



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Official Plan Five-Year Review: Urban Design Consultation Summary and Next Steps

Date:	April 16, 2015
To:	Planning and Growth Management Committee
From:	Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	P:\2015\ClusterB\PLN\PGMC\PG15062

SUMMARY

Urban Design is the process by which we create vibrant, connected, safe, inclusive and beautiful places where people want to live, work, play and learn. Quality urban design is achieved through the creation and application of Official Plan policies, and reinforced through visioning and planning studies, urban design guidelines, application review, design review panels, public art and design competitions. The Official Plan policies related to urban design seek to enhance and set priorities for capital improvements within the public realm and provide guidance for the form and character of development across the city.

This report provides a summary of the public consultations undertaken in the last quarter of 2014 with respect to the urban design policies of the Official Plan. The report also summarizes key work to be undertaken for each of the policy directions in order to complete the review and prepare draft policies, as well as an estimated timeline for completion and reporting back to Planning and Growth Management Committee.

The "Urban Design Matters" consultation process was designed to obtain input from a diverse range of Torontonians through a variety of different events and online engagement methods. One of the goals of the urban design public consultation program was to build capacity and raise awareness of what urban design is to Torontonians. Consultation included open houses, focused stakeholder meetings, a series of pop-up events in public spaces throughout the city and an Urban Design Forum. In total, City Planning staff engaged over 1,500 Torontonians through the Urban Design Matters consultation program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Planning Division recommends that Planning and Growth Management Committee:

1. Request the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning to continue the development of draft policies for the purpose of public consultation as outlined in Attachment 1 to this report.
2. Receive the Consultant's report, appended as Attachment 2 to this report, which summarizes the process and outcomes from public consultations on urban design policy directions.

Financial Impact

The report recommendations will have no financial impact beyond what has already been approved in the current year's budget.

DECISION HISTORY

Five-Year Review of the Official Plan – Urban Design

At its meeting on August 7, 2014, Planning and Growth Management Committee directed that City Planning consult on 11 Urban Design policy directions which were grouped into four content clusters: (1) Seeing the bigger picture; (2) Prioritizing the public realm; (3) Guiding built form; and (4) Enhancing parks and open spaces and report back on the consultation outcomes. The decision document can be accessed at this link: <http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2014.PG35.20>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Since the Official Plan Review was initiated in 2011, City Council has adopted Official Plan Amendments to the following policy areas: Heritage, Housing, Economic Health and Employment Lands Policies and Designations and Transportation. City Council has also considered proposed draft policies related to the Environment and *Neighbourhoods* and *Apartment Neighbourhoods*.

Given that the policies in the Official Plan all work together to achieve city-wide goals, the work done in these other policy areas has helped to inform the Urban Design policy review. For example, the *Neighbourhoods* and *Apartment Neighbourhoods* policies address sunlight penetration in residential areas and the Transportation policy review included policies that define Complete Streets. The Urban Design review will continue to complement the components of the Official Plan Review, which have already taken place.

The policy directions deal with Official Plan Chapter 3 (Building a Successful City), including the Public Realm, Built Form, Building New Neighbourhoods and other sections, as well as Section 2.2.3. Avenues: Reurbanizing Arterial Corridors. The 11 policy directions fall into the four following content clusters:

1. Seeing the Bigger Picture

- i. Providing the purpose and intent of urban design guidelines
- ii. Recognizing that large and deep lots need additional planning
- iii. Refining the Avenue policies and Map 2 Urban Structure overlay
- iv. Promoting a walkable city

2. Prioritizing the Public Realm

- v. Clarifying the role of the public realm
- vi. Clarifying the need for new public streets as part of developments

3. Guiding Built Form

- vii. Development criteria for low-rise developments and mid-rise buildings
- viii. Encouraging thoughtfully designed tall buildings

4. Enhancing Parks and Open Spaces

- ix. Encouraging thoughtfully designed tall buildings
- x. Maintaining sunlight on downtown signature parks and open spaces
- xi. Promoting and increasing privately owned publicly-accessible spaces (POPS)

Consultation Process

In September 2014, City Planning retained LURA Consulting to assist staff with conducting city-wide consultations on the urban design policy directions. The consultation program used a variety of in-person and online engagement techniques in order to ensure that the consultation outcomes were inclusive and represented a diverse range of opinions from across the city. The program included four public open houses, one Urban Design Forum and 11 pop-up events. Consultation also included meetings with targeted stakeholders, residents associations and professional organizations. The consultant's report outlining the detailed outcomes and process of each consultation component is included as Attachment 2 to this report.

