

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (WORKING SESSION) - MAY 25, 2009

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL PILOT PROJECT VAUGHAN CORPORATE CENTRE FILE #25.5.1 WARDS 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5

Recommendation

The Commissioner of Planning recommends:

1. That the City of Vaughan undertake a Pilot Project to implement a Design Review Panel for a period of 2 years, addressing higher density development (mid-rise and high rise) in key locations as generally shown on Attachment 1 and including higher density development along the major corridors not otherwise identified;
2. That the Terms of Reference, attached hereto as Attachment 3, for the creation of a Pilot Project to implement a Design Review Panel be adopted;
3. That Council authorize a maximum yearly budget of \$10,000.00 to be included in the Development Planning Department's 2010 Operating Budget, for the Design Review Panel, and that a request be referred to the 2010 budget deliberations;
4. That the prospective applicants be required to undertake pre-application consultation with the Design Review Panel prior to the site plan application being submitted; and,
5. That at the conclusion of the first and second year of the project Planning staff evaluate the pilot project, and provide an interim and final report respectively, on its conclusions and recommendations to Committee of the Whole.

Economic Impact

In order to establish and operate a Design Review Panel, it will be necessary to include funding in the yearly budget. The panel will provide their time on a volunteer basis, however, funding will be necessary for (staff overtime, if after hours work is required), administrative support, materials/supplies, lunch and travelling expenses for the panel members. The recommended yearly budget is \$10,000.00, to be included in the Development Planning Department's 2010 Operating Budget.

Communications Plan

Once the Pilot Design Review Panel has been established and operating for a period of time, the City will solicit feedback from the development community and design professionals, and report back to Council with respect to the panel's efficacy and any appropriate modifications.

Purpose

The purpose of the Vaughan Design Review Panel is to provide expert impartial advice and guidance on higher density and or complex development proposals within the City. The Panel would act as an independent urban design advisory body to the Planning Department, in order to assist in achieving high quality architecture, urban design, landscape architecture, and environmental sustainability in development.

The Panel is an advisory body and can make significant contributions to the development approvals process but it does not replace the process. Their input is integrated into the approvals

process to provide advice to City staff. It does not have the authority to approve or refuse a project or make policy decisions.

Background and Analysis

The design quality of development is of significance to Vaughan. Economic, cultural and social, environmental benefits can be derived from high quality design streetscapes and landscapes, and contributes to:

- Achieving better aesthetics for buildings and associated streetscapes;
- Maximize amenity, security and safety for occupants and the broader public; and
- Minimize the consumption of energy from non renewable sources, conserve the environment and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

On December 8, 2008, when Vaughan Council was considering an award of contract for the Vaughan Corporate Centre Focused Area Study, Council resolved:

“That Staff be directed to bring a report to Committee of the Whole, Working Session, by June 2009 on the establishment of a pilot Design Review Panel to provide design advice on developments in the Vaughan Corporate Centre and potentially for other developments in the City.”

Council’s recommendation was to provide advice on developments in the Corporate Centre Area and potentially for other developments in the City. It is appropriate that the Panel review other areas within Vaughan that have higher density development and/or require the same level of attention in terms of high quality architecture/design in public spaces. Furthermore, in the short term, there may not be enough applications in the Vaughan Corporate Centre alone, to take advantage of the Panel’s expertise. Accordingly, it is recommended that the Panel also review developments in other areas where more complex, higher order and higher profile development is taking place, in areas such as, but not limited to, those outlined on Attachment 1.

In light of Council’s resolution, staff is bringing forward this report for the Committee’s information and consideration.

Design Review Panel

A number of Cities have determined that current regulatory development approvals process does not adequately address the quality of design in proposed developments. This can mean that opportunities are missed in achieving high quality architecture, landscape architecture and urban design. Many cities in Canada, United States, England and Europe, in order to improve the design quality of buildings and the public realm, use a Design Review Panel to augment the development approval process. In Canada review panels exist in Vancouver, the National Capital Commission in Ottawa, Montreal, Niagara Falls, Mississauga and London. Design Review Panels have been established in the Toronto Community Housing Corporation, the Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation, and within the City of Toronto as a two year pilot project for specified areas within the City, with a view to test the feasibility of incorporating the Design Review Panel within the development approvals process.

