

COUNCIL REPORT

M&C No.	M&C 2019-65
Report Date	March 13, 2019
Meeting Date	March 25, 2019
Service Area	Growth and Community Development Services

His Worship Mayor Darling and Members of Common Council

SUBJECT: One Stop Development Shop Customer Service Enhancement

OPEN OR CLOSED SESSION

This matter is to be discussed in open session of Common Council.

AUTHORIZATION

Primary Author	Commissioner/Dept. Head	City Manager
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RECOMMENDATION

Receive and file this update on planned customer service enhancements to the City's One Stop Development Shop, proposed as a priority deliverable for the City's Growth & Community Development Services in 2019.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to update Common Council on planned enhancements to the customer service experience provided by the City's One Stop Development Shop housed within Growth & Community Development Services. Accelerating growth of the City's tax base is critical to addressing Saint John's financial challenges and ensuring long term prosperity. The customer service provided by the City's One Stop Development shop is a key contributor to improve investor confidence and support tax base growth. Working together with DevelopSJ, the recommended customer service enhancement plan will be delivered as a priority City initiative in 2019, taking customer service to the next level and delivering a best in class solutions-oriented customer service model to drive smart growth.

PREVIOUS RESOLUTION

N/A

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Common Council has adopted a set of Council Priorities: 2016-2020 and under the heading of “Growth and Prosperity,” the following is stated: “Saint John is recognized by residents and businesses as a positive and supportive city. We grow in a smart way and attract talent, innovation and opportunities so all people can thrive.” Accelerated growth is needed to address the financial challenges facing the City. Customer service excellence and the ease of development approvals is an important contributor to the City’s ability to attract investment and achieve tax based growth.

REPORT

The purpose of this report is to update Common Council on planned enhancements to the customer service experience provided by the City’s One Stop Development Shop housed within Growth & Community Development Services. Accelerating growth of the City’s tax base is critical to addressing Saint John’s financial challenges and ensuring long term prosperity. The customer service experience provided by the City’s One Stop Development shop is a key contributor to improve investor confidence and support tax base growth.

Context: One Stop Development Shop Customer service Improvement

Under Council’s direction, the City has demonstrated strong leadership in transforming its building and development approval services into a customer focused One Stop Development Shop. Key highlights the major improvements realized over the past five years, based upon significant client engagement include:

- One Stop Shop implemented transformational & structural change bringing staff under one roof
- Defined customer service role as “Facilitators vs Regulators” and implemented 40 plus service improvements to eliminate red tape and streamline approvals and value added services to our clients
- KPIs established that drive performance & efficiency
- Modernized suite of development bylaws adopted to support smart growth
- Initiation of Heritage Bylaw / Neighbourhood Plan to catalyze growth
- Developed a suite of incentives to support urban development and heritage reinvestment
- Completed (3) continuous improvement projects to improve efficiencies during the permit intake process, move to digital notification of planning applications, and enable a streamlined heritage approvals.
- New organization, DevelopSJ has been created to drive tax base growth and will play an important role in attracting and supporting investors working in collaboration with Growth & Community Development Services.

While the City has improved its service over the past five years, there continues to be challenges experienced by our clients navigating the City's One Stop Development Shop and potential areas of improvement:

- Customer resolution remains siloed, and customers are having an inconsistent experience. Escalation is not streamlined and accessing various parties.
- Lack of formalized customer feedback system to track customer satisfaction levels (beyond efficiency metrics).
- Development processes need to be clear and solutions oriented. The lack of clear expectations is causing frustration and costly resubmissions. In some cases, expectations may not always be reasonable.
- Perception is reality – negative experiences can undermine the City's reputation and investment attraction efforts.

Working together with DevelopSJ, the recommended customer service enhancement plan to be delivered as a priority City initiative in 2019 will take the customer service offered at the One Stop Development Shop to the next level and deliver a best in class solutions-oriented customer service model to drive smart growth.

2019 Work plan: One Stop Development Shop Customer Service Improvement

Growth & Community Development Services have identified the need to proactively implement customer service improvements to continually improve the City's One Stop Development Shop and provide valued services to the City's development clients.

The recommended improvement plan will focus on three areas:

1. *Fostering a customer centric culture;*
2. *Removing barriers and incentivizing smart growth; and*
3. *Improving our processes to reduce red tape and costs.*

Some improvements can be actioned immediately as short term wins; others require policy or bylaw changes or more robust process improvement. Priorities will be established working collaboratively with DevelopSJ and our development clients and include the following customer service improvements for 2019:

1. Effective immediately, **introduce a Manager of Customer Service Operations for the One Stop Development Shop.** This role, originally conceived with the One Stop Development Shop model, will be front facing and charged with ensuring seamless customer service experience, providing a single point of contact for the customer to troubleshoot issues, facilitate solutions and roll out customer improvements. This

position will work with a quick reaction team to resolve customer issues & drive improvement. This position will be filled as a secondment opportunity within existing establishment.

2. **Deliver a program of customer service training** for front line staff to continue to build and strengthen competencies around customer service excellence and equip staff with skills needed to navigate the important roles of facilitating solutions.
3. In collaboration with DevelopSJ, host engagement sessions with our respective teams and **developer / client focus groups** to understand pain points for clients, yield and test ideas for improvement and set priorities in terms of implementing customer service process improvements.
4. Action short term customer service improvements including **up to 10 “just do it” initiatives** that will cut red tape and add value for clients. The identification of priorities will be based on client engagement feedback. Engagement sessions will be held with staff to identify “just do it” improvements that can be implemented to cut red tape or costs and add value for clients. The list will include improvements such as streamlining of heritage approvals to reduce timeframes for minor renovations and phased permits for site or infrastructure improvements to enable construction projects to move forward faster.
5. **Facilitate the adoption of the Neighbourhood Plan for the Central Peninsula and new Heritage Bylaw and related Zoning Bylaw amendments** that will be transformational in improving clarity and investor confidence, driving growth and removing unnecessary red tape or regulatory barriers to drive urban density and allow for more flexibility for development in heritage areas and clear guidelines for infill development creating more predictability for investors to unlock development potential for Central Peninsula. Implement enhanced incentive programs to build momentum with these changes.
6. **Deliver process improvements to enhance the planning and infrastructure processes** to ensure an efficient and effective process for clients. Focus will be to review these processes to remove barriers, improve predictability, and create new value added tools to achieve outcomes while reducing costs for industry.

The customer service enhancement plan for the One Stop Development Shop will be a priority initiative for Growth & Community Development Services in 2019. The next steps include updating Council at its March 25 meeting and moving forward the engagement sessions with Developers and clients to seek feedback on pain points and areas of improvement. Growth Committee and Council will be updated at key milestones in the delivery of this plan.

SERVICE AND FINANCIAL OUTCOMES

The intended outcomes of the City of Saint John's growth-related efforts and investments are to achieve new levels of employment, population and tax base growth. The plan will be resourced within the City's current operating budget for 2019.

INPUT FROM OTHER SERVICE AREAS AND STAKEHOLDERS

The customer service enhancement plan for the One Stop Development Shop has been designed to address previous feedback from clients; improvements will be delivered in partnership with DevelopSJ and staff throughout the organization involved in the development process. The plan will be prioritized on the basis of improvements that yield the maximum impact for our customers to drive growth outcomes.

ATTACHMENTS

Power Point Presentation: One Stop Development Shop Customer Service Enhancements