

Development Approval Process Improvement Task Force - Minutes

1E – Committee Room B
City Hall
13450 - 104 Avenue
Surrey, B.C.
TUESDAY, JANUARY 14, 2025
Time: 9:08 a.m.

Present:

Councillor Kooner, Chair
Councillor Hepner, Vice-Chair
Councillor Bains
S. Neuman, General Manager,
Engineering
R. Gill, General Manager, Planning &
Development
R. Blackwell
J. Gaglardi
A. Johl
S. Yusuf

Absent:

Staff Present:

J. Searle, Assistant City Clerk

A. DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. Planning Report Process

The General Manager, Planning & Development provided an overview of the planning report process improvement project and requested comments from the Committee regarding deadlines, report content, and potential improvements.

Discussion ensued as follows:

- Reports often undergo significant last-minute changes within the final days before the report deadline.
- Fees for Letters of Credit (LOC) often arrive late, creating difficulties in meeting timelines.
- Reports have expanded over time, incorporating extensive appendices and drawings. The Committee discussed the potential for streamlining reports to maintain information quality while reducing unnecessary content.
- Applicants are willing to provide project information into a standardized report template, shifting some of the administrative workload away from staff.
- While most applicants understand the City has report deadlines, staff should provide clear target dates to ensure expectations are met
- There was support to formalize the report deadlines but emphasized the need for reasonableness and flexibility.

In response to comments from the Committee, staff will review the LOC issue, explore potential improvements to report content, set out the report deadlines, and provide an update at a future meeting.

2. Design Review

The General Manager, Planning & Development provided an overview of the design review process improvement project, informing of the need to streamline the design review process to ensure that developments meet design requirements while reducing unnecessary complexity.

Discussion ensued as follows:

- The focus should be on key guidelines rather than getting caught in minor design details.
- Commercial/Industrial Developments located 75m outside of residential areas could potentially bypass Design Review (DR) under OCP exemptions.
- Campbell Heights Industrial Area approvals could be accelerated by allowing projects to proceed directly to Building Permit if they are already zoned industrial, skipping the Development Permit process.
- Townhouse developments under 26 UPA could qualify for a simplified design review, while 29-30 UPA townhouses would still require a more thorough review.
- Subjectivity in Urban Design comments is causing delays and multiple rounds of revisions, even after Advisory Design Panel approval.
- Some projects have faced significant delays over minor design elements.
- A workshop between developers and staff should be scheduled to identify solutions.

In response to comments from the Committee, staff explained that while most applicants work with qualified design professionals, some require additional guidance. Additionally, the OCP exemptions for commercial and industrial developments have not been looked at in a while. Staff also summarized the key issues to resolve:

- Possible exemptions from the design review process.
- Minimizing subjectivity by establishing clear guidelines.
- Clarifying the scope of design review.
- Defining a structured decision-making process and dispute resolution mechanism.

- Ensuring flexibility by recognizing that not all sites are the same.
- Clarifying internal structure, including reporting relationships and responsibilities

Staff will review and report back at a future meeting.

3. Surety Bonds

The General Manager, Engineering provided an overview of the Surety Bond program and requested comments from the Committee regarding potential extension and expansion of the Surety Bond Pilot Program beyond its current scope for off-site works.

Discussion ensued as follows:

- Surrey has been a leader in implementing surety bonds. There was support to keep and expand the program.
- The program should not be limited to housing and could be applied to other types of development.
- Surety bonds reduce financial risk for developers, allowing them to pursue additional projects more efficiently.
- Expanding the program could also include landscaping securities.

B. INFORMATION DISTRIBUTED

1. Adoption of the Minutes – December 5, 2025

It was	Moved by A. Johl Seconded by S. Yusuf That the minutes of the Development Approval Process Improvement Task Force meeting of December 5, 2024, be adopted.
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Carried

C. NEW BUSINESS

The Committee had a roundtable discussion on upcoming discussion topics.

- Getting projects past fourth reading
- Soil Permits
- Planning Reports
- Urban Design
- Public Art
- Indoor and Outdoor Amenities

- Parking
- Bike Parking
- Development Permit “Light” Process
- Increasing Professional Reliance
- Infrastructure servicing and front ending.

These topics will be scheduled for discussion at future meetings.

D. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Development Approval Process Improvement Task Force is scheduled for 9:00 a.m. on January 28, 2025 in 1E – Community Room A & B.

E. ADJOURNMENT

It was Moved by R. Blackwell
Seconded by S. Yusuf
That the Development Approval Process
Improvement Task Force meeting be adjourned.
Carried

The Development Approval Process Improvement Task Force adjourned at 10:35 a.m.

Jennifer Ficocelli
City Clerk and Director Legislative Services

Councillor Pardeep Kooner, Chair