

## End-to-end Review of the Development Review Process

**Date:** September 3, 2019

**To:** Planning & Housing Committee

**From:** Chief Planner & Executive Director and Deputy City Manager, Infrastructure and Development Services

**Wards:** All

### SUMMARY

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The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the end-to-end review of the development review process as directed by the former Planning & Growth Management Committee.

The full report of the end-to-end review can be found at <https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/planning-development/>.

The City of Toronto's development review process is a mature and robust system that supports and informs engagement with public stakeholders. The City believes in continuous improvement to ensure the development review process is efficient and effective; enhances clarity, certainty and transparency to applicants and the public; and above all else, continues achieving valuable city-building objectives such as affordable housing, transit, economic development, parklands and complete communities.

In response to the direction of City Council and the Planning & Growth Management Committee, the City ran a competitive procurement process and retained an outside consultant – KPMG and Gladki Planning Associates – to provide an external objective perspective, relevant expertise conducting similar reviews, knowledge of industry leading practices and research of other jurisdictions.

The City formed an interdivisional team, consisting of representatives from City divisions involved in development review, to oversee and consult on the end-to-end review including City Planning; Engineering & Construction Services; Toronto Building; Toronto Water; Solid Waste Management Services; Fire Services; Legal Services; Transportation Services; Parks, Forestry & Recreation; Economic Development & Culture; and the former Affordable Housing Office.

Extensive stakeholder consultations were conducted to identify how the City can improve the clarity, certainty and transparency of the development review process to City staff, applicants and the public. In addition to stakeholder consultation, the review included documentation reviews, analysis of internal performance measures and data,

multiple workshops with the interdivisional project team, high-level process mapping and research of leading practices from comparable jurisdictions.

The end-to-end review identified a number of continuous improvement opportunities around project management, teamwork, collaboration and technology that are administrative in nature. These continuous improvements will improve how the City manages the development review process to better achieve its city-building objectives, and ultimately, make it more consistent, effective and efficient for applicants to work with the City to get the necessary approvals. These continuous improvements will also result in more collaborative working relationships between applicants and the City.

The City is in the process of creating a dedicated Implementation Team, led by the Director of Business Transformation to lead, monitor and report to the Chief Planner on the implementation of the review's recommendations. The recruitment process for the Director of Business Transformation is currently underway.

Upon the hiring of the Director of the Business Transformation, this individual will be responsible for:

- Developing a detailed, multi-year work plan, adapted from / based on the full consultant report, to implement the end-to-end review's recommendations; and,
- Hiring additional project management support staff, reporting to the Director of Business Transformation that will support the interdivisional implementation of the multi-year work plan.

With the full support of the City's senior management team, the Director of the Business Transformation will lead the multi-year, interdivisional effort to transform the City's development review process, and the management structures and practices in place to support the process. The administrative, interdivisional changes to the development review process are intended to be implemented in phases over the next two (2) years.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning and Deputy City Manager, Infrastructure and Development Services recommends that:

1. The Planning and Housing Committee receive this report for information.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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The costs to implement the initial phase of the development review process improvements will be considered through the 2020 Budget Process, which includes the appointment of a Director of Business Transformation and two additional support staff. The three permanent positions are estimated to cost \$0.434 million in 2020. Future costs that may arise during the improvements' implementation will be considered through future budget processes.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

## DECISION HISTORY

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At its meeting of January 31, 2017, in consideration of item [PG17.4 \(Additional Staffing Resources for Development Application Review\)](#), City Council directed the Deputy City Manager, Cluster B, the Deputy City Manager, Cluster A, the Deputy City Manager & Chief Financial Officer and the City Solicitor to conduct an end to end development process review and to report to the Planning and Growth Management Committee. <http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2017.PG17.4>

Subsequently, at its meeting of May 31, 2017, in consideration of item [PG21.5 \(Work Plan for the Review of the Development Review Process\)](#), the Planning and Growth Management Committee made the decision to refer this review to the Chief Transformation Officer with the request that he:

- Chair and lead a Steering Committee comprised of representatives from City corporations, divisions and agencies which comment on development applications to conduct the end to end review of the City's development review process; and,
- Ensure that the end to end review of the City's development review process be holistic in nature and consider best practices for planning applications.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2017.PG21.5>

