



Markham Design Review Panel

Terms of Reference

June 2026



MARKHAM

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1. Purpose

The City of Markham Design Review Panel (“the Panel”) is an independent advisory body that provides professional and objective urban design advice to the City’s Planning and Urban Design Department staff and applicants. The Panel supports high-quality development that positively contributes to Markham’s built form, public realm, and overall urban design quality. The Panel does not have authority to approve or refuse development applications or to make policy decisions.

The purpose of the Design Review Panel is to support Council-approved objectives by:

- 1) Enhancing Urban Design Quality**
Providing independent advice to elevate built form, landscape, and urban design excellence, and to strengthen the City’s character, livability, and vibrancy.
- 2) Promoting a Transparent and Consistent Review Process**
Applying objective urban design principles to support fair, predictable, and principle-based evaluations of development applications.

- 3) Advancing the Public Interest**
Encouraging development that enhances the public realm, walkability, streetscapes, and open spaces; respects local heritage and character; supports community well-being; and advances sustainability and climate-resilience objectives.
- 4) Identifying Design Issues Early**
Supporting early-stage review to identify and resolve key design considerations, reducing revisions and delays later in the planning process.
- 5) Supporting Policy Implementation**
Assisting in the interpretation and application of the Official Plan, Secondary Plans, built form and urban design guidelines, complete streets frameworks, public realm strategies, and sustainability standards.



2. Mandate

The Panel provides independent, expert design recommendations to City staff, applicants, and their consultants on the physical and functional design of proposed developments, including site organization, buildings, landscapes, streetscapes, and their interface with the public realm and surrounding context. The Panel's mandate is to:

- Ensure development proposals align with the goals and objectives of the City's Official Plan and applicable policies and guidelines;
- Promote design excellence through regular and structured design review; and,
- Cultivate a collaborative and constructive relationship with the development industry.

3. Application Type

The Panel will review development applications with potential impacts on the public realm, including:

- Official Plan Amendments, Zoning By-law Amendments, Draft Plan of Subdivision, and Site Plan Control applications;
- Significant or complex developments within intensification areas, Secondary Plan areas, and special character areas of the City;
- Significant or complex mixed-use and high-density residential; and
- High-profile applications, at the discretion of the Director of Planning & Urban Design.

The Director of Planning & Urban Design, or their designate, may require or waive Panel review at their discretion.



4. Design Review Panel Structure and Composition

The Panel will be comprised of ten (10) standing regular members, including:

- Architects (full member with OAA or equivalent)
- Urban designers (full member with OPPI, OAA, or OALA or equivalent)
- Landscape architects (full member with OALA or equivalent)
- Transportation professionals/engineers (PEO)

5. Quorum

A quorum consists of a minimum of four (4) Panel members. If quorum is not achieved, the meeting will be rescheduled to a date determined by the Senior Manager, Urban Design or their designate.

6. Term of Office

Panel members will be appointed for a three (3) year term, with staggered appointments to ensure continuity. Members may serve a maximum of two (2) consecutive terms.

If a member resigns prior to the end of their term, the City may appoint a replacement.

A member will cease to be on the Panel if absent from more than three (3) consecutive meetings or more than fifty percent (50%) of scheduled meetings in a calendar year.

7. Chair and Vice Chair

The Panel will appoint a Chair and Vice Chair from among its members. In the absence of Chair, the Vice Chair will act as Chair. Where both are absent, the Panel will appoint an alternate Chair for that meeting.

8. Role of the Chair

The Chair will preside over the meetings, facilitate discussion, ensure fair and timely consideration of all matters, and maintain an efficient and orderly meeting in accordance with the Meeting Protocol for Panel Chair and City Staff guide.

9. Conflict of Interest

Panel members must declare any conflict of interest in writing to the Panel Coordinator at least two (2) weeks prior to a scheduled review and shall not participate in the review of that project. All declared conflicts will be recorded in the meeting minutes.

10. Meeting Schedule

The Panel is scheduled to meet on the last Thursday of every month, except December when no meetings are routinely scheduled.

Meetings are held virtually. Members may be required to attend a minimum of one (1) in-person meeting per calendar year.

A maximum of two (2) projects may be scheduled per meeting, to a maximum duration of three (3) hours. Meeting schedules will be coordinated and adjusted by City staff as required.

11. Project Review Timing

The Design Review Panel process is integrated with the City's existing development approval framework. Planning & Urban Design staff will advise applicants when participation in the Panel review is required and schedule reviews at the appropriate stage of the application process.

Development proposals will generally follow a two-staged review process. Where Stage 1 review is not required, applications may proceed directly to Stage 2.

1) Stage 1 Preliminary Review: Official Plan Amendment, Zoning By-law Amendment, and/or Draft Plan of Subdivision Applications

