

Subject: Planning and Development Process Review Project**APPROVALS:****Antoine Remp**_____
Director_____
Interim Chief Administrative Officer**Recommended Motion:**

THAT the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo Planning and Development Process Review Final Report be accepted as information.

Summary:

Clear, efficient, and easy to follow municipal permitting and licensing processes help facilitate investment and increase customer service and customer satisfaction. Through honest discussions with regional stakeholders, permit applicants, and the Wood Buffalo Development Advisory Committee (WBDAC), the Planning and Development Department (P&D) recognized the need to undertake a review of the Department from both the staff and the applicant's perspective. In mid-2021, P&D retained Ernst & Young (EY) to help lead a departmental Process Review Project - a rigorous, impartial, and expert-based evaluation of permitting and licensing processes. After one year of work, EY's final report is now complete (Attachment 1) and outlines the Department's challenges, identifies 92 recommendations, and specifies over 300 actions for the department to complete over the next few years. The overall objectives are to:

- Improve customer services
- Reduce red tape
- Better facilitate property improvement, investment and responsible growth
- Reduce barriers to development

Background:

P&D is an outward facing department, serving residents, businesses, prospective investors, stakeholder groups, realtors, and trades on a daily basis. Annually, the Department's three branches (Community Development Planning, Safety Codes, and Land Administration) have thousands of public interactions, and while most are productive and positive, concerns of inconsistency, confusion, duplication, etc. are

regularly heard and recognized as being a barrier to growth and efficiency. P&D acknowledges that there is room for improvement and is committed to refining its processes, providing exceptional customer service, and facilitating economic activity.

In 2021, P&D worked with the WBDAC to finalize the project's scope of work, which was publicly issued in mid-2021 as a Request for Proposal. Shortly after, the project was awarded to EY to facilitate the process, working very closely with staff.

The internal project team included P&D leadership and staff, along with project management support from the Strategic Planning and Program Management department. An extensive documentation review was undertaken, along with internal and external engagement. By mapping out and understanding the existing processes and documentation, engaging over 100 P&D stakeholders (including public survey) to understand frustrations, meeting with over 45 staff, and reviewing practices in comparable cities, EY was able to conduct a gap analysis, identifying where changes are required.

Based on this review and information, EY created a final report which outlines nine key departmental challenges, and 92 recommendations for change, along with over 300 actions to be undertaken. These recommendations and actions now form part of a three-year implementation plan to be actioned by all three branches and the Director's office in P&D.

Throughout the entire project, P&D provided regular updates to the WBDAC at their monthly meetings and received feedback that helped guide and shape the work that was undertaken. This level of engagement with the Committee provided an important opportunity for validation of the project's approach and findings, while also helping to build awareness of the project throughout the region. The WBDAC has provided a letter of support for the project's final report (Attachment 2).

Budget/Financial Implications:

Budget for this project was approved as part of the 2021 Budget. Any budget requests associated with implementation and continuous improvement will occur as part of future municipal budgeting processes.

Rationale for Recommendation:

The reduction of red tape and facilitation of economic development are important components of ensuring a high quality of life in the Region. Through the Process Review Project, P&D has identified changes to how it serves the public and supports businesses. The department is committed to making meaningful improvements to processes and supports to encourage development in our Region.

Strategic Plan Values:

Responsible Government
Regional Economic Development
Building Partnerships
Local Economy
Downtown Visualization

Attachments:

1. Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo Planning and Development Process Review Final Report

2. Letter of Support - Wood Buffalo Development Advisory Committee 2022.06.02

Planning and Development Process Review Project Presentation