

PLANNING AND BUILDING DEPARTMENT 2025 BUSINESS PLAN

Committee of the Whole

DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- The Planning and Building Department provides information and support relating to services associated with community planning, land use, and sustainable land development.
- We prepare and maintain plans, regulations, and policies for the responsible development of North Cowichan's communities and are responsible for the review and administration of planning and building approvals.



CORE BUSINESS

The Planning and Building Department is organized into four key areas:



Community Planning



Development Planning



Building inspections



Administrative support

STAFFING LEVELS

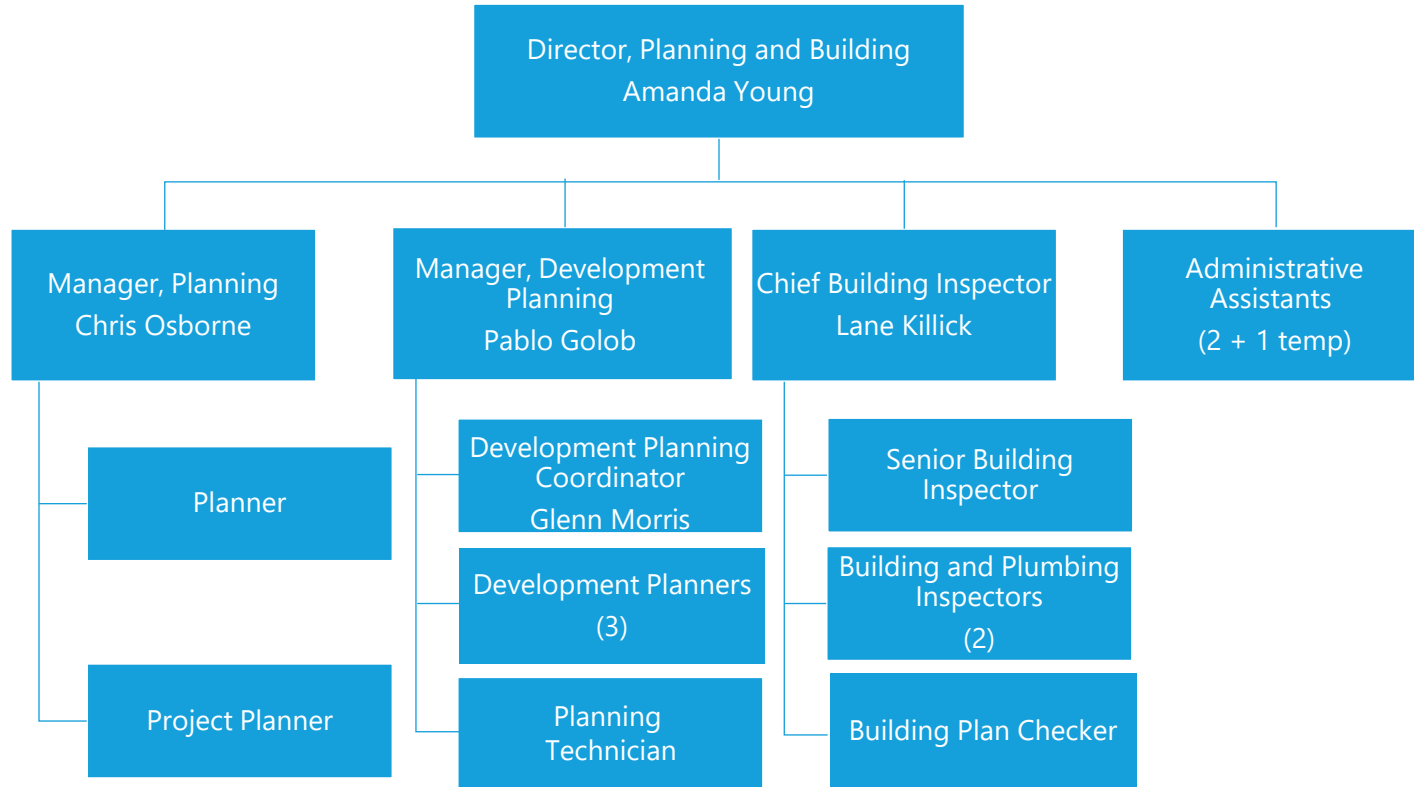
19

Total positions
as of
July 1, 2024

- 17 Full-Time, Permanent
- 2 Full-Time, Temporary

(Exempt 6; CUPE 13)

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE



COMMUNITY PLANNING

3.0 FTE (Manager, Planning; Project Planner; Planner)

- Responsible for land use plans and policy
- Official Community Plan and Zoning Bylaw update
- Supports community partnership initiatives and emergent policy issues (e.g. affordable housing, telecommunication tower policy, harmonization with ALC regulation)
- Assists with complex development applications
- Coordinates and collaborates on regional planning projects (e.g. Cowichan 2050, childcare, housing needs assessments)
- Development and implementation of Local Area Plans and Secondary Plans
- Provides planning support on a range of municipal initiatives (e.g. affordable housing projects, master transportation plan, infrastructure planning)
- Environmental planning in collaboration with Environment Services staff, including implementation of the Climate Action and Energy Plan and Biodiversity Protection Policy
- Coordinates and prepares grant applications
- Maintain and develop external relationships and conducts public engagement on projects and policies
- Community outreach

DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

6.0 FTE (Development Planning Manager, Development Planning Coordinator; 3 Development Planners; Planning Technician)

- Administers and maintains Zoning Bylaw and other development-related regulations and policies
- Provides information and advice to land owners and developers
- Receives and processes development applications
- Works with applicants and land owners to achieve compliance with policies, regulations, and guidelines
- Responds to public information requests of all sorts
- Reviews and comments on building permit and subdivision applications, business license applications, special event applications, liquor and cannabis license applications
- Processes Agricultural Land Commission applications
- Enforcement and compliance
- Communications with agencies and external agencies

BUILDING INSPECTIONS

5.0 FTE (Chief Building Inspector; 3 Building and Plumbing Inspectors; Plan Checker)

- Administers building, fire, health, and life-safety standards and regulations
- Provides technical information to designers, builders and homeowners
- Business license approvals regarding building standards
- Reviews and approves building, sign, and plumbing permit applications
- Conducts inspections for compliance with BC Building Code, Building Bylaw and other applicable regulations
- Enforcement and compliance
- Promotion and implementation of the BC Energy and Zero Carbon Step Codes
- Construction industry outreach

BUILDING PERMIT STATISTICS

Year	Building Permits	Commercial	Residential	Other	Residential Units Created	Total Value of Construction
2017	294	36	198	60	162	\$47M
2018	336	30	194	112	378	\$67M
2019	263	20	171	70	340	\$85.8M
2020	301	29	202	70	221	\$64.2M
2021	329	15	232	82	291	\$116.9M
2022	251	17	156	78	492	\$161.4M
2023	245	20	123	102	303	\$309.7M
2024*	192	24	43	125	489	\$102.6M

* to September 30, 2024

BUILDING PERMIT STATISTICS

Dwelling Units

New Residential Units	Single-Family + Accessory Dwelling	Duplex	Suites	Multi-Family + Apartment	Total
2017	130	14	14	12	170
2018	149	26	15	186	376
2019	132	20	14	174	340
2020	154	19	8	39	221
2021	180	28	4	69	281
2022	100	6	6	380	434
2023	82	14	12	0	108
2024*	70	11	5	403	489

* to September 30, 2024

DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION STATISTICS

	Rezoning	Development Permits	Development Variance Permits	ALC Applications	Temporary Use Permits	OCP Amendments	Total
2017	29	29	10	7	3	1	79
2018	31	26	12	5	11	1	86
2019	19	42	3	1	1	1	67
2020	17	30	9	6	1	3	66
2021	20	43	12	4	1	1	81
2022	17	27	10	7	1	3	65
2023	8	18	10	7	7	5	55
2024*	14	21	5	3	2	2	53

* to November 21, 2024

TRENDS FOR 2024 – BUILDING DIVISION

- New construction somewhat slowing due to high interest rates and construction costs.
- Building permit applications dipped slightly in 2023, but the long-term trend is expected to be upwards.
- Phased permits for the Cowichan District Hospital Replacement Project were issued in 2023 and continued in 2024. This project is expected to continue into 2025/2026.
- Project delays resulting from Contaminated Sites Regulation and ALC Soil deposit and removal regulations.

TRENDS FOR 2025 – PLANNING DIVISION

- OCP implementation and new Zoning Bylaw the over-arching 2025 departmental priority. This work was slowed in 2024 due to the reallocation of resources to meet the requirements of Bill 44.
- Provincial Housing Target Order received in 2024 that will impact resourcing and priorities in 2024 and beyond.
- If a grant from the Housing Accelerator Fund is received, commitments made in application will be prioritized.
- Ongoing implementation of the Bell McKinnon Local Area Plan is necessary to manage major land use applications in that area.

2024 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Accomplishments	Strategic Alignment
Implementation of the Bill 44 requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required Zoning Bylaw amendments • Updated of the Interim Housing Needs Report • Required OCP amendments 	Housing & Community
Development Procedures Bylaw	Service & Community
Building Bylaw	Housing, Environment & Service
Reduction of the Development Planning Application backlog	Service



**CLIMATE EMERGENCY
AND ENVIRONMENTAL
SUSTAINABILITY
PRIORITIES**

CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY PRIORITIES

Planning and Building



PRIORITY 1:

Support Environment Staff in the implementation of the Climate Action and Energy Plan



PRIORITY 2:

