



City of Richmond

Report to Committee

To: Planning Committee
From: Wayne Craig
Director, Development

Date: December 15, 2022
File: 08-4100-00/Vol 01

James Cooper
Director, Building Approvals

Re: **Process Optimization - Development and Building Permitting**

Staff Recommendation

The report titled "Process Optimization - Development and Building Permitting", dated December 15, 2022 from the Director, Development and the Director, Building Approvals be received for information.

Wayne Craig
Director, Development
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James Cooper
Director, Building Approvals
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REPORT CONCURRENCE		
ROUTED TO:	CONCURRENCE	CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER
Information Technology	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Business Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
SENIOR STAFF REPORT REVIEW	INITIALS:	APPROVED BY CAO

Staff Report

Origin

This report has been prepared to provide an update on current and ongoing initiatives within the Planning and Development division to optimize the Development and Building Permit application process.

This report supports Council's Strategic Plan 2018-2022 Strategy #6 Strategic and Well-Planned Growth:

Leadership in effective and sustainable growth that supports Richmond's physical and social needs.

6.1 Ensure an effective OCP and ensure development aligns with it.

Overview

The Planning and Development Division regularly identifies and implements improvements to optimize the review and consideration of new development activities and permitting functions, consistent with the City's culture of continuous improvement.

In 2021, a significant upgrade and modernization of the City's primary permitting processing platform (AMANDA) was undertaken and completed. In May of 2021, Council authorized staff to apply to the UBCM's Local Government Development Approvals Program to optimize and streamline the permitting process while leveraging technology to improve the customer experience. The City's application to the grant program was ultimately unsuccessful and staff were told that the program was heavily oversubscribed by member municipalities. While the City did not receive grant funding, in late 2021, Council amended the 5-Year Capital Plan to proceed with the improvements consistent with the UBCM grant program application, with the intent to foster continued innovation of City practices and respond to increasing demands for shortened approval timelines for all project types.

The project, named the Permit Optimization Project, or POP, is focused on delivering an enhanced customer experience whereby existing City practices within the Planning and Development Division are optimized for convenience, time efficiency, quality control and cost effectiveness for both the applicants and City staff. In line with the City's principles of innovation, the project is premised on leveraging available technology advancements, observed industry best practices, and incorporating user feedback (customers and staff) through an initial business process review phase.

Key objectives of the Permit Optimization Program are to:

1. Optimize the end-to-end permitting process, including application intake, review, approval and permit issuance;
2. Develop a public-facing online service portal enabling streamlined digital application submission, review notifications and exchanges and permit issuance with end-to-end visibility of the process and status of applications for all stakeholders;
3. Ensure consistency across the various departmental review processes; and
4. Develop performance and reporting metrics related to building and development processes.

POP Project Update

The project is currently underway and the POP team has been conducting the review of existing established processes, adopted technology and assessing internal user feedback to identify factors that contribute to the overall permitting and application processing time.

Throughout this review and assessment, staff have identified a number of benefits for both our customers and the City, examples include but are not limited to:

- Providing a self-serve option for customers to apply for and manage permits anytime, anywhere;
- Improving access to information and application status tracking;
- Improving quality of applications through modernizing application forms for online submission, and providing guided assistance to applicants through use of examples, bulletins and reference materials;
- Supporting digital plan submission and review process;
- Reducing administrative time through automation;
- Automating permit issuance for eligible Trades permits (plumbing, gas, sprinkler) within a defined period of time;
- Identifying KPIs to allow staff to better manage staff resources and predict building/development trends and statistics; and
- Reducing overall application process timelines.

To ensure the success of this project, it is being implemented through a phased approach, with the first phase focused on supporting guided online application submission, enabling credit card payment and issuance of “over the counter” Trades Permits, such as plumbing, gas, simple fire suppression sprinklers and Servicing Agreement applications. Phase 1 will leverage existing software platforms and technology (AMANDA and E-Plan) and scale them to the Development and Building Permit application process.

This Phased approach will provide immediate benefits while establishing a foundation for the future Phase 2 work and wider application to more permit and application types. A summary of the project milestones for Phase 1 is provided below.

Timeline	Project Milestones for Phase 1	Status
Q1 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop project plan and conduct business analysis 	Complete
Q2–Q3 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review business rules and requirements • Design the system/business solution 	Complete
Q4 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procurement of vendor to deliver business solution 	Complete
Q2 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder consultation • Implement online portal for Trades Permits and Servicing Agreements 	On-Track

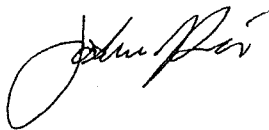
Other/Ongoing Initiatives

There are a number of other actions, in addition to POP, which the City has taken or are underway to support the City’s application review process and include:

- Concurrent review of Rezoning, Development Permit and Building Permit applications;
- Priority review of affordable housing and rental housing projects;
- Digital submission and review of Servicing Agreement applications and single family Building Permit applications;
- Preliminary Building Permit application screening to identify those that may be issued straight away, avoiding unnecessary queuing;
- Implementing simplified plan review for retail tenant improvements within major malls;
- Fast Track option for simple Rezoning and Development Permit applications;
- Information sharing and improving the quality of submissions;
- Pre-application meetings with applicants and developers; and
- Continued participation in the Province’s Development Approvals Process Review.

Conclusion

The Permit Optimization Project is underway and staff are excited to soon harness the improvements of the project and will provide Council with regular updates as the project progresses through 2023.



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WC/JC:jdr/ft