


PRESENTATION

- ▶ Objectives
- ▶ Consultant's Approach
- ▶ Setting the Stage
- ▶ Issues to Address
- ▶ Recommendations to Consider



CITY OF NANAIMO
THE PEARL ON THE COAST

BUILDING PERMIT FUNCTION REVIEW
DRAFT REPORT

This Draft Report has been prepared by Neilson Strategic Inc. for the City of Nanaimo. The document is presented for discussion only, and is for the information of the City. No representations of any kind are made by the consultant to any party with whom the consultant does not have a contract.

NEILSON
Strategic Inc.
395 West Douglas Avenue, Kelowna, BC, V1Y 9C2
info@neilsonstrategic.ca
March, 2021



OBJECTIVES

- ▶ Reduce time required to issue building permits
- ▶ Embrace new approach to managing risk
- ▶ Engage industry in identifying issues and designing solutions
- ▶ Engage staff in identifying issues and designing solutions
- ▶ Pursue cost neutrality of recommended changes



CONSULTANT APPROACH

- ▶ Considerable engagement with staff and industry
 - ✓ all staff from Building Department
 - ✓ some staff from other departments
 - ✓ total of 19 individuals from industry
 - ✓ two former Chief Building Officials (BOABC)
 - ✓ MIABC



CONSULTANT APPROACH

- ▶ Considerable engagement with staff and industry
 - ✓ Nanaimo Development Group
 - ✓ Mid-Island Business Initiative
 - ✓ Vancouver Island Construction Association



CONSULTANT APPROACH

- ▶ Research undertaken on City and on other places
 - ✓ several high-growth BC municipalities
 - ✓ Canadian municipalities



SETTING THE STAGE

- ▶ Expectations high for meaningful change
- ▶ Important to involve staff and industry in implementation
 - ✓ designing elements
 - ✓ monitoring changes
 - ✓ reporting out on changes



SETTING THE STAGE

- ▶ No silver bullet
 - ✓ package of recommended changes that are both inter-related and inter-dependent
- ▶ Need for change is most significant for commercial permits



SETTING THE STAGE

- ▶ City staff are highly respected
 - ✓ criticism is directed at "the system", not the people
- ▶ Reviews, by their very nature, are critiques
 - ✓ important to recognize that lots of good stuff to highlight



ISSUES TO ADDRESS

- ▶ Examined function by focusing on four inter-related elements:
 - ✓ application review process
 - ✓ Building Inspections Section
 - ✓ technology
 - ✓ relationship with industry



ISSUES TO ADDRESS

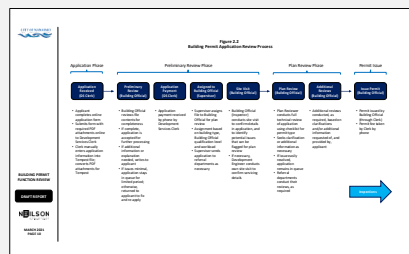
- ▶ Several issues were raised by industry, staff and consultant
 - ✓ report focuses on those that consultant deemed to be most important



ISSUES TO ADDRESS

Application Review Process

- ▶ Limited streams
- ▶ Incomplete applications
- ▶ Internal referrals
- ▶ Reluctance to rely on professionals

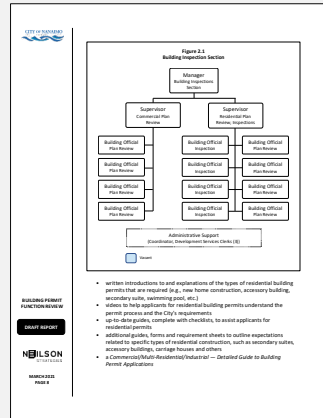




ISSUES TO ADDRESS

Building Inspections Section

- Number of staff
- Experience of Building Officials
- Overtime levels
- Organizational culture
- Applicant complaints



ISSUES TO ADDRESS

Technology

- Receipt of applications
- Credit card payments
- Transparency of process



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ISSUES TO ADDRESS

Relationship with Industry

- ▶ Partnership
- ▶ Outreach and education

RECOMMENDED CHANGES

Recommended changes in Chapter 4, designed to improve the processing of all permits, will help to significantly reduce the number of complaints and the impact that complaints have on management and staff time. It is being anticipated that the changes will help to address the perceptions of complaints that reach the public in some cases. Legitimate and legitimate complaints will not, however, cease existing.

TECHNOLOGY

Receipt of Application

From January 2020, all applications for building permits were submitted in-person by applicants at the City's Permit Centre. With the onset of COVID-19 there was an urgent need to design an online submission capability for all permit types. The Building Inspections Section, with the assistance of the City's Information Technology Department, responded to this need and put in place the necessary process in short order.

The process that was developed is innovative in its use of readily available tools, such as Webfile PDF forms and DocuSign software. The process is not, however, an efficient one for the City. As permits applications submit completed application forms using DocuSign to the City and either signed or signed PDF versions of all required building plans, drawings, forms and other attachments, Development Services Clerks who receive the packages must manually transfer the application information into a Permit file. Each standard residential permit application takes a Development Services Clerk up to 30 minutes to convert to Permit. Applications for complex buildings take upwards of one hour each – some much longer.

