



# Update on Markham's City-wide Urban Design Guidelines Project

Presentation to Development Services Committee  
May 5, 2026





# City-wide Urban Design Guidelines Project Presentation Overview

**01** - Recap on Project and Objectives

**02** - Update on Progress and Accomplishments

- Key Milestones Achieved
- Guidelines Progress
- Preliminary Engagement / Consultation
- Council Tour (Special DSC June 2025) Highlights

**03** - Approach to Delivery of the Guidelines

**04** - Next Steps





# 1.0 | Recap on Project and Objectives

- 1.1 Project Overview
- 1.2 Project Objectives

## 1.1 Project Overview

### Recap - Staff Presentation made to the Development Services Committee on June 4, 2024:

- Launch of the City-wide Urban Design Guidelines
- Illustrated document that sets out design expectations for development industry in the delivery and quality of new development in Markham
- Focus on intensification areas (i.e. Markham Centre and Secondary Plans)
- Primarily used by staff to evaluate development applications under the Planning Act



## 1.1 Project Overview Cont'd

- Important planning tool that provides greater certainty and predictability
- Regard for recent provincial legislative changes, i.e. Planning Act
- Guidelines are not mandatory but provide a framework for best practices to ensure quality design
- Implements Markham's Strategic Plan and Official Plan policy direction
- Supports other key city-wide initiatives and processes, i.e Official Plan Review, Streetscape Guidelines, etc.



## 1.2 Project Objectives

- Design guidance for Tall Buildings, Mid Rise Buildings, and Townhouses
- Emphasis on:
  - Site context
  - Site design
  - Built form massing and exterior considerations
- Reframe guidance to focus on health, safety, and accessibility
- Delivered in-house by Urban Design staff
- Retain consultant for peer review purposes at key stages of guidelines development





## 2.0 | Update on Progress and Accomplishments

- 2.1 Key Milestones Achieved
- 2.2 Guideline Topics and Progress
- 2.3 Preliminary Engagement and Consultation
- 2.4 Council Tour Highlights



## 2.1 Key Milestones Achieved

- Conducted Council Interviews (*Sept - Nov 2024*)
- Completed Council Tour / Special DSC Meeting (*June 25, 2025*)
- Completed draft Terms of Reference for consultant peer review services (*July 2025*)
- Held Preliminary Consultations (*July - November 2025*)
- Developed draft guidance (*Contents and Typologies*)



## 2.2 Guidelines Topics and Progress

### Contents

### Progress Bar

### Status

<b>Tall Buildings</b>		Substantial progress on draft content
<b>Townhouses</b>		Research and benchmarking
<b>Mid-Rise Buildings</b>		Initiated draft content
<b>Landmarks (Principles)</b>		Initiated draft content

**Note:** Progress reflects completion of written content only.  
Visuals, diagrams and precedent photos to also be developed.

## 2.2 Typologies / Topics

### Tall Buildings / Mid-Rise Buildings

- Site Context
- Site Organization
- Built Form / Massing
- Building Articulation
- Integrated Structured Parking
- Retail At-Grade
- Integrated Townhouses

### Townhouses

- Townhouse Types
- Site Context
- Site Organization
- Built Form / Massing
- Building Articulation



### What are “Fabric Buildings”?

- Buildings that collectively shape urban places to create a context
- Designed to blend with their surroundings, not stand out on their own, i.e. neutral
- Help create a consistent look and feel along the street edge
- Support human scale and sidewalk life

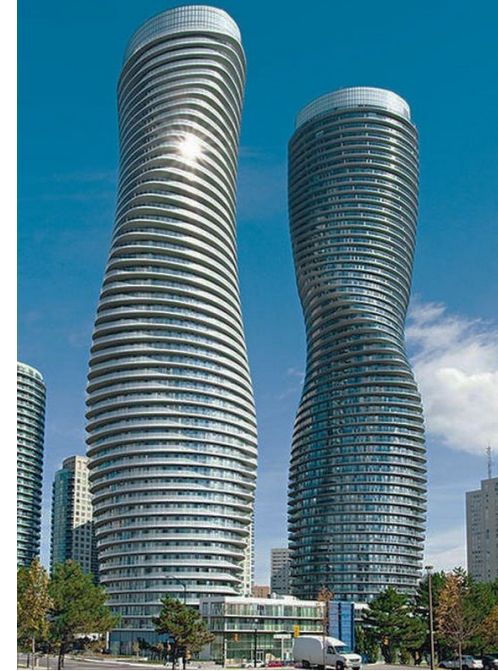
# 2.2 Typologies / Topics Cont'd

## Landmark Design Principles

- Overview
- Role of Landmarks in City Building
- Context, Location and Siting
- Built Form Qualities
- Landscape and Open Space

