

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an evaluation of the design review processes at the National Capital Commission (NCC) and City of Ottawa (City). Design review is a process whereby development applications are subject to expert criticism on design aesthetics and usability through sponsorship of local government agency(ies). The primary source of evaluation criteria is *Urban Design as Public Policy: Best Practice Principles for Design Review and Development Management* (2007).

planning rationale for development in relation to the appropriate guidelines. Both the NCC and City showed strong support for social inclusion through planning principles, and expressed an interest in developments that benefit private and public users. Lastly, differences regarding zoning limitations were apparent whereby the City is willing to be flexible in exchange for enhanced public spaces, but the NCC has to be more firm in some cases because of concerns such as protecting the views of Parliament.

range of planning tools, proper design review administration and expert panel advice. For weaknesses, the NCC could use improvement on efficiency within ACPDR, and the City of Ottawa needs to make adjustments in distinguishing between mandatory regulations and design guidance.

Figure 4-6: Design Review Comparison Chart

Best Practice Principles for Design Review	National Capital Commission	City of Ottawa
Community Vision		
1 - Coordinated Vision		
2 - Community and Industry Support		
Design, Planning, and Zoning		
3 - Harnessing the Broadest Range of Actors	8	
4 - Mitigating Exclusionary Effects		
5 - Addressing Limitations of Zoning		8
Broad, Substantive Design Principles		
6 - Community, Vitality, Accessibility, and Sustainability		
7 - Mandatory Requirments and Design Guidance		8
8 - Accommodating Spontaneity, Innovation and Pluralsim		
Due Process		
9 - Clear Rules	8	
10 - Proper Administrative System		
11 - Efficient, Constructive and Effective Permitting Process	8	

In addition to the process evaluations, three sample projects were selected for evaluation and include an NCC project (Canada Aviation Museum), City project (The Mondrian), and a combined NCC/City project (Rideau Centre Red Garage). These highlight how the design review panels assessed the projects to develop advancements that added more value.

The project samples were used to showcase the type of recommendations that the respective design review panels typically suggest. Each project is unique in itself, and often has a fairly good design to begin with, but the role of the panel is to provide their expert advice on ways in which development projects could be improved. Small changes such as lighting or materials used can have a large impact on the aesthetics and usability of a building. Furthermore, recommendations are often tailored to benefit both private and public users, such as alterations in canopy designs or alternative designs to hide street-level views of parking.

Upon analyzing the respective processes, several conclusions and recommendations were established. Design review has proven to be beneficial for adding value to a variety of development projects, as well as utilizing local design guidelines and initiatives that have not been adequately addressed in the past. This report provides a guide for any planning body looking to formulate design review. However, the principles are not directly transferrable and minor modifications may need to be explored to best suit the area being developed. The NCC and City have their similarities and differences, but both witnessed some areas where improvements could be made, and therefore recommendations were made to enhance the effectiveness, efficiency and consistency of their design review processes.

Three recommendations were made for the NCC, which suggests providing detailed guidance on the application process, making adjustments to have greater public accessibility and alleviate time-delays, as well as the need to establish a set of design guidelines pertaining to the federal land of downtown Ottawa. Two recommendations were made for the City based on the future of design review. At the time of this report, the City was in transition from pilot phase to formalizing design review, and therefore recommendations included improving the administrative process and panel composition, as well as expanding the area in which design review is required.

NCC Recommendations