

2014 Service Change Case

Service	Land Use Planning
Initiative	Community Planning – Urban Regeneration

Financial Implications (\$ 000)							
	Change to Gross Expenditure	Change to Non Property Tax Supported Revenue	Net Change to Property Tax Levy	2014 Tax Levy Impact %	Incremental Net Change Future Years \$ (if applicable)		
					2015	2016	2017 2018
Capital Budget Impact							
Operating Budget Impact	85		85				
Staffing Implications							
# of FT / FTEs impacted	1 new FT						

Background

Our prosperity as a City is tied to infill and intensification. A recent ReThink London report showed that the capital cost of growing in a spread pattern over the next 50 years will cost us \$2.7 Billion more than growing in a compact pattern. What's more, the spread pattern would cost us over \$50 million per year more in operating cost than a compact form of development. Meanwhile, the more compact form of development would make rapid transit viable, would reduce energy costs, improve air quality and reduce the amount of development we are required to extend into our rich agricultural lands. Infill and intensification often uses existing infrastructure capacity and services, thereby reducing the pressure/urgency to extend municipal services. Our Downtown and urban main street areas rely on infill and intensification to regenerate and regain their economic vitality.

However, the infill and intensification that our Official Plan calls for and brings us all of these benefits, relies upon development proposals for lands within existing neighbourhoods. These applications, handled by Planning Services, are significantly more challenging for developers, the receiving neighbourhood, and staff than greenfield development projects. Established neighbourhoods often feel threatened by change and the unknown that comes with a planning system they don't often interface with. This often leads to significant community concern that can escalate into bad feelings, misinformation, and emotional perspectives on development proposals.

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What is required, to track infill and intensification applications towards success, is a more proactive approach to engaging and informing a community early in a planning application process. Rather than the standard approach of distributing notice by mail, community workshops at the outset of the process can help to inform residents about the current regulatory context, the proposal itself, and the best means for engaging in the process. This often “lowers the temperature” on community discussions on infill projects and allows for constructive conversation to occur.

Infill projects are even better handled when Planners can speak to communities before an application is even made. This type of information session explains the importance of infill and intensification to our future and helps planners and communities to discuss mutually agreed upon terms for growth and change in neighbourhoods. This helps to prepare a community for infill and intensification projects going forward and develops a relationship between community and planning staff that will benefit everyone when a project does come to the fore.

Infill and intensification projects require more time and deeper attention from planning staff to reconcile concerns of applicants with those of neighbours and other stakeholders affected by new and redevelopment. Furthermore, because infill and intensification development addresses “fit” in existing developed areas, this type of application is often subject to policies and regulations governing such matters as community improvement, heritage conservation, and bonus zoning that may not apply in greenfield sites.

These circumstances underpin the January 21, 2014 recommendation of the Planning & Environment Committee:

That, the following actions be taken with respect to Civic Administration’s procedures relating to infill:

- a) *the Civic Administration BE REQUESTED to mitigate the public’s concerns by engaging area residents earlier in the process;*
- b) *the Civic Administration BE REQUESTED to enhance the process; it being noted that the approach taken for greenfield initiatives and the approach taken for infill development should be different; and,*
- c) *the Civic Administration BE REQUESTED to include a business case as part of 2014 Budget deliberations, with respect to this matter.*

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Clearly, Council's request for an enhanced level of service and earlier engagement with communities cannot be reasonably addressed within existing Planning resources. Staff believe that a single additional planner (in addition to the assessment growth request) can help significantly to address this gap and make a significant difference in moving toward the requested direction in 2014, with a longer term perspective on how we can support urban revitalization in the coming year.

Performance Measures Impact

- # of planning applications within urban areas
- Time to process planning applications
- # of appeals to planning applications
- # units developed in urban areas
- # new businesses within urban business districts (& vacancy rates)
- Increase in assessed value within urban areas

Impacts

Community: The health and prosperity of the London depends on maintaining and carefully infilling and intensifying developed areas of the city.

Community Engagement: Successful infill and intensification development outcomes usually require more community meetings, conversations and relationship building than greenfield projects require.

Other City of London Services: None

A one-time expense of \$6k for computer equipment and furniture will be required to support this position.

Risks

Quality infill and intensification proposals may be rejected by communities, take longer to receive approval, or be refused where communities are not engaged early.