



Purpose of the Urban Design Review Panel

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

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

1. Mandate

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

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

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



cases, more broadly than existing policy may allow. Any conflicts that arise will be clearly identified and resulting recommendations described in the appropriate reports.

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

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

Periodically the Panel may wish to comment or make recommendations to the Development Authority for regulatory or guideline changes that may be outside the scope of individual applications. These recommendations will be made through separate submissions by the Panel which do not tie the recommendations to specific applications.

2. Definitions

- a. **"Urban Design"** means the practice of giving form, shape and character to the arrangement of buildings, or whole neighbourhoods, or the city. At the more detailed level, it involves the shaping of the external spaces between buildings, and the design of their detail and finishes to respond to use, context, climate, and building form (*Urban Design Framework*, City of Calgary, 2011).
- b. **"Public Realm"** means all external areas of the city (on public or private land) to which the public has regular access. This includes, for example, sidewalks, squares, plazas, as well as +15 bridges, walkways and associated outdoor spaces (*Urban Design Framework*, City of Calgary, 2011).
- c. **"Development Authority"** means a planning authority provided by council bylaw to exercise development powers and perform duties on behalf of the municipality, and may include one or more of the following: A designated officer; a municipal planning commission; any other person or organization (*Municipal Government Act*, Province of Alberta, 2017).
- d. **"Schematic Design Phase"** means the phase in a project's evolution equivalent to the architect's services in Schematic Design Phase described by the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, wherein the architect shall review the program



requirements furnished by the client and characteristics of the site; review alternative approaches to the design of the project, and prepare design documents that illustrate the scale and character of the project and how the parts of the project functionally relate to each other (*A Guide to Determining Appropriate Fees for the Services of an Architect*, The Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, 2009).

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

3. Panel Structure and Expertise

3.1 Classification

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

3.2 Composition

The Panel is comprised of 12 public members as follows:

- Five Architect members of the Alberta Association of Architects (AAA);
- Three members of the Alberta Association of Landscape Architects (AALA);
- Two members of the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta (APEGA); and
- Two members of the Alberta Professional Planners Institute (APPI).

3.3 Eligibility, Recruitment and Appointment

- a) Qualification for Panel membership requires professional accreditation with one of the Associations listed in section 3.2. All members shall be members in good standing with their respective professional associations. No more than one member of the Panel may be non-practicing.
- b) Members shall have demonstrated expertise in urban design. Additional attributes may be developed by the Panel including, but not limited to:
 - Experience indicating applicants who are leaders in their professions,
 - Experience in delivering high quality design outcomes,



Terms of Reference

- Experience in large-scale development,
 - Expertise in high-rise design, commercial building design, civic building design, accessible design or sustainable design.
- c) Annual vacancies shall be included in the City Clerk's Office recruitment and advertising campaign, in accordance with Council Policy CP2016-03, Governance and Appointments of Boards, Commissions and Committees.
- d) In addition, non-binding nominations may be submitted from the following organizations, with no obligation by Council to appoint any of the Panel positions from within these groups:
- Alberta Association of Architects (AAA);
 - Alberta Association of Landscape Architects (AALA);
 - Alberta Professional Planners Institute (APPI);
 - Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta (APEGA);
 - BILD Calgary Region;
 - NAIOP Commercial Real Estate Development Association; and
 - Other stakeholder industries, as Council deems appropriate from time to time.

Nominating bodies shall:

- Have access to the list of qualifications and additional attributes desired by the Panel,
 - Receive submissions directly from potential nominees,
 - Confirm which qualifications and additional attributes are met by the nominees, and
 - Forward their non-binding nominations to the City Clerk's Office.
- e) Nominations and applications received in the annual recruitment campaign shall be forwarded to the Administration Resource and the Panel Chair for review, in accordance with Council Policy CP2016-03. The Panel's recommendations for appointment for each vacancy and for a Reserve List, will be submitted to the Nominations Committee for consideration.
- f) Mid-term vacancies on the Panel shall be filled in accordance with Council Policy CP2016-03, Section 5.18.

3.4 Quorum

The quorum of a full Panel meeting is a majority of the full Panel membership (greater than 50%).

The members of the Panel may conduct meetings in sub-panels of six members, so long as the sub-panels have appropriately balanced expertise.



Quorum for a sub-panel is a majority of the sub-panel membership (greater than 50%. E.g.: for a sub-panel of 6 members, quorum is 4).