Design Review Panels (Panel) provide professional, objective advice on matters that relate to design affecting the public realm, including the design of proposed buildings, streets, parks and open spaces. Their input assists in achieving and maintaining design excellence. Design Review Panels can make significant contributions to the development approvals process but do not replace the process. Their input is integrated into the development review process to provide advice to the City staff involved in this process. Panel members are design professionals who review development proposals based on publicly approved criteria such as secondary plans or urban design guidelines.

As noted previously, the Design Review Panel is strictly an advisory body and makes recommendations only. It does not have authority to approve or refuse projects or make policy decisions. It is not intended to replace the development approval process, or the role of Council. It is an additional stream of consultation to enhance the development approval process.

The advantages of a Panel is that it has the potential to be a catalyst for high quality design and will send a message to the public, the development industry and the design community that design standards have been raised commensurate with the vision for an attractive and sustainable City.

Accordingly, it is appropriate to develop and bring forward for Council's approval a Terms of Reference for the establishment of a Design Review Panel pilot project that would be applicable to the Vaughan Corporate Centre and would also apply to other sites associated with major nodes and corridors particularly those areas associated with higher order transit initiatives, such as Steeles West, Yonge Street and the Carville District.

A framework for a Design Review Panel pilot project is outlined below based on practices in other jurisdictions. The pilot project is proposed to test the feasibility of a city-wide Panel by implementing a permanent Panel for a trial period to review development proposals in select areas within the City.

Functions of the Panel

The Panel is an advisory group and makes recommendations only. It is not a decision making body. It is an independent design advisory body to the Planning Department. It does not have the authority to approve or refuse. Council will remain the decision making body on any recommendations brought forward from staff.

The functions of the Panel are as follows:

- to provide independent advice to staff, applicants, and their consultants, prior to and following the submission of relevant development applications in order to aid development proponents in delivering projects which contribute good quality design in the public realm;
- to promote the understanding of design quality, and provide advice on other mechanisms and initiatives in achieving high quality design, and
- to foster an effective working relationship with the development industry.

Scope of Work

The Panel will evaluate development applications brought forward to it, and provide professional objective advice to the Commissioner of Planning, at the site plan pre-application and application stages, on matters of design that affect the public realm, including the design of proposed buildings, site plans, structures, open spaces, and associated streetscapes in order to promote and uphold standards of design excellence.

Whenever possible, it is recommended that prospective applicants be required to undertake pre-application consultation with Staff and the Design Reviews Panel. The mechanism for accomplishing this requirement, will be a component of the Bill 51 conformity process coming forward to Council in the latter part of 2009.

Design Review Panel Membership

The Design Review Panel will consist of 12 volunteer members with not less than seven (7) members for any given meeting, who have been appointed for a period of two years. The Panel will comprise at least six (6) architects, two (2) landscape architects, one (1) engineer, one (1) urban designer and two (2) other individuals with experience in planning, design or engineering.

The City will issue a request for Expressions of Interest for Panel members and will include criteria to ensure an appropriate mix of professionals with appropriate expertise.

The criteria for Panel membership nomination will be developed on best practices research of other municipalities with Design Review Panels and tailored to Vaughan's local needs. Emphasis will be placed on qualified design professionals who are well respected among their peers.

Panel member selection is based on the selection procedures of other Canadian cities such as Vancouver, Toronto, Mississauga, and Ottawa. Attachment 2 provides a comparison of the roles, scope of work and membership composition of the Design Review Panels for the above noted cities, which will serve as a basis for Panel composition.

City staff will nominate Panel members from expressions of interest to ensure appropriate panel membership mix, and make recommendations for approval by City Council.

Panel members will serve a two year term. Panel members are to be non-paid positions. Traveling expenses will be covered by the City.

No City staff or members of Council shall be appointed to the Design Review Panel.

Panel Nomination Criteria

Emphasis will be placed on qualified design professionals who are well respected among their peers, who have a broad range of experience.

The following criteria will be employed to nominate members of the Design Review Panel:

- (i) Membership in a professional design association:
 - Ontario Association of Architects,
 - Ontario Association of Landscape Architects,
 - Ontario Professional Planners Institute, or
 - Professional Engineers of Ontario,
 - Toronto Society of Architects.
- (ii) Minimum 15 years of practice in their respective field.
- (iii) The Panel shall have a wide range of relevant professional experience including:
 - High quality design in the fields of architecture, landscape architecture, urban design, planning and engineering,
 - Mix of local and international practice
 - Mix of project scales
 - Mix of project types (commercial, residential, institutional, parks and public space design)
 - Knowledge and practice of sustainable design, and
 - Professional research and academic involvement.

