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

Prepared by Lura Consulting and Perkins+Will for:
The City of Toronto

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This summary report was prepared by Lura Consulting. Lura is providing third-party consultation management services, in partnership with Perkins+Will, for Phase I of the Urban Design Policy Consultations undertaken as part of the City of Toronto’s Five-Year Official Plan Review. This summary report captures the feedback from the consultation program implemented between October and December 2014. If you have any questions or comments regarding the summary, please contact:

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The City of Toronto is conducting a Five-Year Official Plan Review as required by Section 26 of the Planning Act. As a staged review, City Planning staff are reviewing the following policy areas: Transportation, Environment, Neighbourhoods, Apartment Neighbourhoods, Housing and Urban Design. Urban design is the process by which we create beautiful, vibrant, safe and inclusive places where people want to live, work, play and learn. "Urban Design Matters" was the branding approach applied for the Phase 1 consultation on urban design.

The City of Toronto retained Lura Consulting and Perkins+Will in the Fall of 2014, to provide independent consultation and facilitation services for Phase I of the Urban Design Policy Review as part of the Official Plan Review. This report provides an overview of the consultation process and summarizes the feedback obtained during the consultations. The consultation program consisted of roundtable meetings with 11 stakeholder groups, four Public Open Houses (one in each Community Planning district), one public forum, 11 pop-up events and an online survey. Through all of these events, over 2,300 Torontonians participated in Phase I of the Urban Design Policy Consultations.

Between October and December 2014, the consultation process sought to engage Torontonians and interested stakeholders in a discussion on Official Plan policies and concepts related to urban design. The City's Planning and Growth Management Committee endorsed eleven policy directions to form the basis of the consultation program. The policy directions were categorized into four themes: (1) Seeing the bigger picture; (2) Prioritizing the public realm; (3) Guiding built form; and (4) Enhancing parks and open spaces.

Another goal of the Phase I consultation on urban design was to increase knowledge and understanding of urban design in the general public. A more informed public is a more engaged public, as the more people understand about Urban Design and city building, the better equipped people are to participate in the planning process and the better the outcomes will be. The major capacity building component of the Phase I consultation was the Urban Design Forum, which was attended by approximately 300 people, and engaged Torontonians in a discussion about why Urban Design matters.

A wide range of communication and engagement tools – including a project website, media releases, newsletters, e-updates, social media, discussion guides, an online questionnaire and community asset mapping – were used to encourage broad participation and obtain feedback on the proposed policy directions.

The consultation program was designed to achieve participation from a diverse set of audiences and interests (including land development, urban design, architecture, landscape architecture, and business associations, as well as community groups and residents), and to ensure that those who chose to participate are able to see their feedback accurately documented for consideration by City staff in the development of the draft urban design policies.

Highlights of the feedback collected during the consultation process are summarized below and organized according to the four categories and eleven policy directions:
A. 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

The intent of the first policy direction (i.e., to clarify the purpose, while at the same time, strengthening the role of the City’s urban design guidelines) was well received and supported by the majority of stakeholders and the public. There was consensus among stakeholders that the Official Plan urban design policies need to be both defensible at the Ontario Municipal Board (i.e., have “teeth”) and flexible (i.e., allow for architectural creativity). Stakeholders also agreed that prescriptive policies should be the foundation of the urban design policy framework to prioritize and regulate elements that are essential to achieve quality urban design (e.g., the pattern of blocks, streets and open spaces) and protect the quality of life of current and future Torontonians. However, some level of flexibility is required to permit the natural evolution of the City as it grows, accommodate nuances that arise during the development of complex projects and to encourage design creativity.

Whether the policies are prescriptive or not, consultation participants also noted the need to ensure they are applied consistently and in coordination with other City policies. There was also support to elevate some measurable standards contained within various city-wide urban design guidelines into Official Plan policies in order to strengthen their weight and importance. Stakeholders and participants were also generally supportive of the need for a comprehensive master planning approach to guide development on larger sites.

Regarding the Avenue policies, feedback supported further study of the City's Avenues to identify and categorize the Avenues according to their appropriate scale and type of intensification and built form. Feedback also identified the need for studies to assess the capacity of existing infrastructure to keep pace with intensification on the Avenues.

Participants spoke at length on the importance of walkability as a design consideration; a long list of the elements that provide visual interest and contribute to a comfortable pedestrian environment was compiled based on feedback received and documented.

B. Prioritizing the Public Realm

v. Clarifying the role of the public realm

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

The public realm is comprised of the City’s shared assets, including streets, parks, open spaces and public buildings. The public realm was understood and accepted by both stakeholders and participants as the organizing element of the City’s environment. Feedback obtained through the consultation activities revealed a range of favourite places and spaces, including a range of buildings, streets, neighbourhoods, public squares and parks, highlighting the diversity of special places in Toronto and the importance of the public realm. Consultation participants agree that the design of where buildings meet the public realm should be prioritized through policy to achieve greater connections.

Comments also indicated that while quality urban design can be observed in new public initiatives, particularly on the waterfront, (e.g., East Bayfront, West Don Lands, Sherbourne Common, Corktown Common), participants generally felt this could be improved upon in privately-led projects (with some
exceptions), older neighbourhoods and areas outside the downtown, particularly in pedestrian areas and the transition areas between new and existing developments.

There was significant interest in how urban design policies and guidelines can be used to improve existing public streets. Feedback suggested modifying existing public streets, and identifying laneways across the city that can play a role in increasing the amount of open space available to pedestrians, particularly in areas experiencing intensification. A discussion with the Waterfront Design Review Panel emphasized the importance of the City’s ravine systems and the concession grid as unique and defining structures that are unique to Toronto.

