



John Tory
Mayor

September 30, 2019

Chair and Members
Planning and Housing Committee
City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Chair and Members:

Re: Focusing on Building Design Improvements

Summary

Toronto is a global centre for architectural, planning and design talent. However, the city hasn't always tapped into these vast resources as effectively as we could. With these initiatives and several others I am interested in pursuing, I hope to unlock and activate architects, landscape architects, planners and students in these disciplines to help build a more beautiful and engaging city.

This summer, my office along with Deputy Mayor Bailao and Councillor Bradford hosted a meeting of international talent from the development, architecture and planning communities to help generate ideas to shape a city we can be proud of. We learned from this meeting that we must consider design in our policy development and procurement and, employ open and transparent competitions whenever possible.

The international design competition for the Etobicoke Civic Centre and the Design Review Panel were pointed to as an examples of where the city got it right. With these recommendations in this letter I hope we can expand on our successes and build a culture within the City that embraces the best this city and the world have to offer.

The Design Review Panel represents some of Toronto's leading designers, architects and landscape architects who volunteer their time to help guide significant developments in our city. We must review the Panel's mandate and give the experts on the panel a chance to regularly report publically so that we can learn from their expert opinions.

Finally, we know that we must look for ways to add density to low-rise residential areas in a way that will enhance neighbourhoods and be embraced by neighbours. To do this effectively we have to ensure new zoning regulations and guidelines are aesthetically exciting as well as functional. I am calling for an open ideas competition to gather the ideas from the public and particularly students, young designers and experts to help us shape the new, more permissive policies Council will consider.

Recommendation

1. City Council direct the Chief Planner and Executive Director of City Planning include in its upcoming report to the Planning and Housing Committee on the Missing Middle, a plan for a public design competition in order to solicit ideas that could help shape policies for more permissive zoning in areas designated as neighbourhoods in Toronto's Official Plan.
2. City Council request the Board of CreateTO work with the CEO of CreateTO in order to employ open and international design competitions for major and transformational projects in which it is the lead developer.
3. City Council direct the Chief Planner and Executive Director of City Planning, as part of existing and ongoing consultations in recently developed higher density neighbourhoods, include questions that solicit feedback on the cumulative impact of design guidelines and policies on the daily lives of residents.
4. City Council invite the Chair of the Design Review Panel to provide an annual letter to Planning and Housing Committee to summarize any relevant observations, suggestions and themes in the applications the panel has reviewed.
5. City Council direct the Chief Planner and Executive Director of City Planning to work with the Chair of the Design Review Panel to review the mandate of the panel and make recommendations for revision, and report to the Planning and Housing Committee in Q2 2021.

John Tory
Mayor of Toronto