## COMMENTS

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### Introduction to the Development Review Process

Development review shapes how the city grows and delivers vital public goods necessary to successfully promote and manage growth. Overall, the system has approved an average of approximately 22,000 dwelling units and 742,000 square metres of non-residential development annually over the last 10 years. The development review process allows applicants to obtain planning-related approvals (e.g., zoning amendments, site plan control) for developing property and is undertaken within the context of applicable provincial planning legislation and regulations (such as the Planning Act, the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, Provincial Policy Statement, Heritage Act) and municipal policies, regulations and guidelines (such as the Official Plan, Zoning By-Law, Urban Design Guidelines, Tall Building Guidelines).

Toronto's development review process is distinctly complex and interdivisional in nature, involving up to 25 City divisions and entities across all four service areas and over 30 potential external commenting partners. It's a mature and robust development review system that supports and informs engagement with public stakeholders. With extensive community consultation, the development review and approval system is crucial in developing affordable housing, securing parklands, driving economic growth and job creation, supporting landmark projects, and delivering complete communities for the city.

### End-to-end Review Methodology

The City believes in continuous improvement to ensure the development review process is efficient and effective; enhance clarity, predictability and transparency to applicants

and the public; and above all else, continue producing good city-building results. The end-to-end review did not review the substance of provincial and municipal policy, planning frameworks or regulations. The review focused on identifying how the City could improve the development review process, regardless of the current or future policy context that the City works within.

The City formed a team of representatives from City divisions involved in development application review to oversee and consult on the end-to-end review, including City Planning; Engineering & Construction Services; Toronto Building; Toronto Water; Solid Waste Management Services; Fire Services; Legal Services; Transportation Services; Parks, Forestry & Recreation; Economic Development & Culture; and the former Affordable Housing Office.

Extensive stakeholder consultations were conducted to identify how the City can improve the development review process. More than 150 stakeholders were engaged, including: City staff across various divisions, geographies and levels; elected City officials; City agencies, boards and corporations; non-City agencies and boards; external commenting partners; and industry stakeholders, including developers, renovators, lawyers, urban planners, engineers, and other industry consultants.

Numerous engagement tactics were used to conduct these stakeholder consultations, such as one-on-one meetings, facilitated roundtable discussions, online surveys and written submissions. In addition to stakeholder consultation, the review included documentation reviews, analysis of internal performance measures and data, multiple workshops with City representatives, high-level process mapping and research of leading practices from comparable jurisdictions.

## **Findings and Recommendations**

The review identifies systemic challenges impacting the efficiency, consistency, transparency, timeliness and outcomes of the development review process. These systemic challenges pertain to the overarching structure and organization of the City that the development review process operates within. These systemic challenges have contributed to the increasingly adversarial nature of the process, creating barriers to effective communication and mutual understanding across stakeholder groups.

The City, in partnership with the community, development industry, external agencies and applicants, recognizes it cannot achieve its city-building objectives / deliver social goods without improving the development review process in the following ways:

- Improving the overall customer experience for applicants engaging in the development review process;
- Creating greater accountability and ownership for the end-to-end process across the City;
- Shifting the culture towards open collaboration and rigorous project management amongst applicants and City staff;
- Increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of identification, escalation and resolution of issues within development applications;

- Increasing the predictability and consistency of the development review process across geographies and commenting partners across the City and external partners;
- Focusing staff capacity and expertise on value-adding work;
- Resulting in meaningful reductions in application circulations and/or processing times;
- Enabling real-time data and analytics to manage the application pipeline and drive service planning; and,
- Improving the completeness and quality of applications submitted by applicants.

The end-to-end review consultant team produced a final report identifying a number of administrative continuous improvement opportunities around project management, teamwork, collaboration and technology. Highlights of the report's recommendations that will be implemented by the City include:

***Interdivisional Development Review Teams:*** The City will form interdivisional, multidisciplinary development review teams to collaboratively review applications. These interdivisional teams, which will be virtual teams in nature, will consist of representatives from the City's commenting divisions, including: Community Planning, Urban Design and Heritage Planning; Engineering & Construction Services; Transportation Services; Legal Services; Parks Development & Capital Projects and Urban Forestry from Parks, Forestry & Recreation; and the Housing Secretariat: and Economic Development & Culture as needed.