3.5 Duties of Panel Members

- a) To regularly attend meetings of the Panel. In accepting appointment to the UDRP, the Panel member acknowledges that they have suitable flexibility to attend regularly scheduled Panel meetings.
- b) To know and understand Council policy.
- c) To understand the approval process for land use and development applications and to ensure that Panel commentary is provided within CPAG review timelines.
- d) To conduct a thorough review of submission materials prior to each Panel meeting.
- e) To provide the applicant with impartial, professional advice on proposed designs with respect to improving their impact on the city's physical environment.
- f) To consider, in providing design guidance, the *Elements of Urban Design* as described in the Calgary Municipal Development Plan and set out in Part 6 of this Terms of Reference.
- g) To assist in the recruiting of new Panel members through active promotion of The Panel, its work, and its importance to the design review process at The City of Calgary.

3.6 Duties of Panel Chair

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

- a) Manages the meeting to ensure the Meeting Procedures are adhered to and that comments from the Panel are consistent with its mandate and objective to provide direction from an urban design perspective.
- b) Summarizes Panel commentary utilizing an established template and sends directly to the File Manager, copy to the Chief Urban Design, within two to five days of the meeting. The File Manager will communicate this commentary, unedited, to the applicant, as soon as possible.
- c) Represents the Panel when Urban Design Review Panel representation is required outside of regular Panel duties, including being periodically available to address questions of clarification. The Vice-Chair assists in these duties in the absence of the Chair



3.7 Attendance by Non-Members

- a) The Applicant and/or their representative will be available to:
 - Present the overall design rationale and physical context of the proposal, and, as relevant, the project's history.
 - Answer questions raised by the Panel.
- b) The Chief Urban Designer or designate will be available at Panel meetings to:
 - Provide applicable urban design context at the request of the Panel.
 - Provide any previous urban design direction given on the project and/or site.
 - Advise the Panel with regard to potential policy conflicts arising from their comments.
 - Answer other questions raised by the Panel.
- c) The File Manager/Project Planner will be available to:
 - Present the relevant planning context of the proposal and relevant process considerations as requested by the Panel.
 - Answer questions raised by the Panel.
- d) No member of Council or Administration may be appointed to the Panel. The meetings are not open to members of the public; however, applicants will be requested to present the project and address questions of the Panel (further detail of the conduct of Panel meetings is set out in the Urban Design Review Protocol).
- e) Administration will arrange venues and agendas, and will distribute submission materials to UDRP members.

4. Appointment Term

Panel members will be appointed at the annual Organizational Meeting of Council and shall serve for a term of one or two years. A member may serve a maximum of six consecutive years. Despite the above, a panel member may serve until their successor is appointed. The service of a member beyond the appointed term shall not count toward the six-year limit on the length of service if the additional service is one year or less.

When a mid-term appointment is made to fill a vacancy:

- If the balance of the term to be served is half of the original term or less, that service shall not count toward the limit on the length of service; and
- If the balance of the term to be served is more than half of the original term, that service shall count toward the limit on the length of service.



5. Code of Conduct

Members of the Urban Design Review Panel must complete a *Declaration* form upon their appointment to The Panel which states that they will read and abide by the *Code of Conduct for Public Members Appointed to Council Established Boards, Commissions and Committees* (CP2022-05). Members of the Panel will conduct their assessments in a collaborative and transparent manner with the applicant.

6. Assessment Process

6.1 Scope of Work

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

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

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

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

6.2 Urban Design Principles

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



each project addresses the principles within the context of best practices of contemporary urban design.

6.3 Project Review Stages

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

Pre-Application/Schematic Design Advice

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

Development Permit/Design Development Review

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

6.4 Panel Position

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

6.5 Frequency of Meetings

Panel meetings are held every two weeks throughout the year. Additional meetings may be convened when necessary during periods of high file volume or to hold discussion sessions on topics of interest or concern. The Panel may be split by the Chair into sub-panels, with each sub-panel meeting on alternate weeks.



The Panel may select a Co-Chair or assign the Vice-Chair to preside over the additional sub-panel. The Co-Chair or Vice-Chair has all the duties and rights of the Panel Chair when presiding a meeting.

6.6 Training / Update Sessions

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

7. Record of Meetings

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

*Adopted on 2004 September 13, C2004-37
Amended on 2007 October 23, C2007-71
Amended on 2017 July 24, PUD2017-0601
Amended on 2018 January 29, VR2018-0002
Amended on 2018 March 21, C2018-0163
Amended on 2020 July 20, PUD2020-0768
Amended on 2022 October 25, N2022-0979
Amended on 2023 January 03, C2022-1020*