

# Staff Report for Decision

DATE OF MEETING    APRIL 14, 2021

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**SUBJECT                LOCAL GOVERNMENT DEVELOPMENT APPROVALS PROGRAM**

## **OVERVIEW**

### **Purpose of Report**

To provide Council with information on a suitable project for an application under the Local Government Development Approvals Program.

### **Recommendation**

That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council direct Staff to submit an application to the Local Government Development Approvals Program for the Development Approval Improvement project, and provide overall grant management.

## **BACKGROUND**

In 2019, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs initiated the Development Approvals Process Review (DAPR). The Ministry engaged local governments and a broad range of stakeholders to discuss the challenges of current development approvals processes in B.C., to identify opportunities for addressing those challenges, and to develop an informed list of ideas about how to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of processes. A summary report of engagement findings identified several key themes. The Local Government Development Approvals Program, a component of the Canada-BC Safe Restart Agreement, is one element in addressing the DAPR Report findings.

The Local Government Development Approvals Program is intended to support the implementation of established best practices and to test innovative approaches to improve development approvals processes while meeting local government planning and policy objectives.

The development approvals process refers to all operational steps and decision making in relation to a local government's consideration of approving development, from the pre-application phase to the issuance of the building permit and, ultimately, approval of occupancy. The local government's review process ensures that development applications conform to policies, plans, and regulations for building and development.

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs has provided \$15 million in funding and UBCM is administering the program. Municipalities may submit one application for 100% funding of eligible project costs up to \$500,000. Eligible projects must be completed within two years of grant approval.

The grant application deadline is **2021-MAY-07**.

## **DISCUSSION**

At its meeting of 2021-MAR-29, Council directed staff to implement the recommendations of Neilson Strategies Inc.'s Building Permit Function Review. Council's direction included submission of a grant application to the UBCM's Local Government Development Approvals Program. Staff have also identified additional areas in the City's development approvals processes, outside of the building permit functions, where efficiency and effectiveness could be improved through initiatives that meet the Local Government Development Approvals Program grant criteria. These initiatives have been combined into one project titled Development Approval Improvement in anticipation of applying for funding under the Local Government Development Approvals Program.

The Development Approval Improvement project will include the following suite of initiatives, for a total estimated cost of \$500,000:

- Investment in software technology as recommended in the Building Permit Function Review to support implementation of improvements to the online application system including ability for cost recovery option for credit card fees (\$375,000)
- Implementation of the recommendations in the Building Permit Function Review allocation for consulting services (\$25,000)
  - i. To review and update internal process guides and support the development of an internal service agreement;
  - ii. To develop a Terms of Reference for the Joint Building Permit Advisory Working Group;
  - iii. To develop eligibility criteria for the proposed Fast Track Program; and,
  - iv. To develop specific elements, requirements and terms for the proposed Approved Professionals Pilot Project.
- Consulting Services for a development process review focused on Current Planning approvals (\$50,000)
- Consulting and legal services (\$50,000)
  - i. To update the development approval procedures bylaw;
  - ii. To develop standard template legal instruments to support efficient development application approval;
  - iii. To update development permit guidelines to provide clear expectations to applicants and clear decision-making parameters for delegated and Council decisions; and,
  - iv. To review and update application forms, checklists and guidelines to clarify application requirements and expectations of local government-applicant interaction throughout the application process.

## **OPTIONS**

1. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council direct Staff to submit an application to the Local Government Development Approvals Program for the Development Approvals Improvement project, and provide overall grant management.
  - The advantages of this option: Implementing these changes will help reduce development approval processing times, improve development approval process transparency, and provide clarity and consistency to application submission requirements.

- Financial Implications: These initiatives are not currently in the 2021 – 2025 Financial Plan; however, a discussion point is being presented for Council's consideration for the Software and Implementation phases of this project. If the application is successful, the 2021 – 2025 Financial Plan will be amended with the project fully funded from the grant.
2. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council provide alternative direction to Staff for a project to submit an application to the Local Government Development Approvals Program. |

#### **SUMMARY POINTS**

- The Local Government Development Approvals Program provides up to \$500,000 of funding for eligible project costs.
- The City may submit one application.
- The application deadline is 2021-MAY-07.

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