

NO: R263

COUNCIL DATE: December 16, 2024

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: **Mayor & Council**

DATE: **December 10, 2024**

FROM: **General Manager, Planning & Development
General Manager, Engineering**

FILE: **0540-20
(Development
Approval Process
Improvement Task
Force)**

SUBJECT: **Development Approval Process Improvement Task Force Update and
Modified Terms of Reference**

RECOMMENDATION

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

1. Receive this report for information; and
2. Endorse the modified Terms of Reference for the Development Approval Process Improvement Task Force (attached as Appendix “I”).

INTENT

The intent of this report is to provide Council with an update on the work of the Development Approval Process Improvement Task Force and request Council’s endorsement of a modified Terms of Reference (Appendix “I”) that will allow the work of the Development Approval Process Improvement Task Force to extend into 2025.

BACKGROUND

On October 7, 2024, Council approved the establishment of a new Development Approval Process Improvement Task Force (the “Task Force”) to examine the City’s development and permitting processes and provide advice to Council on achieving this goal. Council appointed Councillor Hepner and Councillor Kooner to participate in the Task Force (Corporate Report No. R195; 2024, attached as Appendix “II”). Council later appointed Councillor Bains to the Task Force at the Regular Council – Public Hearing meeting on December 2, 2024.

The creation of the Task Force stemmed from Mayor Locke's Notice of Motion, as amended, which was carried at the September 23, 2024 Regular Council Public Hearing Meeting and 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.”*

DISCUSSION

Following Council's approval to form the Task Force, four members of Surrey's development community were appointed to participate in guiding the Task Force's work:

- Rob Blackwell, Anthem Properties
- Josh Gaglardi, Orion Construction
- Avtar Johl, Platinum Group
- Sarah Yusuf, Qualico Communities BC

These developers represent years of development experience in Surrey, as well as across the region, and will be well-positioned to provide insights that are representative of a full range of single-family, multi-family, commercial, and industrial development types.

The development community representatives are joined by two senior City staff members, Scott Neuman, General Manager, Engineering, and Ron Gill, General Manager, Planning & Development.

Since its establishment, the Task Force has been meeting weekly, with a total of six meetings to date. A Work Plan has been established that includes the following:

- Reviewing established processes and practices, and assessing current timelines, associated with all aspects of development application review and approvals.
- Seeking to identify current processes that may be obsolete, inefficient, unclear, or unnecessarily onerous.
- Engaging as required with key stakeholders both internally and externally.
- Exploring current best practices from other Lower Mainland municipalities.

- Examining current digital and automation tools to better leverage their capabilities and explore other technologies that may assist in providing further efficiencies.
- Reviewing current staffing resources to determine if redeployment or restructuring can achieve more effectiveness and identify any additional staffing needs.
- Providing recommendations for best practices in the development approval process, such that the City is the leader in the region.

The Task Force has also identified key focus areas, which include:

- Project negotiation/design review and procedures.
- Professional reliance and third-party reviews.
- Building Permit process and phasing.
- Training opportunities and decision-making processes.
- Projects not advancing (process between third and fourth readings).
- Parking, Traffic Demand Management, Amenity Space, and other policies that may require updating.
- Neighbourhood Planning Process and development proposal integration.
- Development Cost Charges and Community Amenity Contributions.

The Task Force has already provided recommendations on issues related to environmental review processes and parking requirements that have been included in reports to Council on these matters.

In order for the important work of the Task Force to continue, staff recommend that the term be extended until June 30, 2025. It is anticipated that during that time recommendations for process improvements from the Task Force will flow regularly through to Council via a series of Corporate Reports. Staff will provide a mid-year update report for Council's consideration by the end of Q2 2025. In that report, staff will recap the work of the Task Force done to that date, advise on any work that may still be underway, and provide recommendations to Council for continuation of the Task Force.

Staff are also recommending that the meeting schedule for the Task Force be changed from weekly meetings to every second week. This will allow time between meetings for staff to research any information requested by the Task Force and relieve scheduling pressures on the development industry representatives who are all still actively engaged in their own development projects.

Legal Services Review

This report has been reviewed by Legal Services.

CONCLUSION

Following Council's approval for the establishment of a new Development Approval Process Improvement Task Force on October 7, 2024, and demonstrated effectiveness of the Task Force in identifying opportunities for improvements in several key development approval process areas, it is recommended that Council endorse a modified Terms of Reference that will allow the important work of the Task Force to continue into 2025.

Original signed by
Ron Gill, MA MCIP, RPP
General Manager, Planning & Development

Original signed by
Scott Neuman, P.Eng.
General Manager, Engineering

Appendix "I" Revised Development Approval Process Improvement Task Force
Terms of Reference

Appendix "II" Corporate Report No. R195; 2024

Proposed Amendments to the Development Approval Process Improvement
Task Force Terms of Reference

DEVELOPMENT APPROVAL PROCESS IMPROVEMENT TASK FORCE
TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Mandate

- a) The purpose of the Development Approval Process Improvement Task Force is to provide Council with advice on streamlining and improving Surrey’s development and permitting processes.

