CITY OF WATERLOO

URBAN DESIGN MANUAL

The City of Waterloo is committed to promoting a high standard of urban design for all development in the City. The City’s primary design expectations are established in the City of Waterloo’s Official Plan and implemented through the Urban Design Manual.

WHAT IS URBAN DESIGN?
Urban design is a term that describes an evolving discipline focused on the design and analysis of the city and its related parts and elements. Good urban design is about creative city building and the art of creating great places, places for people. The role of urban design is expanding in city planning and is providing an effective tool in creative city building, intensification and placemaking. Urban design provides a design-based approach to city planning and a medium to improve the quality of city streets, neighbourhoods and community. It can also be further linked to other initiatives such as the Official Plan, recreation programs and visioning exercises, such as the Uptown Vision 2025, to create truly vibrant and dynamic places.

WHAT IS THE URBAN DESIGN MANUAL?
The Urban Design Manual is a consolidated set of City design guidelines and reference material approved by Council that implements the City’s Urban Design policies contained in the Official Plan. This Manual includes General City Design Guidelines for many types of development in the City and includes more detailed, Supplemental Design Guidelines for specific types of projects and locations in the city. The Urban Design Manual also includes process guidelines and technical criteria to assist with the Site Plan Review and Approval process.

WHAT ARE DESIGN GUIDELINES?
Design guidelines are a set of design recommendations intended to guide development to achieve a desired level of prescribed quality. Guidelines apply to projects in the public and private realm. They may be general statements, or more technical statements that help create functional, attractive and compatible site development. The City will implement design guidelines with a level of presented flexibility through creative and innovative solutions that meet the City’s design objectives.

WHAT ARE THE CITY’S PRIMARY DESIGN OBJECTIVES?
The City of Waterloo has a clear design vision for the City based on the following design objectives:

- Promote a High Standard of Urban Design;
- Respect Context and Promote Sense of Place;
- Enhance Connectivity and Interaction;
- Promote Creativity and Innovation; and
- Encourage Sustainable Design.

These design objectives are established in the City’s Official Plan and have been incorporated into the Urban Design Manual with supporting design guidelines.
WHAT IS THE PRIMARY FUNCTION OF THE URBAN DESIGN MANUAL?

- To support the implementation of the City’s Urban Design policies established in the City’s Official Plan;
- To provide guidelines to assist with implementing the Planning Act reforms that expanded Site Plan Control to include detailed building design considerations, sustainable design and accessibility;
- To support intensification in planned growth areas through effective guidelines;
- To finalize guidelines for the Nodes and Corridors areas; and,
- To establish clear Site Plan review process with supporting standards for site development.

WHAT IMPACT DOES THIS MANUAL HAVE ON FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS IN WATERLOO?

The Urban Design Manual was prepared to apply to many types of development in the City with emphasis on the Site Plan Review process administered through Section 41 of the Planning Act. All Site Plan development is subject to the General Guidelines contained in the Urban Design Manual. In addition, specific types of projects, such as tall buildings or specific locations, such as the Nodes and Corridors Areas, are subject to Supplemental Design Guidelines. All Site Plan developments will be subject to this process and to the criteria established in the Site Plan Review Guidelines (SPRG).

SITE PLAN DEVELOPMENT EXAMPLES:

- Mixed Use Development Regina Street
- Commercial Development Wildcraft Restaurant
- Institutional Development Perimeter Institute
- Office Development Research & Technology Park

The City has passed new Official Plan policies (through Official Plan Amendment 72) that strengthens the role of Urban Design Guidelines in the City; providing greater authority and ability to implement design guidelines. The City of Waterloo will use the Urban Design Manual as a component for development review and approval with emphasis on Site Plan Control, and will update the Urban Design Manual on a regular basis.

IMPORTANT PRINCIPLES:

- design that results in attractive streetscapes
- more articulated building massing that relates to the surrounding buildings, human-scale dimensions and interesting skylines
- greater emphasis on building entrance, rooftop screening and building massing
- high quality architectural features, materials and coordinated colours that complement and enhance the neighbourhood character or project theme
- higher quality landscaping treatment that contributes and improves streetscape quality and to effective buffer treatment
- more detailed Nodes and Corridors guidelines with emphasis on built form, pedestrian connectivity, landscaping strategies and public art
- area-specific guidelines for the Uptown
- sustainable design and opportunities
- criteria for shadow impacts, lighting standards and landscape matters

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

City Hall Planning Division 519.747.8523 or visit: www.waterloo.ca
The Urban Design Manual is available in electronic form on the City’s website.