- (iv) Respected among peers as recognized by awards, publications and teaching appointments.

Operation and Meeting Schedule

The Commissioner of Planning or his designate(s) will be responsible for the management/operation of the Design Review Panel.

The Design Review Panel will meet on a monthly basis as required, during regular work hours.

Meeting Procedures

Panel meetings will be attended by appropriate City staff as required. Planning staff will make a brief presentation to provide the Panel with an understanding of the planning and technical analysis of the project outlining its context, background, scope, related policies, design policies or guidelines and to reiterate the design concerns which staff would like the panel to address.

The applicant and their design consultant will be given an opportunity for a brief presentation to explain the project objectives and how it responds to the City's policies. Subsequent to staff and proponent presentation the panel will have the opportunity to ask questions of the project team on any aspect of their development proposal. The Panel will review the presentation material, followed by a discussion on the merits of the design of the project. With the guidance of the Chairperson, the Panel will formulate their recommendations for the project at the end of the Design Review Panel Meeting.

Integration of Development Approvals

To ensure that the Design Review Panel process is appropriately matched with the development approvals process, meetings will be held on a monthly basis. The meeting schedules will be coordinated with Council meetings to ensure that projects are moved through the approvals process in a timely manner. Meeting schedules will be monitored and adjusted if required.

Monitoring

A significant aspect of the Design Review Panel Pilot Project is the continual refinement of the Panel's process and evaluation of its function during the trial period. Accordingly, it will be necessary to monitor the Panel's function by collecting feedback from applicants and design consultants whose projects have been reviewed and to evaluate any necessary changes that may be needed to the procedures. Development Planning Staff will evaluate the pilot project and provide an interim report to Council after the first year with a further report at the end of the second year of the project.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2020/Strategic Plan

This report is consistent with the priorities set forth in Vaughan Vision 2020, particularly "Plan and Manage Growth & Economic Vitality".

Regional Implications

N/A

Conclusion

The establishment of a Design Review Panel Pilot Project for the City will create a higher quality of life for Vaughan's citizens and enhance the City's economic competitiveness by fostering

design excellence in the public realm and improved environmental sustainability. Councils' recommendation was to provide advice on developments in the Corporate Centre Area and potentially for other developments in the City. It is appropriate that the Panel review other areas within Vaughan that have higher density development and/or require the same level of attention in terms of high quality architecture/design in public spaces.

The Pilot Project will contribute to the development approvals process and further add to building a vibrant, beautiful and dynamic City. The advantages of a Design Review Panel is that it has the potential to be a catalyst for high quality design and will send a message to the public, the development industry and the design community that design standards have been raised commensurate with the vision for Vaughan. Should Council concur, a call for Expressions of Interest for Panel members should be undertaken.

The call for Expressions of Interest will be advertised through professional association newsletters and other appropriate media. The City will ensure that members who express an interest in serving on the Panel are in good standing through communication with the professional associations.

Staff will undertake advertising the call for Expressions of Interest during the summer months and it is anticipated that a list of recommended Panel Member candidates will be brought forward for Council's consideration in the Fall of this year.

Attachments

1. Areas of Focus for Design Review Panel
2. Comparison of Other Cities Design Review Panels
3. Terms of Reference Design Review Panel Pilot Project

Report prepared by:

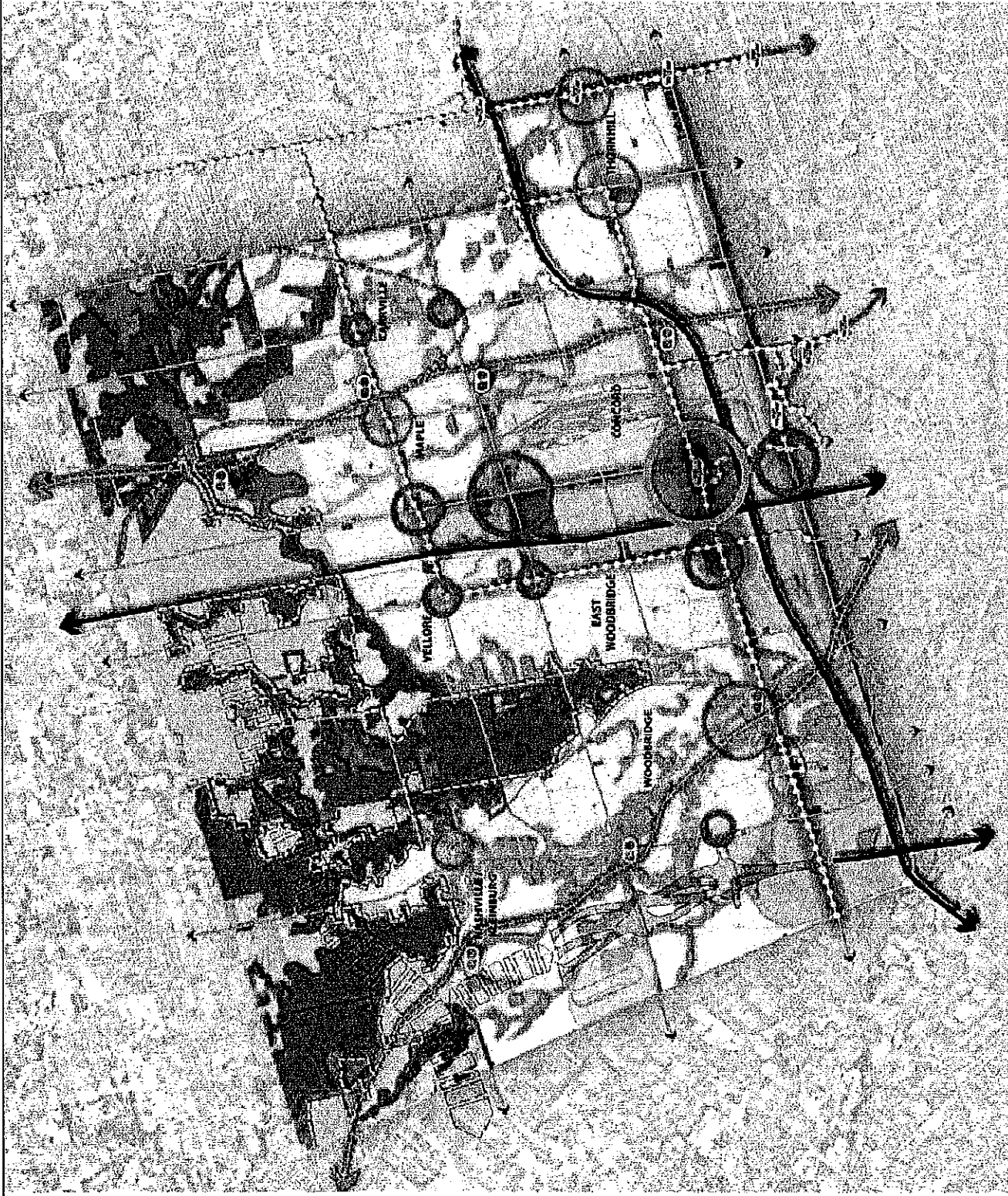
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Respectfully submitted,

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/LM



Areas of Focus for Design Review Panel



File: 25-5.1

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Development Planning Department

Legend

-  Design Review Panel
-  Focus Areas

Attachment

LOCATION:
The City of VAUGHAN

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May 1, 2009

**COMPARISON OF OTHER CITIES
DESIGN REVIEW PANELS**
(File #25.5.1)

CITY	PANEL/ADVISORY COMMITTEES	PANEL ROLE	SCOPE OF WORK	MEMBERSHIP COMPOSITION	TERM	MEETING FREQUENCY	# FILES REVIEWED PER YEAR
VANCOUVER	Urban Design Panel	Advisory to Development Permit Board.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major rezoning or Development Permit Applications, Civic Works-buildings 	12 Members 6 Architects 2 Professional Engineers 2 Landscape Architects 1 Representative from Planning 1 Representative from Development Industry	2 yrs	Bi-weekly	65 approx.
MISSISSAUGA	Mississauga Urban Design Advisory Board	Advisory to Planning and Building Departments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major development applications in specific areas. Major mixed use and high density development Civic projects Other projects at discretion of the Commission of Planning and Building Departments 	12 Members 6 Architects 3 Landscape Architects 3 Individuals with experience in planning, design or engineering	2 yrs	Monthly	Approx. 10-15/year
TORONTO	Design Review Panel	Advisory to staff at City of Toronto, Planning and Urban Design Departments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major projects determined through focus group meetings throughout the City to implement the goals of the Official Plan. Buildings, streets, parks and public art. 	12 Members 6 Architects 3 Landscape Architects 3 Individuals from a related discipline	2 yrs	Monthly for 11 months	Potential for 44/year
TORONTO WATERFRONT	Design Review Panel	Advisory to Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New developments in the Downtown area. 	10 Members 6 Architects 2 Landscape Architects 1 Planner 1 Professional Engineer	3 yrs	Twice per month	30-40/year
OTTAWA	Peer Design Review Panel	Advisory to Planning Department		10 Members 7 Architects 3 Landscape Architects	2 yrs	As required	approx. 10/year

