
Memorandum

PDS-C 7-2025

Subject: Niagara Region Model Urban Design Guidelines

Date: July 9, 2025

To: Planning and Economic Development Committee

From: Khaldoon Ahmad, Manager Urban Design

The purpose of this memorandum is to inform the Planning and Economic Development Committee that the update to the Region's Model Urban Design Guidelines is complete.

Background of the Model Urban Design Guidelines

The Region's initial Model Urban Design Guidelines (MUDG) were developed in 2005 to provide urban design guidance and best practices associated with Smart Growth planning principles of the day. The primary goal of the guideline was to inform the urban design policies of both the Regional Official Plan and the official plans of Area Municipalities. The MUDG provided land use planners, developers, architects, landscape architects, and the public at large, with a reference document of urban design practices appropriate to Niagara.

The Update to the Model Urban Design Guidelines

The new Niagara Official Plan (NOP) was approved in November 2022. Subsequently, the Region's MUDG were revised to align with the new plan and address current trends in development. In November of 2023, Brook McIlroy Inc., a notable architecture and urban design consulting firm, was awarded the assignment to update the MUDG.

The goal for the update was to ensure that the document would continue to be useful to the development community by showing how new forms of development can fit into a variety of contexts in Niagara. These guidelines have been assembled by the Region on behalf of the area municipalities. These guidelines do not replace local design guidelines and may be referenced in the absence of a local design guideline.

The updated guidelines are intended to facilitate development by supporting innovative design, densification, walkable and transit friendly developments. The guidelines illustrate urban design solutions that are ready to support more housing, gentle density,

taller building heights, reduced parking, and well-designed communities, enhancing livability, and active transportation through complete streets.

The updated guidelines are a reference document and serve as the first stop for planners, architects, developers, and others to envision urban design solutions that are relevant to Niagara. These guidelines can help to streamline design of developments by illustrating the possibilities. Without this guideline, the development community might seek urban design solutions from other places that may not be suitable for Niagara.

Consultation

Preparation of the updated Model Urban Design Guidelines included review of the document by a technical team of Regional and area staff that provided feedback regarding the consultant's deliverables. In addition to the technical team, there was extensive consultation with broader area staff in planning and public works, the development industry, and the public that included:

- November 30, 2023: A Virtual Public Open House
- June 25, 2024: Draft 1 - Half Day Workshop, with Area Planners, Area Public Works, and other Area staff in heritage, parks planning, trails, and more.
- October 24, 2024: Development Industry Workshop: (46 attendees including builders, architects, landscape architects, planners, and engineers).
- December 5, 2024: A Virtual Public Open House: Draft 2 presentation

Final Draft

The final document is intended to facilitate development including housing and to support the development community by providing a first stop reference document for urban design solutions appropriate to Niagara.

The final draft is designed to be a searchable and easy to use reference for a significant breadth of urban design conditions in Niagara. The guidelines are not a statutory document and do not include mandatory design standards and will be relevant to Area Municipalities - post proclamation – as these municipalities assume greater planning duties. The updated Model Urban Design Guidelines is provided as Appendix 1.

Respectfully submitted and signed by

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Appendix 1: Updated Model Urban Design Guidelines