



Town of Newmarket
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Urban Design Guidelines Staff Report to Council

Report Number: 2021-55

Department(s): Planning and Building Services

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Meeting Date: August 23, 2021

Recommendations

1. That the report entitled Urban Design Guidelines dated August 23, 2021 be received; and,
2. That Council approve Attachment 1 to this report titled “Town of Newmarket Urban Design Guidelines” prepared by Fotenn Planning + Design; and,
3. That Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to recommend the approval of the Town-wide Urban Design Guidelines.

Background

Currently, different areas of the Town are subject to different urban design policies (i.e., Urban Centres Secondary Plan Area vs. the remainder of the Town). In addition, numerous existing subdivisions are subject to their own urban design guidelines that were prepared as part of their approvals processes. Given the context, Council directed staff to retain a consultant and develop a set of Town-wide urban design guidelines.

In October 2019, Fotenn Planning + Design (Town’s consultant) was retained to prepare the Town-wide Urban Design Guidelines (UDG). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the project was delayed and the public engagement process had to adapt to Provincial COVID-19 orders.

Discussion

The UDG is structured as follows:

- Introduction
- Design Objectives
- Built Form Guidelines
- POPS Guidelines
- Demonstration Plans
- Implementation

All guidelines contained in the UDG are built upon the Town's Official Plan and Secondary Plan urban design policies, Zoning By-laws, and best practices in other municipalities. The UDG are intended to guide the design of buildings, development sites and Privately Owned Public Space (POPS). It should be noted that where numerical values of development standards are recommended in the UDG, in many cases, they are based on the Town's Zoning By-laws. Where the recommended standards are more stringent/restrictive than those of the Zoning By-law, the intent of those guidelines will be used in designing and reviewing development applications. While staff will work with applicants towards achieving the objectives of the UDG in every development, it is important to remember that these are guidelines and not zoning regulations. In some cases, an individual guideline might not be met, but the overall design may still be acceptable where the intent of the guideline is achieved.

The following paragraphs summarize the main sections of the UDG.

Eight Objectives that Make a Development Great

The built form guidelines, which are discussed in the following section, were developed by asking the question "what are the elements that make a development great?" The answer to the question resulted in the following eight objectives, which form the overarching framework for the UDG:

1. Fit harmoniously into the established context
2. Mitigate impacts on adjacent properties
3. Create attractive, human-scaled buildings
4. Support walkability and active transportation
5. Minimize vehicle presence in the public realm
6. Promote vibrant streets
7. Provide amenity space for all residents
8. Ensure safety and accessibility for all

Built Form Guidelines

In the UDG, each built form (i.e. single- and semi-detached, townhouses, low-rise, mid-rise, and high-rise) has its own section where individual guidelines supporting each of the eight objectives can be found. As previously mentioned, some of the built form guidelines are based on current zoning standards, such as side yard setbacks, building height, angular plane etc. However in many cases, the UDG provide further guidance to help achieve the eight objectives. For example, in a Zoning By-law, front yard setback is often used to guide the siting of a single detached dwelling and to establish/reinforce the established streetwall, which is one of many elements to consider when a new development needs to fit into the existing context. To achieve the objective of “fit harmoniously into the established context”, the Single-detached and Semi-detached Dwelling section of the UDG references this setback requirement, but further recommends that these forms of development be oriented parallel to the street and that the style of the dwelling “should reference (but not replicate) the prevailing character, including height, roof and cornice lines, ground floor heights, pilasters, window location and proportions, porches, brick and material colours etc.”

Privately Owned Public Space Guidelines

POPS are an important element of great developments. They help “provide amenity space for all residents”. Furthermore, POPS are permitted as a form of parkland in the urban centres by the Town’s Parkland Dedication By-law and are becoming increasingly popular amongst developers as a way to help meet parkland requirements. At this time, the Town’s design guidance on this type of parkland is minimal, and therefore it was determined that POPS guidelines would form part of the UDG.

