



Corporate Report

REPORT NUMBER 303-2023-Infrastructure, Development & Operations-Development Services

DATE PREPARED	September 26, 2023	FILE
----------------------	--------------------	-------------

MEETING DATE October 23, 2023

SUBJECT Streamline Development Approval Fund (SDAF)- Final Report

RECOMMENDATION

This Report is for information.

LINK TO STRATEGIC PLAN

The vision of the City’s 2023-2027 Strategic Plan – Maamawe, Growing Together – is that Thunder Bay will foster an inclusive city focused on service excellence and collaboration, and provide opportunities for a high quality of life.

This Report provides an update on efforts aligned with the Growth and Sustainability strategic pillar as the SDAF initiatives included many service improvements that focus on efficiencies and positive experiences for those who require development approvals.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Report provides a final report on the 18 eligible projects completed under the Streamline Development Approval Fund including e-permitting, e-plans, enhancement of 3D tools, planning studies, housing studies and new tools to assist the public to navigate the planning and building processes. At the time of writing this Report, the projects are complete or substantially complete. The nine planning studies and strategies will result in additional reports to present recommendations to Council.

Attachment A lists permits currently available through the Building & Planning On-line Property and Permits Portal. The Portal has an 80% acceptance rate, meaning the vast majority of our permit applications are now coming through the portal. Based on industry standards, this is a definite success. An advertising campaign will promote the Portal and residential permits available online through the use of social media, billboards, and additional videos hosted on YouTube and the City website.

Following the presentation of this report to Council, it will be submitted to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing as required by the funding agreement.

DISCUSSION

The Streamline Development Approval Fund was made available to large urban municipalities to unlock housing supply by streamlining, digitizing, and modernizing their approach to managing and approving applications for residential developments. The availability of this funding through Ontario's Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing dovetailed with the City of Thunder Bay's intentions to introduce digital service delivery enhancements related to e-permitting and streamlining development approvals. The funding allowed the Corporation of the City of Thunder Bay to advance these projects.

Eligible Projects

Project 1 – E-Plans and E-Permitting Roadmap (AMANDA)

Visioning and development of a 3-4 year work plan for the City's land and property management software to facilitate enhancement of citizen facing services (e-permitting and e-plans) and back office processes.

Project 2 – E-Plans and E-Permitting Business Process Optimization

Reviewing of planning and building business processes to evolve from paper based workflows to digital ready workflows to harness all aspects of software enhancements.

Project 3 – E-Plans and E-Permitting Enhancements (Including AMANDA Licencing, Subscriptions and Citizen Portal)

Software development to enable Citizen Portal (web portal including payment integration), Collaboration Portal, and Inspector App and digitize back office processes.

Project 4 – E-Plans and E-Permitting Project Advisory

Strategic advisory services to facilitate AMANDA software development and website enhancement and navigation.

Project 5 – Website Enhancements (Available Lands & Buildings)

Launch of enhancements to the City's available lands and buildings webpage to show case city owned lands available for lease, purchase and development.

Project 6 – Before You Build Guide and Promotion

Development of an interactive handbook to assist citizens through common planning and building application and permit processes, highlighting applicable components of the City's zoning by-law in conjunction with a promotional campaign to promote the handbook and new digital tools (AMANDA Citizen Portal).

Project 7 – Urban Design Guidelines Update

An update to a set land use, building and site design performance standards to support the planning application review process, specifically the Site Plan Control review process for development on private land.

Project 8 – Delegation of Authority By-law Update

A By-law to delegate additional Planning approvals to staff to streamline development approvals.

Project 9 – Parkdale Background Study, Stage 1 Archaeological Assessment and Natural Heritage Assessment (West Arthur Secondary Plan and Environmental Assessment)

Background assessment to inventory existing conditions, constraints, and opportunities for growth and development with respect to natural and cultural heritage, land use, existing infrastructure, and the natural, social, cultural, and economic environment, to inform the Secondary Plan and Master Environmental Servicing Plan for the study area.

As a recommendation of the Background Study, a Stage 1 Archaeological Assessment was also completed to study the area's geography, history, previous archaeological fieldwork and current land conditions; as well as to evaluate the study area's archeological potential and recommend appropriate strategies for the Stage 2 survey.

Project 10 – Belrose Background Study and Stage 1 Archaeological Assessment

Background assessment to inventory existing conditions, constraints, and opportunities for growth and development with respect to natural and cultural heritage, land use, existing infrastructure, and the natural, social, cultural, and economic environment, to inform a possible future Secondary Plan and Master Environmental Servicing Plan for the study area.

As a recommendation of the Background Study, a Stage 1 Archaeological Assessment was also completed to study the area's geography, history, previous archaeological fieldwork and current land conditions; as well as to evaluate the study area's archeological potential and recommend appropriate strategies for the Stage 2 survey.

Project 11 - Housing Land Needs Study and Strategy

A study to ensure that the City is well positioned to meet current and future housing demand in a way that is cost effective, sustainable and in the public interest.

Project 12 - Housing Accelerator Fund Application and Action Plan

An Action Plan to deliver approximately 2000 units if awarded significant dollars by the Fund

Project 13 - Downtown Fort William Community Improvement Plan (CIP) Housing Review

Corporate Report 303-2023-Infrastructure, Development & Operations-Development Services

A study to recommend governance, resourcing and CIP incentive tools to maximize residential development in the Downtown.

Project 14 – Interocean/Central Ave Area Development Plan

Creation of conceptual layouts for lands located within the Urban Residential Designation to maximize the highest and best use for city-owned land within a special policy area to identify potential lots, blocks and roads, while working in unison with existing private and public owned lands.

