



# CITY OF WEST KELOWNA DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION PROCESS REVIEW REPORT

This *Confidential Report* has been prepared by Neilson-Welch Consulting Inc. for the City of West Kelowna. The document is presented for discussion with, and for the sole use of, the City. No representations of any kind are made by the consultants to any party with whom the consultants do not have a contract.

**NEILSON-WELCH**  
CONSULTANTS TO GOVERNMENT

Neilson-Welch Consulting Inc.  
1-600 Sherwood Road  
Kelowna, BC, V1W 5K1  
aneilson@nwci.ca

June, 2018



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

<b>1. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Development Application Process Review .....	1
Report .....	2
<b>2. DEVELOPMENT ENVIRONMENT.....</b>	<b>4</b>
Environmental Facts .....	4
Increasing Development Activity.....	4
Electoral Area Legacy .....	5
Challenging Terrain.....	5
Community Expectations .....	6
Applicant Experience.....	7
City's Changes and Initiatives .....	7
<b>3. ISSUES TO ADDRESS.....</b>	<b>10</b>
Communication with Applicants .....	10
Staffing Levels.....	13
Late Hits .....	19
Applicant Contributions.....	20
Submission Requirements .....	21
Timeline for Approvals.....	22
Culture .....	26
Other Issues.....	28
<b>4. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>30</b>

DEVELOPMENT  
APPLICATION  
PROCESS REVIEW

**REPORT**

**NEILSON-WELCH**  
CONSULTANTS TO GOVERNMENT

JUNE 2018  
PAGE i



## SECTION 1 INTRODUCTION

---

The City of West Kelowna was incorporated in December, 2007, as the Westside District Municipality. In the ten years since this event, West Kelowna has worked to develop and, subsequently, update a complete set of land use plans and regulations, service master plans, and a variety of other guiding documents necessary to allow the community to transition from its former electoral area system of local governance. The municipality has also put in place a municipal administration to advise City Council on servicing, policy and regulatory issues across a broad range of functions, and to deliver the City's local services. All of this work, it is worth noting, occurred during a period of expansion during which growth rates in total dwelling numbers and population rivalled or exceeded those in the other jurisdictions of the Central Okanagan, as well as British Columbia as a whole.

Since the municipality's inception, successive Councils have recognized the importance of development — residential, commercial, industrial and other — to the community's long-term economic prosperity and sense of identity. Council has emphasized the duty of the City to regulate development on behalf of the community, but has also worked to streamline approval processes, and to reduce barriers to good development projects.

In 2011, the City commissioned an independent review of the municipality's development application process to identify areas in need of improvement. Recommended changes from that exercise were implemented to clarify roles and responsibilities, tighten timelines, structure opportunities for communication between the development community and decision-makers, and improve the flow of information within City Hall. In subsequent years, the municipality has pursued a path of continuous improvement, aimed at enhancing aspects of the development approval function on a regular basis. "Development Services Enhancements" has been formally identified as an action item in every set of Council Strategic Priorities since 2014.

Significant growth in development applications in recent years — in particular 2017 — has placed considerable pressure on the City in its capacity as regulator, and in its role as facilitator of development. Concerns have been expressed by some applicants to staff in the Development Services Department, to senior managers and to City Council regarding aspects of the current development application process. In response to these concerns, and in keeping with its commitment to ongoing improvement, the City commissioned a new independent review of the situation.

### **DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION PROCESS REVIEW**

Neilson-Welch Consulting Inc. was retained by the City, through the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), to conduct the review. The consultant was retained,

**DEVELOPMENT  
APPLICATION  
PROCESS REVIEW**

**REPORT**

**NEILSON-WELCH**  
CONSULTANTS TO GOVERNMENT

**JUNE 2018  
PAGE 1**



specifically, to examine the process through which West Kelowna receives, reviews and, ultimately, approves applications for Official Community Plan (OCP) amendments, zoning amendments, development permits, subdivision approvals, and building permits. The project deliverable expected of the consultant is a report to the City, complete with findings and recommendations.

As suggested, the impetus for the review was the concerns raised by some applicants regarding different aspects of the process. To understand these concerns, as well as the broader views of the development community, the consultant interviewed developers and development professionals with recent experience in West Kelowna. In total, thirteen individuals were approached for information; ten spoke with the consultant. Several, but not all, of the interviewees had raised specific complaints in recent months with staff and/or members of Council.

In addition to these interviews, the consultant:

- met separately with three members of City Council (invitations for interviews were sent to all members)
- held discussions with key managers at the City, including the Chief Administrative Officer (project manager), General Manager of Development Services, managers in the Development Services Department, and the Human Resources Manager
- reviewed, in detail, a selection of ten application files, including applications for rezoning approvals, development permits, subdivision approval, and building permits
- consulted development services managers in five other municipalities, including Kelowna, Campbell River, Chilliwack, Port Moody and Langford
- researched recent development process initiatives and best practices in municipalities in Metro Vancouver (e.g., Coquitlam), Vancouver Island and the United States

## REPORT

This report presents the consultant's findings and recommendations for Council's consideration. The text is divided into the following sections:

- *Section 2: Development Environment* — Issues and concerns regarding the development application review process must be considered in the context of the forces and factors that affect development in high-growth centres, including West Kelowna. Section 2 of the report identifies and examines some of the factors. Section 2 also identifies and comments on key process-related efforts made by the City in recent years, or that are underway in West Kelowna today, to address the needs of applicants and the community.
- *Section 3: Issues to Address* — Section 3 identifies and examines a set of issues that the City needs to understand and may wish to address. Most of



the issues emerged from the consultant's interviews with members of the development community; some were identified based on the consultant's own assessment of the process. Recommended actions to address the issues are provided for the City's consideration. Many of the recommendations are based on best practices that are in place elsewhere.

- *Section 4: Summary of Recommendations* — Section 4 ends the report with a summary of all recommendations.

DEVELOPMENT  
APPLICATION  
PROCESS REVIEW

REPORT

**NEILSON-WELCH**  
CONSULTANTS TO GOVERNMENT

JUNE 2018  
PAGE 3



## SECTION 2 DEVELOPMENT ENVIRONMENT

---

Issues and concerns regarding the development application process at the City of West Kelowna, or at any other city, must be considered in the context of development activity, changing expectations, the community's history and terrain, and other factors that, taken together, define the environment within which development occurs.

This section of the report identifies some of the key factors that define the development environment in West Kelowna. The section also identifies some of the recent and ongoing changes that the City has implemented to facilitate development. These changes also help to shape the development environment, and to set the stage for a review of issues and concerns.

### ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

The following factors help to define West Kelowna's development environment:

- increasing development activity
- legacy of electoral area
- challenging development terrain
- changing community expectations
- varying levels of applicant experience

### Increasing Development Activity

Over the past several years, City has experienced a sustained increase in the level of development activity, and in the number, value and/or complexity of applications for many types of approvals and permits.

An increase in development activity is an indicator of a strong economy, and is therefore welcome news to the City. The increase also, however, stretches the capacity of the Development Services Department, which, in turn, results in added pressure on the City's planners, development engineers and building inspectors, plan checkers and support staff who process the development applications. Pressure comes from the development community which seeks certainty with respect to timelines and outcomes, and from City Council which desires high quality development and efficient processing. In this environment, delays will (and do) occur, and conflict will (and does) arise.

