



Report
Staff Report
 The Corporation of the City of Brampton
 5/26/2025

Date: 2025-04-08

Subject: Information Report – Urban Design Guidelines Update

Contact: Han Liu, Principal Urban Designer/Supervisor, Development Services & Design

Report number: Planning, Bld & Growth Mgt-2025-147

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That the report from Han Liu, Principal Urban Designer/Supervisor, Development Services and Design to the Planning and Development Committee Meeting of May 26, 2025, re: **Information Report – Urban Design Guidelines Update**, be received.

OVERVIEW:

- This report is to inform the Council about the development of revised Urban Design Guidelines and to outline the key updates in the document.
- Urban Design Guidelines and Comprehensive Zoning By-Law (CZBL) are two important tools to implement Brampton Plan. They play different yet interconnected roles in assisting in Brampton's transition to a more urbanized and sustainable future.
- The guidelines are City-wide standards for new developments, providing a flexible framework for City Staff to review applications and guiding developers in creating high-quality, sustainable designs that align with the City's goals. They also allow flexibility and adaptability to meet different project needs.
- The updates implement Brampton Plan, coordinate with the new Comprehensive Zoning By-Law, and replace the 2003 Development Design Guidelines to reflect the evolving needs and priorities of the City.
- The guidelines support future development by expediting approvals, promoting high-quality and sustainable design through alignment with the new CZBL and Sustainable New Communities Program, and providing a clear framework for growth in priority intensification areas.

- The new draft document includes two key updates: the introduction of guidelines for high-rise developments and a shift away from angular planes toward alternative transition strategies.
- The development of the UDG has included an inclusive and collaborative engagement process, incorporating input from the public, the development industry, internal and external stakeholders, and experts from the Urban Design Review Panel.
- The update to Urban Design Guidelines reflects Brampton's commitment to facilitating more housing and investment opportunities while ensuring design excellence and compatibility with the surrounding built environment.

BACKGROUND:

Implementation and Alignment with the 2023 Official Plan

Brampton is a rapidly growing City that has undergone significant transformation over the past several decades. Once characterized by sprawling greenfield and industrial developments, it is evolving into a more compact, urban community with a diverse mix of uses. To support this shift, the City of Brampton launched the **Brampton 2040 Vision** in 2018, which later informed the development of the **Brampton 2023 Official Plan** (referred to as *Brampton Plan*). A range of tools and policies has been introduced to implement Brampton Plan, including two key components, being the:

- **Urban Design Guidelines (UDG)** - led by Urban Design with The Planning Partnership as the consultant, and
- **Comprehensive Zoning By-Law (CZBL)** - led by Integrated City Planning staff with WSP as the consultant.

These tools play different yet interconnected roles in assisting Brampton's transition to a more urbanized and sustainable future. The UDG focuses on translating the urban design policies outlined in Brampton Plan into actionable guidance while complementing the CZBL. Brampton Plan provides a framework encompassing environmental sustainability, parks and open spaces, transportation, heritage, and urban design. It introduces five design lenses and four pillars of sustainability, which form the foundation of the UDG principles. Additionally, Brampton Plan defines the City Structure, setting high-level goals for design and built form in various areas based on this structure. The UDG provides relatively detailed guidance to shape the built form, character, and design vision for these areas.

On the other hand, the CZBL is a legal tool to regulate land use and development, focusing primarily on establishing minimum requirements. While the UDG allows for

flexibility and creativity in the design process, the CZBL ensures compliance with land-use regulations. Together, these tools function as complementary mechanisms to achieve Brampton Plan's vision, balancing regulatory standards with innovative design.

What are Urban Design Guidelines?

The UDG is a set of city-wide standards that establish clear guidance for new developments, serving as a key tool for both City Staff and developers. For City Staff, the UDG provides a basis to review and assess development applications, ensuring alignment with the City's broader planning goals. For developers, the guidelines inform the creation of development applications that meet the City's expectations for quality and character. The UDG promotes consistency and high quality in urban developments while allowing flexibility and adaptability to meet different project needs. It ensures that new developments contribute to a cohesive, context-sensitive urban fabric while emphasizing sustainability, accessibility, and innovation in design.

Purpose of the Project

The current design guidelines in use, the [2003 Development Design Guidelines](#) (DDG), were approved by Council to focus on greenfield development prevalent at that time. They were designed to guide growth patterns and respond to the development pressures of the early 2000s. In 2015, additional draft guidelines for [Transit-Supportive Mid-Rise Development](#) were introduced and integrated into the DDG to support emerging urban needs. Since then, both the City of Brampton and the Province of Ontario have introduced and updated various plans, legislation, and policies to prioritize urban development, including intensification and sustainable growth strategies.

