



MEMO / NOTE DE SERVICE

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TO: Chair and Members of the Planning and Housing Committee and Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee

DESTINATAIRE:

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DATE: November 10, 2023

10 novembre 2023

FILE NUMBER: ACS2023-PRE-RHU-0048

SUBJECT: Urban Design Review Panel Terms of Reference Update

OBJET: Mise à jour du mandat du Comité d'examen du design urbain (CEDU)

PURPOSE

The purpose of this memorandum is to advise Members of Council of staff's updated Terms of Reference for the City's Urban Design Review Panel (UDRP). The Terms of Reference review was undertaken to ensure conformity with the new Official Plan, recent legislative changes to the *Planning Act*, and to review opportunities for improved efficiency in the development review process.

In developing the revised Urban Design Review Panel Terms of Reference, Public Realm and Urban Design staff consulted with the existing Panel members and departmental staff who attend the Panel, and undertook a review of the practices of Urban Design Review Panels in other municipalities.

BACKGROUND

The Urban Design Review Panel was established in 2010 as an independent Panel of volunteer professionals comprised of architects, landscape architects, urban designers, and heritage professionals. As stated in [Section 4.6.1\(2\)](#) of the Official Plan, the UDRP provides an objective peer review of development projects in the City's Design Priority Areas, identified in [Schedule C7A](#) and [Schedule C7B](#) of the Official Plan. The Panel's advice is advisory in nature to City staff and the development applicant.

The Urban Design Review Panel works alongside the City's in-house design professionals to play an important role in supporting the policy directions of the Official Plan. Notably, the Panel promotes design excellence in Design Priority Areas ([Section 4.6.1](#) of the Official Plan), encourages innovative design practices and technologies in site planning and building design ([Section 4.6.4](#) of the Official Plan), ensures effective site planning that supports the objectives of Corridors, Hubs, Neighbourhoods and the character of our villages and rural landscapes ([Section 4.6.5](#) of the Official Plan), and enables the sensitive integration of new low-rise, mid-rise and high-rise developments to ensure Ottawa meets its intensification targets while considering liveability at various scales of development ([Section 4.6.6](#) of the Official Plan).

[Section 4.6.1\(1b\)](#) of the Official Plan establishes the requirement to define a framework for the operations of the UDRP. The existing UDRP Terms of Reference has been updated to fully align with both the new Official Plan and recent legislative changes to the *Planning Act* which have resulted in significant changes to the development review process. Highlights of the amendments are:

- Responding to the new development review process timelines by generally conducting UDRP reviews during the pre-consultation process.

- Realigning the threshold for applications that will be subject to Panel review. This recognizes the inhouse design review skill set of City staff and will focus the skills and expertise of the Urban Design Review Panel on projects that have a significant impact on the advancement of design excellence in Ottawa.
- Aligning the height thresholds for UDRP review with the Official Plan's transect model ([Schedule A](#)): seven-storeys or greater in the Downtown Core and Inner Urban transects, five-storeys or greater in the Outer Urban and Suburban transects, and three-storeys or greater within Village Design Priority Areas. Currently, the height threshold for UDRP review is four-storeys across the city.
- Improving UDRP administration, logistics and overall workload by reducing the number of Panellists at a UDRP session

Attached to this memorandum are the final Terms of Reference that will be implemented as of January 1st, 2024.

If you have any questions on the revised Urban Design Review Panel Terms of Reference, please contact Court Curry, Manager, Right of Way, Heritage and Urban Design.

Original signed by

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cc: Wendy Stephanson, City Manager

Don Herweyer, Interim General Manager, Planning, Real Estate and Economic Development Department

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION:

Document 1 - Urban Design Review Panel Terms of Reference