

**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (WORKING SESSION) MAY 8, 2007**

**VAUGHAN URBAN DESIGN AWARDS  
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**Recommendation**

The Commissioner of Planning and the Commissioner of Economic/Technology Development and Communications recommends:

1. THAT changes to the current City of Vaughan Urban Design Awards program as identified in this staff report, BE APPROVED;
2. THAT the recommended changes to the Urban Design Awards program commence with the 2008 Urban Design Awards;
3. THAT the Urban Design Awards program and gala hosting budget for the 2008 Urban Design Awards be included in the Development Planning Department's 2008 operating budget, and that a request be referred to the 2008 budget deliberations; and
4. THAT staff pursue corporate sponsors for the 2008 Urban Design Awards.

**Economic Impact**

The funding requirement associated with the Urban Design Awards program and gala hosting for the 2008 Urban Design Awards includes: poster design, printing, brochure and application, judges honorarium, awards, jury report design, venue, food, rentals and audio/video). The total budget for the 2008 Urban Design Awards event is estimated to be approximately \$25,000. However, should Council approve to promote corporate sponsorship of the 2008 Urban Design Awards, the funding requirement could be reduced.

**Communications Plan**

To promote the 2008 Urban Design Awards, City staff will advertise through posters to be placed in various public facilities throughout the City. The awards gala will also be advertised on the City of Vaughan's "City Page", as well as the corporate web site. In addition, an informational brochure and application form will be available to the building industry and design professionals when development applications are submitted.

**Purpose**

This report has been prepared in response to Council's request that the Development Planning Department review and evaluate the current Urban Design Awards program, and recommend changes to meet the needs of the development industry and establish appropriate categories and criteria to fully recognize the wide range of urban design projects that are currently being implemented in the City of Vaughan.

**Background - Analysis and Options**

The City of Vaughan initiated the Urban Design Awards in 1992, to promote excellence in urban design, architecture and landscape architecture, and to help recognize the development of the built environment and its contribution to the overall quality of life for the residents and businesses of the community.

In June 2006, the Development Planning Department conducted a survey of the surrounding GTA municipalities to determine the process that they use for their Urban Design Awards program. The municipalities that were surveyed included Markham, Mississauga, Brampton, Oakville and Toronto.

Each municipality had a similar process, however, the judging categories, the frequency of the event and the makeup of jurors on the judging panels varied with each municipality. The survey results on each municipality is provided below:

a) Town of Markham

The Town of Markham's Design Excellence Awards program is presented every other year to recognize and promote excellence in urban design. The 9 member jury consists of 3 landscape architects, 2 architects, 2 planners, the Commissioner of Development Services, and the Chairman of the Development Services Committee.

The jury determines one Design Excellence Award winner in each of six categories (best of category) listed below:

- Town-Wide Significance
- Community-Wide Significance
- Neighbourhood-Wide Significance
- Innovation and Creativity
- Quality of Execution
- People's Choice Design Award

In addition to the selection of Design Excellence Award winners, the jury also presents Awards of Merit to projects and consultants that have generally shown a good interpretation of relevant urban design guidelines, and an above average execution and quality of architectural detail with a creative massing of built form. The number of awards is at the discretion of the jury members.

b) City of Mississauga

The City of Mississauga's Urban Design Awards program was initiated in 1982 and is generally presented on an annual basis (dependent upon sufficient number of potential projects) to recognize outstanding projects that achieve the highest standards in urban design excellence. The 5 member jury consists of 2 architects, 1 landscape architect, the Commissioner of Planning and Building, and a member of City Council.

The jury gives 2 types of awards, being an Award of Excellence and an Award of Merit; however, there may not be an award winner for every category. The number and type of awards is at the discretion of the panel of jurors. Project submissions are assessed by the jury panel according to the following criteria:

- Significance – City Wide Scale: Contribution to the City design objectives related to City image, visual identity, vistas, skyline, streetscapes, recognition of sites and location opportunities.
- Significance – Community Wide Scale: Contribution to the quality of environment within a community which demonstrates a regard for the context of the locale, enhancing a sense of place and personal safety or reinforcing a unique history.
- Innovation: The degree of creative response to program requirements, site constraints and ability to influence trends.
- Context: The relationship or blending of built forms and spaces with existing and planned development, and respect for and enhancement of the area's character.

- Execution: The quality of construction materials, and the interpretation of design into reality.

Award of Excellence: This is awarded to projects which exemplify and encompass, as much as possible, and to a high degree, the judging criteria and the City's design principles.

Award of Merit: This award is awarded to projects for excellence, specifically in one or more areas of judging criteria and the City's design principles.

c) City of Brampton

The City of Brampton revamped their Urban Design Awards program in 2005, which focuses on the City's new vision to guide development with a commitment to building attractive communities with appealing character, strong identity and enhanced architectural design. The Urban Design Awards program is generally held every 2 years with a 5 member jury that consists of the Mayor, a Councillor, City Manager, the Commissioner of Planning, Design & Development, and a professional representative from the private sector.