The consultation program was widely advertised through a variety of methods. Staff posted information on the Official Plan dedicated webpage, an advertisement on Spacing Magazine's Toronto website and a notice was placed in the Toronto Star. Email and mailed invitations were sent to over 4,000 individuals who had requested to be informed about the Official Plan Review reports and events. In addition, a flyer was distributed to Toronto's universities, professional associations and City Councillors. The Open Houses, Forum and Pop-Up Events were also promoted on Twitter.

One of the goals of the urban design public consultation program was to build capacity and raise awareness of what urban design is to Torontonians. To that end, staff hosted an Urban Design Forum at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education featuring four distinguished urban designers and architects on a panel to discuss the importance of urban design and design issues facing the City of Toronto. This event had approximately 350 attendees.

To provide the opportunity for a diverse and inclusive consultation process, 11 pop-up events were held across the City, at libraries, community centres and other publicly-accessible locations. In total, over 1,150 people attended the pop-up events. Staff engaged with residents and employed a community asset mapping exercise that helped to spark engaging conversations about urban design. Staff asked participants to add stickers on a map of the City to indicate their favourite places and / or suggestions for urban design improvements. Identifying community assets lead to further discussions on why these spaces were important and what improvements were needed. An image of the South Etobicoke responses is included below.

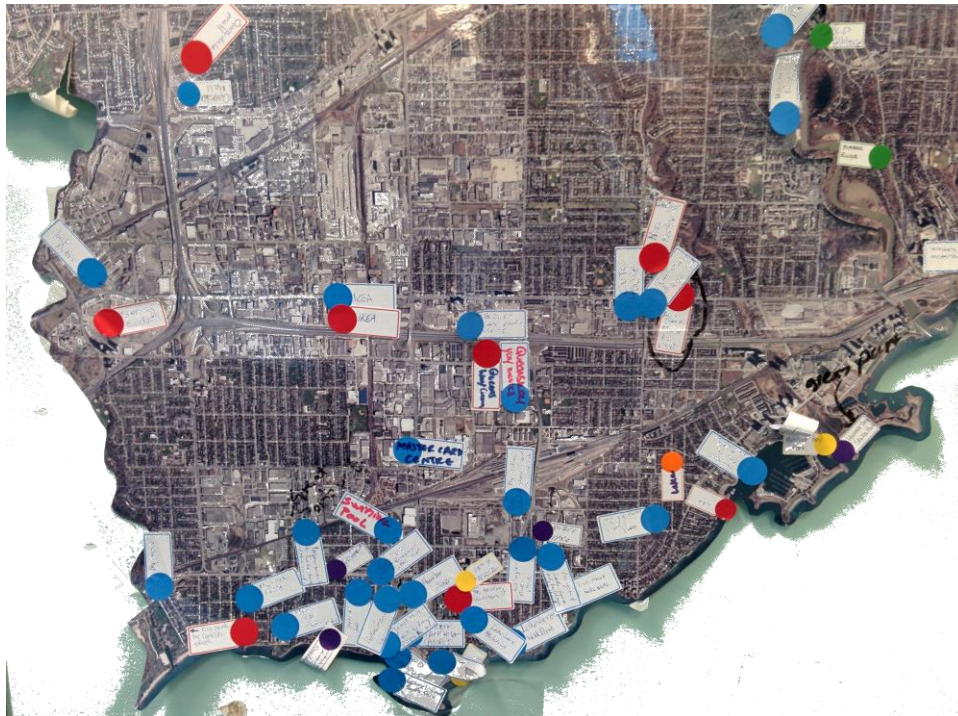


Image: South Etobicoke Community Asset Map

Overall, 1,582 people were engaged in the urban design consultation process. Their comments and feedback have informed discussion on the urban design policies and the refinement of the policy directions within the four content clusters.

COMMENTS

What We Heard - Summary

The following section includes a brief summary of the comments and feedback received during the consultation process, organized by the four content clusters set out in the July 2014 report on Urban Design Policy Directions for Consultation. The detailed consultant report is found in Attachment 2. As an outcome of the consultation, Attachment 1 provides a summary chart detailing key work for staff to undertake for each policy direction and an estimated timeline for completion of draft policies and reporting to Planning and Growth Management Committee.

