

Committee of the Whole (1) Report

DATE: Tuesday, January 19, 2021

WARD(S): ALL

TITLE: ACTIVE DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS - UPDATE

FROM:

Nick Spensieri, Deputy City Manager, Infrastructure Development

ACTION: FOR INFORMATION

Purpose

To provide an update on active development application files across the City of Vaughan.

Report Highlights

- The development approval process continues to benefit from increased utilization of technology
- A new 'AMANDA' Development Application Portal is under development to provide additional efficiencies through digital plan intake and review
- Opportunities to enhance the development application approval process are being implemented, planned and explored in consultation with industry stakeholders
- Attachments to this report provide a list of development applications and information related to their status in the application review process

Recommendations

1. THAT this report be received for information

Background

Vaughan Council ('Council') on October 29, 2020, directed staff to report back on the status of active development application files, identifying key outstanding matters to be resolved. This report includes a list of all active development applications, their status in

the development review process and identifies actions being undertaken to facilitate their expeditious review.

Previous Reports/Authority

N/A

Analysis and Options

A robust development review system contributes to city building, shapes how the city manages growth, and supports and informs engagement with public stakeholders. With extensive community consultation, the development review and approval process ensure sustainable housing supply, secures parkland and drives economic growth and job creation. Staff seek opportunities to innovate and improve the planning processes to facilitate the development of complete communities.

What has been done?

The City has or is undertaking initiatives to implement an efficient development application review process including:

- New development applications are being received electronically and Pre-Application Consultation (PAC), Heritage Vaughan Committee and Design Review Panel meetings are being held with electronic participation
- Virtual meetings continue to be held with stakeholders to review applications and discuss staff comments
- A new digital permitting portal was launched in April 2020, enabling citizens and building industry professionals to apply, track and pay for building permits online; a similar portal for the electronic submission of development applications is being developed for implementation in Q2 of 2021
- Enhancements were made to the portal in June 2020, providing a “one stop shop” opportunity for citizens and building industry professionals to apply for engineering grading permits online
- Development applications are being circulated electronically to all City Departments and external review municipalities (i.e. York Region), Provincial ministries and review agencies such as the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority providing shorter circulation times than typical regular mail circulations
- Where feasible, the ability to phase planning and conditional building permits are explored

The development review process is complex requiring input from several professional disciplines and review partners

As Vaughan continues to transform and mature from a suburban community to an urban centre, development applications in the past typically comprised of subdivisions for detached dwellings now seek approvals for more varied mixed-use development with higher building heights and densities. This new form of development introduces complexities into the planning process related to matters such as compatibility for proposed infill development, wind and shadow analysis, built form compatibility, environmental/sustainability considerations, increased density resulting in Section 37 negotiations, strata park requests and complex implementation documents (e.g. Official Plan and Zoning Amendments) and agreements.

Development applications require the review of technical documents/studies from varied professional disciplines (e.g. planners, engineers, biologists, etc.) and from review partners with legislated jurisdiction (e.g. development fronting onto York Region or Ministry of Transportation roads and lands within Toronto and Region Conservation Authority ('TRCA') regulated areas) through the approval process. The success of an efficient development application review process is dependant on many factors including clearly defining application submission requirements, the quality of applicant submissions, any the expeditious coordination of review of the application by City Departments and partner review agencies.

Staff continue to work with City Departments and external review agencies towards new innovative digital tools and improved processes to ensure all pertinent information is received and reviewed in an efficient manner.

BILD study identifies Vaughan's development application review process performs well relative to similar sized municipalities

BILD released a Municipal Benchmarking study (the 'Study') in September of 2020. This Study utilizes an objective methodology to compare the performance and relative cost of planning application approvals across 18 Ontario municipalities. The BILD Study identified:

- The City of Vaughan ranked #1 out of the 18 municipalities in Site Plan Approval timelines
- The City of Vaughan ranked #2 among large municipalities for the average time it takes to process Official Plan Amendments, Zoning By-law Amendments and Plan of Subdivision approvals
- The report identifies new digital tools and modernization as a key consideration in improving the overall planning approval process

Several digital modernization projects are underway in the Planning and Growth Management Portfolio to enhance the development approval process moving forward

The Planning and Growth Management Portfolio is currently (or will be) undertaking several initiatives to further enhance the efficiency of the development approval process including:

- Future electronic service delivery and efficiencies include the implementation of an 'AMANDA' based online Application Submission Portal for all development applications in 2021
- Migration of the Department's current outdated application management software (PLANit) to the latest version of 'AMANDA' with full electronic circulation and review, GIS capability, integration with other development related departments (e.g. Development Engineering and Building Standards Departments), third party (i.e. applicant) access to the system and full development application reporting intended for implementation in 2021
- The Development Liaison Committee comprised of representatives from external agencies, consultants, developers, and Senior City staff has been established as a City led forum to foster collaborative discussion to promote new efficiencies, best practices and opportunities to improve the development approval process.
- The City regularly engages BILD in meaningful consultation among a variety of City Building initiatives
- Enhanced data management will lead to enhanced evidence-based decision making
- The shift to a virtual environment has enabled the development of leaner business processes and to offer more services in a digital format
- Enhancing citizen engagement through community engagement software (Bang the Table) to drive online communication

