

Development Application Process Review - Update

**Planning and Development Services
Engineering and Regional Utilities**

July 24, 2025 Council Meeting



Consultant PRESENTATION

- ▶ Purpose and Scope of Review
- ▶ Approach Taken
- ▶ Current System
- ▶ Opportunities for Change
- ▶ Recommendations to City



PURPOSE & SCOPE

- ▶ Identify opportunities aimed at strengthening DAPR
- ▶ Reflects commitment to customer service and continuous improvement
- ▶ Undertaken in context of significant growth, affordability pressures, legislative change



PURPOSE & SCOPE

- ▶ Set of specific objectives:
 - S Speed
 - E Efficiency
 - M Measuring
 - C Customer experience
 - T Transparency
 - CP Clarity and predictability



PURPOSE & SCOPE

- ▶ Scope includes processes at City to receive, review and approve range of applications
- ▶ Examine role of City departments involved in process review
 - ✓ Planning & Development Services
 - ✓ Development Engineering



APPROACH

- ▶ Eight-stage work program followed
 - ✓ interviews with all staff
 - ✓ review of best practices
 - ✓ consultation with developers and industry professionals
 - ✓ consultation with two City Committees



CURRENT SYSTEM

- ▶ Purpose of the Function
- ▶ Legislative Framework
- ▶ Staffing
- ▶ Approval Processes
- ▶ Technology
- ▶ Information to Applicants
- ▶ Planning & Development Statistics



OPPORTUNITIES

Planning and Development Services

- ▶ Development Inquiry Meetings
- ▶ File Management
- ▶ Application Tracking
- ▶ Target Timelines
- ▶ Development Application Review Team
- ▶ Streaming Applications



OPPORTUNITIES

Planning and Development Services

- ▶ Review Letters
- ▶ Delegation of Authority
- ▶ Authority of File Managers
- ▶ Templates and Professional Reliance
- ▶ Technology
- ▶ Internal Support



OPPORTUNITIES

Development Engineering

- ▶ Role and Authority
- ▶ Late Hits
- ▶ Development & Servicing Agreements
- ▶ Application Quality

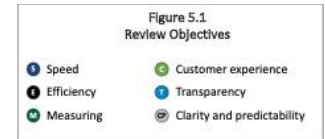


RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Development Planning recommendations



CHAPTER 5 RECOMMENDATIONS


Several opportunities were identified and assessed in the *Report*; paths forward for the City to consider were set out for each of the opportunities, and were outlined in charts that referenced the recommended actions. The following section compiles each of the recommendations, together with comments on the implementation, as well as the objectives that the recommended actions are intended to achieve.



These proposed paths that relate to issues identified in Chapter 3 on Development Planning are presented as recommendations in Figures 5.2. Recommendations to address the issues in Chapter 4 (Development Engineering) are presented in Figure 5.3.


Figure 5.2
Development Planning Recommendations

Recommended Actions	Comments
Development Inquiry Meetings	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > THAT the City amend the <i>Development Application Procedure Bylaw 2016, No. 2521</i> to include a requirement for pre-application meetings for proposals that seek rezoning, subdivision approval, development permit(s) and ALC approval  > THAT the City design a Pre-Application Meeting Request Form, accompanied by an information checklist, for proponents to complete in order to schedule a pre-application meeting  > THAT the City require proponents to provide, along with the Meeting Request Form: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – contact details for the applicant – civic address and parcel identification number 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The City may wish to consider the need for exemption to the requirement – The City may wish to also consider charging a modest fee for Development Inquiry Meetings – The City should track the number of DIM meetings and pre-application meetings, as well as the number of meetings that result in development applications


RECOMMENDATIONS (Highlights)	OBJECTIVES
Development Inquiry Meetings (DIMs)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ THAT the City amend the <i>Development Application Procedure Bylaw</i> to include a requirement for pre-application meetings for proposals that seek rezoning, subdivision approval, development permit(s) and ALC approval	

RECOMMENDATIONS (Highlights)	OBJECTIVES
Development Inquiry Meetings (DIMs)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ THAT the City amend the <i>Development Application Procedure Bylaw</i> to include a requirement for pre-application meetings for proposals that seek rezoning, subdivision approval, development permit(s) and ALC approval ✓ THAT the City charge a pre-application meeting fee of \$1,100.00, the full amount of which would be credited to the application fee provided such applications are submitted within six months of the pre-application meeting 	<p data-bbox="1651 578 2033 639">S C E T CP</p> <p data-bbox="1651 911 1709 972">M</p>

RECOMMENDATIONS (Highlights)	OBJECTIVES
File Management	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ THAT after a complete application is submitted the City aim to have files set up and assigned to a File Manager in a maximum of two weeks	<p>S M</p>

RECOMMENDATIONS (Highlights)	OBJECTIVES
Application Tracking	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ THAT the City, in an effort to enhance transparency and accountability, and to reduce time spent responding to inquiries on the status of applications, publish data on times required to applications to reach review milestones and applicants to view where they are in the process	

RECOMMENDATIONS (Highlights)	OBJECTIVES
Target Timelines	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ THAT the City create, publish and report annually on progress towards a set of timeline targets for milestones in the development approval process	