1. Seeing the Bigger Picture

i. **Providing the purpose and intent of urban design guidelines**

The majority of the stakeholders and the public understood Urban Design Guidelines as an important tool to achieve good outcomes from development and supported the City's intent to clarify the role of urban design guidelines and in some cases, strengthen them. Stakeholders suggested that if elements of the City's various urban design guidelines became policy, they should be supported by clear definitions and/or measurable standards to ensure that their intent was clear. Some members of the development industry did not agree with including measurable standards in the Official Plan.

ii. **Recognizing that large and deep lots need additional planning**

Feedback around large sites which have recently been developed through a master planning approach, such as the Shops at Don Mills and Regent Park, was generally positive and the new streets, parks, community facilities and open spaces achieved on these sites were valuable additions to Toronto's favourite places. Feedback supports the development of draft policies to identify key criteria and considerations for these types of lots to achieve complete communities.

iii. **Refining the Avenue policies and Map 2 Urban Structure overlay**

Staff heard support for removing or changing the requirement for Avenue Segment Studies as part of the application process for developments on Avenues, as the use of the Performance Standards from the Avenues and Mid-Rise Buildings Study have reduced the need for these studies. However, feedback identified a desire for more comprehensive studies to be part of the application process to assess the capacity of servicing infrastructure to keep pace with intensification on the Avenues.

There was also support for a potential categorization of Avenues according to their appropriate scale and type of intensification and built form.

iv. **Promoting a walkable city**

There was broad support among the public and stakeholders for policies to encourage a walkable city in our many public places, streets, parks, ravines and open spaces. Improvements to make Toronto more walkable include the use of wider sidewalks, fine grained uses at ground level and streetscape improvements. In particular, feedback was supportive of creating comfortable wind conditions at ground level and limiting shadow impacts on streets, parks and open spaces.

A common theme of this discussion was the need to recognize that Toronto is a winter city and should be designed to encourage walking during the colder months.

2. Prioritizing the Public Realm

v. **Clarifying the role of the public realm**

The public realm is comprised of the City's shared assets, including streets, laneways, parks, open spaces and public buildings. Stakeholder and participants in the public consultation process overwhelmingly understood that the public realm is an important city asset and the organizing element of Toronto. Consultation outcomes indicated that development has a responsibility to create new public realm through setbacks and other open spaces and that buildings have a responsibility to promote safety and overlook to public places and promote pedestrian comfort

Feedback indicated that there are many public projects and large site redevelopments that are contributing to creating a new high quality public realm, such as along the waterfront, but that privately-led projects and projects outside of the Downtown may not be achieving as high a quality public realm as they should.

vi. **Clarifying the need for new public streets as parts of developments**

There was limited discussion related to the design of new public streets. However, staff did receive comments that policy clarification of when private streets might be considered would be helpful. Public feedback indicated that new streets as part of new developments provide opportunities for an improved public realm and increased connectivity, in particular to destinations such as parks, open spaces, transit stops, etc.

3. Guiding Built Form

vii. **Development criteria for low-rise developments and mid-rise buildings**

Throughout the consultations, concerns were raised about clarifying and defining important development criteria for low-rise and mid-rise building typologies (e.g., tower separation distance, shadow impacts, skyview, etc.). Participants questioned why the Official Plan contains policies for tall buildings, but not equivalent policy guidance on low and mid-rise developments.

viii. **Encouraging thoughtfully designed tall buildings**

Feedback on tall buildings focused on three major themes: the design of the ground levels / base of buildings; tower separation distances; and transition to low-rise neighbourhoods. The issues of tower separation distance and transition are key for improving sunlight penetration, sky-views and quality of life for people living within and surrounding these buildings.

Participants stressed the importance of designing the base of the building to ensure that it meets the street level in a way that creates a comfortable pedestrian environment, improves connectivity and is aesthetically pleasing.

Many participants also suggested that the importance of tower separation distances should be strengthened by translating some of the standards from guidelines into policy. However, members of the development industry voiced concern about introducing tower separation distances and other numerical guidelines in policy.

Residents raised the issue of tall buildings transitioning to low-rise neighbourhoods. Yonge and Sheppard was identified as a good example of appropriate transition – with taller buildings clustered near subway stations and building heights transitioning down as the distance from the subway station increases.

