



July 5, 2022

Planning and Housing Committee
Nancy Martins
10th Floor, West Tower, City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Sent electronically.

RE: PH35.23 Employee Talent, Retention and Attraction - City Planning

RESCON is writing to provide feedback regarding the Employee Talent, Retention and Attraction report which will be brought forward to the Planning and Housing Committee on July 5, 2022.

RESCON's goal is to work in cooperation with government and related stakeholders to offer realistic solutions to the many challenges facing the residential building industry, which in turn have wider societal impacts.

RESCON has been engaging with the C2K team regularly to address ways to improve customer service, and how the City can streamline and improve the development approvals process. As reported by City Planning, the annual average application volume increased by 8% between 2016 and 2021, with OPA/Re-Zoning and Minor Variances applications increasing by 21% and 13%, respectively. However, staffing shortages continue within multiple City departments that play a role in development approval processing. Persistent and growing staff vacancy rates are not helpful in tackling the growing housing and affordability crisis. The City's own 9-month timeline target under the STAR (Streamlining the Application Review) process for reviewing complex planning applications has not been met for years. A sufficient and sustainable staffing level would no doubt improve the approval process to meet the standard.

The City report identifies reasons for high turnover and the current 12.8% vacancy rate (compensation, flexibility in making offers, life cycle, work characteristics, portability, cost of living), but lacks any actual strategy or proposal to address these reasons or propose potential solutions. Just last year, RESCON deputed in front of North York Community Council in June 2021 regarding a Director of Community Planning position that had been vacant for 18 months. The report also alludes that staffing issues are a more recent phenomenon when in fact they have been present for years, as referenced in the following reports and articles dated back to [2016](#) and [2019](#). In fact, RESCON had commissioned a report in 2016 of 172 projects between 2006 and 2016 which demonstrated the delays were getting longer. The assertion the delays were due to projects being larger and more complex was not supported by the City's own data.

RESCON is requesting that City Planning, with the oversight of C2K, develop a realistic strategy to reduce the vacancy rate in City departments tasked with development approvals City Planning should also strive to ensure that staffing levels are reflective of current and anticipated demand, and the recruitment and retention strategy must be flexible enough to respond to future requirements.

The building industry has and continues to face challenges with supply chains and other factors beyond our control or the control of the Province. The industry now faces a grave challenge which is already resulting in project cancellations. The industry must adhere to timelines required by Tarion and other bodies failing which penalties. The industry's ability to deliver housing or propose new projects has become immeasurably more

difficult. If the City cannot do the job which is paid for then another solution must be found. The housing supply crisis will get worse, and Toronto will see a further drain of talented young people leave due to a lack of housing.

The development application review process and fee structure levied upon applicants is something that can be controlled. It is incumbent upon the City to have the necessary staff complement to efficiently process applications and use funds gathered for this purpose.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MLC', written in a cursive style.

Richard Lyall
President

Copy to:

Councillor Ana Bailão, Chair, Planning and Housing Committee
Tracey Cook, Deputy City Manager
Gregg Lintern, Chief Planner & Executive Director
Kris Hornburg, Director, Concept 2 Keys