
2021 OPERATING BUDGET BRIEFING NOTE

City Planning Division – Study Resources

Issue/Background:

- City Planning's annual Study Work Program Update report (January 5, 2021) was adopted with amendments by the Planning and Housing Committee on January 19, 2021 ([2021.PH20.2](#)).
- At its January 19 meeting, Planning and Housing Committee requested the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning to provide a briefing note to the Budget Committee on the backlog of planning and heritage report requests, and the necessary resources that would be required from the appropriate Reserve Fund, to address the backlog of planning and heritage report requests and provide scenarios for completing the backlog of requests within 3 years and within 5 years

Key Points:

- The Study Work Program Update report identifies the Division's 58 deliverables in 2020 (report's Attachment 1); provides a forecast for the Division's 2021 Study Work Program (report's Attachment 2); and includes a preliminary list of active projects anticipated for completion or approval beyond 2021 as well as items currently on hold (report's Attachment 3).
- A total of 32 planning studies ranging from area-based work and guidelines to zoning and policy studies, and 17 heritage studies are currently listed as "hold" in Attachment 3 of the Study Work Program Update report.
- Studies may be on hold as a result of potential duplication with broader studies, legislative changes or prioritization of resource assignment. For example:

Broader Studies

- City Planning is advancing Expanding Housing Options in Neighbourhoods (EHON) initiative, as requested by City Council, on a city-wide basis and its outcomes will inform other initiatives, such as the Neighbourhood Design Guidelines Template which is currently on hold.
- City Planning launched the Toronto Heritage Survey in summer 2019. This prioritized city-wide survey will facilitate the identification and listing of heritage resources across Toronto, providing a more strategic approach covering larger geographies compared to

area-specific work. A Phase 1 Update Report to Planning and Housing Committee is tracking for Q3 2021, and will include a review of outstanding Heritage Conservation District study areas.

Legislative Changes

- Provincial legislative changes and requirements, such as Bill 108 and further changes to Bill 108 enacted through Bill 197, *COVID-19 Economic Recovery Act, 2020*, and associated implementing regulations have generated on-going work impacting how the City delivers heritage planning as well as new study initiatives including the Community Benefits Charge and the Official Plan Growth Plan Conformity and MCR. As approved by City Council, these study initiatives have been prioritized given the provincial prescribed timelines.

Resource Prioritization

- The 2021 Study Work Program reflects Council's direction and the Division's commitment to advancing a suite of activities in response to Toronto's recovery and rebuild efforts. This includes both the Jane-Finch Initiative and the Little Jamaica Study recently requested by City Council.
- Items currently listed as "hold" may be brought forward to the list of Active items based on a shift in city-wide and Council priorities or availability of divisional and partner resources as other study work concludes.
- City Planning's 2021 budget submission includes the necessary resources to advance the Study Work Program's multi-year plan for studies and prioritized on a two-year basis. In year pressures can be quite fluid and demand constant adjustment. It is anticipated for example that in 2021 and 2022, City-initiated zoning to support all forms of rapid housing, Housing Now, transit oriented development and legislative deadlines for the MCR and the Community Benefits Charge background work will all continue to be pressures especially given ongoing staffing challenges.

Questions & Answers:

Q: What are the scenarios for completing the study requests within 3 years and within 5 years?

A: The Study Work Program is a living document which is responsive to Council and city-wide priorities. New initiatives are added to the Study Work Program either through requests from City Council or as identified by the Division in response to new strategic priorities, public investment, growth pressures, shifts in demographic and economic conditions or legislative changes.

In a city as dynamic as Toronto this means that new items are regularly added to the list of requests (approximately 5-10 new study requests from Council per year). In addition, the items currently listed as "hold" have not been scoped to determine the extent of the study work and resourcing required. Finally, any scenario would have to assume that the list is locked (i.e. no new items) and would also need to assume a consistent legislative

landscape which has not been the case. For these reasons, providing scenarios for set periods of time is not practical.

Q: Why is there a study backlog?

A: "Backlog" is not the correct term – it is just new work. In a growing and changing city like Toronto, there is always going to be a great demand for studies. Each year, City Planning receives Council's requests for studies and incorporates new items into the Study Work Program. The Study Work Program provides a multi-year plan for the Division's studies and prioritized on a two-year basis.

Q: Why is my Study "On Hold"?

A: Studies may be on hold as a result of more pressing resource assignments, potential duplication with broader pieces of work or lack of alignment with strategic priorities. Items on hold can be activated over time as capacity becomes available with the completion of prioritized items, or circumstances arise that lend a new urgency to advancing the item.

Q: How does City Planning resource studies?

A: A study involves City Planning staff from across the Division's sections along with other divisional and agency partners and consultants supported by the capital budget. The type of study helps determine the lead section, which is assigned overall responsibility. It is important to note that the Study Work Program is part of City Planning's overall workload, which includes development review and other planning activities. Staff are typically involved in a particular study along with other work assignments.

Q: What is City Planning doing to improve study process alignment?

A: City Planning is advancing various process refinements to better leverage synergies in related studies. For example, heritage studies are increasingly done in co-ordination with growth-related studies. Such as the recently completed West Queen West planning study with a subsequent report to Council recommending 325 properties be included on the City's Heritage Register rather than wait for the completion of the Heritage Conservation District plan for Council to make a decision. This interim step in the heritage study process provides transparency to the public and informs owners seeking to make a planning application and develop strategies to manage change and conduct further heritage evaluation for the development site.

Q: What are the primary resource challenges to delivering the Study Work Program?

A: A primary resource challenge is maintaining staffing levels as staff advance to new opportunities in the Toronto Public Service and elsewhere. At the same time, the Division's ability to attract and retain talent is influenced by the type of employment opportunities available. Temporary positions are less attractive and harder to keep filled compared to permanent positions.

Another primary resource challenge is the protracted appeals process. LPAT proceedings on study outcomes continue to generate significant workload years after Council's decision, with the timeline between a Council decision and a LPAT outcome being

further extended as a result of the cancellation of many 2020 LPAT proceedings due to COVID-19.

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