### What are “Landmarks”?

- Have a strategic location, position or siting (views, gateways, prominent corners)
- Iconic, distinctive, innovative and unique design features and land use programming
- Culminate in different building forms and scales of buildings
- Can be a prominent public realm feature (i.e. signature urban park, complimentary open space)
- Contribute to orientation, navigation, sense of place or destination, i.e. easily identifiable
- Portray cultural, architectural, civic or symbolic meaning, contribute to collective memory / identity



## 2.3 Council Outreach (fall 2024)

**13** Individual interviews with members of council conducted in Q4 / 2024

### Interview Objectives

- Identify key topics and priorities
- Clarify project scope and objectives
- Raise Council awareness
- Seek preliminary insights and feedback





# What We Heard from Council Interviews



## 2.3 Preliminary Consultation

### Completed to date:

- Markham's Accessibility Advisory Committee (MAAC)
- Rick Hansen Foundation
- York Regional Police
- Project Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

### Upcoming consultation events:

- Public Open House *Target: Late Q3 / 2026*
- Development Industry (Tall Buildings)  
*Target: Early Q4 / 2026*
- Other stakeholders as identified



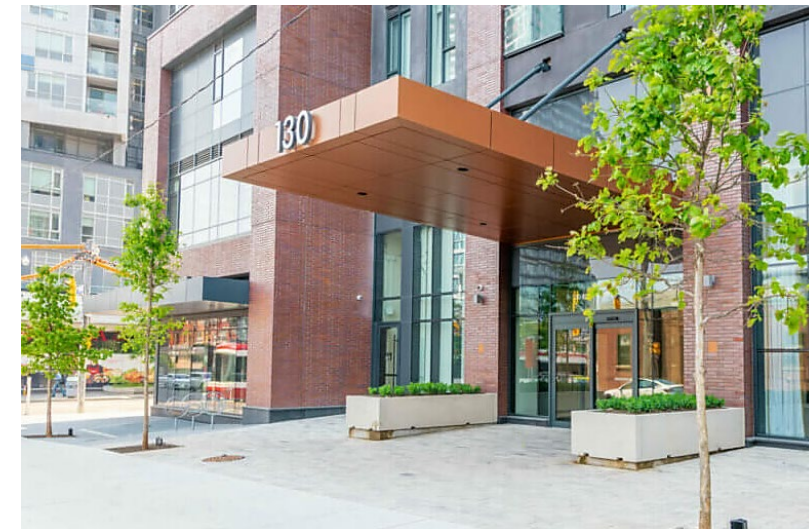
# What We Heard from Preliminary Consultation

## Accessibility

- Grading, Access and Thresholds
- Entrance Design and Placement
- Storefront Design and Visibility
- Benches and Seating
- Site Navigation
- Aging in Place
- Grading
- Signage

## Safety

- Public to Private Transition
- Visual Permeability
- Eyes on the Street / Space
- Pedestrian Safety
- Clear Sightlines
- Wayfinding
- Lighting



## 2.4 Council Tour

### Special Development Services Committee Meeting - June 25, 2025

- Council educational session
- Bring awareness of best practices in urban design, built form, and public realm design
- Showcase key urban design topics and built form matters to be explored by Guidelines
- Development sites visited:
  - Canary District
  - Regent Park
  - Concord Park Place





# What We Learned

## Canary District, Toronto

### Key themes:

- Generous boulevards
- Active ground-floor uses and frontages
- Articulated facades
- Internalized servicing, loading and parking functions
- Transition between public and private realm
- Eyes on the street





# What We Learned

## Regent Park, Toronto

### Key themes:

- Above-grade parking wrapped with active uses
- Grade-related residential units
- Facades with varied material



