



CITY OF OTTAWA
URBAN DESIGN REVIEW PANEL
TERMS OF REFERENCE
NOVEMBER 2023

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1. Introduction

The Urban Design Review Panel (UDRP) is an independent panel of volunteer design professionals who provide an objective peer review of projects within the City's Design Priority Areas. The Panel plays an important role in promoting design excellence, a key priority of the City's Official Plan. Section 4.6.1(2) requires the City to retain the UDRP as an "independent advisory panel who provide objective peer review of both development applications and capital projects".

Important to note is the *advisory* role of the Panel in general terms, as it does not make binding decisions on development applications. Exceptions may apply to a Special Review Panel, who may be given additional authorities by Council through a Secondary Plan or an Area Specific Policy.

1.1 UDRP in the Planning Approval Process

The UDRP fits into the City of Ottawa's planning approval process. City staff work with applicants to ensure that UDRP reviews are embedded within the pre-consultation application process so that the maximum benefit is obtained from the review session(s). Pre-consultation application proposals that meet the criteria set out in Section 3 of these Terms of Reference will be subject to UDRP review(s) *before* a formal application is deemed complete. Submission to the UDRP, recommendations from the Panel, and responses of the applicants will be submitted as part of the formal application package in accordance with the UDRP Report Terms of Reference. In the case of an Official Plan Amendment and/or a Plan of Subdivision, the UDRP review may be held *after* a formal application is submitted and deemed complete, at the discretion of the File Lead.

1.2 Public Involvement

Due to the confidentiality of the pre-consultation application process, the general public will not be able to attend UDRP reviews. Community representatives who are engaged in the pre-consultation application process through a non-disclosure agreement will be able to attend. The UDRP submission, the recommendations from the Panel, and responses of the applicants will be available on [Development Application Search](#) site as part of the UDRP Report once a formal application is submitted and deemed complete. In the case of an Official Plan Amendment and/or Plan of Subdivision UDRP review may be held *after* a formal application is submitted and deemed complete and will be open to the public in a virtual and/or in-person format as determined for each review session. While the public is invited to these UDRP reviews, public comment is not to take place during a UDRP meeting, and questions/comments from the public can be directed to the appropriate File Lead.

2. Panel

2.1 Panel Membership

The Panel shall be comprised of eight Canadian (8) expert design professionals with expertise in urban design, architecture, landscape architecture, sustainable design, and heritage conservation. Members of the Panel shall be accredited by professional bodies including (but not limited to) the Ontario Association of Architects, the Ontario Association of Landscape Architects, The Canadian Association of Heritage Professionals, and the Ontario Professional Planners Institute. Members will be required to evaluate projects of varying complexities, understand the municipal planning system in Ontario, and be cognizant of the City of Ottawa's development approval process.

2.2 Appointment

Members are recruited and appointed by staff for a term of four (4) years with staggered terms to ensure Panel succession-planning. Members may serve one (1) additional 4-year term.

2.3 Quorum

A minimum of three (3) Panel members shall be required to fulfill quorum requirements. Panel members are asked to provide five-day advance notice to the Chair and the Panel Coordinator if they are unable to attend a meeting.

2.4 Chair

A Chair and Vice Chair shall be elected by the Panel as required. The Chair is responsible for leading Panel meetings, introducing presenters, ensuring all Panel members participate in review discussions, and providing a high-level summary at the end of each Panel meeting. If the Chair cannot attend a meeting, the Vice Chair will serve as Chair. If neither the Chair nor the Vice Chair is available for a meeting, an acting Chair shall be appointed by the Chair. The Chair and Vice Chair are responsible for revising and approving the Panel recommendations drafted by the Panel Coordinator.

2.5 Conflicts of Interest

A conflict of interest occurs when a Panel member is called upon to review a proposal in which the member has a direct or indirect conflict, perceived or real conflict, personal or professional conflict, and/or a financial interest in the project. Panel members shall disclose conflicts of interest to the Chair and Panel Coordinator by email upon receiving the meeting agenda in advance of the meeting date. Panel members shall also declare conflicts of interest at the start of each meeting. Panel members shall recuse

themselves from in-camera sessions for any files that they have identified a conflict of interest for and may attend the review sessions as an observer.

3. Applications Subject to UDRP Review

3.1 Applications Subject to Review

Applications located within the Design Priority Areas designated in Schedule C7-A (Urban) and C7-B (Villages) of the [Official Plan](#) that meet the following general criteria (3.2) shall be subject to UDRP review. These general criteria may change periodically as deemed appropriate. A Secondary Plan or other Council-approved statutory policy may establish directions and criteria that deviate from this Terms of Reference. Should such circumstances arise, the Secondary Plan or other Council-approved statutory policy shall prevail.

