

Report to Planning and Environment Committee

To: Chair and Members
Planning & Environment Committee
From: John M. Fleming
Managing Director, Planning and City Planner
Subject: City of London
Draft City-Wide Urban Design Guidelines
Meeting on: October 21, 2019

Recommendation

That, on the recommendation of the Managing Director, Planning and City Planner.

- (a) The following information report on the City-Wide Urban Design Guidelines **BE RECEIVED** for information; and,
- (b) The DRAFT City-Wide Urban Design Guidelines, attached as Appendix "B" **BE CIRCULATED** to the London Development Institute, Urban League, London Homebuilders Association, London Area Planning Consultants, London Society of Architects, London Society of Landscape Architects, Consulting Engineers – London Chapter, London Area Construction Association, London Transit Commission, Urban Design Peer Review Panel, internal service areas, advisory committees and other relevant external agencies.

IT BEING NOTED that the feedback received through this consultation process will feed into revised City-Wide Urban Design Guidelines and an implementing Official Plan amendment that will be prepared for the consideration and approval of Municipal Council at a future Public Participation Meeting of the Planning and Environment Committee in the first quarter of 2020.

Background

The Urban Design Program was introduced to the City of London in 2007. Since then, the program has grown and urban design has become a consideration in the review of development applications, development of planning policy and in the review of public facilities and infrastructure projects in the public realm. High quality urban design is recognized as an important component of building a prosperous city; designing livable, walkable neighbourhoods; and creating vibrant mixed-use and commercial areas. It is also an important part of the City's efforts to support a more compact urban structure to help address our impact on climate change.

The need for Urban Design Guidelines arose in order to assist with the review of planning and development applications, as well as public projects such as roads, parks and community centres. Staff, Council and stakeholders identified the need to consider the following:

- Greater certainty on what will be reviewed for development applications
- A clear and easy to use document
- Recognition of unique and varied contexts within London
- Flexibility when implementing policies and allowance for design creativity

Purpose and Use of Guideline Documents

The London Plan

The London Plan provides that, by resolution, City Council may adopt guideline documents to provide direction for the implementation of The London Plan policies, or to

guide the development of a specific area. Guideline documents may contain guidelines that are either too detailed, or require more flexibility in interpretation or implementation than The London Plan policies can provide. Planning and development applications and public works should be reviewed with consideration for their consistency with any applicable guideline document. The adoption of a guidelines document requires an Official Plan amendment and a public participation meeting to allow input from interested parties.

Regulatory Documents and Manuals

Many other policy and regulatory documents will apply during development review and public works projects. The Site Plan Control Bylaw, Engineering Design Standards Manual, Complete Streets Manual, Parks and Recreation Master Plan, and any Secondary Plans will prevail if there is a conflict with the City Design Guidelines. The Guidelines are not intended to be regulatory in nature. Flexibility should be applied, and creative and innovative design solutions are encouraged.

Document Structure and Content

Through consultation on the Urban Design Guidelines, it was determined that adequate urban design direction exists within the City Design policies of The London Plan. The most useful tool to add value to the development review process would be a guideline document that provides photographs, diagrams and other illustrations that demonstrate the existing policies of the London Plan, including a variety of ways to implement them in different contexts.

Taking into consideration the comments from stakeholders and staff throughout the evolution of the urban design guidelines, the draft City-Wide Urban Design Guidelines, attached as Appendix “B”, provides the following changes to structure and content:

- A deliberate tie back to the London Plan City Design policies has been provided in the structure of the document.
- The purpose and use of the document as a flexible guideline is more clearly outlined in the introduction as well as its relationship to other policies and standards.
- The guidelines focus on visual representations of the City Design policies through photographs, illustrations and diagrams, with further elaboration through text where more detail is required.