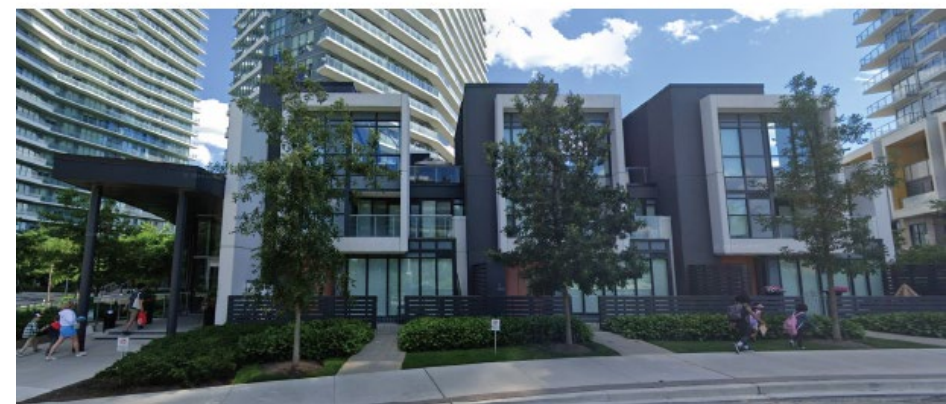


# What We Learned

## Concord Park Place, North York

### Key themes:

- Human-scaled buildings
- Accessible retail entrances
- Mid-block connections
- Outdoor amenity spaces
- Screened utilities



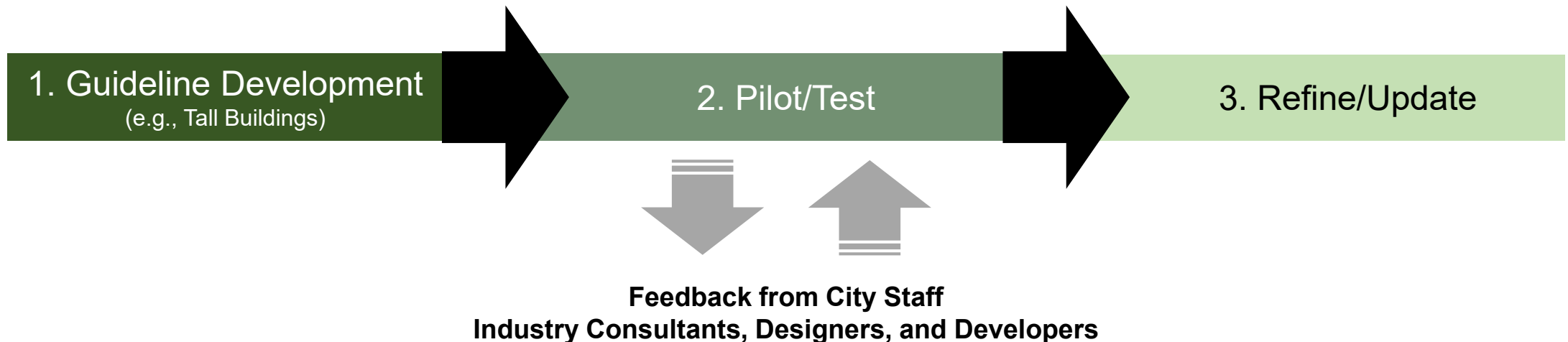


## 3.0 | Delivering the Guidelines

- 3.1 Piloting: Putting the Guidelines to Work
- 3.2 Benefits of Piloting
- 3.3 Guidance that can be Tested
- 3.4 Roadmap to Delivering Consolidated Guidelines

## 3.1 Piloting: Putting the Guidelines to Work

1. Develop draft guidance for each topic and post to project website / landing page (at substantial completion)
2. Pilot and test utility of each topic (i.e. Tall Buildings, Townhouses, and Midrise)
3. Update and refine based on feedback received (i.e. from staff and developers)
4. After piloting, make final update and consolidate all topics into one guideline document for DSC endorsement



## 3.2 Why Pilot the Guidelines?

### Benefits:

- No impact on timing of the project schedule, re: delivery of final consolidation of Guidelines
- Allows for the typologies to be put to use by staff in real time
- Work out the ‘kinks’ and identify areas for improvement based on observations / feedback
- Gauge sensitivity to current market conditions / adjust Guidelines to strike the right balance (i.e. flexibility versus highly prescriptive)
- Adapt to changes in policy and development trends based on latest info available
- Builds capacity and stakeholder buy-in
- Coordination with the ongoing Official Plan Review and other Secondary Plan updates