It should be noted that the increase in development activity, and the challenges associated with this increase, are not unique to West Kelowna. Other municipalities in the Okanagan (including the City of Kelowna), the Lower Mainland, Vancouver Island and elsewhere are experiencing the same increases and the same pressures. Several of these places are also involved in reviews to address process challenges.



## Electoral Area Legacy

As noted, West Kelowna was incorporated ten years ago at the end of 2007. In the years before incorporation, West Kelowna existed as the Westside Electoral Area, governed by the Regional District of Central Okanagan (RDCO). RDCO was the primary local service provider to the community, responsible for a broad range of infrastructure, regulatory and other services. RDCO was not, however, the only local service provider. Two large improvement districts — Westbank Irrigation District and Lakeview Irrigation District — operated extensive, discrete water utilities in parts of the community, alongside of (separate) smaller utilities operated directly by the Regional District. The provincial Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI) was responsible for providing all local roads in the community. As is common in unincorporated areas, most of the roads were constructed and maintained to a sub-municipal level. Importantly, MOTI was also the subdivision approving agency for the community.

In the years since its incorporation, the City of West Kelowna has worked to merge, through a phased program, the separate water systems. The municipality has also taken over responsibility for roads and subdivision approval, as well as all of the local infrastructure systems and services that were previously the responsibility of the Regional District.

The City is intent on creating the conditions necessary to attract good development to the community. At times, however, the City is frustrated in its efforts by sub-standard infrastructure and information records that were inherited by the municipality. The City and developers have been challenged on several occasions in recent years by incomplete information on the placement or capacity of works, and by the need to upgrade other works (in particular, roads) to urban standards.

Some members of the development community interviewed by the consultant appear unsympathetic to the challenges faced by the City in dealing with its electoral area legacy. Other members, however, acknowledged the legitimacy of the issues, and share the City's frustration. Over time the challenges will be addressed and become less impactful. For the moment, however, they remain real, and they form part of West Kelowna's development environment.

## Challenging Terrain

The remaining land available for new development in West Kelowna is, in general, more challenging to develop than land that was available in past years.<sup>1</sup> These challenges relate in large part to the municipality's physical terrain, which is characterized by steep slopes (i.e., hillsides), considerable forest interface, sensitive natural areas, bedrock and other features. Development in this type of terrain is relatively expensive compared to development in other places. Higher costs are related to:

---

<sup>1</sup> A number of developers interviewed by the consultant made this point.



- site preparation needs
- reductions in the size of the developable part of a site on account of a sensitive feature or steep slope
- *BC Building Code* requirements, land use regulations, servicing requirements, and development permit guidelines to which a project must conform
- longer project timelines on account of more challenging construction and greater municipal oversight
- the need to hire specialists, such as geotechnical engineers and registered biologists, to produce reports necessary for approvals

The challenges and resulting higher costs put pressure on project budgets and returns on investment. The added pressure affects and, in some instances, shapes the dynamic of interactions between applicants and the City in the development application review process.

### **Community Expectations**

Good development contributes positively to the overall prosperity of a community. Development also, however, changes the built and the natural landscapes of a community. Development is also disruptive — if only during the construction process — and can add to local traffic levels and other impacts that are associated with urban growth.

It is typically the case that a community's awareness of development, and its concerns related to development, grow in tandem with the amount of development activity. In high-growth municipalities such as West Kelowna, residents often express concerns and expectations related to:

- the pace of growth, which may be viewed as excessive<sup>2</sup>
- a desire for quality developments that add, rather than detract from, an area's character and value
- increases in density, despite OCP policies that encourage such density
- the need for development to pay its own way, not only through development cost charges, but also through amenity contributions
- a desire for certain types of development that most benefit — or are perceived to benefit — the community
- the impact of development on the natural environment

These expectations are communicated by residents to City Council and staff who respond, in some cases, by exercising greater scrutiny over development applications, and in some cases through increased regulation. For developers, the expectations can create additional uncertainty. Increased community engagement,

---

<sup>2</sup> In West Kelowna's 2017 Citizens' Survey, 45% of respondents expressed the view that the City is growing too fast. This finding was significantly higher than in the previous five years during which the percentage consistently fell below 30%.





even for projects that are not subject to a public hearing, may need to be undertaken to address the expectations. Such engagement takes time and money.

### **Applicant Experience**

There are several experienced development firms and development professionals active in West Kelowna today. A number of these firms and professionals have been working in the municipality for many years, and have been instrumental in building many of the quality projects that exist in the community. Others, based outside of the Central Okanagan, have made investments in West Kelowna more recently.

There are also examples of developers and development consultants in West Kelowna who are less experienced, and/or less comfortable working through the City's existing development approval process — a process that is similar in most key respects to the processes in other mid- and large-municipalities, particularly in high-growth centres.

Finally, there are individual property owners in West Kelowna who seek approval to develop their own properties. In some (but not all) cases, these applicants lack both experience and expertise, and are not prepared for the inherent complexity of the municipal approval process. To add to the challenge, not all of these applicants choose to retain development consultants to interact with the City and to ensure that all requirements are met.

All applicants, irrespective of their levels of experience and expertise, or of their willingness to retain competent development consultants, have the right to pursue development approvals through the City's application process. The City recognizes this right, and is committed to providing a high level of customer service to those who submit applications. The City's efforts to process the submissions of less experienced and less knowledgeable applicants, however, inevitably result in delays and frustration for all applicants, not to mention stress for City staff who wish to promote high quality development in the municipality.

This issue, it should be emphasized, is not unique to West Kelowna, but is certainly a characteristic of the municipality's development environment.

### **CITY'S CHANGES AND INITIATIVES**

The environmental factors are important to acknowledge in the development application process review. Also important, however, are changes made and initiatives taken by the City in recent years, both in the spirit of continuous improvement, and in response to suggestions and concerns raised by applicants. Some of the changes were recommended in the earlier 2011 review; others were initiated by the City in the years since that exercise.

The following changes and initiatives are provided as important examples of the efforts that have been, and that continue to be, undertaken by the City:



- *Pre-application Meetings* — West Kelowna requires all prospective applicants for development approval and for subdivision approval to meet with development services department prior to submitting an application.<sup>3</sup> These meetings help to ensure that applicants understand all submission requirements, as well as the process to be followed, the fees required, and the timelines to expect. A checklist of key items is reviewed with applicants at the meeting; both parties sign the checklist.

The requirement for pre-application meetings sets West Kelowna apart from many other jurisdictions. Most places allow for and even encourage pre-application meetings; however, the meetings are not required in many places.

- *Development Review Committee* — West Kelowna created, in 2011, a Development Review Committee (DRC) comprised of representatives from all departments that review and comment on applications for development.<sup>4</sup> The DRC meets weekly to discuss files that have been circulated for review by each individual department prior to the group meeting. At the DRC, departments identify and resolve competing or conflicting views and objectives so that the City is able to respond with "one voice" to the applicant. A comprehensive letter with comments from all departments is sent by the file manager to the applicant following the DRC discussion (separate letters with comments from individual departments are not sent). Proponents of applications that are deemed by the DRC to be complex are invited to attend the DRC meeting to present information and answer questions.

DRC's are common in mid- and large-size municipalities. Not all DRC's, however, meet as frequently as West Kelowna's group. As well, not all DRC's invite applicants to make presentations.

- *Single File Manager* — West Kelowna appoints a planner as the file manager for applications. At points of the approval process, development engineers and building inspectors will interact directly with the applicant. At all times, however, the file manager is in place to oversee the progress of the file and be involved in discussions.