The draft City-Wide Urban Design Guidelines is structured into the following sections – Character, Street Network, Streetscape, Public Space, Site Layout, and Buildings. These categories have been chosen to specifically relate to the structure of the City Design policies in the London Plan. The sections are further broken down to address specific themes or topics that commonly present themselves through planning and development applications, and public spaces and roads projects. Photographic examples and diagrams are provided to illustrate the concepts, and variations in how the policies may be applied in different contexts are provided.

Design for Equality and Sustainability

The draft City-Wide Urban Design Guidelines have been prepared with a particular focus on equality and sustainability. The guidelines have been reviewed with a gender lens to evaluate how the design of the built form might impact the wellbeing and safety of all genders, ethnicities and socio-economic backgrounds. Resulting from that, additional guidelines have been included relating to crime prevention through environmental design and multi-modal transportation options, among other things.

The guidelines have also been reviewed with a sustainability lens, acknowledging that Council has declared a climate emergency. Guidelines have been added to address the need for a more compact urban form, convenient active transportation networks and reducing car-dependency. Staff will continue to review the City-Wide Urban Design

Guidelines with these lenses during further consultation on the draft.

Stakeholder Consultation

Building and Development Liaison Forum

On Wednesday March 6th 2019, City staff met with the Building and Development Liaison Forum. City staff presented the details of the Terms of Reference for the City Design Guidelines to City staff and members of the building and development community. The primary concern heard at this meeting was to ensure the guidelines assist with the implementation of development projects and don't delay the planning and development process.

An update was provided to the Building and Development Liaison Forum on June 13th, 2019.

London Area Planning Consultants

On May 15th 2019, City staff met with the London Area Planning Council. City staff presented the details of the Terms of Reference for the City Design Guidelines to approximately 20 members of the London Area Planning Council.

Concerns and comments from this group included the following:

- A clear understanding of intent (vision, purpose or goal) for all proposed guidelines is required.
- A clear understanding of what is a policy and what is a guideline is required.
- Ensure the images and graphics don't stifle creativity.

London Development Institute

On May 16th, City staff met with the London Development Institute. City staff presented the details of the Terms of Reference for the City Design Guidelines to approximately 10 member of the London development Institute. See Appendix "A" for a summary of comments from the London Development Institute following the meeting.

The comments and concerns raised by this group included the following:

- A clear delineation between what is policy and what is guideline is required.
- A clear understanding of the intent (vision, purpose or goal) of all proposed guidelines is required.
- All guidelines should be amalgamated under one comprehensive document, or provide a clear hierarchy of guideline documents.
- Affordability needs to be included in all levels of the development process.

On September 23rd, City staff met again with the London Development Institute. City staff presented a sample of the City-Wide Urban Design Guidelines to approximately 10 member of the London development Institute.

The comments and concerns raised by this group included the following:

- Ensure there is no conflict between these guidelines and existing policy, by-laws, or guidelines
- A clear understanding of what is a policy and what is a guideline is required.
- Provide flexibility to allow for implementation.

Next Steps

The next steps in the process will be to circulate the draft City-Wide Urban Design Guidelines. Staff will continue consultation with stakeholders, internal service areas, advisory committees, external agencies and other interested parties in the refinement of the City-Wide Urban Design Guidelines.

**Urban Designer:
A. Lockwood**

The draft City-Wide Urban Design Guidelines will be posted on a Get Involved London webpage for the general public to review and provide comments.

A drop in community information meeting will be organized to allow the public and stakeholder the opportunity to talk to staff about the draft City-wide Urban Design Guidelines.

Upon refinement, Staff will bring forward a report to the Planning and Environment Committee with the revised final City-Wide Urban Design Guidelines. The target for this report will be the first quarter of 2020. This will also include a public participation meeting as well as an implementing Official Plan amendment to adopt the document as a guideline under The London Plan.

Conclusion

The City Design section of The London Plan provides policy direction on community structure, public realm and built form. These draft City-Wide Urban Design Guidelines are intended to assist Staff, the development community and the public by providing illustrated examples of how to implement the City Design policies in various contexts.