**C. Guiding Built Form**

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

Participants referenced a range of building as positive precedents – from low, and mid-rise to tall buildings when asked about their favourite buildings at public open houses and pop-up events, highlighting the importance of a diverse built form and scale in the City. Feedback also revealed a consensus about the need to clarify and define important development criteria for low-rise and mid-rise building typologies (e.g., including a range of building heights, shadow impacts, skyview, angular planes, etc.).

Recurring feedback indicated that the relationship between the base of a building and how it meets the sidewalk with active ground floor uses, setbacks, step-backs, building materials, architectural features, landscaping, etc., is important regardless of building height. This demonstrates the significance of the public realm and how buildings interface with the surrounding public realm. Recurring comments also identified the importance of transition in scale around tall buildings and mid-rise buildings, particularly near established low-rise neighbourhoods, given that changes in building height impact actual and perceived pedestrian comfort and safety.

Several stakeholders identified the need to accommodate increased residential populations with sufficient social services (e.g., schools, community centres, parks and open spaces etc.) and infrastructure (e.g., public transit, sewer capacity, etc.). Feedback also noted that the character of Toronto’s diverse residential neighbourhoods and arterial roads should be respected and maintained. As such, urban design policies and guidelines should be flexible enough to account for different histories, cultures, and neighbourhood characteristics (e.g., downtown vs. North York).

**D. Enhancing Parks and Open Spaces**

- ix. Protecting and increasing privately owned publicly-accessible spaces
- x. Promoting public squares
- xi. Maintaining sunlight on Downtown signature parks and open spaces

Participants value the diverse range of Toronto’s parks and open spaces for the spontaneous and programmed opportunities they provide (e.g., recreation, social interaction, cultural activities, etc.). Feedback indicated a preference for public parks as few public squares were explicitly mentioned by participants (e.g., Nathan Phillips Square, Mel Lastman Square and Dundas Square). Participants also articulated the importance of maximizing sunlight in all public spaces, not only parks. Feedback also stressed that while maintaining access to sunlight is important, overall comfort throughout the year, including mitigating uncomfortable wind conditions, particularly during the winter and shoulder
seasons, should be considered through urban design interventions and policies (e.g., awnings, building form and scale, etc.).

There was consensus among consultation participants about the need for policies to protect pedestrian comfort in all parks across the city, not only those identified as "signature parks" in the downtown. Feedback obtained through consultation activities also highlighted the need for policies to support the creation of new parks and open spaces, enhance existing parks and open spaces, and increase connectivity between them. Ravines were also seen as an important part of the Parks system and how they are accessed and connected to surrounding neighbourhoods. Recurring feedback also emphasized that parks and open spaces should be enhanced to be safe and inclusive while meeting the needs of Toronto’s diverse and multi-cultural population (regardless of gender, ethnicity, income, age, physical abilities, etc.).

While consultation participants support the intent to provide more parks and open space, they felt that privately owned publicly-accessible spaces (POPS) should supplement and complement the City’s network of public parks and open spaces, not replace them. Feedback also noted that POPS should be designed as part of a connected public realm that is accessible and clearly understood as public space.

E. Other Comments

Consultation participants also provided feedback regarding on-going engagement and consultation practices, the benefit of pilot projects, and opportunities to meet parking requirements through flexible arrangements.

Additional detail on the feedback under each policy direction is provided in Section 3 of this report. Section 4 of the report provides a summary of suggested refinements to the proposed policy directions that emerged from the consultation process.

The feedback summarized in this report will inform City Planning staff as they revise existing policies and draft new urban design policies for City Council's consideration in 2015.
1. Introduction

A. Background

The City of Toronto is conducting a Five-Year Official Plan Review as required by Section 26 Planning Act. This review is required to ensure that Official Plans are consistent with matters of provincial interest and policy statements, among other matters.

Toronto’s current Official Plan was adopted by Council in 2002, approved by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing in 2003, and brought into force and effect by the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) in June 2006. The City began its Official Plan Review process in May 2011. The Official Plan Review is taking place in a staged manner.

The first stage of the Official Plan Review focused on information gathering:
- Public engagement during Stage 1 was conducted to collect initial observations and ideas on planning in Toronto. Consultations were conducted in Fall 2011 and included online engagement, stakeholder roundtable meetings and six public open houses.
- Information gathering also included research on growth trends and studies on specific topics like heritage and employment lands.

After the first stage of the Official Plan Review was completed, Council divided the review into two phases. The first phase would cover Official Plan policy areas which the City is required to review including heritage, employment lands, and transportation policies. The second phase includes policy areas which are not required by statute to be included in the review.

Since the Official Plan Review was initiated in 2011, City Council adopted Official Plan Amendments to the following areas: Heritage, Housing, Economic Health and Employment Lands Policies and Designations. City Council has also considered draft policies for public consultation on Transportation, Neighbourhoods and Apartment Neighbourhoods and the Environment. This particular process was focused on policies related to urban design.

Urban design is an essential component of great city building and is fundamental to achieving the Official Plan goals. In August 2014, the Planning and Growth Management Committee considered a report from the Chief Planner proposing eleven policy directions to be used as the basis for consultation and inform revisions to, or the introduction of, new urban design policies. The proposed policy directions can be classified 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. The policy directions arose out of initial public consultations in 2011, internal consultation with Community Planning, Urban Design, and Public Realm staff, a review of City Council directions and an analysis of a number of Ontario Municipal Board decisions.
B. Purpose of Phase I Urban Design Policy Consultations

The objective of the urban design policy review is to strengthen and clarify the existing policy framework. Phase I of the engagement process sought to obtain stakeholder and public feedback on the policy directions. Based on the feedback received during Phase I, City staff will prepare draft urban design policies, which will be the subject of a second phase of consultations in 2015. The urban design policies will also need to be updated to reflect the revised Provincial Policy Statement, 2014 and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.