Most mid- and large-size municipalities assign a planner as the file manager. Efforts have been made in other places to refine the practice; West Kelowna can learn from others' efforts to improve its practice.

- *Single Department* — Following the 2011 development process review, the City placed Building Services, Development Engineering and Planning in a

<sup>3</sup> Pre-application meetings for build permit applicants are not required, but are recommended.

<sup>4</sup> Representatives of Building Services are typically included only to discuss more complex files.



single Development Services Department, under one General Manager. This move helped to facilitate information flow among the different divisions, strengthen accountability (under the General Manager) for actions and decisions within the development application process, and reduce the potential for inter-divisional impasses that can arise over competing views and objectives put forward in the review process.

West Kelowna's organizational structure for Development Services exists in some but not all other mid- and large-size municipalities.

- *Application Management and Tracking* — For several years, West Kelowna has made consistent improvements in its information systems that are in place to manage and track the movement of applications through the development application process. West Kelowna's CityView Portal, introduced in 2017, represents the latest and most significant improvement. Once fully implemented, this system will address many persistent issues concerning communication between applicants and the City on files, the submission of supporting documents by applicants, the flow of information among review departments, and tracking of the status of an application.

With CityView, West Kelowna is ahead of most mid- and large-size municipalities in the management and tracking of development applications.

- *Information Materials* — The City makes available through its website clear information on requirements, the application process, and anticipated timelines for different kinds of applications. The recent re-design of the City's website makes this information easy to obtain and review. Application forms and checklists are also available online.
- *Development Roundtables* — Since 2013, West Kelowna has hosted an annual development roundtable to foster better communication with the development community, and to share concerns and ideas about the development application process, as well as the broader development environment. The City began holding an annual, separate roundtable for homebuilders in 2017, and is committed to holding roundtables with other groups (e.g., legal community) in 2018.

These initiatives are not highlighted to suggest that there is no opportunity for improvement at the City, or to downplay concerns expressed today by applicants. The initiatives are presented, instead, to illustrate that the City is alive to issues and concerns that arise, and takes steps in response to those concerns. The City efforts also show that West Kelowna is, in several instances, outperforming other municipalities. These points provide important context for the current review.



## SECTION 3 ISSUES TO ADDRESS

---

This section examines specific issues with the City's existing development application process. The issues emerged from the discussions with developers, development professionals and City staff, and from the consultant's review of application files and City materials. Recommendations, informed in many cases by best practices in other jurisdictions, are provided for the City to consider.

The list of issues examined in this section includes the following points:

- communication with applicants
- staffing levels
- "late hits"
- applicant contributions
- submission requirements
- timeline for approval
- corporate culture

These issues do not constitute the entire list of concerns identified to, or by, the consultant during discussions with developers, staff and others. An effort has been made to focus attention on the specific items that, in the consultant's view, are most important.

### **COMMUNICATION WITH APPLICANTS**

City staff communicate directly with applicants at several points of the application process, beginning with the pre-application meeting. Some communication is in-person at City Hall or on-site, some is verbal by phone, and some is in writing by email. Some communication is initiated by staff — an example is the issuance of a comprehensive letter following staff discussion of an application by the Development Review Committee. Other communication is initiated by applicants. Applicants often, for example, contact the City to inquire on the status of an application, or to seek clarification on City requirements and concerns. Ideally, communication occurs between the City's file manager and the applicant's project manager. On applications that involve several approvals and permits, however, various City staff may deal directly with the applicant's representative.

For applicants, direct and regular communication with the City is important. On a basic level, communication allows for inquiry and the exchange of information. On another level, however, communication provides a source of assurance to applicants. Development is an inherently difficult undertaking for applicants who, in addition to meeting the requirements of the municipality, often need to need to manage investor and/or purchaser expectations, coordinate the efforts of development professionals and builders, engage with the local community, and



attend to a range of other needs. Regular communication with the City helps to assure applicants that submissions have been accepted, that reviews are underway, that the file has not been "lost in the system", and the anticipated timelines identified at the outset of the process are being met. Communication, in this sense, helps the applicant manage the resources under him or her, as well as the expectations of investors and/or prospective purchasers.

In all, good communication between the applicant and the City creates certainty for the applicant. Conversely, poor or insufficient communication creates uncertainty for developers. Development environments that are characterized by uncertainty are not environments in which quality developers wish to do business.

### **West Kelowna**

Some of the developers and professionals interviewed for the review expressed no concerns about the level of communication with City staff — indeed, a few of the developers complimented specific staff in Development Services for being responsive to inquiries, proactive in keeping developers apprised of issues, and thorough in communicating, through comprehensive letters, the needs and comments identified by City departments in the DRC meetings. On the whole, however, communication by the Development Services Department was identified as an area in need of improvement. This conclusion, it is worth noting, also emerged from the November 23, 2017, Development Roundtable.

Some of the specific points raised with the consultant, and at the Development Roundtable, are as follows:

- Staff in Development Services are not consistent in returning phone calls or emails in a timely fashion, and certainly not within the stated 48-hour window. The Building Services division stands out as the group that has most difficulty in responding to applicants. Several persons interviewed expressed frustration with this division's record on call-backs. Criticisms were not limited, however, to Building Services alone. Inconsistency was also noted in the responsiveness of file managers in Planning Services.
- Emails from staff are not consistently structured in a way that highlights the inclusion of attachments, specific information points, or requests for further detail.
- Some file managers reach out to applicants to advise them of items that are missing from applications. Other file managers do not appear to make this effort. Interviewees pointed to a few cases in which applicants were under the impression that applications were complete, only to find out later that the applications were incomplete and not being processed.
- Applicants who respond to staff emails receive, at times, "out of office" notifications that do not identify back-up contacts who are assigned to deal



with the specific application. A similar concern relates to the City's need to shift staff among files to cover for staffing absences. The reliance on part-time relief staff to fill vacancies exacerbates this concern.

Clear and consistent communication from the City to applicants is exceedingly important not only to applicants who are seeking permission to develop, but also to the City's reputation as a municipality that is "open for business". The City needs to be able to expect its planners, development engineers and building inspectors to return calls, provide clear information and direction to applicants, and provide assurance to applicants that their applications are important to the City. These expectations speak to the importance not only of communication, but also to need for a high level of customer service.

### **Moving Forward**

The ability to communicate effectively does not come naturally to everyone. Some staff members at the City — and, indeed, in every other municipality — will find it difficult to communicate with applicants, particularly in cases where there is a potential for conflict. As well, different staff members will have different views on what constitutes sufficient and effective communication. The City needs to help all of its staff in Development Services:

- understand the need for communication
- understand the City's expectations with respect to frequency and style of communications
- develop the skills to communicate, including in situations that involve potential conflict

The City also needs to make the investments necessary to enable staff to engage in consistent and timely communications. West Kelowna's CityView, noted earlier, allows staff to easily track when communications have occurred on a file, what information was provided, and when further communication is necessary. The software synchronizes with Microsoft Outlook to prompt staff on the need for action, including the need to initiate communication. Growing proficiency with CityView on the part of staff should help to address some of the concerns with communication.

One important investment is the number of staff. West Kelowna, similar to some other cities, has been challenged in its efforts to adequately staff its Development Services Department. Staff who are in place are expected to take on additional files when total FTE numbers are down. The additional workloads can make it difficult to meet all expectations, including those related to communications.

### **Recommendations**

Recommendations are provided here to help the City address the need for improved communication with applicants. Recommendations specific to staffing numbers are presented later in this section under a separate discussion.



