

Chapter 6

Recommendations for implementation

The Vision and Regulations proposed through this study and discussed in the sections above have serious implications for the way in which Tall Buildings will be considered in the approval process in Toronto’s Downtown. It is beyond the mandate of the study to establish precisely how that should occur, however, during the course of this study we found an opinion as to how some of those changes might best be implemented to achieve the outcomes envisioned.

While development is likely to continue on a site specific basis in most cases, it is important to provide a level of certainty to land owners and to the community as to the outcomes that might be anticipated. The regulations which flow from this study will need to find their way into the existing policy framework that governs development Downtown. The notion that tall buildings should be “invited” or “encouraged” in those locations that are designated for tall buildings should govern the overall approach when creating the final regulatory framework. The consultant team recommends the following action items:

I. The Downtown Vision, and the individual High Street Visions should in our view form some part the Official Plan. They should provide a basis for considering any site specific rezoning application for a Tall Building not built as-of-right, and to that end the Maximum Height proposed for each street must find its way into the Official Plan. The City may wish to take the High Streets

Visions further than has been provided to include issues not addressed in the study or the sections of major streets not included in the High Streets segments. The recommendations concerning the shadowing of parks, the controlling of important views, and heritage matters in relation to Tall Buildings should also be woven into the Official Plan. There are other aspects of the Regulations and how they should be considered which should also find their way into Official Plan Policy, we have tried to indicate these where they are addressed in the text.

II. Key elements of the Vision and Regulations should be incorporated into the Zoning By-law. Most important are the Base Heights from the High Street Visions which should serve as a base zoning for the High Streets. In addition some key Regulations should also be included in the zoning, so that as-of-right development of tall buildings can occur as envisioned in this study, and so that each new development fosters improved quality of life for people living and working in the buildings, and using the public realm.

These Regulations are:

Regulation #1 requiring podiums that extend the length of the site on all street frontages;

Regulation #2 requiring minimum and maximum podium heights;

Regulation #4 requiring retail uses at grade along designated Priority Retail Streets;

Regulation #5 requiring grade-related non-residential uses associated with tall buildings to be at least 4.5m in height;

Regulation #9 requiring location and access of parking, loading, service areas, and utilities to be primarily on a lane or at the rear of the building so as not to conflict with pedestrian-oriented activities;

Regulation #10 requiring the maximum gross floor area per floor of tall building towers not to exceed 750 square metres;

Regulation #11 requiring a 3m front yard setback of the tower from the podium, for a minimum of 2/3 the face of the tower;

Regulation #12 requiring a minimum 10m setback of the tower from side and rear property lines, and a minimum spacing distance of 20m between two towers on the same site;

Regulation #13 outlining minimum lot sizes for tall building sites, and options for development on small sites;

Regulation #14 requiring tall building towers that are located adjacent to stable low rise residential areas to be set back 20m from adjacent property lines, with podiums massed to create a smooth transition; and

Regulation #16 requiring that tall buildings do not interrupt designated Landmark Views.

III. All Regulations should be incorporated into a Design Guidelines document for Downtown. Downtown is a unique part of the city and requires its own set of rules and regulations. This will require a special Downtown-specific revision to the City's Design Criteria for the Review of Tall Building Proposals.

IV. The study team strongly endorses the use of a Design Review Panel, with the purpose of reviewing site specific rezoning applications for tall buildings Downtown. Design Review Panels provide professional, objective advice on matters of design that affect the public realm, including the design of proposed buildings, streets, parks and open spaces as well as new urban design policy, in order to help achieve and uphold standards of design excellence. Design Review Panels are used successfully by many cities in Canada and internationally to improve the design quality of buildings and public spaces. Such a panel should advise City Council on how proposed buildings meet the Downtown Vision, the High Streets Visions and the Design Guidelines. Applications for tall buildings Downtown should be subject to a Design Review Panel.

V. The City may choose to require demonstration of compliance with some of the Regulations as part of the Complete Application Process and the Site Plan approvals process. In particular, the complete application requirements could include Regulation #15 regarding shadow impacts on designated parks and Regulation #16 regarding interruption of designated view corridors. Most of the requirements could be incorporated into the Site Plan requirements, including Regulations 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 14, 15, 16, and 17.

VI. The Downtown Vision relies in part on the opportunity to use Section 37 of the Planning Act. The proposed new height regime recognizes the value created by the difference as a tool to capture some of the value created by the difference between the As-of-right Height and the Maximum Height and use it for community benefits. If the As-of-right Heights do not replace the height limits currently in the zoning by-law as suggested in II above, the same effect could also be achieved through an area-specific Section 37 implementation policy in the Official Plan. Such a policy would explicitly state that upon exceeding the As-of-right Heights, Section 37 community benefits would come into play.

VII. The recommendations in this report are intended to bring about clarity and confidence for the future development of tall buildings in the Downtown. Toronto's Downtown has historically been at the vanguard of architectural excellence and it is vital to the city's success that this tradition be continued and fostered.

Tall buildings come with greater civic responsibilities and obligations than other types of development. One such responsibility is the need to achieve architectural and urban design excellence. The City must continue to seek ways in which to recognize merit in architecture, such as the Urban Design Awards (and potentially architectural awards), Design Review Panels, and Urban Design Guidelines. Only through creating an environment where great architecture is rewarded through the approval process will it become accepted by landowners as a necessary part of undertaking development in Toronto's Downtown. It is for this reason that establishing a Design Review Panel is so important. Great architecture requires informed criticism and great buildings define great urban places.



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Mike Mizzi, Past Manager Community Planning

Eric Pedersen, Program Manager Urban Design

James Parakh, Urban Design

Mark Van Elsberg, Urban Design

Myron Boyko, Urban Design

Carolyn Humphreys, Program Manager
Graphics and Visualization

Al Rezoski, Acting Manager, Community Planning

Barbara Leonhardt, Past Director, Policy and Research

Peter Langdon, Project Manager, Policy and Research

Lynda MacDonald, Manager, Community Planning

Eno Rebecca Udoh, Past Urban Design

Joanna Kimont, Community Planning

Frank Fortunato, Graphics and Visualization

Peggy Lee, Graphics and Visualization

Joe D'Abramo, Acting Director
Zoning By-law and the Environment

Tom Ostler, Manager Policy and Research

Bill Warren, Policy and Research

Scott Barrett, Senior Co-ordinator
Heritage Preservation Services

South District Community Planning Staff