Another goal of the Phase I consultation on urban design was to increase knowledge and understanding of urban design in the general public. A more informed public is a more engaged public, as the more people understand about Urban Design and city building, the better equipped people are to participate in the planning process and the better the outcomes will be. The major capacity building component of the Phase I consultation was the Urban Design Forum, which was attended by approximately 300 people, and engaged Torontonians in a discussion about why Urban Design matters.

The approach taken for community and stakeholder engagement was to ensure that key stakeholder groups with an interest in urban design, as well as the general public, had an opportunity to provide feedback on the urban design policy directions. The consultation approach was designed to achieve participation from a diverse set of audiences and interests (including land development, urban design, architecture, landscape architecture associations, business associations, and community groups and residents), as well as individuals who normally would not participate in traditional public meeting formats. A key objective was also to ensure that those who chose to participate are able to see their feedback accurately documented for consideration by City staff in the draft urban design policies.

The community and stakeholder engagement process was guided by the following broad objectives:

- Provide an inclusive approach to stakeholder and resident engagement so that all Torontonians and key stakeholder groups have the opportunity to participate;
- Present the policy directions in easy-to-understand and accessible language and graphics using a mix of traditional consultation methods and online tools;
- Integrate creative, innovative and informal consultation techniques to encourage broad participation and to reach new audiences; and
- Utilize highly graphic presentation materials to demonstrate and communicate policy in a way that is accessible and attractive to a range of audiences.
C. Report Contents

This report provides a description of the consultation activities undertaken as part of Phase I of the Urban Design Policy Directions Consultations, as well as a summary of the feedback received during the consultation process. Section 2 provides an overview of the consultation process, the various consultation activities used to reach and engage different audiences, and the communication and promotional tactics used to encourage participation. A summary of participant feedback is provided in Section 3 organized according to the four content clusters, while Section 4 provides a summary of suggested refinements to the proposed policy directions that emerged from the consultation process. Next steps in the Official Plan Review process as it relates to urban design are outlined in Section 5.
2. Consultation Process Overview

A. Consultation Process

Consultations on the urban design policy directions took place between October and December 2014. To ensure a well-rounded, inclusive, and accessible consultation process, a multi-faceted approach was taken, targeting key stakeholders and the general public through a number of different mechanisms.

The following diagram provides an overview of the consultation process and timing. Each component is described in greater detail on the next page.

Figure 1 - Consultation Process Overview Infographic
B. Communication and Promotional Tactics

 Project Website

A dedicated Urban Design Matters webpage (http://bit.ly/1IqhUiM) on the City of Toronto’s website acted as a landing spot for all information related to the urban design policy consultations undertaken as part of the Official Plan Review. The website included an overview of the process, all documents and resources related to the process, information about opportunities to get involved, and offered an opportunity to provide feedback directly through the site.

 Social Media

Twitter was used to promote the public consultation events, as well as increase awareness and encourage participation. Tweets from both @CityPlanTO, @luraconsulting, and project team members were posted in advance of consultation events, and during the public open houses, forum and pop-up events. Members of the public were encouraged to participate – via the project website, social media or by attending face-to-face consultation events. The project hashtag #opreview was used on all tweets to encourage discussion and track participation.

 Public Notice/Invitation

Public notices, electronic newsletters, and invitations were utilized to promote public and stakeholder awareness of upcoming consultation events. They included:

- An invitation flyer was sent to professional organizations as well as planning and architecture schools in Toronto;
- The invitation flyer was sent to 400 neighbourhood residents’ associations; and
- An e-mail or letter with the notice was sent to almost 3000 people who have participated in other Official Plan Review events.

 Media Advertising

Several formal notices were published to complement the promotional tactics described above to inform members of the public about consultation and engagement opportunities. They included:

- An advertisement for the public consultation process was placed in the Toronto Star;
- An advertisement for the public consultation process was run on the Spacing Toronto website (spacing.ca/toronto), which ran between October 14th to November 14th; and
- An advertisement for the public consultation process was included in the October 17th and 24th City of Toronto editions of Novae Res Urbis (NRU) (http://www.nrupublishing.com/).
Other Promotional Activities

Two additional promotional strategies were employed to encourage broad participation in the consultation process. They were:

- Several City Councillors provided notice of consultation activities in their email newsletters; and
- The Toronto Reference Library promoted the public consultations in a blog post and posted the invitation flyer in their urban affairs section.

Copies of materials used to promote the consultation process can be found in Appendix A.
C. Consultation Resources

A number of resources were developed to facilitate participation in the consultation process. These resources were made available on the project website and at the public open houses and public forum. An overview of each is provided below.

❖ Discussion Guide

A discussion guide was developed to encourage and collect feedback on the proposed urban design policy directions. The discussion guide outlined the policy directions, session agenda, and discussion questions. It was intended to provide participants with a focused tool for learning about the policy directions and providing feedback. The discussion guide was provided to participants at the public open houses and forum and was also available on the project website as an online questionnaire. A total of 60 completed discussion guides and online questionnaires were submitted by participants.