The panel of jurors award one winner (best of category) in each category, and 2 to 3 awards of merit as decided by the jury. In addition, there is an award for the best overall project selected from the entire body of submissions. The project submissions are selected and recognized by the panel of jurors in the following categories:

- Best New Building (New Buildings on Greenfield and Infill Sites): Residential single/multi-unit, commercial, institutional, industrial and renovation/heritage restoration.
- Best New Landscape: Small landscape (public space, neighbourhood park, flower arrangement), Large landscape (community/city park, stormpond facility, valley, streetscape).
- Best New Neighbourhood: Large area (40 ha/100 acres or more) with defined character, centre, edges, recognition elements, 75-80% built, nominations submitted by City staff.
- Most Promising Project: This category will include new projects, studies and designs of interest which hold promise to become future award winning developments.
- People's Choice Award: This category will be selected by the public at large based on the display on the City's web page of images and descriptions of projects submitted for all categories.
- Best Overall: This award will be selected from the entire body of submissions.

d) Town of Oakville

The Town of Oakville Urban Design Awards program is currently undergoing a facelift in 2007 to address the needs of the evolving urban design industry, and to make way for new categories that will fully recognize the wide range of urban design projects that are being developed throughout the Town.

Oakville Staff will be evaluating the current program from top to bottom, with the goal to recognize forward-thinking urban design projects that take into account both natural and human environments that improve both the community and its landscape.

e) City of Toronto

The City of Toronto has initiated an Architecture & Urban Design Awards program that is held every other year and helps recognize and promote public and private awareness of outstanding architecture and urban design projects in the City. The 3 member jury consists of a landscape

architect, architect and an architect critic from the press; however, there is no City of Toronto representation on the panel of jurors.

The jury presents an Award of Excellence or an Honourable Mention to the winning projects in each category, however, the jury reserves the right to not award a winner in each category. The number of awards presented is at the discretion of the jury panel. Project submissions are assessed by the jury panel in the following categories:

- Elements: A stand-alone object, landscape element or small-scale piece of a building which contributes significantly to the quality of the public realm. It should provide a memorable image, reinforce the human scale and enhance the character of the surrounding area.
- Buildings: An individual building or a composition of buildings, which achieves urban design excellence through its relationship to the public realm, its massing, detailing and pedestrian amenity.
- Small Open Spaces: Generally related to and defined by adjacent buildings or natural/man-made elements which provide an extension to the public realm in an exemplary way, eg. courtyards, plazas, forecourts and small neighbourhood parks.
- Large Places or Neighbourhood Designs: An executed design plan for a new or renovated large-scale area of the City that creatively resolves and addresses multiple objectives and competing interests, eg. large parks, subdivisions, industrial parks, campus plans and streetscapes.
- Visions and Master Plans: Unexecuted visions for the City, studies and master plans of high inspirational value with the potential for significant impact on Toronto's development.
- Student Awards: Local universities offering degrees in architecture, landscape architecture and design can submit, on behalf of their students, theoretical and studio projects relating to Toronto.

#### Proposed Program Revisions for Vaughan

The comparison chart (Attachment 1) specifically identifies key elements of the current Urban Design Awards program, and the recommended changes to the program. Given that the Development Planning Department is responsible for processing development applications and implementing the city's design requirements, it is only logical that the Development Planning Department should also be responsible for the overall administration of Vaughan's Urban Design Awards program with the assistance from other City departments, specifically regarding media and scheduling issues. The budget allocated for the awards program should be included in the Development Planning Department's 2008 operating budget.

The make-up of the panel of jurors needs to include representation from the City. It is recommended that the total 6 member jury consist of 3 representatives from the City and a representative from each relevant professional discipline from the design industry. On this basis, the jury would consist of a landscape architect, architect, urban designer/planner, City Manager, Commissioner of Planning, and a representative from City Council.

The award categories and judging criteria should be changed to better recognize the wide range of projects being built in the City, and that demonstrate the City's commitment to building attractive sustainable communities with appealing landscape architecture, strong identity and high quality architectural design. Upon evaluating the Urban Design Awards programs in the other GTA municipalities surveyed, it has been concluded that the following criteria be used for the judging of the 2008 Urban Design Awards:

1. Significance – City Wide Scale: Contribution to the City design objectives related to City image, visual identity, vistas, streetscapes, recognition of significant sites and location opportunities.

2. Significance – Community Wide Scale: Contribution to the quality of environment within a community which demonstrates a regard for the context of the locale, enhancing a sense of place and conserves and protects the natural environment.
3. Sustainability Design: Performs well in terms of location and linkage, energy efficiency, neighbourhood pattern & design and green construction & technology.
4. Compatibility: The integration or blending of built forms and public or private spaces with existing and planned development, and respect for or enhancement of the existing development character.
5. Innovation and Creativity: The degree of creative response to program requirements, site constraints and ability to influence urban design trends.
6. Execution: The quality of construction materials, and interpretation of the design into reality.

