

| AGENDA INFORMATION | |
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| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Regular Meeting | Date: April 26, 2021 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: | Date: _____ |



The District of North Vancouver REPORT TO COUNCIL

April 8, 2021

File: 13.6410.01/000.000

AUTHOR: Jason Smith, Senior Community Planner

SUBJECT: UBCM 2021 Local Government Development Approvals Program Grant

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT staff are directed to submit a grant application to support the identification of challenges and potential opportunities to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the District's development approval processes as described in the report dated April 8, 2021, titled UBCM 2021 Local Government Development Approvals Program Grant.

REASON FOR REPORT:

This report provides information on the UBCM 2021 Local Government Development Approvals Program Grant¹ for the purpose of obtaining Council approval to submit a grant application due May 7, 2021. The grant application can be for up to \$500,000. This would allow the District to undertake several projects to improve the development approvals process with the goal of improving efficiency and reducing processing including for applications involving rental and affordable housing or business initiatives. The grant application supports Council direction to increase business friendliness and District policy to work to reduce permit approval times for District businesses, non-profits and residents.

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 the current development approvals processes in the Province, identify opportunities for addressing those challenges, and develop an informed list of ideas on how to improve development approval processes. The Ministry released a DAPR final report in September 2019 and the Local Government Development Approvals Program is one element of addressing some of the opportunities identified in the report. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs has provided \$15 million in funding for the Local Government Approvals Program.

¹ Local Government Development Approvals Program 2021 Grant Program & Application Guide
<https://www.ubcm.ca/EN/main/funding/lgps/local-government-development-approvals.html>

EXISTING POLICY: Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the development approval process supports the delivery of our goals and initiatives as described in the following policies:

Council Strategic Directions 2019-2022

- Increasing housing diversity and addressing affordability
- Increase business friendliness in processes and service

Official Community Plan and Targeted OCP Review

- Work to reduce permit approval times and to simplify and streamline regulations.
- The Targeted OCP Review will identify actions to address housing diversity and affordability, expand support for business, address transportation issues and strengthen policies on climate action.
- Work to support economic and employment recovery stemming from COVID-19

Rental, Social, and Affordable Housing Strategy

- Expand the supply and diversity of housing
- Expand the supply of new rental and affordable housing

Other Initiatives

- District of North Vancouver Rental, Social and Affordable Housing Task Force recommendation to consider how to speed up development approvals for rental, social and affordable housing.
- District of North Vancouver Digital Strategy, which supports and enables the public to quickly, easily, and securely complete transactions, request services, access information, and share their thoughts with us at any time, from anywhere.

ANALYSIS:

Grant Opportunity

Local governments in BC have been invited to apply for a grant under the Local Government Development Approvals Program (Program). The Program can contribute to covering a 100% of eligible activities to a maximum of \$500,000.

The intent of the Program is 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 (source: UBCM).

To be eligible for funding proposed projects must meet the intent of the grant program, include new activities or represent a new phase of an existing project and be capable of completion within 2 years of grant approval.

Proposed Project Activities

The District of North Vancouver is committed to good governance and ensuring that its citizens and those who interact with the District receive exceptional service, which is reflected in Council’s Strategic Directions and in the Official Community Plan. Through ongoing surveys of citizens and clients who interact with the District, it is apparent that there is an opportunity to improve some aspects of the development approvals process.

District staff identified a series of projects that would meet the intent of the grant and address the following:

1. Problem Definition: The development and building permit processes can take a considerable amount of time to complete. This results in increased costs for applicants and delays in bringing much needed housing to market.
2. Project Outcome: Identify opportunities in the development approval processes to clarify requirements, reduce the time taken, ensure consistency and transparency for all applicants, move to fully digital submissions, support the delivery of stated District goals and policies, and help reduce costs for applicants and the District.

The District’s UBCM proposed funding request is \$460,000.

The table below outlines the projects which would be included in the funding request. Each project in the list is intended to undertaken as a standalone project and would go through its own process for hiring a consultant(s).

| Project | Cost |
|--|--------------------|
| <p>Development Applications: Review of Best Practices and Opportunities to Implement</p> <p>This project would include an analysis of the opportunities identified in the DAPR final report² and see a regional screen of other local government development application practices. There would be a specific focus on the preliminary development application processes, development submission requirements and building permit processes.</p> <p>These would be compared to the current District of North Vancouver process and result in recommendations for process improvement.</p> <p><u>Research</u>: Research provincial and regional best practices to identify gaps and opportunities for process improvements and do an analysis</p> | <p>\$75,000.00</p> |