A modified version of the discussion guide was used at Pop-Up Events to collect feedback about participants’ favourite places in the City of Toronto. A total of 510 truncated discussion guides were submitted as part of the pop-ups.

Copies of the discussion guides used to capture participant feedback can be found in Appendix B.

❖ Overview Presentation

A twenty-minute presentation was developed by Perkins+Will and City Planning staff to provide an overview of the urban design policy directions, which was delivered at the public open houses. The presentation was highly graphical and provided imagery from other cities that reflected the relevant policy directions. A PDF version of the presentation is available through the project website, at the following address: http://bit.ly/1iDAJG

A modified presentation was delivered at the stakeholder roundtable.
Open House Panels

Informational panels were developed by Perkins+Will and City Planning staff to provide an overview of the each policy direction and provided participants the opportunity to write their ideas and comments on sticky notes and paste them directly on the panels. The panels were designed with evocative imagery and easy-to-understand language to help promote discussions on urban design concepts. The panels also included selected excerpts from the Official Plan to demonstrate how the current and in-force policies and urban design guidelines currently address the policy direction presented on the panel.

These panels were on display at the public open houses and are available for viewing on the project website, at the following address: http://bit.ly/1DG8Qpc. The panel titles were:

1. What is an Official Plan?
2. The Official Plan Influences City Life
3. Urban Design Guidelines
4. Master Planning for Large and Deep Sites
5. Pedestrian Realm
6. Reurbanizing Avenues
7. Public Realm
8. Complete Streets
9. Low-Rise
10. Mid-Rise
11. Tall Buildings
12. Sunny Public Places
13. Public Squares
14. POPS (Privately Owned Publicly-Accessible Spaces)

Figure 5 – Open House Panels
D. Consultation Activities

❖ Stakeholder Roundtables

Face-to-face meetings were conducted with key stakeholder groups with a personal or professional interest in urban design practice, policies, and outcomes. The purpose of these meetings was to brief stakeholders on the urban design policy directions, and to solicit feedback to help inform the revisions to, or introduction of, Official Plan policies. The format of the meetings included an overview presentation, questions and answers, and a discussion about the urban design policy directions and any other matters relevant to the specific stakeholder group. Stakeholders were also given the opportunity to provide additional written comments for the consultant team’s consideration.

Meetings were held with the following groups and organizations and their representatives between October and December 2014:

- Building Industry and Land Development (BILD) – Toronto Chapter;
- City of Toronto Design Review Panel;
- Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) Design Review Panel;
- Mid-Rise stakeholders (comprised of the stakeholder group that participated in the 2010 Avenues & Mid-Rise Buildings Study);
- Park People (Toronto Alliance for Better Parks);
- Toronto Society of Architects;
- Toronto Association of BIAs (TABIA);
- Ontario Association of Landscape Architects (OALA);
- Waterfront Toronto Design Review Panel; and
- Confederation of Resident and Ratepayer Associations (CORRA) / Federation of North Toronto Residents Associations (FoNTRA).

A summary of each stakeholder roundtable can be found in Appendix C.

❖ Public Open Houses

Public open houses were hosted in each of the City’s four Community Planning Districts to present the urban design policy directions and obtain comments and feedback from participants. The format of the meetings was designed to encourage as much discussion as possible through a number of different methods:

- Discussion Guide – The discussion guide noted previously was distributed to each participant to guide them through the public open house. Participants were able to provide feedback by completing and submitting a comment form in the discussion guide.
- Open House Displays – Each session included informational panels on display that provided an overview of the urban design policy directions for participants to review at their own pace. City of Toronto Community Planning, Policy, and Urban Design staff were on hand to provide additional information, explain the policy directions, and listen to feedback on a one-on-one basis. Participants were also able to provide comments directly on the panels through the use of “sticky notes”.
- Presentation – A presentation was given by Noah Friedman of Perkins + Will that provided an overview of the urban design policy directions.
Questions of Clarification – Following the presentation participants were able to ask questions of clarification regarding the urban design policy directions that were not addressed in the presentation or through individual conversations during the open house component. Members of the consultant team or City staff provided responses.

Discussion Session – Approximately one-hour was allocated for further discussion about the policy directions. Discussions occurred either in small groups or as a plenary session, depending on the number of participants in attendance and were focused around the proposed urban design policy directions.

A total of four Public Open Houses were held across the City in the following locations:

- **Wednesday, October 29**
  North York Civic Centre
  Council Chambers
  5100 Yonge Street

- **Thursday, October 30**
  North Toronto Memorial Community Centre
  Multipurpose Room
  200 Eglinton Ave. W.

- **Wednesday, November 5**
  Scarborough Civic Centre
  Rotunda
  150 Borough Drive

- **Thursday, November 6**
  Etobicoke Civic Centre
  Council Chambers
  399 The West Mall

A summary of each open house meeting can be found in Appendix D.

Forum

An Urban Design Matters Forum was held at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) Auditorium on the evening of November 3rd at 6:30 pm. The forum featured four panelists: Harold Madi, Director of Urban Design, City of Toronto; Noah Friedman of Perkins+Will; David Pontarini of Hariri Pontarini Architects; and Meg Graham of superkül. The forum was designed as a capacity building and awareness raising event to generate interest and feedback through an interactive discussion about the importance of urban design matters and how the City of Toronto’s approach to urban design can be strengthened through the Official Plan Review process. According to trendsmap.com, during the forum the twitter #opreview hashtag was trending in Toronto.
Panelists were led through a facilitated discussion and asked to make connections between the policy directions and existing buildings and places. This approach allowed members of the audience to gain a better understanding of how and where urban design concepts are found across the city.