For the purposes *Section 3* of this Terms of Reference, 'Application' refers to a Pre-consultation application, with the exception of a Formal application when applied in accordance with section 1.1.

3.2 General Criteria

1. Applications including Official Plan Amendments and/or Zoning By-law Amendments requesting an increase in height or density and Site Plan Control applications, which would result in a building, or an addition to a building, that is:
 - a. Seven (7) storeys *or greater* in the Downtown Core and Inner Urban transects (as identified in Schedule A of the [Official Plan](#))
 - b. Five (5) storeys *or greater* in the Outer Urban and Suburban transects (as identified in Schedule A of the [Official Plan](#))
 - c. Three (3) storeys *or greater* within Village Design Priority Areas (as identified in Schedule C7-B of the [Official Plan](#))
2. Applications which do not meet the criteria outlined in 3.2.1 but are associated with large-scale institutions and facilities such as hospitals, universities, and cultural facilities.
3. Applications which do not meet the criteria outlined in 3.2.1 but are of a complex nature as outlined by the following circumstances. The decision to bring these files to the Panel will be at the discretion of the File Lead and the Urban Designer on file, in consultation with the Panel Coordinator:
 - a. within Village Cores,

- b. within Heritage Conservation Districts and/or in proximity (30m) to built and cultural heritage resources,
 - c. proximity to Natural Heritage Features (as identified in Schedule C11-A, C11-B, and C11-C of the [Official Plan](#)).
 - d. City-led policy initiatives and capital investments, such as a Secondary Plan, a Community Design Plan, a public realm study, and a street reconstruction project.
4. Applications for Plan of Subdivision which include multiple development blocks planned for mid- or high-rise development and a mix of land uses may be subject to UDRP review at the discretion of the File Lead, Urban Designer and Panel Coordinator.

3.3 Exemptions:

- 1. Revisions to plans that have received staff and/or Council approval where the change maintains the overall design response associated with the initial approval.
- 2. Municipal parks development, including developer-built municipal parks.
- 3. Development within the Kanata North Business Park Special District.
- 4. A Site Plan Control application for low-rise or mid-rise development that is generally in conformity with the zoning, and that has implemented staff initial pre-consultation application directions satisfactory to the File Lead, the Urban Designer on file and the Panel Coordinator.
- 5. Applications for conversions where there are no significant alterations to the site or exterior of the building and the conversion is primarily inside the existing building may be considered for exemption at the discretion of the File Lead, the Urban Designer on file and the Panel Coordinator.

3.4 Criteria for Multiple Reviews

- 1. When applications are submitted separately by the applicant for varying application types, each application will be subject to UDRP review(s) as outlined above.
- 2. Applications may be subject to multiple reviews if recommended by the UDRP and/or if the design is significantly changed from the previous review at the discretion of the File Lead and Urban Designer on the file.

3.5 Projects requiring a Heritage Permit

1. In the event where an application is subject to UDRP review and requires a Heritage Permit, the UDRP review shall take place *before* the appropriate Heritage Permit is issued.
2. For applications subject to UDRP review and requiring a Heritage Permit, submission materials *must* be detailed to the level commensurate with a Site Plan Control application regardless of the application type.
3. At the discretion of Heritage Planning in consultation with the File Lead, Urban Designer, and Panel Coordinator, applications which have previously attended UDRP and received a subsequent Heritage Permit may be exempt from a second review with the UDRP during the Site Plan Control application process.

3.6 Applications outside of Design Priority Areas

1. Applications outside of Design Priority Areas are generally not subject to UDRP review. However, at the recommendation of the Program Manager, Public Realm and Urban Design, and in coordination with the applicant(s), complex applications which trigger the need for an Official Plan Amendment associated with an increase in massing and/or height may be brought to the UDRP for review.
2. Applications within the Central and East Downtown Core Secondary Plan area defined in [Schedule A – Character Areas](#) of the Secondary Plan but not within the Design Priority Areas that meet the criteria set out in Section 3 of these guidelines will be subject to UDRP review.

4. Scheduling and Submission Requirements

4.1 Scheduling Process:

1. The applicant must have an initial meeting with City staff through the City's updated pre-consultation application process before making a request to visit the UDRP. All applications are subject to the requirements outlined below:
 - a. Written comments and initial design direction from staff must be received by the applicant.
 - b. The applicant must notify the File Lead and the Panel Coordinator via email of their intention to be on the upcoming agenda at least two weeks in advance of the submission deadline.
2. The applicant must submit the Urban Design Brief two weeks prior to the Panel meeting (see [Panel Meeting Schedule](#)) in accordance with the requested items indicated on the Urban Design Brief Terms of Reference.