This project – the City-Wide UDG – aims to address this shift by clearly defining the City's expectations for urban development. It provides direction on essential aspects such as street and block patterns, community focal points, interfaces with natural heritage, the design of parks and open spaces, and the development of the public realm. Additionally, the document includes a broad range of development forms and building types, including low-, mid-, and high-rise structures, as well as mixed-use developments, ensuring a comprehensive approach to urban design.

In summary, the UDG is intended to implement Brampton Plan, align with the CZBL, replace the dated 2003 DDG, and incorporate the draft 2015 Transit Supportive Mid-Rise Development Guidelines to better reflect the evolving needs and priorities of the City.

How UDG Support Future Development

The UDG is a key tool in advancing Brampton's future development objectives. The document supports growth and intensification by providing greater clarity, consistency, and direction to both the development industry and City staff. Specifically, it contributes to the following:

Expediting Development Approvals by Establishing Expectations Upfront

The guidelines improve clarity for developers at the outset of the application process, helping to reduce approval timelines. By clearly outlining design expectations, they facilitate more streamlined and efficient review processes.

Ensuring Strong Alignment with New CZBL and Sustainable New Communities Program

The UDG promotes more consistent, high-quality urban design outcomes across new developments. It provides clear design guidelines to promote sustainable intensification, assisting in the achievement of the City's environmental and growth objectives.

Providing a Clear Framework for Growth in Priority Intensification Areas as per Brampton Plan

The document supports shifting away from the rigid application of angular plane requirements to better accommodate intensified development. It also establishes a foundation for pre-zoning Major Transit Station Areas (MTSAs) to facilitate development.

These measures position the UDG as a strategic tool for guiding Brampton's direction toward sustainable, well-designed, and efficient urban growth.

Project Timeline, Public Engagement, and Review Process of Urban Design Guidelines

The development of the UDG has been guided by an inclusive and collaborative engagement process, incorporating input from the public, internal and external stakeholders (including City departments, the Region of Peel, Peel District School Board, Bell Canada, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, etc.), the development industry, and experts from the Urban Design Review Panel. Urban Design staff have worked diligently to ensure a robust, comprehensive, and transparent approach, encouraging diverse perspectives to help refine and enhance the UDG.

To facilitate this, three drafts of the UDG were shared for feedback, accompanied by two Public Open Houses organized in collaboration with the CZBL team. Additionally, multiple touchpoints were held with Council members, focusing on key topics of the approach to angular plane and transition of mid- and high-rise developments to low-rise neighbourhoods. Below is a timeline summarizing the key project and engagement milestones achieved so far, as well as those targeted for completion:

- Project Relaunch: Q1 2022
- Informal Draft for Internal Review & Public Release: Q4 2023
- First Draft Virtual Public Engagement (in partnership with the CZBL): February 13, 2024

- First Draft Public Release: February 28, 2024
- First Draft Circulation for Internal Review: Q1 2024
- Meetings with the Development Industry (Angular Plane & Transition): Q2 and Q3 2024.
- Second Draft Circulation for Internal Review: July 29, 2024 to August 16, 2024
- Key Topic Presentation to Urban Design Review Panel (Angular Plane & Transition): August 27, 2024
- Second Draft Public Release: September 2024
- In-Person Public Open House (in partnership with the CZBL): October 15, 2024
- Meetings with BILD: October 22, 2024 and December 17, 2024
- Revised Second Draft Circulation for Internal Review: October 28, 2024 to November 1, 2024
- Third Draft Circulation for Internal Review: February 12, 2025 to March 3, 2025
- Third Draft Release for Public Meeting: April 2025
- Public Meeting: May 12, 2025
- Targeted Council Adoption: Q3 2025

Key comments received to date include:

1. alignment with the CZBL,
2. input on the approach to angular planes,
3. the transition of high- and mid-rise developments,
4. integration with the City's Sustainable New Communities Program, and
5. the need for flexibility in the guidelines.

This feedback has been essential in refining the UDG, which has evolved to enhance clarity, flexibility, and consistency with broader city objectives. The resulting draft UDG balances high standards with contextual adaptability and feasibility in development projects.

A dedicated [Let'sConnect](#) webpage has supported this process, serving as a platform for the public and stakeholders to share feedback, ask questions, and stay informed about the progress of the UDG.

This extensive engagement and review process ensures the guidelines reflect the needs and aspirations of Brampton's diverse community while aligning with the city's broader urban development objectives.