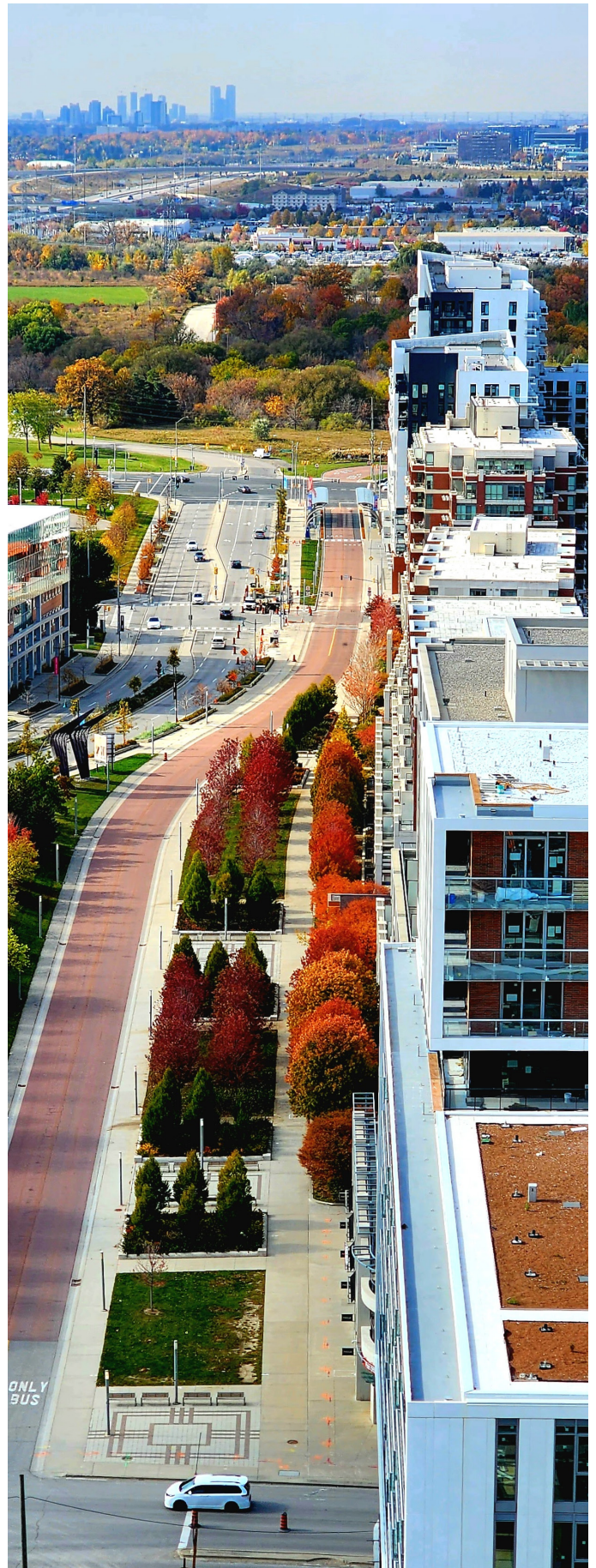
- City staff will identify Stage 1 review requirements prior to formal application submission.
- Stage 1 provides early design guidance and ensures significant proposal changes are fully considered before proceeding to Stage 2.

2) Stage 2 Final Review: Site Plan Applications

- The second review (Stage 2) will be scheduled once confirmed that feedback from the Preliminary Review (Stage 1) has been fully considered.
- The Final Review supports detailed design refinement.

12. Monitoring

Planning & Urban Design staff will monitor the Design Review Panel's operations on an ongoing basis and implement refinements as necessary to ensure effectiveness, informed by internal process evolution and feedback from Panel members and stakeholders.



13. Appendix A

Meeting Protocol & Procedure

Prior to the Meeting



- **Before formal application submission:**
 - Urban Design Staff will determine whether a Stage 1 and/or Stage 2 Review is required. Exceptions may be granted at the discretion of the Director of Planning & Urban Design (or designate).
 - Urban Design Staff will advise the applicant of the Design Review Panel meeting date, presentation requirements (see Stage 1 Review Applicant Guide and Stage 2 Review Applicant Guide), and submission deadlines.



- **Fifteen (15) working days before the meeting:**
 - The applicant submits a draft presentation package to Urban Design Staff for review. Failure to submit the package, attendee list, and Project Summary Sheet by the deadline will result in meeting cancellation.



- **Ten (10) working days before the meeting:**
 - Urban Design Staff provide comments on the presentation material to the applicant.
 - The DRP Coordinator circulates the meeting agenda and project summary to Panel members.
 - The agenda is sent to applicant attendees confirming the meeting date and time.



- **Eight (8) working days before the meeting:**
 - Panel members disclose conflicts of interest to the Senior Manager, Urban Design and the DRP Coordinator.
 - The applicant submits the final revised presentation package.



- **Five (5) working days before the meeting:**
 - The DRP Coordinator circulates the final presentation package and Staff Design questions to the Panel members.

At the Meeting

- **Part 1: Panel Briefing Session:**
 - Urban Design Staff and the Development Planner present an overview of the proposal and key design questions framed around the proposal
 - Panel members may seek clarification on the proposal context and deliberate on recommendations.
 - Briefing session is attended by City staff and Panel members only.
- **Part 2: Applicant Presentation / Panel Discussion:**
 - The applicant presents the proposal
 - Panel members may ask questions for clarification before providing comments and recommendations. Applicants are not expected to respond or question the Panel's recommendations.
 - The Chair summarizes Panel feedback at the close of the meeting.
 - Meeting minutes are recorded by the DRP Coordinator without attribution to individual Panel members.

After the Meeting

- **Three (3) days after the meeting:**
 - The DRP Coordinator prepares draft minutes and forwards to Urban Design Staff for review to ensure key panel discussions, design directions and other recommendations are accurately documented.
- **Six (6) days after the meeting:**
 - The Urban Design Staff will sign off on the minutes, and forward to the Chair for review.
- **Twelve (12) days after the meeting:**
 - The Chair reviews and approves the final meeting minutes.
 - Final minutes are circulated to the applicant by Urban Design Staff and to the Panel members by the DRP Coordinator.
- **Following circulation of approved meeting minutes:**
 - Through the development review process, City Staff will work with the Applicant to address the Panel's comments and recommendations.



Markham Civic Centre

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