TERMS OF REFERENCE DESIGN REVIEW PANEL PILOT PROJECT

1.0 Purpose of Design Review Panel

The Design Review Panel is strictly an advisory body and makes recommendations only. It does not have authority to approve or refuse projects or make policy decisions. It is an independent design advisory body to the Planning Department and is not intended to replace the development approval process, or the role of Council. It is an additional stream of consultation to enhance the development approval process.

2.0 Duties of the Panel:

- to provide independent advice to staff, applicants, and their consultants, prior to and following the submission of relevant development applications in order to aid development proponents in delivering projects which contribute good quality design in the public realm;
- to promote the understanding of design quality, and provide advice on other mechanisms and initiatives in achieving high quality design, and
- to foster an effective working relationship with the development industry.

3.0 Scope of Work

The Panel will evaluate development applications brought forward to it, and provide professional objective advice to the Commissioner of Planning, at the site plan pre-application and application stages, on matters of design that affect the public realm, including the design of proposed buildings, site plans, structures, open spaces, and associated streetscapes in order to promote and uphold standards of design excellence.

Whenever possible, it is recommended that perspective applicants be required to undertake pre-application consultation with Staff and the Design Reviews Panel. The mechanism for accomplishing this requirement, will be a component of the Bill 51 conformity process coming forward to Council in the later part of 2009.

Design Review Panel Membership

- (i) The Design Review Panel will consist of 12 volunteer members with not less than seven (7) members for any given meeting, who have been appointed for a period of two years. The Panel will comprise at least six (6) architects, two (2) landscape architects, one (1) engineer, one (1) urban designer and two (2) other individuals with experience in planning, design or engineering.
- (ii) The City will issue a request for Expressions of Interest for Panel members and will include criteria to ensure an appropriate mix of professionals with appropriate expertise.
- (iii) The criteria for Panel membership nomination will be developed on best practices research of other municipalities with Design Review Panels and tailored to Vaughan's

local needs. Emphasis will be placed on qualified design professionals who are well respected among their peers.

- (iv) City staff will nominate panel members from expressions of interest to ensure appropriate panel membership mix, and make recommendations for approval by City Council.
- (v) Panel members will serve a two year term.
- (vi) The Panel members are to be non-paid positions. Traveling expenses to Panel meetings will be covered by the City.
- (vii) Each member of the Panel has the duty to advise of any conflict of interest with respect to development applications being reviewed by the Panel. In this regard the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act will apply and the Panel member shall decline to participate in the review of that application.
- (viii) No City staff or members of Council shall be appointed to the Design Review Panel.

4.0 Panel Nomination Criteria

Emphasis will be placed on qualified design professionals who are well respected among their peers, who have a broad range of experience.

The following criteria will be employed to nominate members of the Design Review Panel:

- (i) Membership in a professional design association:
 - a. Ontario Association of Architects,
 - b. Ontario Association of Landscape Architects,
 - c. Ontario Professional Planners Institute, or
 - d. Professional Engineers of Ontario,
 - e. Toronto, Society of Architects.
- (ii) Minimum 15 years of practice in their respective field.
- (ii) The Panel shall have a wide range of relevant professional experience including:
 - a. High quality design in the fields of architecture, landscape architecture, urban design, planning and engineering,
 - b. Mix of local and international practice
 - c. Mix of project scales
 - d. Mix of project types (commercial, residential, institutional, parks and public space design)
 - e. Knowledge and practice of sustainable design, and
 - f. Professional research and academic involvement.
- (iv) Respected among peers as recognized by awards, publications and teaching appointments.