² Development Approvals Process Review – Final Report on Province-wide Stakeholder Consultation https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/local-governments/planning-land-use/dapr_2019_report.pdf

| Project | Cost |
|---|---|
| <p>against current District of North Vancouver process. A preferred process map and timelines would be generated.</p> <p><u>Preferred Improvements:</u> The outcome of this project is intended to be a series of recommendations on how the District could improve development approval processes in order to reduce the amount of time and cost it takes to complete an application.</p> <p><u>Document Areas for Improvement:</u> The recommendations would identify specific bylaw, policies or procedures that should be adjusted, how they can be adjusted and provide templates, guidance or form documents to implement.</p> <p><u>Communications Plan:</u> The recommendations will be accompanied by a proposed communications plan that will outline how to effectively engage with key stakeholders during the review stage to better inform the recommendations.</p> <p><u>Monitoring:</u> In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the changes a quantifiable basis to monitor timeline, requirements and process improvements to the approvals processes will be generated.</p> | |
| <p>Development Engineering Review Process</p> <p>District staff have identified the development engineering review process, and development engineering’s administration and participation of off-site works construction, as needing improvement for servicing requirement certainty and processing timelines. To support the improvement of this process the District has allocated an initial budget of \$50,000.00 for this project. The District has further identified target areas where the scope of review can be expanded:</p> <p><u>Research:</u> A close examination will be needed to identify regional best practices, identify gaps and where/if consulting can be of assistance for various topics, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • materials currently required and at what point in the review process they are required • analysis of inputs by, and consultation with, external service providers (eg BC Hydro, Telecommunications companies) • the role Development Engineering has in the construction phase of projects, and | <p>Project Cost \$155,000.00 (- \$50,000.00 DNV Contribution) Grant Request \$105,000.00</p> |

| Project | Cost |
|--|--------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What staffing structure and resources are required in the organization to ensure servicing works are successfully delivered • Balancing time allotment to application reviews versus risk of unacceptable servicing outcomes • Regional screen and best practice review to guide the undergrounding of Hydro and telecommunication wires within redeveloping town centres • Review the corridor between Highway 1 and Deep Cove to refine preferred access approaches and determine function access guidelines <p><u>Preferred Improvements:</u> The project will deliver specific requirements for improving and clarifying the development engineering review process, submission requirements, staff roles and team structure.</p> <p><u>Document Areas for Improvement:</u> Identifying any necessary changes to policies and bylaws will be an outcome of this project.</p> <p><u>Communication Plan:</u> Engagement with key stakeholders in the development and building community will help inform this process.</p> <p><u>Monitoring:</u> Benchmarking of current review times may be necessary to measure effectiveness of any proposed changes to the current process.</p> | |
| <p>Legal Document Templates</p> <p>This project would see the development of commonly used legal document templates (e.g. covenants) for small to medium sized projects to help applicants move more quickly through the application process and save on legal costs.</p> | <p>\$12,500.00</p> |
| <p>Moving to Full Digital Submission and Processing</p> <p>The current development and building permit processes are a manual process for staff, with little ability for digital collaboration, rapid and real time information sharing, or transparency.</p> <p>This project would allow customers to apply for permits online and monitor the approval process, allow staff to review application submissions electronically, and allow the public to have greater insight into permits being considered. All aspects of application approval and permitting processes would be addressed by the online</p> | |

| Project | Cost |
|--|--|
| <p>system, including being able to provide timely digital re-submissions to meet requirements.</p> <p><u>Research</u>: Prior to commencement we would collaborate with internal and external stakeholders to thoroughly understand existing challenges. Throughout development of both internal and customer-facing platforms, we would engage stakeholders in regular progress review and user testing sessions.</p> <p><u>Preferred Improvements</u>: The outcome of this project is intended to be the implementation of processes and technology to improve the District’s service delivery, including an online platform through which customers can interact and collaborate with District staff throughout the approval and development process. Both internal and customer-facing processes and systems would be tightly integrated with existing enterprise permitting systems and business intelligence tools in order to maximize efficiency, provide transparency throughout processes, and monitor key performance indicators to allow for continual iterative improvement of the system.</p> <p><u>Communications and Engagement Plan</u>: This project would be accompanied by a comprehensive communications plan developed in consultation with stakeholders, including training opportunities for both District staff and customers.</p> <p>Throughout design, development, and implementation of the system we would work closely with citizens and business owners to identify needs and expectations, and build a digital permitting system that works for them.</p> <p>Customers would gain insight into development applications and resulting projects through a new integrated public webpage. The page will display information and data collected by the system in open, machine-readable formats, including maps, statistics, and key performance indicators related to the District’s service delivery.</p> <p><u>Monitoring</u>: In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the internal and customer-facing systems, performance indicators would be monitored and reported to identify opportunities for improvement.</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">\$180,000.00</p> |