The City, in partnership with the community, development industry, external agencies and applicants, recognizes it cannot achieve its city-building objectives / deliver social goods without improving the development review process in the following ways:

- Creating greater accountability and ownership for the end-to-end process across the City
- Shifting the culture towards open collaboration and rigorous project management amongst applicants and City staff
- Continued staff training to enhance the skills required to manage complex development applications
- Increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of identification, escalation and resolution of issues within development applications

New innovative and digital solutions implemented during the pandemic have resulted in new ways of doing business, changing service delivery and internal processes within the Planning and Growth Management Portfolio.

Current development applications, their status and actions being undertaken by staff to expedite their review through the development planning process

Number of development applications

Attachment 1 includes a list of all active development applications as of November 30, 2020. Attachment 1 can be generally summarized as follows:

- 481 active development applications are currently in the review process
- 93 of the 481 active developments applications were received in 2020
- 43 of the 93 active development applications submitted in 2020 (46%) were submitted within 90 days of November 30, 2020, as shown on Attachment 2
- Currently, 70 of the 481 active development applications have been appealed to the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal ('LPAT') and are at different stages of the LPAT process, as follows:
 - a Case Management Conference ('CMC') has been scheduled;
 - a Hearing is scheduled;
 - a CMC or Hearing has commenced;
 - the Hearing has been completed and staff is awaiting the LPAT's decision; or
 - the LPAT has rendered a decision and the applicant/City are resolving conditions of approval or finalizing implementing documents.

Application Status

Attachment 3 identifies the status of all development applications and are categorized by the typical steps in the development application review process as of November 30, 2020. This chart represents a "snapshot" in time as the status of review of a development application changes frequently however, it does provide a general level of information related to the processing of all active development applications. More than one status may apply to a single application. For example, an application can be waiting for additional information from the applicant and comments from a City Department or external review partner. Attachment 3 can be generally summarized as follows:

- 46% of applications have a status of "Waiting for Applicant to Respond/Provide Additional information". These are application where staff has either requested additional information from the applicant or provided comments to the applicant and staff are awaiting additional information/response

- Council has approved 19% of the applications and staff is either awaiting final information from the applicant to clear conditions and/or staff is preparing and/or finalizing implementation documents (e.g. Official Plan and Zoning by-law amendments) or agreements (e.g. Site Plan Agreement, Subdivision Agreement or Condominium Agreement)
- 17% of applications have other statuses such as, but not limited to: the file is inactive and file maintenance letters have been sent to the applicant; the applications are in an area where a Secondary Plan must be completed the applications were submitted recently and are at the start of the review process;
- 8% and 6% of applications have a status of pending comments from external agencies or City Departments respectively
- 3% of applications require or are in the Heritage Vaughan approval process
- 1% of applications have a status where Council has directed a community and/or working group meetings to be held prior to the application proceeding

Actions to be taken to facilitate the expeditious review of active development applications

Attachment 4 identifies general actions Development or VMC Planning Department staff will undertake to expedite the review of the active development applications. These actions are in addition to the process improvement and technology initiatives identified above and are generally categorized as follows:

- collectively almost 50% of the active applications rest with the applicant to either respond to comments, provide additional information or further direction to move the application forward. Staff will follow up with the applicant and initiate appropriate actions on 248 applications to resolve outstanding issues to move the application through the development process
- finalize agreements and clear conditions of approval for 113 applications
- follow up with City departments (68 applications) and external review agencies (64 applications) respectively, and initiate appropriate actions to resolve outstanding issues to move the application through the development process
- 38 applications are scheduled for consideration by the Committee of the Whole and/or Council in Q1 of 2021
- Staff will continue to work with appellants to mediate, resolve or participate in Hearings toward the resolution of applications appealed to the LPAT

It is noted that more than one action can apply to an application. For example, staff could be following up with the applicant and a review agency partner at the same time.

Financial Impact

N/A

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

The City of Vaughan continues to collaborate with the Region of York towards innovative solutions and emerging best practices in the review of development

applications. Data integration and digital plan review are fundamental opportunities to align local and upper tier municipal approval processes.

Conclusion

The City of Vaughan continues to work closely with all applicants towards advancing significant development applications across the City. As the City continues to urbanize, staff are analyzing innovative ways to improve the planning process. A new Development Application Portal will enable digital plan intake and review, creating opportunities for efficiencies and enhanced collaboration. The City continues to engage with the development industry, seeking innovative ways to improve the delivery of the development review process. Attachment #1 provides a summary of each active development application, including status and matters which remain outstanding.

Attachments

1. Active Development Application List
2. Development Application Overview
3. Applications by Status
4. Actions by the Development or VMC Planning Department to Move Applications Forward

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