

Urban Design Peer Review Panel – City of London

October 03, 2023

To: Planning and Environment Committee

City of London
300 Dufferin Avenue
London, Ontario N6A 4L9

From: Urban Design Peer Review Panel (UDPRP)

- Nicola Casciato, Architect
- Randolph Wang, Urban Designer
- Dustin Parkes, Architect
- Tom Tillmann, Architect

Regrets:

- Rong Yu, Urban Designer
- Sharon Mittmann, Urban Designer

RE: Dissolution of the UDPRP (PEC Item 4.1)

Dear Members of the City of London's Planning & Environmental Committee,

On behalf of the City of London Urban Design Peer Review Panel (UDPRP), we are writing to express our concerns with the motion put forward by Councillor Lewis and Councillor Lehman requesting the dissolution of the UDPRP.

It is the position of the above noted panel members, including two panel members who are local Architects familiar with City of London approval processes, that it is inaccurate to state that the UDPRP is a 'significant contributor to time delays and cost increases'. The timeline required for submission, presentation, and receipt of comments from the UDPRP fits well within minimum or expedited timelines required for ZBA and/or SPA application and review processes.

It is also inaccurate to state that the UDPRP is redundant now that the London Plan is in full effect, or due to City of London in-house expertise. The UDPRP is an independent group of volunteer professionals, including Architects, Planners, Urban Designers, and Landscape Architects, tasked with providing expert opinion and impartial input on planning and development applications. As stated in the motion put forward, the recommendations of the UDPRP are not binding; our input is intended to assist and inform City of London staff in making recommendations and decisions. The UDPRP provides unique, immediate and

multidisciplinary opinions, for a more informed review process, as staff can receive input from experts working in other municipalities and from other designated design professionals including Architects, which to our knowledge the City of London does not currently employ in-house.

We are further concerned that the London Plan does not leave enough room for interpretation in all cases. Dissolving the UDPRP may result in an overly fixed application of the London Plan in all cases, or it will increase the required workload on city staff who will no longer have additional input to help inform recommendations outside the explicit scope of the London Plan. We see this as an increased risk for the approval of inappropriate and poorly designed development proposals. We do not believe that removing expert volunteer contribution to urban design review will add overall value to the community.

Further to the above, we note that the motion was circulated to UDPRP members on Thursday, September 28th; three business days prior to the scheduled Planning and Environmental Committee Meeting. We are unaware of whether review has been requested by City Planning staff. To the best of our knowledge, the motion has not been circulated to the London Society of Architects (LSA). We respectfully request that a decision on this matter be postponed until the next PEC meeting, to allow sufficient time for review and comment by local professionals including the LSA, City of London staff if applicable, and from the general community.

Sincerely on behalf of the UDPRP,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dustin Parkes', with a stylized, elongated flourish extending to the right.

Dustin Parkes, UDPRP Chair