Recommendations on communications are as follows:

- THAT the City re-activate the staff-level Customer Services Committee to develop and monitor a policy on communications with applicants in the City's development application process.
- THAT the Chief Administrative Officer chair the Customer Services Committee.
- THAT the Committee's policy on communications include, among other items:
  - a statement on the importance of timely and consistent communication
  - a commitment by the City to communicate at key points of the application process
  - a commitment by the City to respond to inquiries within a reasonable, set period of time (to be defined)
  - a commitment by the City to provide training designed to help staff develop the understanding and skills necessary to communicate with applicants regularly and effectively
  - a set of key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure and report on, through quarterly development reports, the City's performance in meetings its commitments
  - the City's expectations for applicants in communicating with City Staff
- THAT the City seek feedback from the development community on a draft of the policy, through the Urban Development Institute's Developer Liaison Committee, and through other channels as necessary.

### **STAFFING LEVELS**

Several of the developers interviewed for the study put forward the view that the City needs more staff in Development Services to process applications in a timely fashion. This view emerged, as well, as a key point of discussion at the November, 2017, Development Roundtable. This call by the development industry for more staff is not unique to West Kelowna. The view has been expressed strongly to other mid- and large-size municipalities in the Central Okanagan, the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island, among others. It is a view that is regularly expressed during periods of high development activity.

### **West Kelowna**

At the City of West Kelowna, any examination of staffing levels in Development Services needs to consider:



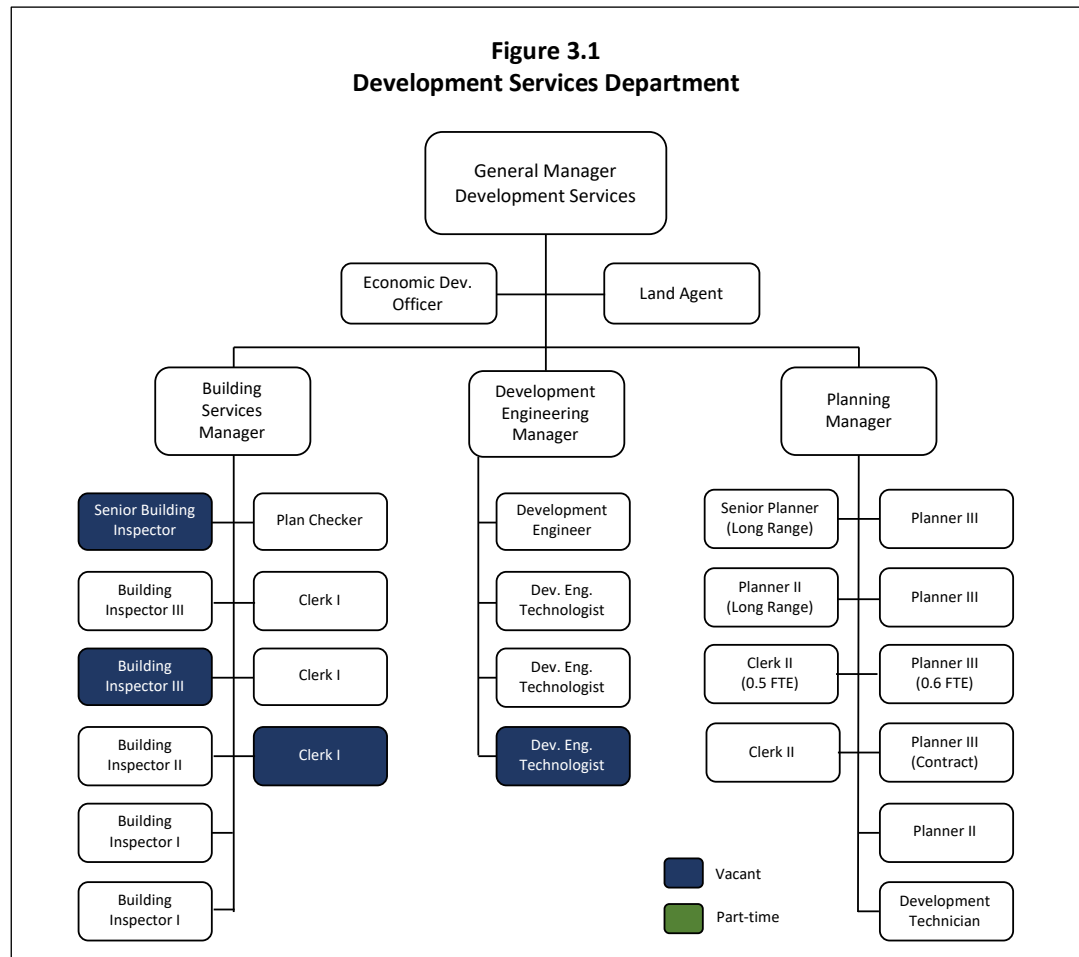
- vacancies that exist in parts of the department
- the overall number of approved positions in each division

➤ **Vacant Positions**

Figure 3.1 presents the current organization chart for the Development Services Department. As shown, the department has three vacancies in Building Services, including the positions of Senior Building Inspector and Building Inspector III. These two positions are extremely important in the department, particularly given the increasing complexity of development types and projects in West Kelowna today. The City is trying to manage the vacancies using part-time relief staff — an approach that is not ideal, despite the skills of the persons involved. The vacant Clerk position is the third opening in the department. This position provides significant time-saving assistance to inspectors in their management of applications.

Development Engineering has one vacant Technologist position. This position is a new one that was approved by Council in the 2018 budget. No positions in the Current Planning section of the department are vacant. One of the Planner III positions, however, is staffed at 0.6 FTE until 2019.

**Figure 3.1**  
**Development Services Department**







The City is having trouble filling its vacant positions, particularly the two senior positions in the Building Services group. Part of the reason for the difficulty may relate to remuneration and benefits. Comparative research undertaken for the review revealed that the wage rates for these positions are slightly below those of other places — considerably below the City of Kelowna in the case of the Senior Building Inspector position.<sup>5</sup> The City's vacation benefits for first-year unionized employees were also, until recently, below those of competitor cities. The City has taken steps, however, to mitigate both of these concerns. Letters of Understanding have been signed with the Association of Local Government Employees Union (ALGEU) to provide some flexibility on wages for the difficult-to-hire building inspection positions, and to improve vacation benefits for all new employees at the City.

These efforts notwithstanding, remuneration and benefit issues may still be contributing to the difficulty faced by the City in filling the vacant positions. A more significant issue, however, relates to broader concerns about the organizational culture at the City. These concerns, which are not entirely unique to West Kelowna, were noted by many of the discussions that were conducted for this review. They are explored in detail under a separate heading later in the report.

➤ **Number of Positions**

Figure 3.2 shows changes in the number of positions in Development Services since 2011. As illustrated, the numbers of staff in Building Services and Development Engineering have increased over time in response to increases in development activity and complexity; Planning staff numbers have remained relatively constant. All of the staffing numbers in Figure 3.2, it is important to note, include past and current vacancies.

