

Update on Tall Buildings Design Guidelines

Date:	December 11, 2007
To:	Planning and Growth Management Committee
From:	Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	Pg070082

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide an update about the evaluation of the Tall Buildings Design Guidelines. As directed by Council (July 2006) the effectiveness of the Guidelines is being evaluated by staff applying them to tall building development applications across the City. Council approved an evaluation period of one year for this test. The Guidelines have been found to be helpful in the assessment of tall building proposals. The evaluation period has not been long enough to review the guidelines and their effectiveness. This report requests that staff continue to use the Guidelines for development application review for an additional period of two years.

For the City's downtown, the Living Downtown study to address site selection for tall buildings is being carried out by the City Planning Division and is scheduled to be completed at the end of 2008. As this study is related with the Tall Buildings Guidelines it is necessary to continue to use and evaluate the Tall Buildings Guidelines until this study is completed. The Living Downtown Study will also benefit from the ongoing use and evaluation of the Tall Buildings Guidelines.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Planning Division recommends that:

1. City Council extend the previously approved one year period to test the effectiveness of the Tall Buildings Guidelines by an additional period of two years during which they will be continue to be used in evaluation of development applications for tall buildings in conjunction with the application of the Built Form policies of Section 3.1.3 of the City's Official Plan.

2. City Council direct the Chief Planner to report to the Planning and Growth Management Committee at the conclusion of the test period regarding any necessary modifications to the Tall Buildings Guidelines identified during the test period.

Financial Impact

There are no financial implications.

DECISION HISTORY

City Council at its meeting of July 25, 26 and 27, 2006 adopted Planning and Growth Management Committee Report 5, Clause 5 “Tall Buildings Design Guidelines” with amendments.

The report recommended that:

- (1) the design guidelines contained in the attached report entitled “Design Criteria for Review of Tall Building Proposals” be applied to future tall building development applications in conjunction with the application of the Built Form policies of Section 3.1.3 of the City’s Official Plan, and;
- (2) the effectiveness of the tall building design guidelines referred to in Recommendation (1) above, be tested over a period of one year and any necessary modifications identified during that review period be reported to the Planning and Growth Management Committee.

In doing so, Council adopted the following additional recommendations of the Chief Planner’s supplementary report of July 13, 2006:

- (1) Council adopt the following staff recommendations contained in the Recommendations Section of the supplementary report (July 13, 2006) from the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning:

It is recommended that:

- (2) the consultant report, entitled “Design Criteria for the Review of Tall Building Proposals” (June, 2006) be modified to incorporate the Appendix on Sustainable Design into the main body of the report and the text be further expanded to make reference to the guidelines recently adopted in the City’s “Percent for Public Art Program”, and;
- (3) during the one-year period for testing the effectiveness of the Tall Building Design Guidelines, an assessment be made of the need to develop additional design criteria related to the achievement of enhanced pedestrian connections to local transit services and the attainment of the City’s waste reduction/recycling targets and, if necessary, to report back to the Planning and Transportation

Committee on the best means of incorporating such criteria into the development approval process.

Council also directed that:

- (4) the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning, be requested to report further to the Planning and Transportation Committee, in six months' time, on the issues contained in the above-noted supplementary report.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

The Council approved (March 2003) consultant study was carried out including review of worldwide best practices, workshops with staff and testing on sites throughout the City. Additionally, consultation with a stakeholder roundtable group comprising representatives from the community, the development industry and architectural and urban design professions were carried out, resulting in "Design Criteria for Review of Tall Building Proposals". The Tall Building Guidelines implement Official Plan built form policies for tall buildings (Section 3.1.3) by providing more detailed urban design guidelines, linked where possible to measurable criteria and qualitative indicators. These are required to assist City staff in the review of tall building applications, and to assist the preparation of development applications by the private sector.

The Tall Buildings Guidelines address issues of Site Context; Site Organization; Building Massing, and Pedestrian Realm while issues of site selection were not addressed. Locational criteria for tall buildings and the criteria for how tall a building can be on a specific site are addressed through other policies including secondary plans, zoning by-laws and district urban design guidelines.

In the downtown area the location and height of tall buildings is being address through the Living Downtown Study, within Downtown Toronto. If approved by Council, the study will provide measurable criteria, including Performance Standards to be incorporated into the City's land-use planning and development approval regulatory framework and be used in the assessment and approval of Tall Building development proposals in Downtown Toronto, as required by the City Planning Division. The study is scheduled to be completed in the fourth quarter of 2008.

COMMENTS

Further to approval by Council (July 2006) the Tall Buildings Guidelines have been applied to tall building development applications across the City to evaluate the effectiveness of the Guidelines. Council directed an evaluation period of one year. To date, the Guidelines have been used to evaluate site-specific development applications in all four Districts of the City. They have also been used to assist in development of new planning and urban design studies including the Humber Bay Shores Urban Design Guidelines and the Living Downtown Study.

The Guidelines have been found to be helpful in the assessment of site specific tall building proposals as well as planning and urban design studies. The City Planning Division recommends extending the evaluation period, by continuing to use the Guidelines for development application review as there is a need to evaluate them further. It was not the purpose of the Tall Buildings Guidelines to address issues of site selection. Site selection for tall buildings is currently being addressed on a District by District basis. For the City's downtown, site selection is being addressed by the Living Downtown study carried out by a consultant retained by the City Planning Division and scheduled to be completed in the fourth quarter of 2008. As this study is related to the Tall Buildings guidelines it is necessary to continue to use and evaluate the Tall Buildings Guidelines until this study is completed so that any necessary changes to the Guidelines resulting from its development could be addressed. The Living Downtown Study will also benefit from the ongoing use and evaluation of the Tall Buildings Guidelines.

To address the recommendations of the July 13, 2006 supplementary report from the Chief planner, appropriate design criteria for achieving Council's waste reduction and recycling targets, public art, as well as for transit connections to tall building developments, will be integrated within the final draft of the Tall Buildings Guidelines at the conclusion of the test period.

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SIGNATURE

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