Project 15 – Development Charges Study

A Development Charges background study to provide Council options to consider implementing Development Charges to help pay for the cost of infrastructure required to provide municipal services to new developments.

Project 16 – ArcPro Upgrade

Upgrade required as an important component of digitization, for data modeling and data migration; workflow design and to assist with modifying existing workflows to help the mapping team in leveraging new and improved functionality that is available through software and tools that provide enhancement to our parcels and their updates, save time (streamline) work for mapping technicians, improve tools to manage data integrity and quality of the parcel layer.

Project 17 – Digitization of Historic Records & Maps

Important reference maps were digitized to preserve the integrity of street addressing structure and provide efficient access to this information.

Project 18 – Project Support Intern

Temporary project support to digitize historic property files used for support in zoning and permit issuance.

Overall Results

The online Property and Permitting Portal has an 80% user acceptance rate, meaning the vast majority of our digitized permit applications are now coming through the portal. Based on industry standards, this is a definite success. As of September 19, 2023, a total of 519 digitized building permits and 38 planning pre-consultation applications have been received via the portal.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to the Province of Ontario through the Streamlined Development Approval Fund for its funding contribution to these projects. City Council's support for the Corporate Digital Strategy enabled administration to take advantage of SDAF funding for planned projects identified in the Strategy related to digitization and service modernization.

The announcement of the Streamline Development Approval Fund occurred as the workplace was shifting out of the COVID-19 pandemic into new norms and spurred the advancement of projects identified in the newly completed Digital Strategy. A project of this scope and magnitude is only possible with significant collaboration and commitment and owes its success to the commendable efforts from the Building Services, Planning Services and Corporate Information Technology teams who advanced the important digitization and project work.

The team included project sponsorship from: Karen Lewis, General Manager, Kerri Marshall, General Manager, and Jack Avella, Director – Corporate Information Technology, as well as, significant contributions from Joel DePeuter, Director – Development Services, Bevin McIlwain, Supervisor – Support Services & Internal Projects, Penny Kok, Director – Building Services, Paul Manzon, Manager – Building Services, Jonathan Kushner, Senior Plans Examiner, Devon McCloskey, Manager – Planning Services, Jillian Fazio, Planner II, Brent Bigford, GIS Application Specialist, Andrew Wehrstedt, Manager – IT Delivery, Chrissie Dysievick, Manager – IT Client Services, Dan Goodheart, Business Applications Developer and Seth Wilson, Business and Project Analyst. Many other staff have made contributions to the projects.

CONSULTATION

Just prior to receiving the SDAF funding, consultation was undertaken with the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, Thunder Bay Community Economic Development Commission, and with representatives from the building and construction community as part of the Digital Strategy. The grant made possible the digitization projects that the consultation process identified as priorities for implementation in the Corporate Digital Strategy.

Many of the projects involve significant stakeholder and public consultation, particularly the Housing Study and Secondary Plans.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATION

The City of Thunder Bay has maximized its \$1.75 million allocation under the SDAF, implementing eligible projects to streamline the development approval process.

Enhancements made using the SDAF streamlined development processes resulting in an improved customer experience, better internal workflow and some cost savings. Permit digitization contributed the reduction of 1 FTE resulting in an annual cost savings of approximately \$60,000. Net savings are impacted by increased service and technology fees.

Corporate Report 303-2023-Infrastructure, Development & Operations-Development Services

The Final Report, which will include this Corporate Report, will be submitted to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing prior to its deadline of November 1, 2023.

CONCLUSION

This Report is for information.

Applicable projects listed will be individually presented to Council with recommendations and requests for direction.

BACKGROUND

The Streamline Development Approval Fund was made available to large urban municipalities to unlock housing supply by streamlining, digitizing, and modernizing their approach to managing and approving applications for residential developments. On January 19, 2022, the City of Thunder Bay was advised its allocation was up to \$1.75 million.

The development of a comprehensive Digital Strategy that aligns with the City's Strategic Plan was a recommendation of the Grant Thornton Program and Services Review and was recommended for Implementation in Corporate Report R 144/2020 (City of Thunder Bay Program and Service Review – Implementation) presented at a special Committee of the Whole meeting on December 9, 2021.

Following on consultation with members of Council, Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, Thunder Bay Community Economic Development Commission, and a stakeholder consultation session with representatives from the building and construction Community, the projects this grant made possible were identified as priorities for implementation in the Corporate Digital Strategy.

Administration worked with a third party consulting firm to develop the phased work plan for digitization projects with e-permitting and e-plans as the highest priorities.

Interim and final reports related to the funding were due to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing on April 22, 2022, and February 28, 2023, respectively.

On January 23, 2023, Minister Clark announced an extension to the final report deadline for SDAF projects from February 28, 2023, to November 1, 2023. On March 7, 2022, further to Report R 29/2022, Committee of the Whole approved Appropriation No. 4 to establish the budget for the City of Thunder Bay's Streamline Development Approval Fund initiatives as fully funded by Ontario's Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Corporate Report 303-2023-Infrastructure, Development & Operations-Development Services

No additional funding was made available. The Ministry advised the extension was to allow additional time for municipalities to complete approved projects already underway and undertake new eligible projects to benefit from the existing allocation of funding,

REFERENCE MATERIAL ATTACHED

Attachment 1 – Building & Planning Portal Applications & Permits Available Online

REPORT PREPARED BY

Joel DePeuter, Director - Development Services
Bevin McIlwain, Supervisor - Support Services & Internal Projects Lead

REPORT SIGNED AND VERIFIED BY

Kerri Marshall, General Manager – Infrastructure, Development & Operations

Date (10/04/2023)