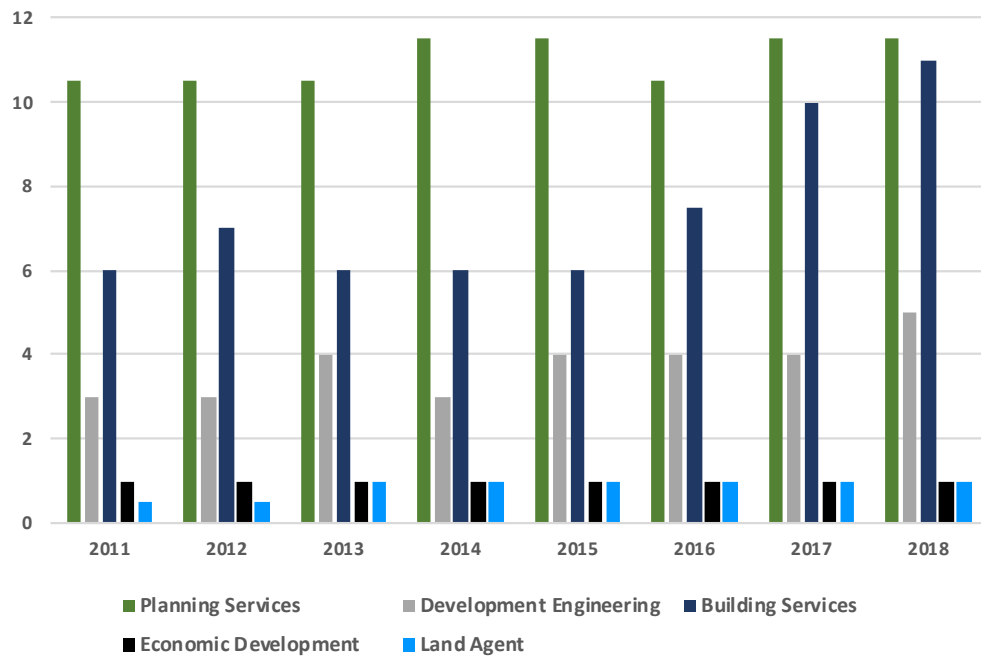
Does the City have sufficient numbers of staff in the department? The development community, on the whole, would say that the numbers are too low, and would recommend that the City hire additional people. Development activity is high at present, and developers are under pressure to complete projects and get units into the market. Developers want the City to process applications quickly, and are willing (in theory, at least) to help the City pay for additional staff through higher development fees. Developers make the point, as well, that faster approvals help to increase the number of taxable lots and overall tax base of the City, which in turn provides the City with new tax revenues to pay for additional staff and services.

City staff, including managers in Development Services, may also support the addition of staff to assist with current workloads. Managers report that staff are struggling to meet demands for faster turn-around times, while working to

---

<sup>5</sup> The position at Kelowna, however, is non-union and involves a greater level of supervision.

**Figure 3.2**  
**Changes to Staffing Levels**



**Notes:**

- Planning includes the General Manager (1) and the Planning Manager (1); Development Engineering and Building Services each include one (1) Manager
- Planning includes one (1) FTE contract senior planner in 2017 and 2018
- All figures include vacant positions, where relevant

ensure that reviews are thorough and fair, that the interests of the City and the community are protected, and that the overall quality of development continues to improve. Additional resources, managers may feel, could help to alleviate the pressure that exists in the department. Managers also know, however, that efforts to staff a department for periods of high development activity result in other challenges when development levels moderate. At those times, the City is forced to either lay off staff, or impose the cost of carrying higher-than-optimal staffing levels on City taxpayers.<sup>6</sup>

In an effort to determine the adequacy of staffing levels, municipalities often look for comparisons to other municipalities. For this review, some numbers on staffing, application volumes, construction values, approval timelines and other

<sup>6</sup> West Kelowna and other cities make use of stabilization funds in Building Services to help keep staffing levels constant during periods of reduced development activity. These funds are useful, but are not a panacea or a licence for significant expansion of staff during busy periods. Decisions to hire must also take into account inter-departmental equity, space constraints, capacity of management to supervise additional people, and the availability of qualified candidates.



items were obtained from other places. In the end, however, the numbers proved to be of limited value. For starters, not all data were made readily available for sharing. Second, the data that were provided did not take into account differences among places in the complexity of applications, in the range and complexity of approvals and requirements, in the levels and roles of support staff (e.g., technicians, clerks) in the review process, or in the use of mechanisms to shield staff from interruptions. Small differences in any of these factors can have significant implications for the number of files per staff, the time required for approvals, and for the overall staffing levels in place.

The challenges facing West Kelowna in determining optimal base staffing levels are present in other places as well. Reviews of development approval processes in Vancouver, Coquitlam, Kelowna and other cities have all pointed to the need for more in-depth based staffing level assessments. West Kelowna, it is understood, is contemplating a similar assessment for several departments, including Development Services.

### **Moving Forward**

The recent measures put in place in collaboration with the ALGEU may help the City to fill its vacant positions in Building Services and Development Engineering. Efforts to address concerns with organizational culture (see later) may also help to fully staff the department.

The City will be in a better position to gauge the need for additional FTEs once all vacancies have been addressed. In the consultant's view, the City should focus its efforts for the time being on these vacant positions, and postpone any assessment of base staffing levels until all positions have been filled. Additional assessment should also be deferred pending further implementation of CityView, and action on the full set of recommendations in this review. CityView is designed to help staff better manage information flows and overall workloads. Several of the other recommendations present ideas that are also intended to help manage work.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are designed to address, for the time being, concerns related to staffing levels:

- THAT the City undertake a base staffing level assessment for the Development Services Department after:
  - all vacancies in the department have been filled
  - implementation of CityView has proceeded further
  - the City has considered and, where endorsed, acted on the full set of recommendations in the 2018 *Development Process Review*



## LATE HITS

"Late hits" are requirements that are imposed on applicants, without prior notice, late in the application process. They are often referred to in terms of "changing the goals posts" or as "second bites at the apple". They include requirements that arise as a result of:

- reinterpretation by staff of a municipal policy or regulation
- failure, on the part of staff, to identify a project requirement at the time of review
- the late notification of comments and requirements from a department that was not involved in the original review of the application

Late hits typically result in extra costs for the applicant and/or delays to the development schedule. Municipalities are increasingly reluctant to impose late hits because of these impacts, and because of the damage they can do to relationships with the development community and a municipality's reputation as a place to do business. This reluctance notwithstanding, late hits do occur from time to time in almost all places.

The term "late hits", it is important to note, is regularly misused to refer to requirements that are not imposed by a municipality, and that are not within the control of the municipality. Such requirements can result from changes to provincial regulations (e.g., health and environmental regulations) that are imposed on all projects, irrespective of their place in the municipal development application process. Most often, however, the term is misused by applicants in cases where:

- an applicant is required as part of the staff review to provide new information in support of an application
- changes initiated by an applicant to a project triggers new requirements
- an applicant neglected to submit information in response to a requirement that was identified and communicated by staff upon initial review of the application
- the applicant submitted inaccurate information that was not identified as inaccurate until later in the process (e.g., at time of inspection)

### West Kelowna

Similar to most municipalities, West Kelowna is alive to the difficulties created by late hits, and is committed to minimizing the number of late hit occurrences. Despite best efforts, however, late hits do occur in West Kelowna, and will likely continue to occur from time to time in the future.

The City's practice is to assess from a health and safety perspective all late hits that arise. Late hits are imposed when failure to do so would expose the community to risk of harm. Where health and safety are not concerns, the City re-considers the need to impose the previously missed requirement. Each occurrence, needless to say, is assessed carefully based on the specifics of the case.