A summary of the panel discussion, including questions from the audience, can be found in Appendix E.

- **Pop-up Events**

A series of pop-up consultation events were organized across the city to reach out to the community residents who may not have otherwise attended one of the scheduled open house meetings. Venues were selected to target seniors, youth and newcomers, to ensure participation from a broad and diverse spectrum of the City’s population. Two activities – an interactive mapping exercise and a truncated discussion guide – were used to obtain feedback from participants.

Participants were entered into a prize draw to win an Urban Design Matters t-shirt and offered an Urban Design Matters button.

The Pop-up Events were held between November 19 and December 9, 2014 at 11 locations across the city. A list of the pop-up event locations is included in the promotional flyer in Appendix A, while summaries of the feedback obtained at each pop-up event can be found in Appendix F.

- **Online Engagement**

Concurrent with the above face-to-face engagement activities, online options were also available for the public to learn about the urban design policy directions and provide feedback. An overview of the tools used to engage the public online in the discussion is provided below.

- **Ideaspace** – Urban Design Matters was added as a discussion topic to IdeaSpaceTO, a new online engagement tool being used by the City to encourage public participation in city building and and planning. Participants were
invited to submit ideas to improve quality urban design in the city.

- **Twitter** – Twitter was used primarily as a mechanism to promote the public open houses, pop-up events and the online engagement opportunities. It was also used to encourage discussion and share ideas and comments through the use of the hashtag #OPreview.
- **Email** – a dedicated project email address – [opreview@toronto.ca](mailto:opreview@toronto.ca) – was available for written comments to be provided directly.

❖ **Summary of Participation**

The following infographic reflects the number of participants that were engaged through the Urban Design Matters consultation divided by type of engagement. The total number of people engaged through these processes was 2,304.

![Summary of Participation Infographic](image)

**Figure 9 - Summary of Participation Infographic**

![Outcomes of Community Asset Mapping Exercise](image)

**Figure 10 - Outcomes of Community Asset Mapping Exercise**
3. Summary of Participant Feedback

This section presents a summary of the feedback received through all engagement mechanisms. The summary of participant feedback is organized according to the eleven urban design policy directions and provides a high-level synopsis of the recurring comments, concerns and suggestions obtained during consultation activities. Detailed summaries from the stakeholder roundtables, public open houses, urban design forum and pop-up events are included in the appendices of this report.

A. Seeing the Bigger Picture

i. Providing the purpose and intent of urban design guidelines

The intent of the first policy direction (i.e., to clarify the purpose, while at the same time, strengthening the City’s urban design guidelines) was well received and supported by the majority of stakeholders and the public.

Feedback from several stakeholders suggested re-imaging the policies to ensure they are visionary and encouraged staff to be creative and forward thinking. There was consensus among stakeholders that the urban design policies within the Official Plan need to be both prescriptive (i.e., have “teeth”) and flexible. Stakeholders also agreed that prescriptive policies should be the foundation of the urban design policy framework to prioritize and regulate elements that are essential to achieve quality urban design (e.g., the pattern of blocks, streets and opens spaces). However, flexibility is required to permit the natural evolution of the City as it grows, accommodate nuances that arise during the development of complex projects and to encourage creativity. Several stakeholders cautioned that overly prescriptive policies may have the unintended effect of contributing to homogenous or generic public spaces and create barriers to quality urban design. Whether the policies are prescriptive or not, consultation participants noted the need to ensure they are applied consistently and in coordination with other City policies.

Stakeholders also expressed support to incorporate some measurable standards contained within urban design guidelines into Official Plan policies to strengthen their weight and clarify their importance and intent, although no specific examples were provided. If some aspects of the City’s urban design guidelines become policies, stakeholders noted they should be supported by clear definitions and rationales to provide context and clarify their intent. Members of the development community and rate-payers associations also suggested embedding elements of the urban design guidelines in the zoning bylaw to give them additional weight. Feedback from several stakeholder groups also suggested incorporating measurable standards or key performance indicators (KPIs) to assess the effectiveness of urban design policies and guidelines.

The development of enabling policies to achieve design excellence through complementary methods was also suggested as a means to strengthen the intent of urban design guidelines (e.g., include the City of Toronto Design Review Panel in the Official Plan).
ii. Recognizing that large and deep lots need additional planning

While few comments were received about this theme, those provided were generally supportive of the need for a master planning approach to guide development on larger sites. There appears to be some confusion about the connection between master planning and the Development Permit System (DPS) based on questions posed at the open houses, suggesting that this is not clearly understood by the public and additional capacity building measures would be required. Many of the City's recent large site redevelopments that were based on a master planning approach (e.g., Shops at Don Mills, Regent Park) were considered positive precedents by participants.

iii. Refining the Avenue policies

Regarding the Avenue policies, stakeholders from the development community understood that further study would be required if the City intends to categorize Avenues that are appropriate for different scales of buildings other than the 1:1 building height to street width ratio and to determine what level of intensification is appropriate. Feedback from residents' associations also identified the need for studies to assess the capacity of existing infrastructure to keep pace with intensification on the Avenues; they suggested the Avenue Segment Studies that are currently required by the Official Plan as part of the application process would be more useful if they evaluated infrastructure capacity (e.g., water, wastewater, transit, etc.) prior to determining the level of appropriate intensification. The need for height restrictions on Avenues or streets not targeted for intensification was also raised (e.g., Royal York Rd.).

iv. Promoting a walkable city

Walkability was identified as an important attribute by participants at public open houses, pop-up events and online feedback and supported in principle by the development community. Participants noted that the following urban design elements provide visual interest and contribute to a comfortable pedestrian environment, thereby encouraging walkability:

- Pedestrian-only streets;
- Diverse architectural styles and materials (e.g., brick, pavers, arcades, awnings, etc.);
- Inclusive and accessible design;
- Heritage and character buildings;
- Fine grain of uses at-grade;
- Wider sidewalks;
- Protecting view corridors and access to sunlight;
- Limiting wind and shadow impacts;
- Sunny parks and open spaces;
- Streetscape improvements (e.g., burying hydro lines);
- Connections to public transit and bike lanes;
- Context-appropriate built form (i.e., scale and height); and
- Street trees and landscaping.