4. Enhancing Parks and Open Spaces

ix. Promoting public squares

Participants were generally supportive of a range of public spaces in Toronto, including public squares. Nathan Phillips Square, Dundas Square and Mel Lastman Square were identified as favourite squares in the city. Some participants commented that public squares are uncommon outside of the Downtown and could be appropriate in many other parts of the city as a way of creating more urban gathering places and bringing together Toronto's diverse population.

x. Maintaining sunlight on downtown signature parks and open spaces

Staff received supportive feedback on maintaining sunlight on parks and open spaces across the city. Participants also identified support for maintaining comfortable conditions in all parks and open spaces year round, including ensuring the achievement of: comfortable wind conditions; connectivity of the park system; and public safety.

xi. Promoting and increasing privately owned publicly-accessible spaces (POPS)

Consultation participants support the intent to provide more parks and open spaces. They felt that the role of POPS should be to supplement and connect public parks and open spaces. Participants emphasized that POPS should be designed so that they are inviting, inclusive and clearly understood as public space.

Next Steps and Draft Policies

The feedback received during the public consultation process has been valuable in informing, advancing and refining the work program underway on the urban design policies. The consultation has assisted staff to refine the work program towards the drafting of policies and has helped to identify policy directions which require further work prior to the drafting of policies for public consultation.

Attachment 1 summarizes key work to be undertaken for each of the policy directions in the four content clusters in order to complete the review and prepare draft policies, as well as an estimated timeline for completion. Staff recommend that draft policies be brought forward to Planning and Growth Management Committee in two phases. Phase 1 will be reported to Committee in the fourth quarter of 2015, while phase 2 will be reported out in 2016.

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Key Work to be Undertaken and Estimated Timeline for Completion of Draft Policies

Attachment 2: City of Toronto Official Plan Five-Year Review Urban Design Policy Review - Phase 1 Consultation Summary Report

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**Attachment 1: Key Work to be Undertaken and Estimated Timeline
for Completion of Draft Policies**

Policy Direction		Report to PGMC		Description of Policy to be Drafted / Work to be Undertaken
		Q4 2015	2016	
1. Seeing the bigger picture				
i	Providing the purpose and intent of urban design guidelines	•		Clarify that Urban Design Guidelines are Council-adopted documents to implement Official Plan policies. Review to determine if any guidelines should be elevated to policy status.
ii	Recognizing that large and deep lots need additional planning		•	Research additional considerations for how large sites connect and interface with their surrounding context. Determine size threshold for “large and deep” lots.
iii	Refining the Avenue policies and Map 2 Urban Structure overlay		•	Review the policies in Section 2.2.3 of the Official Plan and implement the recommendations of the Avenues and Mid-Rise Buildings Study, including the future role of Avenue Studies and segment studies. Review of the Avenues identified on Map 2, Urban Structure Map, of the Official Plan and their underlying Land Use Designations.
iv	Promoting a walkable city	•		Revise policies to emphasize connectivity, safety and high quality of public realm. Promoting public access to ravines / Lake Ontario.
2. Prioritizing the public realm				
v	Clarifying the role of the public realm	•		Describe the public realm in policy: what elements make up the public realm, who it is for, what purpose it serves, including laneways.
vi	Clarifying the need for new public streets	•		Continue to direct that new streets be required as part of development and that they should be public, while identifying limited situations where private streets would be considered.
3. Guiding built form				
vii	Development criteria for low-rise developments and mid-rise buildings		•	Additional policy guidance for low-rise and mid-rise developments, including policy direction on heights, where these forms are appropriate and design considerations. Research which development criteria, if any, should become policy. Review the Performance Standards from the Avenues and Mid-Rise Buildings Study and recommend policies for mid-rise buildings and public realm improvements in concert with i) below.
viii	Encouraging thoughtfully designed tall buildings		•	Policies could address tower separation distances, heights of base buildings, and/or step-backs at taller heights in concert with i) below. Research precedents from other jurisdictions.
4. Enhancing parks and open spaces				
ix	Maintaining Sunlight on Downtown Signature Parks and Open Spaces		•	Refine policies to protect parks and open spaces from shadows and uncomfortable winds. Research is needed to determine effective sunlight and wind mitigation techniques.
x	Promoting public squares	•		Identify public square as a type of public space.
xi	Protecting and increasing Privately Owned Publicly-Accessible Spaces	•		Define Privately Owned Publicly-Accessible Spaces (POPS) in policy, in support of POPS guidelines adopted by Planning and Growth Management Committee in its meeting on June 19, 2014.