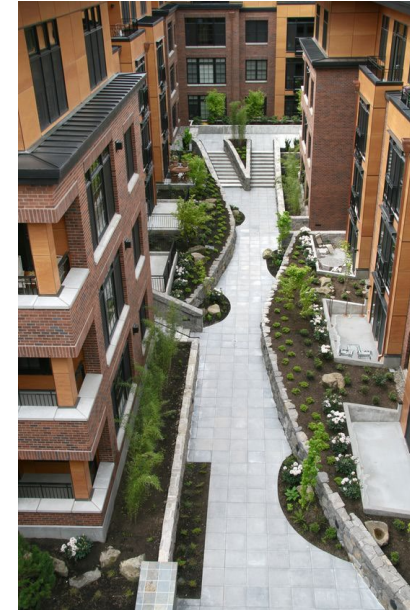


## 3.3 Guidance that can be Tested

Through the development review process, urban design metrics can be tested and refined to produce practical guidance that supports the City’s design objectives and market realities.

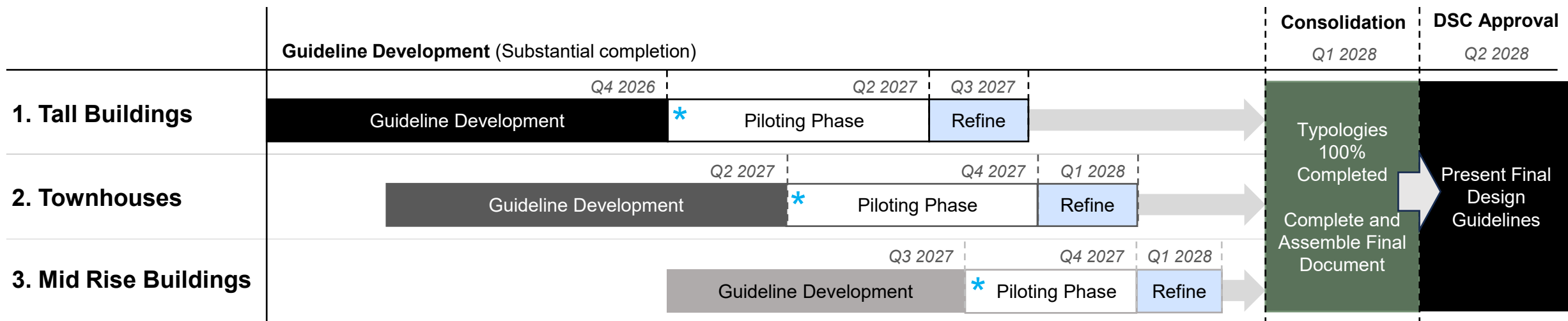
Representative components:

- Base building and streetwall height ranges in taller buildings
- Spacing of façade massing details to mitigate appearance of long buildings
- Building offsets and stepbacks
- Tower floor plates and massing for emerging typologies, i.e. slab form
- Scale, transition and privacy distances between building types
- Amount of transparent glass along ground floors / maximum amount of blank walls, i.e. retail.
- Extent of liner uses (living units, commercial space, etc.) that can be accommodated in base buildings to better conceal structured parking located above ground
- Number and width of individual units in townhouse blocks, including facing distances
- Dimensional considerations for paths, walkways and mews in higher density and townhouse developments
- plus more ....





# 3.4 Road Map to Delivery of Consolidated Guidelines



**Legend**

\* Release for Piloting (City's Website)

Notes:

- One Public Meeting to consult on all topics – Target: Late Q3 2026
- Development Industry to be consulted on each topic during each Guideline Development Phase
- The schedule also includes other sections needed to complete the document, such as the introduction, explanatory sections, glossary, and Landmark design principles





## 4.0 | Next Steps

4.1 What's next?



## 4.1 What's Next?

- Continue to develop draft Tall Buildings, Townhouse and Mid-rise Guidelines (*Ongoing*)
- Retain consultant for peer review services (*Q3 2026*)
- Organize and hold public open house event (*Late Q3 2026*)
- Consult development industry on draft Tall Buildings Guidelines (*Early Q4 2026*)
- Release of Tall Building Guidelines for Piloting (*Late Q4 2026*)



Thank You!