Feedback and comments also highlighted the importance of factoring seasonal changes in weather, particularly winter conditions, into the design of public spaces to promote walkability. Recurring comments from participants identified uncomfortable wind conditions as a primary cause of discomfort in pedestrian areas and public places.
Participants also raised the importance of encouraging walkability in parts of the City outside the downtown, and in areas not necessarily identified for intensification, through public realm improvements.

Figure 11 - Favourite places in Toronto cited by consultation participants.
B. Prioritizing the Public Realm

v. Clarifying the role of the public realm

The public realm is comprised of the City’s shared assets and includes streets, parks, open spaces and public buildings. The significance of the public realm was understood and accepted by both stakeholders and participants as the organizing element of the City’s environment. Feedback obtained through the consultation activities revealed a range of favourite public places, including buildings, streets, neighbourhoods, public squares and parks, highlighting the diversity of special places in Toronto and the importance of the public realm. Consultation participants agree that where buildings meet the public realm should be prioritized through policy to achieve greater connectedness.

There was some agreement among stakeholders and the public that the City is achieving high quality design; however they felt there is still room for improvement. Comments revealed that while quality urban design can be observed in new public projects, particularly on the waterfront, (e.g., East Bayfront, West Don Lands, Sherbourne Park, Corktown Common), participants generally felt this could be improved upon in privately-led projects (with some exceptions), older neighbourhoods and areas outside the downtown, particularly in pedestrian areas and the transition areas between new and existing developments.

Public safety, inclusiveness, accessibility and affordability were frequently raised by stakeholders and participants as important issues that should be considered in the planning and design of public spaces to encourage walkability, social gathering and economic development and overall quality of life for all Torontonians (i.e., regardless of gender, ethnicity, age, income, abilities, etc.).

Stakeholders and participants offered many suggestions to improve the quality of the public realm in Toronto, including:

- Enforceable urban design policies, guidelines and standards;
- Creative “out of the box” planning and design solutions;
- Collaborative planning processes (i.e., proactively engage community members and residents);
- Require more fine grain of ground floor uses;
- Create comfortable pedestrian experiences (e.g., mitigate uncomfortable wind conditions);
- Planning for existing and future populations (e.g., seniors, youth, LGBT);
- Improve the public realm in areas outside the downtown;
- Contextually appropriate design; and
- Plan for year-round weather conditions.

Other comments from consultation participants included the need to clarify who is responsible for the public realm and what each stakeholder’s role is (i.e., City Planning Division, Business Improvement Areas, Transportation Services, etc.).

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

Stakeholders and participants agreed that streets are important public spaces that serve as transportation routes, linkages, connections and interfaces between public and private spaces. The streets favoured by participants were cited as appealing because of the features and functions that contribute to an inviting and comfortable pedestrian experience (e.g., wide sidewalks, street trees,
sunlight, fine grain uses and diverse architectural styles and materials). Many participants described how uses such as restaurants and stores along the edges of certain streets create a desire to visit these streets and contribute to Toronto’s character. While there was little feedback regarding the intent to clarify the need for new public streets, there was significant interest in how urban design policies and guidelines can be used to improve and modify existing streets.

Feedback suggested modifying existing public streets to increase the portion of the street to be used by pedestrians and for landscaping rather than just vehicles, particularly in areas experiencing intensification. Pedestrian zone projects on Gould Street (at Ryerson University) and Willcocks Street (at University of Toronto) were cited as successful examples of similar initiatives to achieve this end. Feedback from stakeholders and participants also noted that public streets, whether new or improved, should be designed with flexibility in mind to accommodate different uses (e.g., Market Street bollards that expand or narrow the right of way).

Some consultation participants suggested that public laneways should be recognized as an important element of the City’s public realm, given their potential to serve as shared spaces to accommodate multiple uses (e.g., fine-grained pedestrian connections, informal gathering spaces, linkages between parks and open spaces, etc.).

A few participants who attended the Scarborough District open house commented that there are few streets in Scarborough with a vibrant urban character that encourage pedestrian activity. Participants would like more pedestrian-friendly streets in areas outside the downtown and believe there is potential for some streets in these areas to become models of complete streets. It was also noted that streets and open spaces should better reflect the cultural identity of the community in which they are located.

Figure 12 - Favourite Toronto streets cited by consultation participants.
C. Guiding Built Form

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

Participants spoke of a range of styles of low-rise, mid-rise and tall buildings when asked at public open houses and pop-up events, highlighting the importance of the diversity of built form and scales in the City’s landscape. They cautioned against a “one-size-fits-all” policy approach that would result in a homogenous built environment and could result in buildings which do not fit within their neighbourhood.