## Moving Forward

The City's current practice on late hits is similar to that of other municipalities, including the City of Kelowna. The difference in some other cities, however, is the presence of a formal, written policy. The City of Kelowna's administrative policy, borrowed from the City of San Diego, identifies what does and does not constitute a late hit, and speaks to how the City will determine the need to impose the hit. West Kelowna would benefit from a similar written statement.

The City would also benefit from a policy to reduce the number of instances in which the City is incorrectly accused of imposing late hits, or of "changing the goal posts". In the research undertaken for this review, the consultant discovered several instances in which applicants had mis-characterized, in discussions with staff and members of Council, applicant errors as late hits. In some of these cases, clear information from staff on the City's requirements had been communicated in writing to the property owner's authorized agent, who did not apprise the owner of the requirements. In other cases, changes made by the owner or authorized agent to the application triggered new requirements that the applicant did not contemplate. In still other cases, items not included in submitted plans were discovered upon inspection, thus requiring the City to impose new requirements.

Instances of this nature exist, to some degree, in every municipality. Many cities work to minimize the problem through the use of pre-application meetings, comprehensive review letters, and other written notifications of requirements. West Kelowna uses all of these approaches and should continue to do so. Some cities have gone further to implement a policy that requires staff to copy the property owner on all communications related to the application.<sup>7</sup> This type of policy helps to ensure that the property owner is kept apprised of all requirements that are brought to the attention of the owner's agent. The policy also makes it difficult for agents to mis-characterize identified requirements as late hits.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations are designed to minimize the occurrences of late hits, as well as the number of instances in which the City is incorrectly accused of imposing late hits:

- THAT the City formalize as an administrative policy the practice of limiting the imposition of late hits to requirements that have important health and safety implications for the community.
- THAT the City develop an administrative policy that directs staff to copy the property owner on all written communication, related to an application, between the City and the owner's authorized agent, in the event that the owner has authorized an agent to act on the owner's behalf.

<sup>7</sup> Research undertaken for the review identified certain cities in the United States that have introduced this policy. One recent example is Leesburg, Virginia.



- THAT the City amend its application forms for development approval, subdivision approval and building permits to advise owners and agents of the policy.

### **APPLICANT CONTRIBUTIONS**

In every jurisdiction, applicants undertake off-site infrastructure improvements and/or provide community amenities to the local government as part of the development approval process. In cases involving subdivision, works undertaken will be identified in the municipality's works and service bylaw. In cases involving changes to discretionary approvals, amenity contributions will be negotiated with the applicant to reflect the impact of the development on the community. In all cases, required and negotiated contributions will be based on the following key principles:

- the cost to accommodate new growth will be paid by growth
- the city will not compromise infrastructure or safety requirements in the interest of facilitating private development

Most applicants — including all experienced developers — accept these principles and the importance of infrastructure and amenity contributions that are consistent with relevant bylaws, and that are equitable. Where disagreements arise is (at times) in the determination of consistency with bylaws, and (more commonly) in the determination of what is "equitable".

### **West Kelowna**

Some of the developers interviewed by the consultant expressed concerns that infrastructure works required by the City are not always consistent with the relevant bylaws. Some of the same developers noted, as well, that the City's expectations regarding contributions were onerous.

The consultant reviewed these different concerns. No instances were found of the City acting without bylaw authority in identifying infrastructure requirements. One incident involving a requirement for back-up power to a reservoir appears to have been a late hit; the requirement does not appear, however, to have been made without authority. In another case, discussions between the City and the applicant resulted in works and service improvements that appropriately reflected the impact of the development.

As for contributions associated with Council's discretionary approvals, all such contributions everywhere are matters for negotiation. As the City grows and becomes more urban in nature, the City will understandably wish to ensure that amenities and contributions are sufficient to protect existing taxpayers from development-related costs, and to add value to the community. In exercising these goals, the City is no different than any other high-growth, mid- or large-size municipality.



### **Moving Forward**

The City wishes to promote quality development, attract reputable developers, and be widely-acknowledged as a municipality that is open for business. To achieve these aims, the City must continue to be diligent in applying properly the requirements in its *Works and Services Bylaw No. 0120* and other relevant documents. The City must also continue to seek equitable contributions from applicants for rezoning.

### **Recommendations**

None.

### **SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS**

At various points of the development application process, municipalities require applicants to submit various information items. Depending on the development that is being proposed, items may include plans, layouts, technical reports, infrastructure drawings, and assurances. The points at which cities require different items will vary based on the municipality and the particular project. Increasingly, however, municipalities are requiring items to be submitted earlier in the process that applicants may prefer.

### **West Kelowna**

Some developers interviewed by the consultant expressed strong frustration not with the list of items to be submitted, but rather with the required timing of submissions. These developers objected, specifically, to the City's required submission of infrastructure drawings early in the process, prior to the granting of the necessary development permit. These persons suggested that the requirement unfairly imposes costs on applicants earlier than is necessary, and well before applicants are able to register lots and generate cash flow from early sales. Other developers were less concerned with the timing of submissions, noting that West Kelowna's approach is not unique among municipalities, especially high-growth centres.

Staff at the City maintain that it is important for both the City and the applicant to know, prior to creating a site rendition, where all rights of way and easements are situated, and whether all site servicing and traffic flows are feasible given the site's characteristics. In the case of residential subdivisions, applicants will pre-sell units (as is expected) based on the rendition that is created. The City has experienced situations in past years in which applicants, without the benefit of servicing plans, completed and used site renditions for pre-sales, only to discover later that the renditions were not possible to achieve based on the actual site characteristics and the attendant servicing challenges. In these cases, developers were forced to re-work the site renditions, then re-apply for development permits based on the new information. No party, including the purchasers of pre-sale units, benefit in these situations.



### **Moving Forward**

The concerns of some developers notwithstanding, the City's practice that calls for the early submission of infrastructure and other plans does not appear to be unreasonable.

### **Recommendations**

None.

### **TIMELINE FOR APPROVALS**

The amount of time required by an applicant to move through the development application process, and to obtain all necessary permits and approvals, is a matter of interest in almost every jurisdiction, including West Kelowna. In past years, it was common for municipalities to track and publicize average and median timelines for different approval processes. Such information allowed for comparisons among jurisdictions, and enabled both municipalities and developers to identify which places appeared to be most efficient.

Today, detailed data on application processing times are more difficult to find — few municipalities make the data readily available. Municipalities appear to have reached the conclusion that average processing time is too simplistic an indicator of a municipality's efficiency or interest in promoting development. Processing times in high-growth municipalities will (and do) increase as applications become more complex, and as application volumes rise. The difficulties experienced by many municipalities in filling staff positions only exacerbate the situation.

A preoccupation with average processing times also ignores the important trade-off between speed and quality. Cities such as West Kelowna, with robust growth and desirable locations, seek to promote high quality development that enhances rather than detracts from the community. In an environment that emphasizes quality of product, staff are expected to be diligent and thoughtful in conducting their reviews. Diligence and thought require time. To reduce time requirements, cities can sacrifice quality, add more staff, and/or implement best practices aimed at streamlining the process. This review focuses on efforts to streamline.

### **West Kelowna**

The desire to streamline the development approval process was the main impetus for the development process review that was undertaken for West Kelowna in 2011. At the time, the development community in West Kelowna was highly concerned with the length of time required to obtain planning, subdivision and building permit approvals from the municipality. To be sure, Council and staff shared many of the concerns. Changes made by the City following the 2011 study helped to reduce processing times. Additional changes made more recently are helping to set the stage for further reductions.