Consideration should be given to adopting three types of award categories, which will allow for a better recognition of various types of urban design projects throughout the City, and also give emphasis to “green” initiatives which are supportive of sustainable development. The three award categories recommended are as follows:

1. Award of Excellence (the number of awards presented in this category is at the discretion of the jury): This award is presented to projects which exemplify, as much as possible, the judging criteria and the City’s design principles.
2. Award of Merit (the number of awards presented in this category is at discretion of the jury): This award is presented to projects and consultants, for excellence in one or more areas of judging criteria and the City’s design principles.
3. Environmental Green Award (the number of awards presented in this category is at the discretion of the jury): This award is presented to projects that achieve a high degree of environmental sustainability through green construction and technology, including but not limited to, integration of environmental design; stewardship; prevention; conservation; recycling; enhancement; rehabilitation and energy efficiency.

#### **Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2007**

This report is consistent with the priorities set forth in Vaughan Vision 2007, specifically ‘A-5’, “Plan and Manage Growth”.

#### **Regional Implications**

N/A

#### **Conclusion**

Based on the survey and evaluation of the Urban Design Awards programs for 5 surrounding GTA municipalities, the Development Planning Department concludes that the proposed changes to the current City of Vaughan Urban Design Awards program as identified in this staff report be approved, specifically with respect to the administration, panel of jurors, judging criteria, and type of award categories.

The proposed changes to the current awards program will better meet the needs of the design industry and make way for new categories that will fully recognize the wide range of urban design projects that strengthen our communities and contribute to a better quality of living in Vaughan.

**Attachments**

1. Comparison Chart

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Respectfully submitted,

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/CM

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**ATTACHMENT NO. 1**  
**COMPARISON CHART**

|                         | CURRENT CITY OF VAUGHAN<br>URBAN DESIGN AWARDS PROGRAM  | PROPOSED CITY OF VAUGHAN<br>URBAN DESIGN AWARDS PROGRAM  |
|-------------------------|---|--|
| <b>ADMINISTRATION</b>   | Shared by two City Departments (Economic and Technology Development, and Policy Planning).  | Development Planning Department will be the lead department with assistance provided by various other City Departments.  |
| <b>PANEL OF JURORS</b>  | Four Jurors consisting of 1 urban designer, 1 planner, 1 landscape architect and 1 architect (No City Representation).  | Six Jurors consisting of 1 outside urban designer/planner, 1 outside landscape architect, 1 outside architect, City Manager, Commissioner of Planning and City Council representative.   |
| <b>JUDGING CRITERIA</b> | Judge projects based on City design principles using qualitative criteria for the following individual categories: Visions and Master Plans; Significant Community Project; Buildings; Innovation and Creativity; and Quality of Execution. In addition, the program provides a judging category called "Visions and Master Plans" which recognizes unexecuted studies and master plans for future development projects in the City. As we experienced in the 2005 Urban Design Awards, this category may result in rewarding a project that will not be fully built as illustrated in an award winning study or master plan. | Judge projects based on specific criteria as follows: Significance – City Wide Scale; Significance - Community Wide Scale; Sustainability Design; Compatibility; Innovation; and Execution. There will be no specific project categories, as each project will be judged using the same criteria.  |
| <b>AWARD CATEGORIES</b> | Two Awards are presented, an Award of Excellence and Honourable Mention. Award of Excellence is presented to projects that exemplify all the judging categories and City's design principles using qualitative criteria. Honourable Mention is presented to projects that have been evaluated for excellence in one or more categories.   | Three Awards are proposed to be presented, an Award of Excellence, Award of Merit and Environmental Green Award. Award of Excellence is presented to projects which exemplify, as much as possible, the specific judging criteria and City's design principles. Award of Merit is presented to projects for excellence in one or more of the judging criteria and City's design principles. Environmental Green Award is presented to projects that demonstrate green construction and technology. |
| <b>BUDGET</b>           | 2005 Urban Design Awards Program cost associated with hosting the gala including: poster design, printing, brochures, judges, honorarium, awards, jury report, venue, food, rentals and A/V was approximately \$17,000 (Economic & Technology Development Department Operating Budget).   | The funding requirement associated with the 2008 Urban Design Awards Program includes: poster design, printing, brochure and application, judges honorarium, awards, jury report, venue, food, rentals and audio/video is estimated to be approximately \$25,000 (Proposed to be included in the Development Planning Department 2008 Operating Budget).<br><b>NOTE:</b> Corporate sponsorship of the 2008 Urban Design Awards could reduce the funding requirement.                               |