- a. Materials shall be submitted as PDF or PowerPoint files, 11x17in size and batched into a single file, not exceeding 50MB.
 - b. Due to email size limitations, only files under 35MB may be submitted via email. Should the size of the submission exceed 35MB, it is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that it is successfully delivered to the Panel Coordinator via a file sharing system (e.g., FTP server, *Dropbox*, *WeTransfer*) by the submission deadline.
 - c. It is at the applicant's discretion as to whether or not the presentation will be the same or different from the Urban Design Brief. The presentation must be submitted at the same time as the Urban Design Brief.
3. The Urban Design Brief must be deemed complete by the Panel Coordinator.
 4. The applicant will then be notified of the time and location for their scheduled meeting with the Panel approximately a week ahead of the meeting.

4.2 Submission Requirements

1. The Urban Design Brief is required to be signed by a member holding a professional membership with the OAA, OALA, OPPI, and/or CIP, or equivalent professional organization; and should include materials prepared by urban designer(s), licensed architect(s), licensed landscape architect(s), and registered planner(s). The Urban Design Brief should highlight the key urban design features of the proposal. The Brief should provide an explanation as to why the proposed development represents the most appropriate design solution for the site. For an Urban Design Brief submission to the UDRP to be deemed complete it must include the following materials.
 - a. [Applicant Summary Sheet](#)
 - b. [Urban Design Brief](#) A customized Terms of Reference for each application will be provided by the Urban Designer following the first pre-consultation application meeting. Elements to be included in Urban Design Brief submitted for UDRP review shall be confirmed by the UDRP Coordinator.

5. Meeting Structure

The UDRP meeting is typically held on the first Friday of each month. It includes an in-camera briefing session and a series of separate review proceedings. In general, Panel members should expect to be available for a full working day, and applicants are expected to arrive at least 5 minutes prior to their scheduled meeting. The maximum number of files that can be reviewed for a single-day review is approximately 6.

5.1 Staff In-Camera Briefing

The staff in-camera briefing is confidential. Each project introductory session takes approximately 15 minutes and includes a 5-minute presentation by the File Lead to outline the context, and a 10-minute Q & A. For applications with a heritage element, the Chair will call on the assigned heritage staff to provide any relevant heritage considerations for context.

5.2 Typical Review Proceeding

The review proceedings will be led by the Chair and will follow the general sequence described below. Meetings last for approximately one hour. Additional time may be allocated to accommodate complex applications.

As a rule, the Panel does not discuss applications without at least one representative of the proponent design team (an architect, landscape architect, urban designer, and planner) present. UDRP proceedings are not allowed to be recorded by any electronic devices.

Time allotted	Course of action
5 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Chair introduces ground rules.
10 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Applicant introduces the project team.➤ Applicant presents the proposal (presentation must be made by an architect, a landscape architect, an urban designer, or a planner).➤ File lead presents key questions.
15 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ (Q & A) Panel members ask clarification questions and Applicant team provides responses to each question asked by the Panel.
20 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Panel members provide comments.➤ Proponents listen to the deliberations but are asked to withhold comments and responses at this point.
5 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Chair summarizes the Panel recommendations.

2 minutes

- Applicant team responds to the Panel's comments and recommendations.

5.3 Virtual Panel Meetings

Meetings may be held in person or virtually over a videoconferencing software approved by the City. If the meeting is being held virtually, the following protocols shall be observed:

1. Applicants should have their presentations ready to share on screen. City Staff require digital copies of the presentation in advance of the meeting in the event of technical difficulties.
2. All microphones are to remain muted unless called upon by the Chair.
3. The meeting chat is not used or monitored for UDRP meetings.

6. UDRP Recommendations

UDRP written recommendations are prepared by Urban Design staff and are approved by the Chair and Vice Chair. UDRP recommendations provide a *summary* of key design direction suggested by the Panel and not a verbatim record of the meeting. Recommendations are typically based on a general consensus but may also include comments and suggestions offered by individual Panel members. Recommendations shall generally be made available 10 to 15 business days after the meeting.

Recommendations made by the Panel will guide staff and the proponent as they work to finalize the design and achieve project modifications.