Concerns over application processing times persist today, and did contribute to the call for this 2018 review. Some of the developers interviewed for the study expressed strong views on the need for further streamlining; concerns expressed by others, however, were more muted. A number of developers suggested that certainty in timelines — that is, obtaining approvals in accordance with time estimates provided by the City — may be more important than the speed of the process. These developers noted that as long as timelines are communicated, reasonable and honoured, resources and expectations on the developers' end can be managed accordingly.

Questions of certainty versus speed notwithstanding, the City is interested in ensuring that processes are streamlined, and do not cause unreasonable delays for applicants, particularly those applicants who are experienced and committed to high quality development. The City has put in place already a number measures that contribute, either directly or indirectly, to the efficiency of the process. Several of these changes were profiled in Section 2 of the report, and included:

- the use of pre-application meetings
- the Development Review Committee and its commitment to weekly meetings that is designed to deal with applications as quickly as possible<sup>8</sup>
- assignment of applications to a single file manager who is responsible for moving the applications through the process
- the introduction of CityView to better manage and track the progress of files
- the development of new communication materials, and the new website, to clearly set out requirements and process steps

Other initiatives, not mentioned in Section 2, are also important contributors to the efficiency of the process. One initiative is the City's effective use of the planner-of-the-day (POD) system. Individual planners in the department are assigned to act as POD on specific days. On the assigned day, the POD is available as the primary point of contact to handle all (or most) planning inquiries. This system, which is common to many municipalities, helps to reduce interruptions for the Planning division, and allows other planners to focus on their reviews of applications. One Development Engineering Technician at the City plays a similar role for subdivision inquiries; another handles building permit-related questions.

The City should continue to follow through with its ongoing initiatives. The CityView system is particularly important in this vein. Over time, as staff and applicants become more comfortable with the system, the City will be able to:

- receive applications and all submissions electronically
- share digital submissions easily across departments, thus eliminating the expectation that applicants provide hard copies of submissions, or re-submit digital copies for use by different departments

---

<sup>8</sup> Similar committees in some other municipalities meet bi-weekly or monthly.



- enable applicants to view the progress of their applications online, to confirm that their applications are complete and accepted, and to determine which materials are still required
- receive automatic notifications / prompts to address tasks so that applications may proceed to the following stage of the process
- send standard notifications and reminders to applicants at pre-determined milestones in the process
- automatically schedule meetings and inspections with applicants

CityView also allows the City to track which planners have answered inquiries about specific properties. This feature allows the City to provide consistent messaging to prospective applicants. It also enables the City to put a stop to time-consuming inquiries that are made of different staff in relation to the same property, in the hope of obtaining a favourable response.

Staff are utilizing some of these CityView capabilities already; in relatively short order, staff will be able to harness the full potential of the system. Greater overall efficiency in the development approval process will be the result.

### **Moving Forward**

There are other measures the City may wish to consider, in addition to its ongoing efforts, and to pursuing the further implementation of CityView. Efforts to fill the vacancies in Building Services and Development Engineering were mentioned previously and are key to the department's overall efficiency in processing applications. Another measure relates to the acceptance of submitted applications. West Kelowna's policy is to not accept development applications that are incomplete. Similar to other cities, however, it would appear that West Kelowna does not always enforce this policy. Full enforcement is important. Incomplete applications consume staff time that could be spent processing the applications submitted by applicants who respect the City's policy on completeness, and who are committed to quality development. It is these applicants, who take the time and make the investment to meet the City's application requirements, who should receive the City's attention.

An additional measure relates to the use of pre-application meetings at the City. The City requires pre-application meetings for prospective applicants who may seek planning and/or subdivision approval from the City. Pre-application meetings allow City staff to ensure that prospective applicants understand the City's requirements and expectations, as well as the fees that must be paid. The meetings also allow staff to gauge the complexity of potential projects, and to provide the prospective applicants with estimated processing timelines. In all, pre-application meetings enhance the efficiency of the review process by helping prospective applicants understand what to submit and what to expect.

Challenges arise where prospective applicants seek or require more than one pre-application meeting. These cases typically involve less experienced property owners



who are unsure of how to complete an application, and who are unwilling or unable to retain a development professional to interact with the City on the owner's behalf. These cases have the potential to significantly impact staff time, and reduce the ability of staff to focus on other applications. These impacts can make it difficult for the City to provide a high level of customer service to qualified applicants.

➤ **Separated Process**

The issues of incomplete applications and the need for more than one pre-application meeting highlight the differences that exist among applicants in terms of experience, expertise and resources. These differences, in turn, highlight a significant problem with West Kelowna's development approval process, and that of most other municipalities — namely, that the process is structured as a one-size-fits-all system.

West Kelowna wishes to attract experienced, reputable developers who consistently produce quality products for the community. These developers — there are several who are active in the City today — do not require the same level of oversight as applicants who are less experienced and/or unassisted by development professionals, or who have less-than-ideal track records with the City. "Gold star" developers do not present the same level of risk to the City as others. There is a strong argument to be made for processing submissions from these qualified applicants through a separate, expedited review process.

Some municipalities in British Columbia provide formal, expedited review processes for targeted types of development, such as non-market housing. Several places give preference, on a more informal basis, to applications that support Council priorities (e.g., priorities that support the re-development of a particular part of a city, or that include significant public amenities). A number of places also give preferential application and permit fees to applicants who use registered professionals. Few if any places, however, appear to provide separate formal processes that are designed to attract and reward applicants with strong track records. The approach, however, is attracting the interest of some places, including Vancouver which has stated its intention to develop, on a pilot project basis, a "Nexus lane" for strong applicants with lower-risk projects.

West Kelowna may wish to consider exploring the possibility of a separate, expedited process for experienced developers. The initiative would represent a significant departure from the traditional one-size-fits-all process model, and could help to enhance the City's reputation in the development community. If successful, the initiative would certainly position the City as open for business to serious, qualified developers.



## Recommendations

The following recommendations address issues related to the timeline for approvals at the City:

- That the City fully implement and follow its policy of non-acceptance for development applications that are incomplete.
- THAT Council amend the City's *Fees and Charges Bylaw 2009, No. 0028* to include a significant fee for a second pre-application meeting, and for each subsequent pre-application meeting, requested by a property owner for the same property.
- THAT the City explore the possibility of creating a separate development application review process to expedite applications, or certain types of applications, that are submitted by applicants who meet specific criteria set out by the City.

It is expected that City staff would take the lead in pursuing the final recommendation, if endorsed by Council. Council itself, however, would have a role to play in identifying the types of applications, and the applicant eligibility criteria, for the proposed process.

## CULTURE

In simple terms, an organization's culture is defined as the attitudes, beliefs and behaviours that shape both the working environment within the organization, and the ways in which the organization interacts with and is perceived by others. In the context of development, an organization's culture influences the degree to which the organization is, and is perceived to be, supportive of new growth and committed to working with applicants to promote and achieve quality development.

