

# Urban Design and Sustainability Brief

The Urban Design and Sustainability Brief is intended to support planning applications for development proposals and encourage high quality and context sensitive design responses. The Brief will illustrate the proposed development's compliance with relevant municipal policies and guidelines, as well as its fit within the existing and emerging/planned site context.

Depending on the complexity of the application, the information requirements may be addressed in a high-level brief or a detailed brief.

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## Required by Legislation

The Local Official Plan.

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## Who should prepare this brief?

An Urban Design and Sustainability Brief is prepared and signed by an Urban Designer, Architect (OAA), Landscape Architect (OALA) or Professional Planner (RPP).

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## Why do we need this brief?

The Urban Design and Sustainability Brief is required to:

- › Encourage high quality and context sensitive design
- › To provide clear direction on how a site should be developed
- › To assist staff in assessing the urban design and sustainability aspect of development applications including the design rationale for the project.

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## How should this brief be prepared?

An Urban Design and Sustainability Brief should at a minimum contain:

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### Introduction

- › Address of the property
- › General site location of the subject property
- › Project Name (if applicable)
- › Applicant and owner's contact information
- › Author name, title, qualifications, company name and appropriate stamp
- › Brief description of the proposed development
- › Overview of the study area
- › Purpose of the study
- › Location and context map.

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### Proposal Description and Context

- › A description of the proposal, development stats (such as number of units, site area) type of development proposed, height, parking areas, access points, location of amenity areas, proposed phasing
- › A description of the existing on-site conditions as well as surrounding areas, roads, natural areas, buildings, parking areas
- › General street/block pattern (including block lengths)
- › Built form character of surrounding area

**How should this brief be prepared?** (continued)**Proposal Description and Context** (continued)

- › Views and vistas to and from the site
- › Linkages to open spaces
- › Other concurrent approvals being sought, planning applications, permits
- › Context maps, aerial photographs to help provide context for the site
- › Concept Plan for the development including building location, parking, access, amenity areas, grading and natural features and any natural hazards and a perspective drawing of proposal noting how it relates to the heritage resource.

**Investigation/Evaluation****Description of the Policy Framework and Applicable Guidelines**

- › Provide a summary and analysis of relevant documents, including a description of how the proposed design accounts for, and implements, the municipal Vision/Strategies as established in:
  - › Strategic Plan priorities
  - › Official Plan policies
  - › Urban Design Guidelines
  - › Transportation Master Plans, including Active Transportation
  - › Relevant Policy, Design Studies and/or Guideline documents for specific areas.

**Policy, Design Studies and/or Guideline documents for specific areas:**

The Design Brief should demonstrate how the design principles have guided the design of the site and optimize sustainability. Through written descriptions, plans, elevations, diagrams and/or photographs, explain how the design proposal deals with each of the following design considerations:

**Site Design**

- › Urban structure (i.e., Centre, Corridor, Development Areas, Neighbourhood etc.)
- › Street and block pattern (permeability, connectivity)
- › Building placement and orientation
- › Transition of building mass within the neighbourhood (if applicable)
- › Vehicular and pedestrian access and circulation
- › Location of parking (surface or underground), driveways, ramps and/or drop-off areas
- › Access to transit
- › Provision for cycling facilities
- › Location of servicing areas (loading, garbage, storage, utilities, etc.)
- › Pedestrian safety and comfort (i.e. sun, wind, etc.)
- › Integration of Green Infrastructure/Low Impact Development.

**Built Form**

- › Building height
- › Transition in scale (compatibility with adjacent building forms)
- › Shadow impacts
- › Setbacks from adjacent properties and street
- › Building step-backs

**How should this brief be prepared?** (continued)**Investigation/Evaluation** (continued)**Policy, Design Studies and/or Guideline documents for specific areas** (continued):**Building and Architectural Design**

- › Enhancing corner locations
- › Roof treatment
- › Location of garage and driveways
- › Location of utilities and mechanical equipment
- › Location of windows and doors
- › Architectural expression (base, middle, top)
- › Street wall and architectural treatment at grade level (ie. podium design, access, height of first storey, level of transparency etc.).

