

Urban Design Review Protocol

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1. Introduction

1.1 *Benefits of Urban Design Review*

The Urban Design Review Panel (the Panel) provides independent peer review by practitioners experienced in a variety of relevant professional disciplines. This input contributes to the application review process by contributing additional expert opinion to the design discussion. In doing so, it assists in fulfilling Council's Municipal Development Plan goal of achieving urban design excellence through encouraging better urban design outcomes which add significant value to the city in economic, social, and aesthetic terms.

The Panel process has the potential to minimise time delays by identifying and supporting the resolution of complex issues early in the design process. Together with the option of discussions with City Wide Urban Design beginning as early as the concept design stage, the urban design review process is structured to provide for early identification of project challenges and expectations and consistent recommendations throughout the process.

Benefits of Urban Design Review Panels include:

- Bringing an additional source of design expertise to further complement the skills of the project team.
- Providing “arms length”, best practice design review from an external professional perspective.
- 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 thorough, thoughtful, and credible, 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 involved in application review for continued learning, especially how to assess good design.

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2. 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:

2.1 City Wide Urban Design

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;
- 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.

In addition, other urban design related responsibilities of City Wide Urban Design 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.

2.2 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 approved 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.

This document, together with the revised Terms of Reference, introduces changes to the Urban Design Review Panel mandate to expand their scope and include a broader range of application types and geographic areas from which project circulations may be drawn.

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3. Elements of Urban Design

Section 2.4 of the Municipal Development Plan includes a set of guiding urban design principles that contribute to achieving excellent design outcomes, referred to as *Thirteen Elements of Urban Design*, which inform city policy and against which all project applications are to be measured.

The Urban Design Review Panel will review how each project addresses these principles within the context of best practices of contemporary urban design.

3.1 *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

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4. Review by Urban Design Review Panel

The Chief Urban Designer (or designate) will be responsible, in collaboration with the Planning File Manager and the applicant, for determining which applications are referred to the Panel for review. The following application types may be referred to the Panel for review. In some cases the capacity and availability of UDRP may limit applications referred to those of higher complexity and impact.

4.1 Application Types

Pre-application enquiries, development permit applications, development liaisons, and Direct Control land use amendment applications with design content that meet any of the following criteria:

- Applications that will result in a development permit referral to CPC for information, recommendation or decision.
- Development applications located within a defined TOD area, (both BRT and LRT), Main Street area, or Centre City.
- All projects applying for the Exceptional Design bonus.
- City of Calgary capital projects, including significant buildings, parks and open space development, streetscape improvement projects and infrastructure projects city-wide with significant urban design impact, excluding maintenance projects.
- Development applications located on prominent sites in gateway locations with significant urban design content or impact.
- New or revised City developed urban design guidelines and urban design components of City policies and guidelines.

Additional projects of significant complexity may be referred to the Urban Design Review Panel at the request of the Planning File Manager and the discretion of the Chief Urban Designer or designate and depending on the capacity of the Panel at the time.

Applicants may request a review with Urban Design Review Panel even if their project is not deemed to meet the criteria for review. In these cases the capacity and workload of Urban Design Review panel will be taken into account and a priority assigned. Applicants should be aware that such requests may take longer to accommodate.

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5. Panel Review Process

The objective of the recommended process is to:

- Establish and help ensure a consistently applied and transparent design review process for specific application types.
- Ensure clearly stated and well-documented commentary detailing issues discussed.
- Enable applicants to know as early in the process as possible the design principles and expectations against which their application will be evaluated.

5.1 Administration Roles and Responsibilities

Screening

City Wide Urban Design:

- Through the Chief Urban Designer, makes the final decision regarding urban design circulation.
- By the initial CPAG Team Review meeting, the Urban Designer assigned to the file shall advise the File Manager of the decision and available dates for the Panel if required. The File Manager will inform the applicant of the Urban Design decision, finalize the Panel date and inform the appropriate people.

Communication

City Wide Urban Design:

- Provides urban design principles and establishes urban design expectations to the Planning File Manager and the applicant during preliminary discussion.
- Advises of the need for UDRP review and directs the applicant to the Complete Applications Requirement List (CARL) which includes UDRP specific requirements; supplies the list of recommended additional submission requirements if necessary.
- Identifies specific Panel members required for review based on the scope of the project being evaluated, any special elements, and potential conflict of interest.

