

Report

Date	December 12, 2023	File:
Subject	Supplemental Net New Staffing Request – Development Planning Manager	

PURPOSE

To consider funding for a Development Planning Manager position in 2024.

BACKGROUND

The Planning and Building Department is organized into four teams – building inspections, community planning, development planning and administrative support. The development planning team comprises a Development Planning Coordinator and three Development Planners. Forty percent of the time from a Planner on the community planning team is also allocated to development planning.

As part of the 2021 business plan and budget process Council authorized a Planning Manager position. That position was created largely to advance policy initiatives such as the Official Community Plan Review, the Zoning Bylaw Review, the Affordable Housing Policy and other policy-based projects. The Planning Manager supports the entire department but is not typically involved in development application files. The Director of the department and the Community Planning Coordinator provide oversight and direction to the development planning team.

In the 2023 business plan and budget process Council authorized a new Development Planner position and funding for contract planning services to help reduce the backlog of development applications. The additional resourcing has been effective in reducing the application backlog by approximately 30%. While the development application backlog has been reduced, approximately 77 active development applications are still at various stages in the development review process. Reducing the application backlog and application processing times continues to be a priority for the department.

DISCUSSION

Request Rationale:

Reducing approval times for development applications while still achieving compliance with Council's policies, regulations, and guidelines is a difficult task. It involves well-trained and dedicated staff, ongoing review and updates to municipal processes and requirements, clear and firm expectations of applicants, consistent support from internal departments and external agencies, empowerment of staff to focus on tasks and to make decisions, and resourcing (primarily staffing) that is resilient and properly matched to application volumes.

With last year's approval of a new Development Planner position, the department is better organized to process development applications in a timely manner. What is lacking on the team is a senior manager who can provide direction, support and provide accountability and leadership for the development approval function. Hiring a Planning Manager has proven very effective in improving the capacity and

performance of the community planning team. A similar approach is recommended for hiring a development planning manager for the development planning team.

Summary of Duties:

- Supervise and direct staff and consultants;
- Manage and facilitate large and complex development applications;
- Mentorship and development of junior planning staff;
- Collaboration with the community planning team and internal departments;
- Maintain and update informational material, regulations, policies and procedures on land use and development;
- Resolution of non-compliance issues; and,
- Support and coverage for the Planning Manager and Director

Resource Requirements:

The estimated annual cost of the position is \$166,000, including benefits. As the position is not expected to be filled until April 2024, the budget impact in 2024 is expected to be approximately \$127,000.

In addition to the direct cost of wages and benefits, additional expenses of \$5,000 to \$8,000 per year are anticipated for creating and maintaining a workstation, training, professional memberships, and other incidental expenses incurred with additional staff.

Alignment with Council’s Strategic Plan

Service – Maintaining the existing high level of service of service in the community

Community – Continue to implement existing neighbourhood plans

Community – Incentivize and prioritize new growth in areas close to existing core development

OPTIONS

1. **(Recommended Option)** THAT the Committee of the Whole direct staff to include the Development Planning Manager position in the 2024 Operating Budget.
2. (Alternate Option) THAT the Committee of the Whole direct staff to bring forward the Development Planning Manager position for consideration after a Development Application Service Review has been completed.
3. (Alternate Option) THAT the Committee of the Whole direct staff to bring forward the request for the Development Planning Manager position to a future budget process.

IMPLICATIONS

Authorizing the Development Planning Manager position will provide longer-term structural capacity to manage development better, improve service, and respond to Provincial housing legislation and directives.

Deferring a decision on the position until after a Development Application Service Review is completed would provide Council with a better understanding as to how the position could improve service and advance Council's priorities but would delay the creation of the position by a minimum of one year.

Denying the position means development will continue to be managed with existing departmental resources.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Committee of the Whole direct staff to include the Development Planning Manager position in the 2024 Operating Budget.

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