CURRENT SITUATION:

An Overview of the Guidelines

The Guidelines provide a clear framework for creating high-quality, sustainable developments across the City. Noted below are its three key components:

- [Part A – Introduction](#) outlines core design principles, links to city policies, and offers practical guidance.

- [Part B – Sustainable Community Design](#) focuses on larger-scale planning (e.g. neighbourhood design), addressing buildings, streets, parks, and natural systems to support sustainable communities.
- [Part C – Site Organization and Built Form](#) provides detailed guidance for designing residential, mixed-use, and non-residential developments, ensuring functional and visually appealing city-building.

Key Updates

The UDG includes two key updates from the 2003 Guidelines, being: 1. Guidelines for High-Rise Development and 2. Updated Transition Strategies. These updates reflect Brampton's commitment to facilitating more housing options and investment opportunities while ensuring design excellence and compatibility with the surrounding built environment. Details on these items are provided below.

1. Guidelines for High-Rise Development

To accommodate the City's evolving urban landscape, the UDG introduces guidelines (contained in Part C5) dedicated to the design of high-rise buildings; defined as buildings exceeding 13 storeys, as per Brampton Plan and Zoning By-law. This section addresses all forms of high-rise buildings, including residential, mixed-use, commercial, and office developments. It promotes a dynamic, street-focused built form that integrates with its surroundings, supports the creation of pedestrian-friendly public spaces, and enhances placemaking initiatives.

2. Updated Transition Strategies

The transition from high- and mid-rise developments to low-rise neighborhoods is a key consideration as Brampton undergoes urban intensification. Balancing growth with compatibility is essential. The project team has conducted baseline studies of practices in other municipalities and developed strategies to move away from rigid reliance on angular planes. Instead, alternative requirements, such as building setbacks, step-backs, and tower separation distances, are recommended. Generally, angular planes will not be applied, except when assessing mid- and high-rise development applications where they are proposed outside the permitted uses outlined in Brampton Plan.

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

There is no financial impact resulting from the planned actions in this report. The cost of the project is covered within the existing budget.

Communications Implications:

Public meetings for UDG are non-statutory. However, an email notification regarding this public meeting for the Urban Design Guidelines Update is planned for distribution to key stakeholders and subscribers via the Let's Connect webpage.

STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA:

The UDG directly supports Brampton's strategic focus areas by fostering sustainable, connected, and vibrant urban growth.

Health & Well-being: The UDG promotes health and wellness by prioritizing walkability, accessible public spaces, and safe, inclusive designs that encourage active lifestyles and community engagement.

Transit & Connectivity: By emphasizing transit-oriented development and prioritizing pedestrian, cycling, and transit connections, the UDG supports efficient, sustainable transportation networks and better connectivity across the city.

Growing Urban Centres & Neighbourhoods: The document guides the creation of mixed-use and vibrant neighborhoods, promotes economic growth, local investment, and strong community ties while enhancing the quality of urban life.

Environmental Resilience & Sustainability: The guidelines prioritize sustainable development through green infrastructure, energy-efficient design, and the integration of natural systems, aligning with Brampton's environmental goals. It also connects directly to the City's Sustainable New Communities Program.

Government & Leadership: The UDG provides clear, transparent guidelines that support effective governance, accountability, and innovation in urban planning, ensuring consistency and high standards in development. Working alongside the CZBL, they provide flexibility to achieve goals while allowing for adjustments based on specific project needs. This balance ensures that the guidelines remain effective and relevant, supporting Brampton's broader vision while fostering high-quality, context-sensitive urban development.

Culture and Diversity: The UDG encourages the integration of public art, cultural heritage, and diverse community spaces, reflecting Brampton's cultural richness and promoting inclusivity and cross-cultural understanding.

CONCLUSION:

The UDG is instrumental in implementing Brampton Plan and guiding the City toward a sustainable, urban future. These guidelines provide a framework to support growth while maintaining high design standards and ensuring that new developments are compatible with the city's goals for sustainability, accessibility, and quality of life. The

UDG also facilitates housing options by encouraging diverse residential developments to support affordability. As Brampton continues to grow, the UDG will assist developers and City staff in creating vibrant, inclusive communities that emphasize sustainable design, connectivity, and resilience. To further enhance the document and gather diverse perspectives, the third draft of the guidelines will be circulated for feedback, with a targeted deadline of June 2nd, 2025. The guidelines are targeted for adoption by Council in Q3 2025. Ultimately, the UDG will contribute to achieving the City's strategic goals by fostering economic, environmental, and social well-being.

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Attachments:

- Attachment 1 – Urban Design Guidelines Presentation