achieving excellent design outcomes, which inform city policy, establish urban design expectations on all projects across the city, and create the framework against which the urban design aspects of all project applications will be measured.
- The Panel is advising staff on a revision to the Urban Design Elements that are used as a guide for Urban Design Review. The revisions are intended to clarify the intent and meaning of the Elements while making them more easily applicable in the evaluation of applications as part of the design review process. A revised Quality Evaluation Template will reflect the changes to the Elements.



3. OTHER INFORMATION

3b - Panel Selection Process

- The Co-chairs of the Panel worked with staff to develop a UDRP Skills Matrix to assist in the selection process for new Panel members. The matrix includes professional affiliations and specialized skills. Selection of panel members took into consideration gender balance and diversity to ensure a wide representation. A challenge to achieving diversity on the Panel is that applicants are not given the opportunity to self-identify as part of the application process.
- The addition of Katherine Robinson and Anna Lawrence as new Panel members will contribute to achieving greater gender balance. Staggered terms will allow the panel to continue to address gender balance and diversity over time without compromising the ongoing effectiveness of the panel.



3. OTHER INFORMATION

3c - UDRP In-Person Tour

- City Staff arranged a (socially distanced) tour of the Rosedale Affordable Modular Housing for UDRP members. Rosedale Highlights is managed by Calgary Housing Company and is comprised of 16 new homes that will provide housing stability for up to 50 Calgarians. These units are unique in that they have been built as prefabricated buildings offsite and delivered complete to the site at nighttime by a crane over the 16 Avenue sound wall, then completed in place with interior finishing, exterior cladding and landscaping.



4. IMPACT OF COVID-19

4a - Summary of Format & Impact Details

- Noted in last year's Report to Council, COVID-19 did not interrupt scheduled review sessions through March and April 2020, as the Panel immediately transitioned to a virtual platform being implemented.
- The Urban Design Review Panel continues to meet and review presentations, via Microsoft Teams. Distribution of electronic submissions remains consistent factor in preparation. Format, meeting process, and timelines for deliverables remain consistent in delivery of UDRP review and comments.



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QUESTIONS?

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