Urban Design & the Planning Process

Urban design is incorporated into a variety of planning processes, including:

- Official Plan and Zoning By-law amendment applications
- Site Plan applications
- Minor variance & consent applications
- Subdivision applications

Generalized process diagrams illustrate how urban design fits within the Official Plan amendment & zoning amendment, and site plan approval processes. Some common messages are noteworthy:

1. It is important to begin the urban design discussion early in your project process. Problems often arise when applicants go through expensive processes to design their buildings in detail, establish floor plans, or prepare expensive architectural and/or engineering drawings prior to entering into an urban design discussion.

2. Begin with an urban design brief. This will take you through the process of evaluating your site from the perspective of its surroundings, potential linkages, important features and other relevant considerations and then through the process of establishing key urban design objectives. Once you have established those objectives and discussed them with Urban Design staff, you will have a solid foundation for designing a site and building that responds to those objectives.

3. Incorporating quality urban design elements into a project DOES NOT have to be expensive. Its all about responding to urban design objectives and in many cases urban design can bring cost savings to a project.

4. Urban design IS NOT simply about aesthetics or architectural design. In general terms, urban design seeks to facilitate:

   a) “People first” development
   b) Quality public spaces and places
   c) Better connected forms of development
   d) Mixed use development – in a variety of different forms
   e) More compact forms of development
   f) Higher quality built form – both buildings and the spaces between them
   g) Functionally and economically successful development
   h) Development which preserves natural and built heritage
   i) Development that recognizes and builds local character