The District's reliance on the current online process creates an additional problem: related to incomplete applications. Previously, under the counter-based process, applications were reviewed directly by the main Building Official who would assess them for completeness with the applicant present. Missing items could be identified by staff by applicants receiving applications quickly, the forms easy and prevented from entering the permit processing queue. Today, in the current online submission system, all applications are reviewed and placed into the system by a Development Services Clerk for preliminary review by a Building Official. Incomplete applications – those not reviewed – must be identified by the Building Official and either not issue pending completion, or re-issued entirely. In such case the Building Official must write an explanatory letter to the applicant with list of deficiencies to correct. The time required by the Building Official is considerable and has resulted in significant delay in the preliminary review stage of the permit process.

BUILDING PERMIT FUNCTIONS REVIEW

Smart report

NELSON
ARCHITECTS
CONSULTANTS

BARBARA JEN
PROJECT

CITY OF NANAIMO
THE OFFICIAL COMMUNITY

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Recommendations address the key issues identified, within the context of the objectives
 - ✓ reduce time required to issue building permits
 - ✓ embrace new approach to managing risk
 - ✓ engage industry in identifying issues and designing solutions
 - ✓ engage staff in identifying issues and designing solutions
 - ✓ pursue cost neutrality of recommended changes



RECOMMENDATIONS

► Fast Track Program

| Tenant Improvement Fast Track | Residential Fast Track |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - issued for minor alterations to existing building elements, and for minor alterations to existing plumbing and mechanical systems - commercial uses located in commercial and industrial zones - no proposed change of use - no net change to the floor area of the unit or gross leasable floor area in a building - minor exterior alterations and additions under <u>\$150,000</u> in construction value - minor plumbing changes that involve replacement of existing fixtures | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - exterior decks, porches, solar panels - interior renovations - plumbing, mechanical and wood stoves - accessory buildings (not including carriage houses) - garages and carports - landscaping and pools - fire, flood and structural repairs - no zoning variances or alternative code solutions |



RECOMMENDATIONS

► Fast Track Program

GUIDE

**TENANT IMPROVEMENTS
FAST TRACK PROCESS**

Planning and Development Department
Building Permits Division
604 972-3443 / permits@coquitlam.ca

GUIDE OVERVIEW

The City of Coquitlam Tenant Improvement (TI) Fast Track process is designed to facilitate the approval process for certain Commercial Tenant Improvement (CTI) Applications. The CTI Fast Track Process is designed for CTI applications involving retail-oriented uses and regular offices that are located in specific commercial and industrial zones and that do not involve a change in use, new or extended uses, significant changes to plumbing, exterior modifications or net increases/decreases to floor area (including gross leasable floor area or planned shopping malls).

CRITERIA

Fast Track Permits are issued for minor alterations to existing building elements, as well as minor alterations to existing plumbing and mechanical systems. Fast Track Permits cannot involve a change in use (in this case, a Zoning Bylaw review by Development Planning staff). They are available for projects where the work involves no additions to or alterations to the structure, no structural changes requiring engineering design by a licensed professional engineer and that do not require plan approval by other departments. Fast Track Permits are for applications involving retail-oriented uses and offices.

Fast Track Permits are limited in scope and must meet the following criteria:

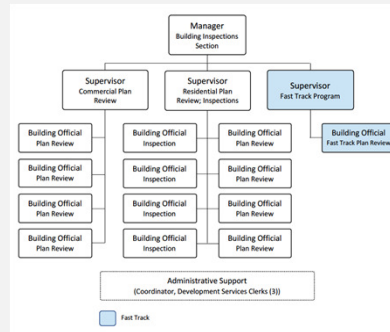
- Applies to commercial uses located in all commercial and industrial zones.
- No proposed change of use.
- No net increase/decrease to the floor area of the unit or the gross leasable floor area in a building.
- No external wood fixtures (unless the Development Permit has been issued and provided to Building Permits Division staff).
- Minor plumbing changes which are associated with replacement of existing plumbing fixtures (i.e., straight fixture replacements do not require a plumbing permit; however, if minor modifications to the plumbing system - fixture relocations, vent repositioning, fitting modifications, capping, etc. are needed, the building permit may be issued in advance of the plumbing permit).
- Single level fire-rated systems without stair access (elevator must be under 12' in height and the ceiling system must not exceed storage height of girder system design capability).
- Minor exterior alterations and additions that are less than \$150,000 in construction value.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Fast Track Permit Group



RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Approved Professionals Pilot Project
 - ✓ targeted applications for complex buildings
 - ✓ approved Registered Professionals
 - ✓ City policies
 - ✓ monitoring and reporting



RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Joint Building Permit Advisory Working Group
 - ✓ five (5) City staff, including Director and Manager
 - ✓ five (5) representatives of development industry



RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Joint Building Permit Advisory Working Group
 - ✓ design Fast Track eligibility criteria
 - ✓ design elements for Approved Professionals Pilot Project
 - ✓ develop calendar of joint workshops, seminars, open houses, site visits



RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Investments in Technology
 - ✓ improved online application portal
 - ✓ online payment system
 - ✓ new online permit tracking system (dashboard) for applicants



RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Internal Service Agreement on Referrals
 - ✓ target timelines for completing referrals
 - ✓ specific responsibilities for each party to the referral
 - ✓ aligning priorities of the referral groups



RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Cost Recovery
 - ✓ overtime cost savings
 - ✓ Local Government Development Approvals Program
 - ✓ permit fees

BRIEFING ON REVIEW OF BUILDING PERMIT PROCESS

Governance & Priorities Committee
March 22, 2021