This document is to be read in conjunction with other applicable policies, standards and manuals in the review of planning and development applications and public realm projects. The guidelines are intended to be flexible and offer inspiration and guidance, while still allowing for design creativity and innovative responses to unique sites.

The City-Wide Urban Design Guidelines will be adopted as a guidelines document under The London Plan.

Prepared by:	Amanda Lockwood, Urban Designer, City Building & Design
Submitted by:	Britt O'Hagan, MCIP, RPP Manager, City Building & Design
Recommended by:	John M. Fleming, MCIP, RPP Managing Director, Planning and City Planner
Note: The opinions contained herein are offered by a person or persons qualified to provide expert opinion. Further detail with respect to qualifications can be obtained from Planning Services	

October 9, 2019

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Appendix A – Stakeholder Consultation



LONDON DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

May 24, 2019

Mr. John Fleming
Managing Director, Planning and City Planner
City Planning
City of London

Dear Mr. Fleming

LDI recently hosted a meeting with Amanda Lockwood, Urban Designer from the City Planning Department, regarding the consultation process in the development of the "Illustrated City Design Guidelines" for the City of London. In our view, LDI and its members are a vital part of the process in developing the City-wide guidelines stemming from the design policies of the London Plan.

Ms. Lockwood did an excellent job of presenting the process, listening and noting our preliminary concerns that need to be addressed in the first draft of a report to be presented to PEC and Council in July. LDI and its members can, through this process, not only offer opinion on the development of the guidelines but solutions that will work for all stakeholders including Council, staff, the community and the development and building industry.

Our initial thoughts embrace three overall concepts that need to be addressed through the process.

First, we need a clear delineation between what is a policy and what is a guideline. The choice of words is critical in the interpretation of a guideline versus a policy. We want to avoid potential conflicts between our industry and city staff tasked with the responsibility of implementing the vision of the design guidelines emanating from the policies of the London Plan.

In our view, one potential outcome could be a better understanding of the expectations of the design related policies in the London Plan. The resulting clarifications may lead to resolving some of the policy issues that are currently under appeal.

Second, the guidelines must articulate a clear understanding of the "why" or intent of a proposed guideline. What is the vision, purpose or goal of a specific or group of guidelines? This should be in writing and embedded within the guideline document.

In conjunction with the "why" we need flexibility built into the guidelines. Guidelines should not be prescriptive but allow for innovation and flexibility. The guidelines must balance questions of design, functionality and other public policy initiatives such as gender awareness. We need the ability to adapt and adopt to new and innovative ways to integrate the guideline's objectives into the built form that our industry will be creating in the City. The decisions we make today will have a 100-year impact on the City of London.

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LONDON DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

Thirdly, all design related guidelines need to be amalgamated under one comprehensive document. As an example, is the current Urban Design Guidelines and the new bird friendly design guideline (yet to be passed) part of the Illustrated City Design Guidelines? Does one take precedence over another? An all-inclusive document should be the "manual" for both the industry and staff.

In addition, any hierarchy of other city planning documents, like heritage district plans, that affect the expectation and implementation of the Illustrated City Design Guidelines must also be clearly identified. Our industry needs certainty and clarity to be able to propose, develop and build in a timely and acceptable manner to achieve London City Council's vision for the built form of our great City.

Finally, we must continue to review all changes and additions to the development process through the lens of affordability. LDI shares City Council's goal of tackling the affordability challenge facing the City of London. LDI is committed to be an active contributor to the process of developing the Illustrated City Design Guidelines that work from both a design and affordability perspective.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mike Wallace', is written over a light blue rectangular background.

Mike Wallace
Executive Director
London Development Institute

cc Mayor and Council
cc Martin Hayward, City Manager
cc George Kotsifas, Development Manger
cc Amanda Lockwood, Urban Design Planner

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Appendix B – Draft City-Wide Urban Design Guidelines