Each development review team will be led by a community planner empowered to: work with team members to develop draft application schedules and identify risks for each application; hold their development review team members accountable to timelines for completing application review, providing comments, resolving internal disagreements and/or escalation; mediate internal negotiations to produce a shared, coherent City position for each application; and, proactively identify issues needing escalation.

Team members will be collectively accountable for developing a coherent City position on each application. This team-based approach will enable collaboration by focusing accountability for each application on a dedicated team, assigning clear roles and responsibilities, creating greater transparency into City staff working on each application, and fostering stronger working relationships through consistency of interactions. A regular meeting structure for team members will be created to review applications and meet directly with applicants. Most importantly, this approach will also help the City bring the right expertise into the development review process at the appropriate points so that issues can be identified, understood and escalated earlier on in the process.

***Interdivisional Governance Structure:*** The City will establish an interdivisional governance structure to oversee the application pipeline and serve as a standing forum for City divisions and other external commenting partners to analyze and resolve application issues.

This governance structure includes several district-level tables within each City district, attended by relevant directors, managers and staff from across the City's commenting divisions within that district, and an executive-level table, attended by the Deputy City Manager of Infrastructure & Development Services and relevant City's division heads.

The expected benefits of this governance structure are: increasing transparency and accountability by triaging and resolving difficult issues earlier in the development review process; delivering clear direction and unified support from City management to front line staff in an orderly and timely manner on how to resolve application issues; and, reducing unnecessary circulations and applicant frustration by proactively identifying “stuck” applications.

***Project Management:*** The City will provide appropriate staff with robust project management training and tools, clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and clearly assigned accountabilities for the end-to-end process.

Examples of tools and templates to be developed, standardized and provided to City staff include: project schedules, risk registers, issue trackers, completion checklists, escalation procedures and standardized templates for commenting partners and applicant communications.

A standard set of project management training and tools will allow interdivisional teams to focus on value-adding work, minimize time “recreating the wheel”, and enhance consistency across the development review process.

***Applications of City-wide Significance:*** The City will proactively identify applications that will notably contribute to the City's desired city-building objectives (such as producing affordable housing, transit, economic development, parklands dedication and complete communities). Applications deemed of city-wide significance will receive increased oversight and management from senior City staff and assigned to enhanced, experienced teams that include representatives from the Housing Secretariat, Economic Development & Culture and the Transit Expansion Office as needed with the aim to review and approve these applications more efficiently.

***Business Transformation Lead:*** The City will hire a Director of Business Transformation within City Planning who will be the single point of accountability for the implementation of the report's improvement opportunities. With the full support of the City's senior management team, this individual will lead the multi-year, interdivisional effort to transform the City's development review process, and the management structures and practices in place to support the process.

This individual will also be responsible for standardization, performance management, continuous improvement, and stewardship of the recommended interdivisional governance structure.

**Continuous Improvement:** The City will continue to improve the development review process in a number of ways, including: streamlining application requirements; standardizing the process of streaming and prioritizing applications by how closely they align to the City's policy frameworks; modernizing performance measures to better reflect the effectiveness of the development review process; formalizing project schedules for each application with the applicant, and incorporating meetings between applicants and City staff upon the completion of each circulation for greater communication and collaboration. These continuous improvements aim to improve the overall customer experience for applicants engaging in the development review process and shift the culture towards open collaboration and rigorous project management amongst applicants and City staff.

**Dedicated Units for Highly Repeatable or Specialized Tasks:** The City has opportunities to centralize certain specialized and/or repeatable tasks into dedicated, specialized units. These opportunities include: establishing a specialized team in Legal Services for tribunal appeals consisting of Solicitors and experienced Community Planners; establishing a specialized team in Legal Services for agreements; and shifting administrative responsibility for public engagement to the Public Consultation Unit. Centralization can potentially improve processing efficiency and increase overall staff capacity to perform development review by allowing City staff to focus on more value-adding work.

