



Terms of Reference: Urban Design Brief



Study Description

The Urban Design Brief will provide the City with information to conduct an efficient review of development proposals in a comprehensive fashion that considers existing conditions, planning policy, and design objectives for the public and private realms. It will be used to assess the merits of the proposed design strategy against design standards defined by policies and guidelines, as well how it prioritizes and balances site-specific design considerations that result from the interrelationship of policy, public realm, built form, transportation, cultural heritage, natural heritage and other city-building inputs.

Purpose

The purpose of this Terms of Reference (“TOR”) is to establish clear expectations and requirements for the preparation of Urban Design Briefs submitted to the City of Waterloo. Compliance with these guidelines will help to expedite review times and mitigate the need for further revisions and submissions. Failure to satisfy the requirements set out in this TOR may result in an application being deemed incomplete. If an application is deemed incomplete it will be returned to the applicant to satisfy the necessary submission requirements.

When is it Required?

An Urban Design Brief may be required for the following Planning Act applications:

- Official Plan Amendment
- Zoning By-law Amendment
- Draft Plan of Subdivision or Condominium
- Site Plan Control
- Other planning applications, as determined by the City.

The need for an Urban Design Brief as part of a complete application will be identified as part of the pre-application consultation review. In the instance where a planning application being advanced does not have a mandatory pre-application consultation process (e.g., Committee of Adjustment applications), the applicant is encouraged to contact the City’s Planning Division to discuss the nature of the proposal and to determine if an Urban Design Brief is required.

Generally, proposed developments with two or fewer buildings and/or structures would be subject to the Urban Design Brief requirements. For more complex applications, refer to the Master/Block Plan Terms of Reference.

The Urban Design Brief is expected to be a separate document from the Planning Justification Report.

Qualified Persons

An Urban Design Brief shall be prepared by an Urban Designer who is a qualified and competent professional in good standing in one of the following disciplines:

- Urban Design
- Registered Planner (RPP/MCIP)
- Licensed Architect (OAA)
- Landscape Architect (OALA)

The report must identify and be signed by the author(s) and, where prepared under the direction of a qualified professional, the signature of the reviewer of the report. As noted in the ‘Report Contents’, the Urban Design Brief introduction is to include the qualifications of who is preparing the report. A one-page Curriculum Vitae should also be appended to the report. The qualified professional that has signed the report shall take professional responsibility for its contents and the accuracy of the information contained therein.

Applicable Legislation

The authority to require or request information or material to evaluate and make a decision on proposed planning applications is provided by the Ontario *Planning Act*, the Provincial Policy Statement, and City of Waterloo Official Plan Section 12.2.14 (“Complete Applications”).

This Terms of Reference document is to be applied in conjunction with all applicable regulations, by-laws, and guidelines, including the City of Waterloo’s Urban Design Manual and Comprehensive Engineering and Landscape Manual.

Report Contents

This TOR document sets out the minimum requirements that must be included in all reports. More specific scoping of the Urban Design Brief may be identified by appropriate staff during the pre-application consultation process.

It is expected that the Urban Design Brief will be highly visual with the extensive use of graphics to demonstrate how the proposed development responds to the existing and planned context.

A. Introduction

The introduction should include the following:

- Applicant information
- Name and qualifications of who is preparing the Brief
- Site address and the extent of the study area
- Details of the development proposal

B. Design Vision

Provide a design vision statement that describes the overall intent and design objectives of the proposed development. Address how the proposed development will integrate into the local existing and planned context and responds to applicable design policies, standards, and guidelines. Consider the approach to accessibility, connectivity, sustainability, active transportation, public realm, culture, heritage, open space, and architectural quality. Emphasis should be placed on how examining the unique aspects of the site and its local context informed the design approach.

C. Context Analysis

Demonstrate an understanding of the site and surrounding conditions within a 250-500 metre radius of the site, with an emphasis on how the development proposal responds to context. It is expected that the following will be addressed through the use of text and graphics.

- Site Attributes:
 - Site location, area, and boundary; and
 - Topography, buildings/structures, access, natural and heritage features, existing constraints, etc.
- Surrounding Context:
 - Neighbourhood structure including street network, neighbourhood pattern, landmarks, gateways, and view corridors;
 - Surrounding land uses including built form, character, and heritage features;

- Transportation networks including vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle, and transit; and
- Natural features, topography, open spaces, and public amenities.

D. Policy Context and Analysis

Provide a high-level analysis of how the proposed development implements the relevant urban design policies found in all applicable documents:

- City of Waterloo Official Plan, including any Secondary Plans
- Zoning By-law, particularly built form regulations
- Urban Design Manuals, Guidelines, and Plans identified by City staff

Include a graphic demonstration of how the proposed development implements policy objectives. It is expected that this section will not be a comprehensive regurgitation of policy but a brief overview that focuses on implementation. In the case of non-conformance, the Urban Design Brief should provide rationale for any potential amendments or areas of divergence. This analysis should be separate content from that found in a Planning Justification Report.