RECOMMENDATIONS (Highlights)	OBJECTIVES
Development Application Review Team	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ THAT the City reposition DART meetings as a forum for reviewing, collaborating, compromising and resolving City requirements on applications with conflicting inter-departmental requests	

RECOMMENDATIONS (Highlights)	OBJECTIVES
Streaming Applications	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ THAT the City create application streams, including one for simple applications, and one for projects identified and endorsed by Council as a priority for the City	<p>S T CP</p>

RECOMMENDATIONS (Highlights)	OBJECTIVES
Review Letters	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ THAT the City update Review Letter templates to include a checklist of required actions, and to standardize the communications to applications, in order to ensure that applicants receive a single, complete review package that includes works and services requirements	<p>S T</p>

RECOMMENDATIONS (Highlights)	OBJECTIVES
Review Letters	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ THAT the City update Review Letter templates to include a checklist of required actions, and to standardize the communications to applications, in order to ensure that applicants receive a single, complete review package that includes works and services requirements✓ THAT the City encourage File Managers to use discretion to identify and provide verbal communication of time-sensitive requirements in advance of the Review Letter	<p>S T</p> <p>S C</p>

RECOMMENDATIONS (Highlights)	OBJECTIVES
Delegation of Authority	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ THAT the City maximize the delegation of approval authority to staff for development permits, minor development variance permits and all other permits for which approval may be delegated	

RECOMMENDATIONS (Highlights)	OBJECTIVES
Templates and Professional Reliance	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ THAT the City provide templates and guides to encourage consistency and quality in technical reports that are submitted with development applications	

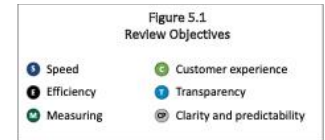
RECOMMENDATIONS (Highlights)	OBJECTIVES
Templates and Professional Reliance	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ THAT the City provide templates and guides to encourage consistency and quality in technical reports that are submitted with development applications✓ THAT the City formalize a policy for peer review of professional reports	<p>S E T CP</p> <p>T CP</p>

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Development Engineering recommendations



CHAPTER 5 RECOMMENDATIONS


Several opportunities were identified and assessed in the *Report*; paths forward for the City to consider were set out for each of the opportunities, and were outlined in charts that referenced the recommended actions. The following section compiles each of the recommendations, together with comments on the implementation, as well as the objectives that the recommended actions are intended to achieve.



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**Figure 5.2
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RECOMMENDATIONS (Highlights)	OBJECTIVES
Role and Authority	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ THAT the City strengthen the role of Abbotsford's Development Engineering Section in leading, and not merely coordinating, the works and services review of development applications	

RECOMMENDATIONS (Highlights)	OBJECTIVES
<h3 style="text-align: left; margin: 0;">Role and Authority</h3>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="453 564 1556 778">✓ THAT the City strengthen the role of Abbotsford's Development Engineering Section in leading, and not merely coordinating, the works and services review of development applications <li data-bbox="453 849 1556 1178">✓ THAT the City create a <i>Development Review Process Protocol Agreement</i> to acknowledge the authority of the Development Engineering Section in the review of development applications, and to assign clear roles and limits to other groups in Engineering & Regional Utilities 	<div data-bbox="1658 578 1888 644" style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> S E CP </div> <div data-bbox="1658 863 1888 929" style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> S E CP </div>

RECOMMENDATIONS (Highlights)	OBJECTIVES
Late Hits	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ THAT the City create a Late Hits Policy to limit the imposition of additional demands on development proponents, after comprehensive letters have been issued	

RECOMMENDATIONS (Highlights)	OBJECTIVES
Development & Servicing Agreements	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ THAT the City consider replacing its use of separate <i>Development Agreements</i> and <i>Servicing Agreements</i>, with an approach that requires a <i>Servicing Agreement</i> at rezoning	

Opportunities

- 16 recommendations provided
 - 12 for Development Planning
 - 4 for Development Engineering
 - Recommendations center on the themes of:
 - Expanded use of Technology;
 - Business Innovation and Process Modernization; and
 - Communications
- Development Inquiry Meetings (DIMs)
 - File Management
 - Application Tracking
 - Target Timelines
 - Development Application Review Team (DART)
 - Streaming Applications
 - Review Letters
 - Delegation of Authority
 - Authority of File Managers
 - Templates and Professional Reliance
 - Technology
 - Internal Support
- Role and Authority
 - Late Hits
 - Development and Servicing Agreements
 - Application Quality



Consultation

The consultants' findings and recommendations were shared with the:

1. Business, Innovation and Public Affairs Advisory Committee;
2. Development, Transportation and Infrastructure Advisory Committee; and
3. City of Abbotsford / Urban Development Institute Liaison Group.

Overall the findings were well received with a general tone of optimism and appreciation.



Implementation Plan – Immediate Short Term Priorities

1. Digitization and modernization of Development Application Processes;
2. Alternative Public Notification;
3. Delegation of Minor Development Variance Permits;
4. Replacement of Development Agreements with Servicing Agreements; and
5. Development Application Team (DART) Terms of Reference Review.

Project is supported by the Housing Capacity Funding with \$500,000 being directed to Project 1.



Recommendation

1. That Council endorse the Development Application Process Review report prepared by Neilson Strategies Ltd, attached to this report; and
2. That Council direct staff to proceed with the immediate short-term priorities as identified in this report.