## West Kelowna

West Kelowna wishes to be recognized as a municipality that is open for business, particularly for development applicants who have the experience, expertise and resources necessary to build projects that add value to the community. During the interviews conducted for the review, a number of developers highlighted specific exchanges, staff members, and development experiences that support the "open for business" message. On the whole, however, comments made by the developers suggest that the City is perceived to be less-than-welcoming to development. Those interviewed offered the following types of observations:

- some staff in the process seem unwilling or unable to work with applicants to find solutions to problems
- members of staff appear overly concerned with small points on applications, and unable to see the larger picture
- the City approves staff vacation time during the busiest months without providing adequate back-up resources to assist applicants



- staff in other municipalities (including in the Central Okanagan) do "what it takes", including working overtime, to get applications processed — an attitude that is not perceived to be widespread in West Kelowna
- some staff (as noted earlier in the report) do not return calls or communicate with applicants in a timely manner
- staff, in general, are focused on their regulatory role at the expense of their role as facilitator of development
- staff have difficulty trusting developers and their consultants, even those with strong track records at the City

A number of the developers, including those with considerable experience in other centres across Canada, shared observations about Council. These developers commented that:

- Council can appear unsupportive and overly critical of staff in public meetings
- Council does not appear to trust the advice of staff on matters of process and on matters of substance related to specific files
- Council places too much importance on the views and concerns of small community groups who oppose development projects, even in cases where the projects are consistent with the community's OCP policies on growth

The comments on Council-staff relations are important to highlight. Developers suggested that difficulties in relations between staff and Council can undermine the confidence of staff, and make it more difficult (and less likely) for staff to work with developers to find solutions. Perceived cleavages between Council and staff can also be — and, indeed, appear to be — exploited by applicants who do not receive the answers they desire from staff in the application process.

Some of the comments reported here may appear as sweeping generalizations that do not apply to all staff, all members of Council, or every situation. This point, however, should not diminish the importance of the messages. It is also the case that the comments reported represent the views and perceptions of a subset of applicants for development approvals. This particular subset of applicants, however, includes developers with strong track records in West Kelowna and elsewhere.

### **Moving Forward**

Several of the changes already recommended in the review, including those designed to improve communications and further streamline development approvals, will help to address the concerns around culture. Additional efforts will be needed, however, to understand and change the perceptions associated with West Kelowna, and the underlying behaviours and approaches of staff and Council. Such efforts may include:

- the increased use of surveys, including a baseline survey, to understand and



measure the perceptions of the development community on the City's culture as a place to do business<sup>9</sup>

- focused discussions with the Developer Liaison Committee aimed at addressing perceptions and improving the organization's culture as it relates to development
- further orientation for Council and staff on the roles and responsibilities of each party in the development approval process, the importance of strong Council-staff relations, and specific actions available to the groups, individually and together, to address concerns and strengthen overall culture

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are put forward to address concerns related to culture:

- THAT the City develop and implement a survey to understand the development community's perceptions of West Kelowna as a place to do business, and to measure changes in perceptions over time.
- THAT the City work with the Developer Liaison Committee to identify actions that the City may pursue in an effort to improve perceptions of the City in the development community.
  - THAT the City work with the Developer Liaison Committee to monitor changes in perceptions over time, following implementation of suggested actions.
- THAT the City develop, with input from others as necessary, an education program on the roles and responsibilities of Council, individual members of Council, and staff in the development approval process.
  - THAT the program include opportunities for Council and staff to learn together, understand the concerns of each other, and embrace actions to help improve Council-staff relations.

### **OTHER ISSUES**

The issues explored in the report represent the concerns that, in the view of the consultant, were most prevalent in the discussions undertaken for the review, and are in most of need of further attention. The issues do not constitute the complete list of concerns raised. Other issues to note for the City include:

- concerns around the time taken by the City to return developers' security bonds

---

<sup>9</sup> The City currently provides a mechanism for applicants to provide feedback on their experience with the City. The importance of this feedback to the City, however, is not emphasized. The result is that the mechanism is seldomly used.



- the desire to be able to submit applicants electronically using fillable PDFs
- the desire to submit all payments (application fees, etc.) electronically
- frustration with the need to submit the same materials to different departments
- development proposal signage requirements that are perceived to be too onerous

Other issues emerged from the November, 2017, Development Roundtable, and have been reported to Council already.

**DEVELOPMENT  
APPLICATION  
PROCESS REVIEW**

**REPORT**

**NEILSON-WELCH**  
CONSULTANTS TO GOVERNMENT

**JUNE 2018  
PAGE 29**



## SECTION 4 SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

A number of recommendations were presented for the City's consideration in Section 3 of the report. These recommendations are summarized in Figure 4.1.

**Figure 4.1  
Summary of Recommendations**

Issue	Recommendations
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; THAT the City re-activate the staff-level Customer Services Committee to develop and monitor a policy on communications with applicants in the City's development application process.</li> <li>&gt; THAT the Chief Administrative Officer chair the Customer Services Committee.</li> <li>&gt; THAT the Committee's policy on communications include, among other items:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– a statement on the importance of timely and consistent communication</li> <li>– a commitment by the City to communicate at key points of the application process</li> <li>– a commitment by the City to respond to inquiries within a reasonable, set period of time (to be defined)</li> <li>– a commitment by the City to provide training designed to help staff develop the understanding and skills necessary to communicate with applicants regularly and effectively</li> <li>– a set of key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure and report on, through quarterly development reports, the City's performance in meeting its commitments</li> <li>– the City's expectations for applicants in communicating with City Staff</li> </ul> </li> <li>&gt; THAT the City seek feedback from the development community on a draft of the policy, through the Urban Development Institute's Developer Liaison Committee, and through other channels as necessary.</li> </ul>
Staffing Levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; THAT the City undertake a base staffing level assessment for the Development Services Department after:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– all vacancies in the department have been filled</li> </ul> </li> </ul>





Issue	Recommendations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- implementation of CityView has proceeded further</li> <li>- the City has considered and, where endorsed, acted on the full set of recommendations in the 2018 <i>Development Process Review</i></li> </ul>
Late Hits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; THAT THAT the City formalize as an administrative policy the practice of limiting the imposition of late hits to requirements that have important health and safety implications for the community.</li> <li>&gt; THAT the City develop an administrative policy that directs staff to copy the property owner on all written communication, related to an application, between the City and the owner's authorized agent, in the event that the owner has authorized an agent to act on the owner's behalf.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- THAT the City amend its application forms for development approval, subdivision approval and building permits to advise owners and agents of the policy.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Applicant Contributions	None.
Submission Requirements	None.
Timeline for Approval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; THAT That the City fully implement and follow its policy of non-acceptance for development applications that are incomplete.</li> <li>&gt; THAT Council amend the <i>City's Fees and Charges Bylaw 2009, No. 0028</i> to include a significant fee for a second pre-application meeting, and for each subsequent pre-application meeting, requested by a property owner for the same property.</li> <li>&gt; THAT the City explore the possibility of creating a separate development application review process to expedite applications, or certain types of applications, that are submitted by applicants who meet specific criteria set out by the City.</li> </ul>
Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; THAT THAT the City develop and implement a survey to understand the development community's perceptions of West Kelowna as a place to do business, and to measure changes in perceptions over time.</li> </ul>



Issue	Recommendations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="656 296 1398 426">&gt; THAT the City work with the Developer Liaison Committee to identify actions that the City may pursue in an effort to improve perceptions of the City in the development community.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="727 468 1382 562">– THAT the City work with the Developer Liaison Committee to monitor changes in perceptions over time, following implementation of suggested actions.</li></ul></li> <li data-bbox="656 604 1419 732">&gt; THAT the City develop, with input from others as necessary, an education program on the roles and responsibilities of Council, individual members of Council, and staff in the development approval process.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="727 774 1414 900">– THAT the program include opportunities for Council and staff to learn together, understand the concerns of each other, and embrace actions to help improve Council-staff relations.</li></ul></li></ul>