E. Proposed Development

The Urban Design Brief will provide a discussion and graphic communication of the proposed development in the context of the following (as applicable).

Reference to other required submission material and their corresponding Terms of Reference may be required to address the content in this section.

- Site Plan
 - Location of the proposed building(s), open spaces, and streets (if any);
 - Proposed uses, at and above grade; and
 - Identify setbacks to all property lines.
- Building Design
 - Building massing including height, step-backs, floorplates, separation distances, building placement, and orientation;
 - In the context of low-rise adjacencies, address building transitions, and privacy mitigation;

- For tall buildings, address the base, middle, and top components;
- On corner or through lots, address how the building(s) will address multiple street edges; and
- Provide an analysis of building impacts to views, sunlight, wind, and microclimatic comfort.
- Access, Circulation, Parking and Services
 - Identify points of vehicular and pedestrian access, describing how drop-off, loading, bicycle parking, and vehicular parking would function;
 - Indicate the internal road network, pedestrian circulation, emergency access, and service routes.
- Public Realm
 - Delineate the pedestrian realm, including at-grade conditions along all public frontages, streetscape design, landscape features, art, light, and signage; and
 - Include any linkages, trails, mid-block connections, courtyards, privately owned public spaces (POPS), etc.
- Landscape Design
 - Provide a conceptual landscape plan, showing general areas for trees, planting and green space, designated spaces (ie. play areas, community gardens, forecourts, patios, etc.), landscape buffers, landscape structures and parkland conveyances (if required); and
 - Delineate extent of soil volume areas for trees, hard and soft surfaces, and public and private areas.
- Sustainability

Describe if the project will be incorporating any sustainability features and technologies such as, but not limited to:

 - Net-zero design;
 - LEED certification;
 - Solar panels;
 - Bioswales;
 - Green roofs;
 - Waste reduction strategies;
 - Permeable pavement; and
 - Car-share.

If details of the above are contained in an Energy Strategy, required to be submitted with the development application, then reference to that document should be made in this section.

Heritage

- Describe how designated cultural heritage resources on or adjacent to the site will be protected, conserved, enhanced, and integrated; and
- Include details such as massing, materiality, datum lines, fenestration, and landscape.

If details of the above are contained in a Heritage Impact Assessment, required to be submitted with the development application, then reference to that document should be made in this section.

F. Required Length

It is expected that the Urban Design Brief will range from 5 to 15 pages subject to the agreed-upon scope.

Additional Information

Note 1:

If City staff consider the submitted Urban Design Brief to be incomplete, unsatisfactory, inconsistent, insufficient, authored by an unqualified individual, or if it fails to satisfy the requirements set out in this TOR in any other manner, the associated development application may be deemed incomplete and returned to the applicant.

Note 2:

If a request for an Urban Design Brief is not made at an earlier stage in the development process, this does not preclude the City from requesting an Urban Design Brief at a later stage. Once an application has been deemed “complete”, the City may require additional information, reports, and/or studies following a more detailed review to assess the implications of an application for approval.

Note 3:

The City of Waterloo is committed to complying with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). In our everyday work with businesses institutions, and community partners we anticipate the same commitment to AODA compliance. Therefore, the Urban Design Brief must be AODA compliant and must meet the current provincial standard for compliance.

Note 4:

Deeming an application complete does not guarantee that the contents of the study are acceptable to City staff and/or that the application will be approved.

Note 5:

The City reserves the right to request an updated study, or an addendum thereto, should staff determine that changes in the development proposal or changes to legislation warrant further/modified planning analysis.

Note 6:

City staff reserve the right to require a peer review of submitted materials by an appropriate agency or qualified professional, the cost of which will be borne by the applicant.

Note 7:

Documents and all related information submitted to the City as part of a complete development application are considered public documents once submitted.

Note 8:

The Urban Design Brief shall be submitted in conjunction with the applicable development application(s), unless otherwise agreed to by the City.

Note 9:

This Terms of Reference document is intended to be used for guideline purposes only, and will be used to provide technical direction throughout the planning and development process. Completion of a report in alignment with the requirements of this Terms of Reference will not guarantee approval of the development application in question.

Note 10:

This TOR is relevant at the time of publishing and will be updated as necessary to reflect current policy, best practices, and accepted standards. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure the report is prepared in accordance with the most recent version of the TOR issued by the City.

This Terms of Reference was prepared by a qualified external consulting firm. For clarification for any information contained within this document, please contact the City of Waterloo staff assigned to the pre-consultation process.