

NO: R195

COUNCIL DATE: October 7, 2024

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: Mayor & Council **DATE: October 3, 2024**

FROM: Acting General Manager, Planning & Development **FILE: 0360-20**
General Manager, Engineering **(Development Approval**
Process Improvement
Task Force)

SUBJECT: Establishing a Development Approval Process Improvement Task Force

RECOMMENDATION

The Planning & Development Department and the Engineering Department recommend that Council:

1. Receive this report for information;
2. Establish the Development Approval Process Improvement Task Force by:
 - a. Appointing two Council members to serve as Chair and Co-Chair;
 - b. Appointing the Acting General Manager, Planning & Development and the General Manager, Engineering; and
 - c. Authorizing the Acting General Manager, Planning & Development to appoint three members of the development community, representing a variety of built forms in Surrey; and
4. Authorize the Development Approval Process Improvement Task Force to develop a Terms of Reference and Work Plan and to report back to Council with these established frameworks at the October 21, 2024 Regular Council Public Hearing Meeting.

INTENT

The intent of this report is to respond to Mayor Locke's Notice of Motion as introduced at the September 9, 2024 Regular Council Public Hearing Meeting and as amended at the September 23, 2024 Regular Council Public Hearing Meeting.

BACKGROUND

The Mayor's Notice of Motion, as amended, directed staff to:

1. **Streamline Rezoning and Development Processes:** Conduct a comprehensive review of our rezoning and development processes and present recommendations that would significantly reduce these timelines.
2. **Innovate and Automate:** Continue enhancing our digitization efforts, including further automating processes with new technologies such as the Automated Rule-Based Zoning Bylaw Compliance Tool, to remove administrative hurdles.
3. **Develop a Model for Best Practices:** Establish a framework that positions Surrey's development and permitting processes as a model of best practice for other municipalities to aspire to—incorporating sustainable practices, efficient timelines, cost-effectiveness and a facilitative approach.
4. **Establish a Task Force:** This Task Force will be responsible for providing Council with advice on streamlining and improving Surrey's development and permitting processes.

The Notice of Motion directed staff to complete items one to three by the end of 2024, and to complete item four at the October 7, 2024 Regular Council Public Hearing Meeting. This report serves to address item four.

Some of the work staff have already completed addresses parts of this Notice of Motion, such as:

- the contract award to Archistar for an automated rule-based zoning bylaw compliance tool;
- improving the functionality of the permitting portal through the revitalized Online Development Inquiry and launching online trade permitting and inspection request capabilities;
- modifying the policies and practices around stormwater drainage requirements for single-family lots;
- introducing the Rapid Transit and the Non-Market Rental Housing Incentive Programs;
- introducing the Development Inquiry Assistance tool;
- the proposed pilot program for building permit submission in advance of subdivision approval for single-family homes; and
- revising the Advisory Design Panel process to advance projects to Council quicker.

The City must continue to evolve from a model of regulation to one of facilitation to continue to deliver housing at the rapid pace that is required for such a growing population. Building on the advancements that have already been made, this Development Approval Process Improvement Task Force will seek to further streamline the process, cut unnecessary red tape, and reduce our permitting timelines.

DISCUSSION

The Development Approval Process Improvement Task Force (the "Task Force") is intended to undertake a comprehensive review of existing land development processes — including rezoning and other development processes. The analysis will include a comprehensive review of established processes and practices, as well as an assessment of our current timelines in order to establish benchmarks for performance. The review process will involve engagement with stakeholders both internally and externally. A review of current practices from other Lower Mainland municipalities will also be undertaken. The goal is to identify policy and procedure changes that could reduce timelines.

The process review will also include an examination of our current digital and automation tools in order to better leverage their capabilities. The work will also explore other technologies that may assist in providing further efficiencies in Surrey's development approval processes.

In addition to the process review, the Task Force will also evaluate staffing resources to determine if redeployment or restructuring can achieve more effectiveness as well as identifying any additional staffing complement needs to unlock the ability to carry out Council's vision and direction.

Finally, the study is intended to establish and implement best practices in the development approval process, such that the City is the leader in the region, drawing more development, construction, business, growth, and jobs to Surrey, which is poised to surpass Vancouver in population within the next five years.

Next Steps

Pending Council's authorization, the Task Force will meet to establish their Terms of Reference and Work Plan. Staff will provide a Corporate Report to Council at the October 21, 2024 Regular Council Public Hearing Meeting seeking Council approval of the intended Terms of Reference and Work Plan.

CONCLUSION

Following the Mayor's amended Notice of Motion as carried at the September 23, 2024 Regular Council Public Hearing Meeting, it is recommended that Council establish the Development Approval Process Improvement Task Force with the intent of further streamlining the land development process and reducing our permitting timelines.

Original signed by
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Acting General Manager, Planning & Development

Original signed by
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