The Administrative Assistant will notify members one week prior to each meeting.

Submissions

Planning File Manager:

- UDRP submission packages should be submitted to the Planning File Manager one week prior to the targeted panel presentation date. In the case of very large and complex file types, additional explanatory material may be required.
- Pre-application files do not require additional materials above what the Complete Applications Requirement List (CARL) states. However additional materials may be submitted by the applicant. Those materials should be submitted to the Planning File Manager one week prior to the targeted panel presentation date. Suggested (but not required) supplementary material will be provided by the File Manager. (see Appendix 1)
- City Wide Urban Design will review the submission materials for completeness in advance of confirming the panel review date.

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- The Administrative Assistant will notify the applicant, File Manager, Chief Urban Designer and the Panel of the meeting date and time, send the complete submission materials package to Panel members, and prepare the meeting agenda.

Presentation

Planning File Manager/City Wide Urban Design:

- The Planning file Manager will be available at Panel meetings to present an overview of the application **if requested by the applicant or UDRP**, including relevant planning policy and any issues raised previously by CPAG or the Community **that were not raised as part of the applicant's presentation and require UDRP consideration**.
- As advisor to the Panel, the Chief Urban Designer or designate will be available at Panel meetings to present applicable urban design policy/guideline and Municipal Development Plan context to the Panel, provide any previous urban design direction given on the project and to answer questions/provide clarification to the Panel as needed.

File Management

Planning File Manager/City Wide Urban Design:

- City Wide Urban Design Team, through the File Manager, stewards the project through resolution of Panel design recommendations throughout the Design Development Phase.
- If a project migrates significantly from its original intent, the Chief Urban Designer may request an additional review meeting.

Representation

The Chief Urban Designer/City Wide Urban Design:

- Will be available to clarify (in addition to the presentation of the File Manager) the recommendations of both City Wide Urban Design and UDRP at CPAG and Calgary Planning Commission meetings.
- Ensures that UDRP is kept informed of report content and process outcomes.

5.2 Conduct of Panel Meetings

For each item under consideration, the Chair shall use the following process to conduct reviews:

1. The Planner has five minutes to present, in the presence of the applicant, the project's history, the planning context, policy context, and relevant process considerations.
2. The City Wide Urban Designer has five minutes to present urban design **context including** ~~policy considerations~~, comments previously given to the applicant and outline urban design-related reactions and concerns.

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3. The Applicant has ten minutes to outline the design intent of the project and how the proposal responds to its surrounding context, with particular emphasis on how the *Thirteen Elements of Urban Design* have been addressed (refer to Section 4).
4. Following the presentations, the Panel will ask questions for clarification before discussing the proposal. The Panel Chair will provide a summary of the discussion at the end of each period.
5. During the discussion and review processes, the Panel Chair is to ensure that the application review stays on track and comments from the Panel are consistent with its mandate and objective.
6. Following the presentations and discussion with the applicant and Administration, the Panel will **meet separately** ~~review drawings and discuss merits and issues of the project~~ **“in camera” to craft a clear and coordinated written response. This discussion will typically be conducted without the applicant present, however a verbal summary of the content of the discussion may be provided by the Chair of the Urban Design Review Panel upon request.**
7. The Chair will ask each Panel member to comment based on the merits of the project, to define issues yet to be resolved through the application and to give advice on the specific questions raised.
8. ~~A vote is held at the end of each project review to determine the Panel's position on the project. The vote only relates to the design issues discussed during the review and is not connected to The City's development approvals process.~~ Panel positions include:
 - i) *Endorse*
 - ii) *Further Review Recommended*. The proponent may be requested to return to a future Panel meeting with the comments addressed. In some cases the Panel may not request a second presentation, but request that City Wide Urban Design follow up on the recommended revisions and inform the Panel of the outcome.

Note: From time to time, based on the information provided, other meeting formats may be appropriate. In this case the Chair will seek agreement from the applicant to vary the meeting procedures.

After the meeting:

9. The Chair will review the notes taken at the meeting for accuracy and completeness, making any appropriate revisions to ensure a succinct, final recommendation and brief accompanying comments for the project, to be sent to Panel Members and the Chief Urban Designer.
10. The final advisory UDRP comments will be forwarded to the Planning File Manager and to the City Wide Urban Design Team following the Panel meeting, sometimes in as few as two days but no later than five days, to ensure they are included in the Detailed Team Review (DTR1) document.
11. It will be incumbent on the applicant to advise City Wide Urban Design of the actions taken as a result of these recommendations at subsequent stages of the application review process.