**Industry Engagement:** The City will develop learning exchange opportunities between City staff and the industry to educate applicants on changes to the development review process. These learning exchanges will also help the City set equivalent expectations with applicants so that project management practices, project schedules and meetings, issue resolution and consultation are better supported. The City will continue to work closely with industry associations to identify additional learning opportunities, building upon existing initiatives such as the Chief Planner's Industry Forum.

**Technology:** The City will leverage technology to find efficiencies in out-dated and paper-based work processes. Work is already underway to modernize the application management system to optimize workflows, automate processes, enhance online application tracking, increase accountability and transparency, and enable greater internal and external collaboration.

The City continues to execute its existing eService Program and includes recent improvements such as:

- Introducing a comprehensive Pre-Application Consultation process within the existing application management system thereby streamlining the applicant's subsequent development application submission;
- Circulating to and retrieving comments electronically from development review partners thereby eliminating the need for paper circulations and reducing the applicant paper submission requirement;
- Updating the Application Information Centre (AIC) to a modern map-based system, providing application milestones and making the development review process more transparent to the public;

- Creating a new, online Committee of Adjustment decision notice portal and making certain closed application submissions available online thereby increasing public accessibility; and,
- Continuously modernizing the application management system to enable additional business functionality and improvements to the development review process.

## **Implementation**

The City is in the process of creating a dedicated Implementation Team led by the Director of Business Transformation and project management support staff to lead, monitor and report to the Chief Planner on the implementation of the review's recommendations. The recruitment process for the Director of Business Transformation is currently underway.

Upon the hiring of the Director of the Business Transformation, this individual will be responsible for:

- Recruiting and hiring the additional project management support staff that will report directly to them; and,
- Developing a detailed, multi-year work plan, adapted from / based on the full consultant report, to implement the end-to-end review's recommendations.

In partnership with the City's senior management team, the dedicated Implementation Team will lead the multi-year, interdivisional effort to transform the City's development review process, and the management structures and practices in place to support the process. The administrative, interdivisional changes to the development review process are intended to be implemented in phases over the next two (2) years.

The Implementation Team will establish interdivisional working groups, drawing on development review staff across City divisions to assist in the delivery of specific recommendations on an as-needed basis. Given the integrated nature of the recommendations, the working groups may be established to address more than one recommendation at a time.

These continuous improvements will improve how the City manages the development review process to better achieve its city-building objectives, and ultimately, make it more consistent, effective and efficient for applicants to work with the City on a development project. It will also result in more collaborative working relationships between applicants and the City. However, the changes underway to the development review process will not have an impact on external factors such as:

- Provincial legislation and policies such as the Planning Act, Heritage Act, Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, and Provincial Policy Statement.
- Applications not aligned with provincial legislation and policies such as the Planning Act, Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and Provincial Policy Statement.
- Applications not aligned with the City's policies such as the Official Plan, Zoning By-law, and Urban Design Guidelines.



## **Impact of Bill 108, the *More Homes, More Choices Act, 2019***

The administrative changes recommended in the end-to-end review are intended to streamline the development review process and make it more efficient and effective for City staff, the public, and the development industry to work together. The Province's Bill 108, the *More Homes, More Choices Act, 2019*, was proclaimed in part on September 3, 2019. Amongst other changes to 12 different pieces of provincial legislation, Bill 108 includes significant reductions to the timelines for processing Official Plan Amendment, Rezoning and Draft Plan of Subdivision applications.

Specifically, the timelines for municipal processing of development applications before a right to appeal for a non-decision of Council arises, which had been extended in Bill 139, the *Building Better Communities and Conserving Watersheds Act, 2017*, are now proposed to be shorter than the pre-Bill 139 timelines. The proclamation of Bill 108 which brings into effect changes to the Planning Act does not provide transition time for the implementation of the new, shortened timelines. This means that complete applications received since the Bill received Royal Assent on June 6, 2019, are now subject to the new timelines for appeal to the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal with a non-decision of Council.

The changes recommended in the end-to-end review are responsive to changes in policy and will be critical in shortening development application review time. Regardless of changes to legislation, the implementation of the end-to-end review recommendations will enhance the customer service experience and create better business practices with a more streamlined, interdivisional, team-based approach to development review.

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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