2. Role

The Development Approval Process Improvement Task Force will:

- a) Conduct a comprehensive review of the City’s rezoning and development processes and present recommendations that would significantly reduce these timelines.
- b) Present recommendations on how to further innovate and automate with the intent to 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.
- c) Develop a model for best practices by establishing 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.
- d) The Task Force is expected to provide ~~a full set of~~ recommendations that can be presented to Council for ~~Council’s~~ consideration ~~on or before the last through~~ regular ~~scheduled Council meeting of the year on December 16, 2024.~~ report updates

3. Membership

The Task Force will consist of the following members:

- a) ~~Two (2)~~ Three (3) members of City Council. One of these members must be appointed to serve as the Chairperson of the Committee. Another of these members must be appointed to serve as the Vice-Chairperson of the Committee.
- b) Two (2) City staff, comprised of the ~~Acting~~ General Manager, Planning & Development and the General Manager, Engineering.
- c) Four (4) representatives from the development industry, appointed by the ~~Acting~~ General Manager, Planning & Development, representing a variety of built forms in Surrey.
- d) The Vice-Chairperson will preside at any meeting where the Chairperson is absent.
- e) ~~The Task Force is expected to deliver a report with recommendations prior to the end of the 2024 calendar year.~~ The term of the Task Force is until June 30, 2025, but may be extended at the discretion of Mayor and Council, should timelines need to be extended ~~or~~ for additional work, or for periodic follow-up on implementation of the Task Force recommendations.

4. General Terms and Code of Conduct

- a) Decorum and Debate: Task Force members must devote the necessary time and effort to prepare for meetings, arrive at meetings on time, provide feedback in keeping with the Task Force mandate, and be respectful of others' thoughts and opinions.
- b) Authority and Reporting: The Task Force and its members will not represent themselves as having any authority beyond that delegated in the Terms of Reference ("TOR") endorsed by Mayor and Council.
- c) Media/Social Media: Members of the Task Force are not permitted to speak to the media as representatives of the Task Force. Task Force members must strive to convey the public interest and remember that they represent the City of Surrey; this means that they must be consistent with the City's position on specific issues. It is the policy of the City of Surrey to encourage clear and effective communication with all Task Force members, stakeholders, and members of the public. Any use of social media must, as

with all other forms of communication, meet tests of credibility, privacy, authority, and accountability.

- d) Professionalism: Task Force members who engage in activities regarding the City of Surrey or Task Force initiatives/projects and promotions are expected to maintain a respectful, constructive, and professional tone that maintains the brand consistency of the City of Surrey.
- e) Confidentiality: All new Task Force members are required to sign a copy of the "Volunteer Services Confidentiality Agreement" as part as their general orientation. Task Force members are expected to honour and uphold the provisions as outlined within the Agreement.
- f) Surrey Requirement: All development industry Task Force members must be involved in the development industry in the City of Surrey.
- g) Conflict of Interest: City policy regarding conflict of interest applies to all Task Force members. A conflict of interest exists if a Task Force member ~~is a director, member, or employee of an organization seeking to benefit from the City, or if the Task Force member~~ has a direct ~~or indirect~~ pecuniary (financial) interest in ~~specific development projects discussed by the outcome of Task Force deliberations.~~ Task Force members who have a conflict of interest with a ~~topic development project or projects~~ being discussed ~~directly~~, must declare that they have a conflict of interest, describe the nature of the conflict, and leave the room prior to any discussions. ~~Task Force members are not permitted to directly or indirectly benefit from their participation on the Task Force during their tenure.~~

5. Meetings

- a) Meetings will generally be held ~~weekly~~every second week, or at the call of the Chairperson.
- b) Should the term of the Task Force be extended ~~for periodic follow-up on the recommendations of the Task Force~~, the frequency of meetings ~~would likely~~may be ~~reduced to one meeting per month~~modified.
- c) Minutes of meetings of the Task Force will be recorded by the Legislative Services Division.

d) Meetings will be conducted pursuant to the rules applicable to Committees under Surrey's Council Procedure By-law, 2004, No. 15300.

6. Work Plan

- a) The Task Force is expected to develop a work plan with the intent of providing ~~a full set of~~ recommendations for Council consideration on ~~or before the last~~ regular ~~scheduled Council meeting~~basis until the end of the ~~year on December 16, 2024.~~ Task Force term. The Work Plan must be in line with the TOR and must outline specific targets as to what the Task Force plans to achieve while supporting the work, priorities, and underlying principles of the City of Surrey.
- b) The agreed upon Work Plan will be executed by the Task Force, with the reasonable assistance of support staff, and must contribute to the overarching goals of the City of Surrey.

7. Amending, Modifying, or Varying Terms of Reference

- a) Any request for amendment, modification, or variation to these TOR can be enacted either by way of a Task Force recommendation to Council or through specific resolution of Mayor and Council.
- b) In the event that Council endorses the requested change, the relevant resolution number and date of amendment will be recorded on the master TOR document.

8. Staff Assistance

- a) Staff assistance will be provided to the Committee, as necessary, by the Legislative Services Division, and other staff, as required.

9. Authority

- a) Section 142 (1) of the Community Charter states that "A council may establish and appoint a select committee to consider or inquire into any matter and to report its findings and opinion to the council."
- b) Section 142 (2) of the Community Charter states that "At least one member of a select committee must be a council member."

- c) Section 142 (3) of the Community Charter states that “Subject to subsection (2), persons who are not council members may be appointed to a select committee.”

Provided to Council for review on October 21, 2024. This is a select committee as set out in Section 142 of the Community Charter. The Terms of Reference were approved by Council on October 21, 2024. The revised Terms of Reference were provided to Council for review on December 16, 2024.

CORPORATE REPORT

NO: R195

COUNCIL DATE: October 7, 2024

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: Mayor & Council

DATE: October 3, 2024

FROM: Acting General Manager, Planning & Development
General Manager, Engineering

FILE: 0360-20
(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.



Ron Gill, MA, MCIP, RPP
Acting General Manager, Planning & Development



Scott Neuman, P.Eng.
General Manager, Engineering