7. Administration

7.1 Panel Coordinator

A full-time Panel Coordinator from City staff shall be assigned to administer and manage the UDRP. The Coordinator shall be the primary liaison between Panel members, the City, and the applicants. The Coordinator is responsible for reviewing submissions, preparing meeting agendas, logging and distributing the Panel's recommendations, and ensuring review materials are accessible to Panel members a

minimum of five (5) working days prior to meetings. The Coordinator will manage the information on the [UDRP webpage](#) and respond to public inquires.

7.2 Fees

There is no application fee for the Urban Design Review Panel.

7.3 Expense Reimbursement

Panel members serve on an unpaid, voluntary basis; however, travel, accommodation, meals and incidental expenses incurred by the Panel members shall be reimbursed by the City. Panel members are to submit original receipts (no scanned copies, no direct payment or credit card vouchers) to the UDRP Coordinator. Panel members will also need to indicate whom to make cheques payable to and provide a mailing address. The reimbursement process takes approximately 15 working days, upon submission of receipts. For budgetary reasons, Panel members are asked to submit their expenses by the end of January, at the latest, for the preceding year.

The standard for air travel is Economy Class, the standard for rail travel is Business Class – Discounted Fare and the standard for rental vehicles is Mid-Size. The standard for accommodations is a single room.

8. UDRP Focused Reviews and Special Design Review Panels

8.1 UDRP Focused Reviews

UDRP Focused Reviews are held for comprehensive applications that require more extensive discussion than permitted during the typical 1-hour meeting slot at the regular UDRP meetings. Focused reviews typically involve 2-3 selected members of the UDRP, led by the Chair or Vice Chair. UDRP members are selected depending on their areas of expertise in relation to the application. Public involvement in the Focused Review sessions shall follow the same guidelines provided in section 1.2 of these Terms of Reference.

1. Projects may be recommended for a Focused Review by the UDRP as part of a review session, or by City staff at the initial pre-consultation application meeting. The decision to proceed with a focused review is under the discretion of the File Lead and the Urban Designer in consultation with the Panel Coordinator.
2. Proponents who participate in a focused review session recommended by the UDRP are expected to return to the UDRP for a final review following the focused review session.

3. Proponents who participate in focused reviews recommended by City staff are expected to attend at least two focused review sessions. The final session is intended to report on and confirm the design progress.

Meeting Logistics

4. Focused Review sessions are generally 2 hours in length. The sessions take the form of a design workshop, organized by the Panel Coordinator. The format of each meeting will be designed to suit the unique circumstances of each project. Generally, the agenda will include a staff presentation, an applicant presentation, a presentation by members of the UDRP, and a discussion/design session.
5. Participating panel members are remunerated by the City and the proponents on a cost sharing basis for the time spent on preparing and attending the sessions.

8.2 Special Design Review Panels

Special Design Review Panels (SDRP) convene to review significant applications that require particular attention due to their height or prominence. SDRPs are typically comprised of a subset of the UDRP as well as guest panel members. Special Design Review Panels replace the requirement for typical reviews with the UDRP. Public involvement in the SDRP shall follow the same guidelines provided in section 1.2 of these Terms of Reference.

1. Special Design Review Panels are mandatory for:
 - a. Any proposed building of 41 storeys or greater in height
 - b. If required by an Area Specific Plan or Secondary Plan
2. The mandate of the SDRPs differs depending on the policy context and shall be specified in a Terms of Reference for each application.

SDRP Terms of Reference

A Terms of Reference shall be prepared by the City with agreement of the proponents prior to the commencement of a SDRP. The Terms of Reference may include the following elements:

- a. Context
- b. Mandate
- c. Panel Composition
- d. Staff Resources

- e. Process/Meeting Structure
 - f. Design Review Packages
 - g. Public Disclosure/Involvement
 - h. Fees and Expense Reimbursement
3. The Terms of Reference of each SDRP is prepared with the following general guidance:
- a. A SDRP shall include a minimum of 3 members. At least 1 of the SDRP members shall be a member of the UDRP who will serve as the Chair of the SDRP. Additional specialized design professionals are selected by the Chair of the SDRP and staff for endorsement by the UDRP.
 - b. A minimum of two SDRP meetings are required for each application (can be concurrent applications).
 - c. SDRP meetings are typically 2 hours in length. The sessions take the form of a design workshop to allow for in-depth extensive discussions between the applicants and members of the Panel with opportunities to explore design ideas and options.
 - d. Generally, the agenda will include a staff presentation, an applicant presentation, a presentation by members of the SDRP, and a discussion/design session.
 - e. Participating panel members are remunerated by the City and the applicant on a cost sharing basis for the time spent on preparing and attending the sessions.