



## Heritage and Urban Design

# URBAN DESIGN BRIEF – SITE PLAN TERMS OF REFERENCE

### 1.0 PURPOSE

An Urban Design Brief (Design Brief) is intended to describe the proposed design solution for a new development project within the City of Richmond Hill, and to demonstrate comprehensively how the design solution was arrived at. The main purpose of the Design Brief is to provide the design rationale for site development, building design and landscaping elements within the proposal, in addition to how the proposed development fits within its context and addresses Richmond Hill's city-building vision.

The design brief should demonstrate how the design is guided and informed by good urban design practices. The brief must describe and justify the rationale for the submitted design directions.

The Design Brief provides a clear design direction of how the site should develop, including a set of design principles and how these principles will be achieved. The scope and level of detail expected in the Design Brief will typically depend on the scale, site, nature and complexity of the development proposal.

Design Briefs are used by City Staff to help assess the urban design aspects of development applications. Given that the City has a strong desire to elevate the quality of development projects in Richmond Hill through design excellence in both the public and private realm, these documents provide an overview of the proposal and give Staff a better understanding of the design rationale for the project and insight as to why certain design decisions were made.

## **2.0 WHEN IS AN URBAN DESIGN BRIEF REQUIRED?**

A Design Brief will be submitted as part of a development application for an Official Plan, Zoning Bylaw Amendment, Draft Plan of Subdivision, and/or Site Plan for larger-scale development projects including high-density, mixed-use or commercial/retail proposals.

This Terms of Reference provides guidance on what should be included in a Design Brief for applications that are submitted with a Site Plan application, or will require a Site Plan application at a future stage.

## **3.0 CONTENT**

Given that development does not occur in isolation, the Design Brief is required to analyze not only the subject site but have consideration for the broader community context in terms of the road and transit network, open space linkages, and the built form character.

The Design Brief should include the following three main sections and address issues and urban design considerations listed below.

### **Section 1 – Vision & Principles**

#### **1.1 Vision Statement:**

Provide a clearly articulated vision statement for the project. The vision statement is a written description that should clearly state a broad mission for the function, look and feel of the proposed design solution. It builds on the site's inherent assets and the potential strengths to set the overarching intent and objective for urban design, and is a direction setting tool that sets the basis for all subsequent urban design initiatives.

#### **1.2 Design Principles:**

Identify the design principles that were used to guide urban design decisions throughout the design process. These principles are interdependent and must support one cohesive Vision.



## Section 2 – Policy Context & Site Analysis

### 2.1 Response to Richmond Hill's Planning Framework:

Provide a summary and analysis of relevant City documents, including a description of how the proposed design accounts for, and implements, the City's Vision/Strategies as established in:

- the Strategic Plan priorities;
- the Official Plan policies;
- the City-wide Urban Design Guidelines; and,
- any relevant area specific policy, design studies and/or guideline documents.

### 2.2 Site Analysis - Opportunities and Constraints:

Provide a detailed spatial analysis of the overall area surrounding the site (at least a 400m radius from the site) noting any on-site attributes and considerations including, but not limited to:

- existing topography and vegetation;
- lot fabric (including frontage and depth);
- general street/block pattern (including block lengths);
- built form character of surrounding area;
- surrounding land uses;
- views and vistas to and from the site;
- existing or planned landmarks or gateways;
- existing or planned transportation networks (including vehicular, cycling, pedestrian, transit, etc.); and,
- linkages to open spaces.

A context map showing the subject site in relation to its context and photographs of the existing context should be included.

### **Section 3 – Design Considerations**

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

#### **3.1 Site Design:**

- Urban Structure (ie. 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, drop-off areas;
- access to transit;
- provision for cycling facilities;
- location of servicing areas (loading, garbage, storage, utilities, etc.); and,
- pedestrian safety and comfort (ie. sun, wind, etc.).

#### **3.2 Massing:**

- building height;
- transition in scale (compatibility with adjacent building forms);
- shadow impacts;
- setbacks from adjacent properties and street; and,
- building step-backs.

#### **3.3 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;
- bird-safe design treatment (refer to the Bird-Safe Design Standards);
- materials and colour palette;
- building lighting (ie. safety, night-time illumination, etc.); and,
- signage.

#### 3.4 Character:

- compatibility with and enhancing the existing neighbourhood; and,
- response to/interface with the existing streetscape (ie. landscaping).

#### 3.5 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; and,
- massing articulation.

#### 3.6 Public Realm:

- streetscape elements (street trees, street lighting, street furniture including benches receptacles, flower beds, bollards etc.);
- 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; and,
- co-ordinated signage/themes.

### 3.7 Sustainability:

- intent to apply for LEED certification or other third-party certification or rating programs; and,
- identify if there are any provisions for sustainable features/programs related to building and/or site design (ie. bioswales, green roofs, solar panels, light-coloured or permeable paving material, xeriscaping, cycling facilities, car-share programs).

### 3.8 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; and,
- describe the details, materials, landscape, architectural pattern, and how these are to be reinforced, and the scale and rhythm of architecture maintained.

## 4.0 SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

As part of the Design Brief, written explanations and descriptions should be provided in addition to drawings, analysis diagrams and/or illustrations to support the proposed development. Depending on the nature and scale of the development, these could include, but are not limited, to the following:

- context plan drawings;
- architectural drawings including Site Plans, Elevations and Floor Plans;
- Landscape Plan drawings;
- Streetscape Elevations (showing the existing streetscape context);
- circulation (vehicular and pedestrian) diagrams;
- 3D-coloured perspectives/renderings of the site and surrounding area;
- figure-ground drawings;
- phasing plans (if applicable);
- photographic precedents; and/or,
- sun/shadow analysis drawings.