

City making progress on building and licensing modernization work

(Penticton BC - May 8, 2018) - Council received an update on the City's efforts to modernize the building permit and business license processes at their meeting today. Staff kicked off the modernization program in 2017 to make the systems and processes for business licenses and building permits easier for customers. Efforts in 2017 focussed on staffing up to support faster turnaround times for building permits and updates to the Building Bylaw.

"We're starting to see some real results from these efforts," says Ken Kunka, Building and Permitting Manager. "The building permit review times have decreased from an average of 8 weeks in 2017 to an average of 2.5 weeks in 2018." The improvements in processing times have occurred during another banner year as well. New single family and multi-family dwelling starts are on pace to exceed 2017 numbers with 42 single family dwellings and 139 multi-family units after only four months of 2018 compared to 33 and 13 during the same period last year.

Coming up in the next phase of the modernization work, the City plans to complete the review of the new Building Bylaw as well as to focus more on business licenses. Similar to the approach followed for the building permits, staff will conduct a customer satisfaction survey of business license holders in the next few weeks to identify what is being done well and where improvements can be made.

"The feedback from residents and builders was really helpful. It highlighted the need to improve our communications around the building permit process, processing timelines and the requirements for inspections and documentation," says Kunka. "We hope to get the same kind of insights and direction from our survey on our business license process."

Another priority for this next phase of the modernization work is to provide an online application system for business licenses. Residents can currently manage building permits and planning applications online as well as utility bills, property taxes and dog licenses but feedback on the customer surveys suggests the systems could be easier to use. "We see having an easy-to-use online system for applying for your licenses and permits and tracking their progress as a cornerstone of our service in the future," says Kunka. "It provides a better experience for customers and is a more sustainable solution for the City."

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