Strengthen environmental policy in all land use planning

2025 BUSINESS PLAN

2025 KEY DELIVERABLES – PLANNING

Actions/Projects	Strategic Alignment
Zoning Bylaw review and update (continued work)	Community
Affordable Housing Strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community amenity contribution policy • Accessory dwelling unit strategy 	Housing
Bill 46 – <i>Housing Statutes (Development Financing) Amendment Act</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amenity Cost Charges 	Housing
Strategic Agricultural Plan Update and support of Agricultural Advisory Committee	Economy

2025 KEY DELIVERABLES – PLANNING

Actions/Projects	Strategic Alignment
Provincial Housing Target Order Compliance	Housing
Continued Bill 44 Implementation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-zoning of 20-year projected housing needs • Any required OCP amendments to achieve compliance 	Housing
Other OCP implementation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban Forest Strategy • Land Clearing Bylaw • Other projects, as directed by Council 	Environment
Bell McKinnon Local Area Plan Implementation	Community

2025 KEY DELIVERABLES – PLANNING

Actions/Projects	Strategic Alignment
<p>Improvements to development application processing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued focus on reducing caseload backlog • Development applications business process review • Review of Delegated Authority • Bylaw amendments 	<p>Service</p>

2025 KEY DELIVERABLES – BUILDING

Actions/Projects	Strategic Alignment
Fees and Charges update	Service & Community
Implementation of new Building Code and Building Bylaw	Environment, Housing & Service

OPERATING BUDGET – ENHANCED SERVICE REQUESTS

NET NEW STAFFING REQUEST

Position	Rationale	Implications of Deferment	Projects Deferred	Budget Impact
<p>Administrative Assistant 2 – Building</p>	<p>The department has been utilizing casual staff to complete administrative tasks for the Building Team on an ongoing and full-time basis for over 3 years. These resources are not exclusive to the department and are frequently pulled to cover absences in other areas or are unavailable for use in other departments because of the Building Team's requirements. This has been ongoing and has been covered by existing department budget. We recently hired a temporary administrative assistant (1 yr. term) to undertake the work that has been performed by casual staff for the past three years. Given the ongoing use of these resources and that this work is likely to be ongoing into the foreseeable future, we would like to hire a permanent administrative assistant.</p>	<p>Continued use of temporary staff for the one-year term and then potential return to use of casual resources.</p> <p>Disruption to the department from not having a person consistently in this role.</p>	<p>Digitization of historic building permit files.</p>	<p>\$90K (benefits included) potential start date of March 2025.</p> <p>Funding Source: Existing Budget.</p>

OPERATIONAL BUDGET – ENHANCED SERVICE REQUESTS

Actions/Projects	Budget	Rationale
Land Clearing Bylaw	\$ 75,000 Funded from appropriated surplus	Development of a Land Clearing Bylaw: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify best practices related to land management. • Achieve clear policies that are understandable for applicants, staff, the public, and Council. • Better align North Cowichan's processes and policies with best practices.
Urban Forest Strategy	\$150,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Urban Forest Strategy identifies actions to increase and improve the quality of tree coverage that makes urban areas more livable, particularly as they face ongoing pressure to develop and densify. Development of a UFS can also provide the context for subsequent tree protection regulations.
Tree Canopy Analysis	\$ 40,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data and analysis to support the Urban Forestry Strategy and Land Clearing Bylaw
Strategic Agricultural Plan Update	\$ 75,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The OCP identifies a need for renewal of the 2001 Agricultural Plan and this item has been requested by the Agricultural Advisory Committee as a workplan project. This work will also address the funding and deployment of the Municipality's Agricultural Reserve Fund.

OPERATING BUDGET

	2024 Budget	2025 Budget	\$ Change	% Change	2024 YTD*	Supplemental	\$ Change
REVENUE							
Building Permit Fees	\$ 777,464	\$ 869,252	\$ 91,788	12%	\$ 865,241		
Development Fees	195,488	199,398	3,910	2%	212,139		
TOTAL REVENUES	\$ 972,952	\$ 1,068,650	\$ 95,698	10%	\$ 1,077,380		
EXPENSES							
Building Inspections	\$ 795,877	\$ 888,696	\$ 92,819	12%	\$ 678,006	\$ 90,000	\$ 182,819
Planning Administration	2,200,400	1,910,718	(289,682)	(13%)	1,706,795	340,000	50,318
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 2,996,277	\$ 2,799,414	\$ (198,863)	(7)%	\$ 2,384,801	\$ 430,000	\$ 233,137

KEY STATISTICS

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Number of development applications received	66	81	65	55	53*
Number of building inspections completed	2,676	2,893	2,318	1,680	1,915*
Estimated number of planning inquiries	5,740	7,789	6,486	5,019	5,562*
Community engagement reach of building newsletter	186	231	260	275	298
Percentage of new housing units within Urban Containment Boundary	48.6%	45.3%	90%	61%	86%**

* to November 21, 2024

** to October 3, 2024