| Project | Cost |
|---|--------------------|
| <p>Resource document for including social housing in private development projects</p> <p>Applicants wanting to include social housing as part of development project are not able to easily access information about the applicable existing policies and regulations in one location to ensure that there is transparent and consistent expectations</p> <p><u>Research:</u> Work would need to be done to ensure all relevant information from across departments is considered and presented.</p> <p><u>Preferred Improvements:</u> The outcome of this project is a digital ready document that provides all the necessary information to consider for including social housing in a development project.</p> <p><u>Communication Plan:</u> Key stakeholder engagement during the review would be necessary to gauge challenges and existing information gaps.</p> <p><u>Monitoring:</u> This project does not entail developing new policies but in order to ensure that the document remains up to date - there will need to be a process in place to incorporate any new policies or regulations as they are adopted.</p> | <p>\$20,000.00</p> |
| <p>Stakeholder consultation on revised process to staff</p> <p>As a key part of improving customer service, engaging industry and meeting Council’s strategic priority directions a series of stakeholder workshops will be required to gain insight and feedback on proposed process improvements (over and above problem definition).</p> | <p>\$17,500.00</p> |
| <p>Enabling Affordable and Rental Housing Through Zoning</p> <p>This project would focus on policy implementation direction, pre-zoning and/or implementing density bonuses for rental, affordable and special needs housing. Currently, taking an application through a full rezoning process is a lengthy process. Pre-zoning, rental only zoning or clear housing policy to support rental and affordable housing will assist to expedite these applications. Community Planning is expecting to undertake some of this work in the near future and the grant funding would enable the District to hire a consultant(s) to help provide specific information and/or expedite the work being undertaken by staff.</p> | <p>\$50,000.00</p> |

| Project | Cost |
|--|--------------|
| <p><u>Research</u>: Examples of other jurisdictions will be examined and undertaking financial modelling will be necessary to ensure that any proposed changes are viable.</p> <p><u>Preferred Improvements</u>: This project will deliver specific recommendations for potential changes to the Zoning Bylaw to deliver more timely affordable housing projects.</p> <p><u>Document Areas for Improvement</u>: Implementation through Zoning Bylaw amendments for consideration by Council for pre-zoning or rental only zoning. Drafting policy for metrics on affordable or special needs housing to meet District housing objectives.</p> <p><u>Communication Plan</u>: Engagement with key stakeholders, such as BC Housing, Metro Vancouver Housing Corporation, non-profit housing providers, other stakeholder groups and the development industry. A robust communications and engagement plan will be generated for proposed Zoning Bylaw changes.</p> <p><u>Monitoring</u>: Documenting the time taken currently to complete affordable housing projects will be necessary to assess the future effectiveness of any pre-zoning or density bonus schemes.</p> | |
| Total Grant Request | \$460,000.00 |

All approved projects would be required to meet physical distancing and other public health guidelines in relation to COVID-19 and comply with applicable privacy legislation under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

Timing/Approval Process:

The application deadline for the UBCM grant is May 7, 2021. A Council resolution is required. Successful applicants will be notified within 90 days of the application deadline. All approved activities must be completed within two years of the date of the grant award.

Financial Impacts:

If successful, grant funding would pay for the activities proposed in the application. The District’s contributions to the project would be comprised of in-kind staff resources to support coordination and implementation of the activities and monitoring of outcomes, in addition to the preciously budgeted \$50,000 for development engineering process review.

Conclusion:

An application to the UBCM 2021 Local Government Development Approvals Program is recommended. If successful, the proposed projects would provide valuable insight into how the District of North Vancouver could improve its development approvals processes and result in more efficient approval of projects that expand housing diversity and create affordable housing.

Options:

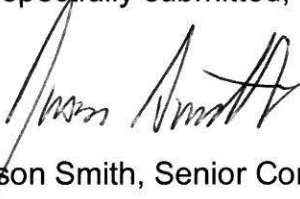
1. THAT Council directs staff to have District of North Vancouver apply for the UBCM 2021 Local Government Development Approvals Program Grant.

AND THAT Council supports the work associated with the Local Government Development Approvals Program Grant application to improve the development approvals process. **(Recommended)**

OR

2. THAT Council provides staff with alternative direction.

Respectfully submitted,



Jason Smith, Senior Community Planner

| REVIEWED WITH: | | | | | |
|---|------------|--|--------------------|--|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community Planning | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Clerk's Office | _____ | External Agencies: | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Development Planning | <u>A</u> | <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <u>A</u> | <input type="checkbox"/> Library Board | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Development Engineering | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Finance | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> NS Health | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Utilities | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Fire Services | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> RCMP | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering Operations | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> ITS | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> NVRC | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parks | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Solicitor | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Museum & Arch. | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environment | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> GIS | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: Digital Services | <u>A</u> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Facilities | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Real Estate | _____ | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Human Resources | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Bylaw Services | _____ | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Review and Compliance | <u>BSQ</u> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Planning | <u>[Signature]</u> | | |