There was some consensus among stakeholders about the need to re-examine and clarify development criteria for low-rise and mid-rise buildings. They agree there is a need to: establish urban design policies for low-rise developments (e.g., residential and industrial/commercial), identify how building heights are allocated; and a clear height for mid-rise buildings, which when exceeded becomes a tall building. Comments from ratepayers associations suggested the height of mid-rise buildings should be 80 percent of the adjacent right-of-way (ROW) instead of the current 1:1 ratio. Applications for buildings with heights between 80 to 100 percent of the ROW should require further consideration to determine whether the Mid-Rise or Tall Building Design Guidelines would apply based on the character of the neighbourhood and the context of the property (e.g., width of the lot and surrounding uses).

Conversely, feedback from the development community suggested that more work is needed to identify where building heights could exceed the 1:1 ratio on portions of certain Avenues. One member of the development community provided additional comments noting that the height limit should not be restricted to the 1:1 ratio. The maximum height for mid-rise buildings should also be permitted as-of-right and reflected in the Zoning By-law. Stakeholders from the development community also noted that urban design policies and guidelines pertaining to mid-rise buildings should be flexible to encourage diverse forms of this building typology to avoid architectural homogenization. They also raised the need to clarify and define sky-view and street proportion as urban design concepts, in reference to the Mid-Rise Performance Standards.

There was some interest amongst participants to include other standards from the Mid-Rise Performance Standards in the policies, i.e., the 45-degree angular plane for front and rear transitions.

Stakeholders from the development community also explained that administrative barriers within the planning process are limiting their interest in developing mid-rise buildings. As an example, the application process for mid-rise buildings often costs the same as applications for tall buildings; they also
require the same studies (e.g., wind, shadow impacts, etc.). There should be a streamlined process for smaller scale applications.

Feedback from stakeholders representing developers, architects and landscape architects also drew attention to new Provincial legislation taking effect on January 1, 2015 permitting the construction of wood frame buildings up to 6 storeys. They noted the need for policies or guidelines to incent the development of 6-storey wood frame buildings in appropriate areas of the City and to consider various implications of the new legislation (e.g., potential to add wood frame additions to existing buildings to a maximum of 6 storeys).

viii. Encouraging thoughtfully designed tall buildings

Comments from the development community stated that the current policy approach for tall buildings generally balances prescriptiveness with flexibility and works well. This approach should be extended to low-rise and mid-rise buildings.

Other stakeholders and consultation participants provided comments directed at policies that encourage thoughtfully designed tall buildings. Recurring feedback indicated that the relationship between the base of a building and how it meets the ground floor and public realm (e.g., creating new open spaces on sites, including setbacks ground floor uses, setbacks, step-backs from the base building, building materials, architectural features, landscaping, etc.) is important regardless of height and highlights the significance of the public realm. Feedback also suggested that guidelines pertaining to minimum tower separation distances should be incorporated within policy to prevent issues of privacy and overlook.

Recurring comments received across the city also identified the importance of transition in scale around tall buildings (and mid-rise buildings), particularly near established low-rise neighbourhoods. Participants felt these were necessary given that changes in building height impact actual and perceived comfort, safety and activity levels in the surrounding public realm. A few participants noted that this has been done well at Yonge St. and Sheppard Ave. (e.g., tall buildings are grouped near public transit and taper off in height as the distance away from the transit station increases).

Feedback from the Waterfront Toronto Design Review Panel (DRP) panelists suggested that all buildings should be thoughtfully designed, not only tall buildings. They also suggested that as mid-rise and tall buildings become the prevalent building typology in certain areas of the City, perhaps there should be a policy to regulate the first three to four storeys of new developments to increase space for a variety of non-residential uses. It was felt that bold is not a term that should be used to describe what is important about most buildings in the city, which should be beautifully and thoughtfully designed but be seen as fabric or background buildings that fit with their context rather than being bold.

Regardless of building height, several stakeholder groups – ratepayers’ associations, business associations, and women’s groups – expressed concerns about how new developments are being built across the city. They identified the need to align new development with existing social services and infrastructure to ensure they can accommodate increased residential populations. Members of both the City and Waterfront Toronto DRPs suggested using this policy review as an opportunity to think about the City’s structure more broadly (e.g., landscape urbanism, sustainability). The stakeholders identified above also noted that the character of Toronto’s diverse neighbourhoods and arterial roads should be respected and maintained; urban design policies and guidelines should be flexible enough to account for
different histories, and cultural identities, and neighbourhood characteristics. Stakeholders from the development community also noted the need to integrate standards for maintenance for all building types into the policies and guidelines. The importance of massing, affordability and heritage were also raised by participants.

Figure 14 - Favourite tall buildings in Toronto cited by consultation participants.
D. Enhancing Parks and Open Spaces

ix. Promoting public squares

Participants value the diverse range of Toronto’s parks and open spaces for the spontaneous and programmed opportunities they provide (e.g., recreation, social interaction, cultural activities, etc.). The concept of the public square was not understood well and feedback indicated a preference for public parks as few public squares were explicitly favoured by participants. The public squares that were identified were also the subject of both positive and negative comments (e.g., Nathan Phillips Square, Mel Lastman Square and Dundas Square). Feedback also suggested that the public square typology is more common in the downtown core. Residents from Scarborough and Etobicoke noted that there are few, if any, public squares or plazas in their communities with an urban character. Some residents felt this was acceptable as not all neighbourhoods in the City should be the same, while other participants indicated a need for more public squares or plazas with amenities (e.g., restaurants, cafes, etc.) with an urban character to serve as gathering spaces outside the downtown, particularly for young adults and to celebrate Toronto’s multicultural population.

x. Maintaining sunlight on downtown signature parks and open spaces

Feedback provided by participants articulated the importance of maximizing sunlight in all public spaces, not only parks. Feedback also stressed that while maintaining access to sunlight is important, overall comfort throughout the year, particularly during the winter and shoulder seasons, should be considered through urban design policies and guidelines (e.g., awnings, building form and scale, etc.). Several comments noted the importance of shade from trees to provide comfort during warmer seasons, highlighting a distinction between shadows cast by buildings and shade created by trees. Participants discussed how wind as well as sunlight can play an important role in determining whether it is comfortable to use a park, street or open space and questioned how the current process does not always deliver on providing sunny, wind free and comfortable streets, parks and open spaces.