5.0 Meeting Schedule

- (i) The Commissioner of Planning or his designate(s) will be responsible for the management/operation of the Design Review Panel.
- (ii) The Design Review Panel will meet on a monthly basis as required, during regular work hours.

- (iii) The members of the Design Review Panel shall appoint, from their members, a Chairperson, who will preside over discussions to ensure matters brought forward for discussion are fairly considered.
- (iii) Lobbying of the Design Review Panel members by applicants or others is strictly prohibited.
- (iv) Minutes of the meeting and the recording of the Panel Recommendations will be the responsibility of the Development Planning Department.
- (v) Individual Panel Members should not be identified in the minutes; however, individual specific comments can be recorded without attribution.
- (vi) The Minutes will be reviewed by relevant staff and the Chair prior to distribution to the Panel Members and Applicant in final form.
- (vii) Minutes will be forwarded to the Panel Members, staff and applicant as soon as possible after the meeting, in order to provide timely written summaries of the review.
- (viii) Panel Members will be asked to approve the minutes at the next Panel meeting and will have opportunity to comment on the minutes at that time.
- (ix) Applicants will not have the opportunity or ability to request any changes to the minutes.

6.0 Meeting Procedures

- (i) Panel meetings will be attended by appropriate City staff as required. Planning staff will make a brief presentation to provide the Panel with an understanding of the planning and technical analysis of the project outlining its context, background, scope, related policies, design policies or guidelines and to reiterate the design concerns which staff would like the panel to address.
- (ii) The applicant and their design consultant will be given an opportunity to make a brief presentation to explain the project objectives and how it responds to the City's policies.
- (iii) Subsequent to staff and proponent presentation the panel will have the opportunity to ask questions of the project team on any aspect of their development proposal.
- (iv) The Panel will then review the presentation material, followed by a discussion on the merits of the design of the project. With the guidance of the Chairperson, the Panel will formulate their recommendations for the project at the end of the Design Review Panel meeting.
- (v) The Panel's comments will be based on Council approved land use and urban design policies. The role of the Panel is to help interpret the policy for specific sites and projects and point out areas of concern that need to be resolved respecting proposed developments.
- (vi) Following the meeting, the Development Planning Department will undertake a review of the recommendations and determine the appropriate actions to be taken by the applicant.
- (vii) The Development Planning Department will advise the Panel on actions taken, as a result of the Panel's recommendation, prior to the following Design Review Panel meeting.

7.0 Presentation Materials

- (i) Presentation materials for projects for review must be submitted not less than three (3) weeks prior to the meeting.
- (ii) Presentation material should contain the following information:
 - Key Plan;
 - Colour copies of the site plan, building elevations and landscape plan;
 - Photographs of surrounding lands and streetscape;
 - Coloured renderings, digital perspectives or a physical massing model showing the proposed development and its relationship to surrounding lands;
 - Building elevations and materials used;
 - Floor plans of ground floors
 - Brief project description.
- (iii) All presentation material should be mounted on panels not greater than 0.9m x 1.2m (3' x 4') in size.

In addition, twenty (20) copies of the presentation material in a bound booklet Form being no larger than 28 cm x 43 cm (11" x 17" landscape format) shall also be provided by the applicant to the Development Planning Department.
- (iv) The applicant may choose to prepare a Power Point Presentation with the above information to further describe the proposal to the Panel at the Design Review Panel meeting.
- (v) Meeting agendas along with copies of the presentation material and Development Planning Department information will be forwarded to the Design Review Panel members and the applicant, not less than two (2) weeks in advance of the meeting.

8.0 Integration of Development Approvals

To ensure that the Design Review Panel process is appropriately matched with the development approvals process, meeting will be held on a monthly basis. The meeting schedules will be coordinated with Council meeting to ensure that projects are moved through the approvals process in a timely manner. Meeting schedules will be monitored and adjusted if required.

9.0 Monitoring

A significant aspect of the Design Review Panel Pilot Project is the continual refinement of the Panel's process and evaluation of its function during the trial period. Accordingly, it will be necessary to monitor the Panel's function by collecting feedback from applicants and design consultants whose projects have been reviewed and to evaluate any necessary changes that may be needed to the procedures. Planning Staff will evaluate the pilot project and provide an interim report to Council after the first year with a further report at the end of the second year of the project.