

NO: **R236**

COUNCIL DATE: **December 16, 2019**

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: **Mayor & Council**

DATE: **December 12, 2019**

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

FILE: **6880-01**

SUBJECT: **Quarterly Update on Program to Reduce Building Permit Wait Times**

RECOMMENDATION

The Planning & Development Department and the Engineering Department recommend that Council receive this report for information.

INTENT

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an update on the strategy and program that was implemented in late 2018 in order to reduce permit processing time for single-family building permits to an average of 10-weeks.

BACKGROUND

On December 17, 2018, Council considered Corporate Report No. R254; 2018 outlining a proposed new program aimed at reducing permit processing time for single-family building permits and setting a goal of a 10-week average processing timeline.

On April 1, 2019, Council considered Corporate Report No. R058; 2019 providing Council with an update on the progress of processing time for single-family building permits that was reduced to an average of 15-weeks.

On July 22, 2019, Council considered Corporate Report No. R162; 2019 providing Council with an update on the progress of processing time for single-family building permits that was reduced to an average of 13-weeks.

On September 12, 2019, Council considered Corporate Report No. R177; 2019 providing Council with an update on the progress of processing time for single-family building permits that was reduced to an average of 12-weeks.

With the processing time goal of an average of 10-weeks, staff have continued to implement the measures approved by Council, which included added staffing capacity, a triage system, and stream-lined drainage review and referrals.

DISCUSSION

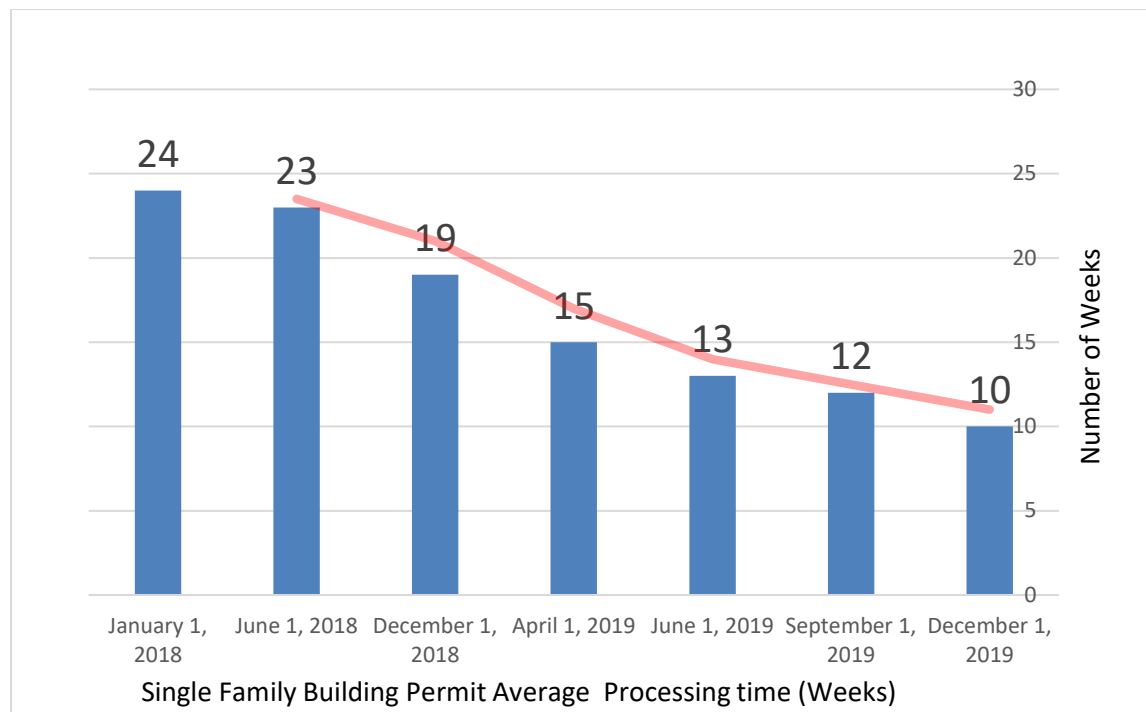
Although parts of the region are experiencing a slowdown in real-estate development, Surrey is still experiencing strong development activity with this year's value of building permits issued passing the two billion dollars mark; a record year. With the continued process improvement changes and efficiencies made to the application review process throughout the year, the time to process the building permit has continued to improve.

Some of the previously implemented changes which are continuing to improve the shortening of the permit processing time include:

- Triage system introduced in early 2019, leading to complete building permit submissions;
- Plumbing permit applications can now be made online for most plumbing permit types;
- Streamlining of electrical permits fee calculation process; and
- Remote inspections for trees and landscape.

Additional staff and extended work hours are still being implemented to continue the enhanced service delivery and to further reduce processing time of permits in the queue.

As a result of the process changes made, the current processing time for single-family building permits has now been reduced to a 10-week average for complete applications from the 12-week average in September 2019. At this point, staff are confident they will achieve a 9-week average processing time by year's end.



Over the last quarter, staff have continued to improve the overall permitting process for all types of building permits, with implementation of single-family building permit digital intake currently in beta testing with select clients.

Single-family Building Permit Digital Intake

In late November staff began the beta testing of digital intake for single-family building permits. This step is currently in production with key select clients in order to thoroughly test the system before its public launch, expected early in 2020. While we anticipated a late 2019 roll-out, staff is confident that launching in the new year will allow us to incorporate feedback from the beta testing group in order to deliver an exceptional system.

Plumbing Permits

As discussed in the September 2019 Corporate Report the addition of the hydronic heating plumbing permits now available on-line has seen a jump of about 40% of plumbing permits now being applied on-line and processed digitally. This in turn translates to time savings to clients not having to come to City Hall to apply for permits.

Additional digital permits are expected to be rolled-out in first quarter of 2020 to increase the digital offerings and provide further efficiencies to both our clients and staff processing permits.

Staffing

We continue with recruitment and training of staff to help provide an enhanced level of service to external clients and internal colleagues. Continuous improvement training is also being rolled-out throughout the department in an effort to have all staff contribute to enhance the level of service both internal and external.

Next Steps

The next steps in continuous improvements for the permitting process will include implementation of the proposed improvements on the landscape review process, with the introduction of standard forms for consulting Landscape Architects. Staff will also continue with the roll-out of the standard process for landscape security releases.

Staff have prepared the 2020 workplan for continuous improvements which will focus on tenant improvement and sign permits processes.

An open house for small builders of single-family homes is planned for the evening of February 20th, 2020 where staff will be able to clarify specific processes, application requirements for a complete application and also receive feedback from clients on how we could further streamline the permit and inspection process.

CONCLUSION

As of December 1, 2019, staff have achieved the goal of 10-weeks average processing time for single-family building permits. Early in 2020, the fully digital permitting process for single-family building permits will be rolled out to the public and staff will start to focus on process improvements for tenant improvement permits and sign permits.

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