There was consensus among consultation participants about the need for policies to protect pedestrian comfort in all parks, not only those identified as signature parks in the downtown. Feedback obtained through consultation activities also highlighted the need for policies to support the creation of new parks and open spaces, enhance existing parks and open spaces, and increase connectivity between them. Comments from members of the City of Toronto DRP identified the need for performance standards to proactively support the creation of new parks to keep pace with residential intensification in growth areas. The need for more well-designed parks was also noted (e.g., Canoe Landing Park).

There was consensus among consultation participants that parks and open spaces should be enhanced to be safe and inclusive while meeting the needs of Toronto’s diverse and multi-cultural population (regardless of gender, ethnicity, income, age, physical abilities, etc.). Feedback from consultation participants also emphasized the importance of connecting parks and open spaces, particularly the ravine system, to create a network of public spaces throughout the City that are easily accessible. Park advocates suggested linkages in the form of greenways, streets and laneways to increase connectivity.

Laneways were also highlighted for the potential opportunities they provide to increase greened open space available to residents (e.g., social gathering, alternate transportation routes for pedestrians and cyclists, etc.). The use of flexible park design policies that permit the conversion of under-utilized street segments into spaces for public use (permanently or seasonally) was also suggested.
xi. Promoting and increasing privately owned publicly-accessible spaces

While consultation participants support the intent to provide more parks and open space, they felt that privately owned publicly-accessible spaces (POPS) should complement the City’s network of public parks and open spaces, not replace them. Park advocates and ratepayers’ associations both support the addition of policies that encourage the creation of POPS, but emphasized their role should be to supplement public parks and open space. Feedback also noted that POPS should be planned and designed as part of a connected public realm that is accessible and clearly understood as public space. Members of the ratepayers’ associations also suggested promoting, increasing and securing POPS through easements on title to ensure they serve as public space as intended over the long-term.

Recurring feedback from participants also stated the need for policies that speak to the relationship between POPS and adjacent buildings, streets or sidewalks that welcome public use through inclusive and inviting design principles (e.g., signage, seating, etc.). The majority of participants commented they would use POPS, particularly employees in the downtown core; however a few participants were skeptical about private ownership and stated they might not use them. Comments from development industry stakeholders noted that while they recognize the value of creating positive synergies between the private and public realms, POPS should be carefully considered on a site-specific basis as they are not appropriate or feasible on all development sites.

Figure 15 - Favourite parks in Toronto cited by consultation participants.
E. Other Comments

❖ Parks, Open Space & Ravines

Feedback from consultation participants also emphasized the importance of connecting parks and open spaces, particularly the ravine system, to create a network of public spaces throughout the City. Park advocates suggested a wide variety of forms for these linkages including greenways, streets, walkways, and public laneways to increase connectivity.

The City's ravine system was discussed as a much loved and important part of Toronto's unique character. Policies which would support: connecting the disconnected ravines, improving connections into the ravines and making the edges of the ravines more public, were encouraged. One panelist at the forum made the analogy that hills are to San Francisco as ravines are to Toronto.

Public laneways were also highlighted for the potential opportunities they provide to increase the amount of parks and open space available to residents (e.g., social gathering, alternate transportation routes, etc.). The use of flexible street design policies that permit the conversion of underutilized street segments into spaces for public use (permanently or seasonally) was also suggested.

❖ Engagement and Consultation

Consultation participants articulated the need to collaborate and engage other City departments in the review of the City’s urban design policies to promote consistency and coordination as well as a shared understanding of the policy objectives. Recurring feedback from both stakeholders and members of the public also emphasized the need to improve how members of the public are engaged in the planning process. Key comments include revising how materials are presented to make them more accessible and to provide a better sense of how proposed changes may be implemented (e.g., plain language, three-dimensional images, fly-throughs). Stakeholders from ratepayers’ associations also suggested providing more time between reports to the Planning and Growth Management Committee and statutory public meetings to review materials and provide comments. Participants also raised the importance of engaging residents in the development of new buildings adjacent to or near established residential areas.

❖ Pilot Projects

Several stakeholders and participants encouraged the use of pilot or demonstration projects to broaden and increase awareness about ongoing or recently completed projects that serve as positive examples of high quality urban design in Toronto.

❖ Parking

Members of the development community identified the need to coordinate with the Toronto Parking Authority (TPA) to develop consistent standards for underground parking to provide flexibility in terms of parking requirements. Parking was also raised by stakeholders representing business improvement areas who suggested replacing on-street parking with commercial parking spaces within new developments would make space available within the public realm for other uses (e.g., bike lanes, wider sidewalks, boulevard cafes).
4. Next Steps

Feedback obtained on the urban design policy directions will be used by City Planning staff to revise the existing urban design policies and introduce new policies within the Official Plan where appropriate. The draft policies and consultation results summarized in this report will be presented to the Planning and Growth Management Committee in 2015.

Phase II of the urban design policy consultations will seek feedback on the draft urban design policies, prior to City Council's consideration.