Urban Design – What’s it All About?

A common misconception is that urban design simply deals with architecture or aesthetics. This is incorrect. Urban Design encompasses a much greater and more holistic area of concern that significantly impacts our city, neighbourhoods and public spaces.

At its essence, urban design is a process of shaping a city’s physical form. It does so at various scales:

- City-wide
- Area-wide
- Site-specific

**It considers public spaces such as:**
- Streets, street patterns, sidewalks, and walkways
- Parks
- Gathering places
- Open spaces
- Bridges
- Water bodies
- Public buildings

It also considers private spaces such as:
- Buildings
- Facades
- Plazas
- Yards
- Parking areas
- Landscaped areas
- Lighting
- Signage
- Fore courts

Urban design shapes the above elements in ways that create urban environments that are functional, economically viable, attractive, comfortable, animated, stimulating and safe.

In general terms, urban design seeks to facilitate:

- “People first” development
- Quality public spaces and places
- Better connected forms of development
- Mixed use development – in a variety of different forms
- More compact forms of development

- Higher quality built form – both buildings and the spaces between them
- Functionally and economically successful development
- Development which preserves natural and built heritage
- Development that recognizes and builds local character