**Architectural style**

- › Architectural features and details
- › Façade treatments
- › Materials and colour palette
- › Building lighting (i.e. safety, night-time illumination, etc.)
- › Signage

**Character**

- › Compatibility with and enhancing the existing neighbourhood
- › Response to/interface with the existing streetscape (ie. landscaping)

**Additional considerations for mid-rise and high-rise buildings**

- › Shaping/designing tall building floor plates
- › Creating a distinct base, middle and top of buildings
- › Accessibility to sunlight and sky views
- › Shadow impacts on adjacent properties as well as internally within the development
- › Massing articulation

**Public Realm**

- › Streetscape elements (street trees, street lighting, street furniture including benches receptacles, flower beds, bollards etc.)
- › Utility aboveground infrastructure impacts
- › Public plazas (continuity of the streetscape, paving material, active pedestrian zones, outdoor patios, site furnishings, etc.)
- › Semi-public spaces (front yards, shared amenity areas, gardens, courtyards)
- › Public walkways and mid-block connections
- › Linkages to open spaces including parks, paths, cycling routes and/or Greenway system
- › Landscaping treatment and planting
- › Architectural screening elements and fencing
- › Landscaped buffers and parking islands
- › Public art
- › Gateways
- › Coordinated buffers and parking islands

## **How should this brief be prepared?** (continued)

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### **Investigation/Evaluation** (continued)

#### **Policy, Design Studies and/or Guideline documents for specific areas** (continued):

##### **Sustainability**

- › Intent to apply for LEED certification or other third-party certification or rating programs
- › Identify if there are any provisions for sustainable features/programs related to building (e.g., energy or water conservation/efficiencies) and/or site design (i.e.. bioswales, green and/or site design (i.e.. bioswales, green roofs, solar panels, light colored or permeable paving material, xeriscaping, cycling facilities, car-share programs , electric vehicle charging)

##### **Heritage**

- › Where the preservation of a heritage building is incorporated into the overall design solution, the heritage character must be evaluated and an appropriate response to the heritage attributes be provided
  - › Compatibility issues must be assessed in terms of the approach to incorporating heritage items into new construction
  - › Describe the details, materials, landscape, architectural pattern, and how these are to be reinforced, and the scale and rhythm of architecture maintained.
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### **Impacts and Mitigation Measures**

- › Summary and conclusions of the studies and how they support the development and any special considerations or conditions that should be imposed.
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### **Recommendations**

- › Any recommendations, or conditions that should form part of a decision on the matter.
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### **Drawings and Supporting Information**

- › Provide an outline of the related supporting studies submitted (i.e. sun shadow study, wind study).
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## **What else should we know?**

The Community Planner will determine whether the information requirements should be a detailed for high-level brief.

The Urban Design and Sustainability Brief will incorporate findings other project studies such as the Sun-shadow study, the Wind Study, Tree Preservation, Transportation Mobility Plans, Culture Heritage Impact Studies along with any other studies or recommendations that will impact the layout of the site and the massing of the buildings and sustainability of the project.

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### **Additional Terms**

To be identified by the local municipality where proposed development is located.

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### **Study Submission Instructions**

To be identified by the local municipality where proposed development is located.

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**What other resources are there?**

Ontario Professional Planners Institute (OPPI) – [Hire an RPP](#)

[Ontario Association of Architects](#)

[Ontario Association of Landscape Architects](#)

[Sustainable Technologies Evaluation Program](#)

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**About these Terms of Reference**

These Terms of Reference were developed as a joint effort with participation by representatives from all York Region municipalities and the Region. The Terms of Reference are in widespread use across the Region, with local requirements added as prescribed by each municipality at the pre-consultation stage.

The need and scope for this study will be decided by a municipality during initial pre-consultation process with input from partner agencies. This pre-consultation process may include:

- Determination if this study is applicable
  - Confirmation of criteria within these Terms of Reference that are appropriate for your development project
  - Identification of specific technical components that need to be addressed
  - Identification of detailed standards to be met
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**Notes:**

If the proposed development is revised, the study/report shall reflect the revisions by an updated report or letter from the author indicating the changes and whether or not the recommendations and conclusions are the same (Note: this is subject to the extent of the revisions).

A peer review may be required. The cost of the peer review will be borne by the applicant.

If the submitted study is incomplete, is authored by an unqualified individual or does not contain adequate analysis, the applications will be considered incomplete and returned to the applicant.