POPS may take various forms such as pocket parks, urban plazas, internal courtyards, pedestrian mews, and more. When POPS is proposed as part of a development, applicants are encouraged to review the POPS guidelines prior to designing the space. Similar to the Built Form guidelines, it is the intent of the POPS guidelines that should be achieved.

The POPS guidelines are organized by the following themes:

- Location – where should POPS be located
- Design – how to design POPS and its relationship with adjacent uses
- Programming – what uses/programs should be accommodated in POPS
- Safety – safety features/considerations when designing POPS
- Access and Accessibility – how to make POPS accessible
- Microclimate – design features in POPS that help control microclimate

Implementation of the Urban Design Guidelines

Upon Council’s approval of the attached UDG, any new development or additions to existing buildings, regardless of the proposed built form, will be reviewed against the approved UDG. It is recognized that there may be limited abilities to fully address the

guidelines for additions to existing buildings, but staff will encourage applicants to achieve the design objectives, where possible. However, where design guidelines have been previously approved as part of the subdivision process, these will continue to apply to those lands within the subdivision.

For a 3-year period following the approval of the UDG, the Town's consultant will assist staff in the review of larger-scale developments under the UDG. Over this period, staff will learn and benefit from the assessment experience of the consultant, and staff will be prepared to handle independent reviews following the 3-year period. This course of action was approved by Council in [June 2016](#).

Conclusion

The attached UDG provides guidance to both staff and developers/land owners on Council's expectations of the design quality in the Town. Upon Council's approval, staff will review new development applications against the UDG to strive for high design quality buildings and POPS.

Business Plan and Strategic Plan Linkages

- Extraordinary Places and Spaces
- Vibrancy on Yonge, Davis and Mulock

Consultation

Virtual Public Information Centres

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the first Public Information Centre (PIC), which was originally scheduled for April 2020, was postponed to November 2020. Since in-person consultation was not possible, a dedicated project site on HeyNewmarket was created as a form of communication platform between the project team and members of the public. The first virtual PIC was launched in November 2020 and it introduced the project and the various built forms by posting electronic information display boards and a recorded presentation on the Town's website and HeyNewmarket. The project site on HeyNewmarket also included an online visual preference survey to collect initial public feedback on the various building typologies. Survey participants were given different images of each building typology and POPS, and were asked to select the image that they prefer the most under each category and provide reasons/list the preferred design element(s). Some common themes resulted from the visual preference survey include: appropriate scale and height; well-landscaped properties, and parking hidden from street.

On May 27, 2021, a second PIC was held via Zoom where the Town's consultant presented the main components of the draft UDG and answered questions from members of the public. An engagement activity was also published on HeyNewmarket to gather public input on what design elements/considerations are important to residents

when they are given three hypothetical development scenarios. Inputs received have been used to develop the three demonstration sites that form part of the final UDG.

Council Workshop

Following the second PIC, a Council Workshop was held on June 28, 2021. Main comments received from members of Council regarding the draft UDG include:

- Ensure strong POPS guidelines, and
- Encourage creativity by utilizing built form/buildings or public art.

Staff have worked with the Town's consultant in strengthening languages in the POPS Guidelines section and added/revised certain guidelines to clearly articulate the intent of such guidelines from an implementation perspective. Furthermore, the final UDG have included guidelines in appropriate sections that encourage unique buildings or integrating public art into building design.

In addition, members of Council have also expressed the importance of the following design considerations:

- Connectivity between development site and open space;
- Accessibility within development site as well as to/from public space and commercial uses, and
- Appropriate height and density transitions to existing residential uses.

Development Industry

The draft UDG was circulated to the Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD) as well as developers who have development applications at the Town for review and comment. No comments were received from BILD at the time of this report's preparation.

Comments received from developers/applicants focused on guidelines for single-detached, semi-detached and townhouses. Specifically, the comments were related to building height, building separation distance, setbacks on upper storeys, and clarity on angular plane. The Town's consultant has addressed these comments in the final UDG.

Human Resource Considerations

None

Budget Impact

None

Attachments

Attachment 1 – Town of Newmarket Urban Design Guidelines, prepared by Fotenn Planning + Design dated August 2021

Submitted by

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Approved for Submission

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