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Appendix A - Presentation Materials

Project presentation material should be submitted by the applicant to the Planning File Manager, at least one week in advance of the meeting, to the satisfaction of the Chief Urban Designer (or designate). An incomplete package may be refused by City Wide Urban Design or the Panel.

Pre-Application/Schematic Design Review:

Application materials for pre-application review are not required to exceed what is required on the Complete Applications Requirement List (CARL); however, the applicant is welcome to provide additional materials in support of their design rationale, including:

1. Description of the proposal, including as detailed a planning and urban design “rationale” as possible at this stage.
2. Conceptual Site Plan and/or Context Plan.
3. Other materials as deemed relevant at the discretion of the applicant dependant on the advancement of the project.

Additional materials should be in the form of 16 complete, stapled sets of plans in 11” x 17” format.

Development Permit/Design Development Review

Sixteen (16) complete, stapled sets of plans in 11”x17” format are required for presentation to the UDRP. Each package shall include the following:

1. Project brief including a planning and urban design “rationale” which describes the urban design approach (address *13 Elements of Urban Design* – maximum one page).
2. Location key plan and context plan with site analysis showing relationship of the site to surroundings to capture key urban design relationships significant to the project, including transit stations, pedestrian and cycle paths and street networks, parks and open spaces, landmark buildings, etc..
3. Photographs that illustrate existing site conditions and surrounding context.
4. Site plan that demonstrates connectivity to the elements above.
5. Main floor plan, landscaping plan, sections as developed.
6. Massing diagram/renderings in context with adjacent massing to illustrate building bulk, height and setbacks.
7. Elevations as developed, showing neighbouring buildings.
8. Interior floor plans as relevant to public realm, including dimensions of all public sidewalks, arcades and terrace elevations site plan, floor plan, elevations and relevant sections.
9. Large scale perspective drawings, showing views of the first 3 storeys and the pedestrian realm, set within existing streetscape.

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10. Coloured renderings of the building, sufficient to describe the building in its context to the urban realm and to give a sense of the building as a whole, with an emphasis on street level views.
11. Detailed description, images and samples of the proposed cladding materials including all glazing types.
12. Detailed landscaping plan indicating planting, paving materials, street furniture, lighting, proposed public art locations if applicable. Relevant cross-sections as required to identify the landscape relationship through the site.
13. Parking plan, including bike parking, should be provided if it is at grade or is incorporated within the public realm.
14. Shadow study as per specific development permit application requirements.
15. Project data sheet.

Land Use Amendment (Direct Control, with significant urban design content)

Applicants are required to submit the significant elements of a Land Use Amendment that are required by the City of Calgary, including:

- Existing site conditions
- Proposed site plan or master plan
- Pedestrian and vehicular circulation through the site and connecting to surrounding networks
- Massing plan showing building heights
- Concept landscape plan

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Appendix B - Urban Design Review Panel Members 2016-2017

Member	Role	Current Appointment	Expiry Year
Janice Liebe (chair) Architect, DIALOG	Representative, nominated by the Alberta Association of Architects	2013	2017
Brian Horton (Vice-Chair) Urban Planner, O2 Planning + Design Inc.	Representative, nominated by the Alberta Professional Planners Institute	2011	2017
Robert LeBlond Architect	Representative, nominated by the Alberta Association of Architects	2016	2018
Philip Vandermeij Architect, Spectacle Bureau of Architecture and Urbanism	Representative, nominated by the Alberta Association of Architects	2015	2017
Chad Russill Architect, Systemic Architecture Inc.	Representative, nominated by the Alberta Association of Architects	2016	2018
Terry Klassen Landscape Architect, Matrix Landscape Architecture Ltd.	Representative, nominated by the Alberta Association of Landscape Architects	2016	2018
Yogeshwar Navagrah Landscape Architect, Navagrah Landscape Architecture + Urban Design	Representative, nominated by the Alberta Association of Landscape Architects	2016	2018
Bruce Nelligan, Engineer, Watt Consulting	Representative, nominated by the Association of Professional Engineers, Geologists and Geophysicists of Alberta	2012	2018

Panel Advisors

- Chief Urban Designer and/or City Wide Urban Design representative
- Planning File Manager (changes depending on project being discussed)
- Administrative Assistant