



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Urban Design Brief Terms of Reference

December 2024

1. When is an Urban Design Brief required?
 - a. An Urban Design Brief is required in accordance with the Planning Act, for site plan control applications, zoning by-law and official plan amendments, and subdivision applications as warranted.
 - b. The requirements are scaled to the scope of the project and the amendment sought by the Applicant. This helps provide some flexibility.
 - c. Staff use their discretion as part of the review process to determine submission requirements for sites.
2. In some cases, a site plan is not required (i.e., less than 10 dwelling units), in these cases is an Urban Design Brief needed?
 - a. If a planning application is not triggered, then an Urban Design Brief is not required.
3. Is an Urban Design Brief necessary when it is typically part of the submission to the Urban Design Review Panel, and part of that process?
 - a. Preparing an Urban Design Brief early in the process is in the best interest of all stakeholders. Getting design feedback early from staff will help prepare for the Urban Design Review Panel, and frequently improves the aesthetics of the proposed development.
 - b. The Urban Design Brief supports the submission made to the Urban Design Review Panel and is a key element.
 - c. The Urban Design Brief is not a new requirement. There is some flexibility with the brief's requirements, and they are scaled to the project's scope.
4. Is it appropriate to require an Urban Design Brief for a Plan of Subdivision when house designs are not known at the time?
 - a. Yes, it is appropriate to require an Urban Design Brief for a Plan of Subdivision. Subdivision designs typically include the layout (and property widths), public and private streets, the location of parks and school blocks, and this may include the subdivision for mid to high-rise mixed-use developments. An Urban Design Brief may not be applicable for low-rise residential subdivisions.



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5. Are High Performance Development Standards part of the Urban Design Brief?
 - a. Currently, the use of High-Performance Development Standards is encouraged, but not required. High Performance Development Standards are currently under review.
6. The Terms of Reference for the Urban Design Brief suggest a checklist of items to be included in the Design Brief and some of these items are also in other plans or studies. Isn't this redundant and unnecessary?
 - a. The Terms of Reference for the Urban Design Brief say that the Brief "...should not replace or replicate the Planning Rationale," and that it is a document that is complimentary to the Planning Rationale." The scope of each Urban Design Brief is tailored to each application. Please contact City staff by sending an email to urbandesign@ottawa.ca if additional clarification is needed.
7. How far from the subject property should the Urban Design Brief address?
 - a. Historically it is within a hundred meters of the site, although this may increase with more complex developments. Please contact City staff by sending an email to urbandesign@ottawa.ca if additional clarification is needed.
8. What if I have questions about an Urban Design Brief or comments provided by City staff?
 - a. If the applicant requires clarification on any items requested or issues addressed, they may discuss these with the assigned Urban Designer. Emails may be sent to urbandesign@ottawa.ca
 - b. The City of Ottawa encourages pre-consultation with applicants, and this is a best practice which has been successful in the past. Staff are willing to discuss any urban design issues with developers.