

--	--

J.M. FLEMING

TO:	CHAIR AND MEMBERS PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
FROM:	JOHN M. FLEMING MANAGING DIRECTOR, PLANNING AND CITY PLANNER
SUBJECT:	PLANNING SERVICES WORK PROGRAM UPDATE OCTOBER 10, 2017

RECOMMENDATION

That, on the recommendation of the Managing Director, Planning and City Planner, the update to the Planning Services Work Program, attached as Appendix A, **BE RECEIVED** and that the Strategic Plan Dashboard **BE UPDATED** accordingly.

PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER
--

- June 6, 2017 – Planning Services Work Program
- October 5, 2015 – Planning Services Work Program
- November 26, 2012 – Planning Services Work Program
- July 18, 2011 – Planning Services Month Work Program

PURPOSE AND EFFECT OF RECOMMENDED ACTION

The purpose of this report is to update Council on the Planning Services Work Program in light of new resource constraints; the report also provides new target completion dates commensurate with the current and projected resources available.

ANALYSIS

Planning Services has recently experienced a departure of key planning staff within a compressed time period. Almost ¼ of the Planning Services Planners (4 staff members) have left the Service Area, causing a significant resource constraint and, therefore, an inability to meet previously established project timelines. These departures include Planners from the areas of Current Planning, Policy and Research and Urban Regeneration. In all cases, these Planners have moved out of Planning Services as a result of promotions to higher level positions within our organization or promotions outside of the Corporation of the City of London.

A reduction of four planners has substantial project management impacts, including:

- Depleting the pool of planners available to take on “counter duty days” throughout the week. A rotating schedule is established such that two planners are on “counter duty” each day to respond promptly to all general enquiries that come into the office in person, by phone, by email, or by some other means. These planners address enquiries and often this requires substantial research the day of, and beyond, the enquiry date, consuming substantial amounts of time to meet established service standards.
- Depleting the pool of planners available to process planning applications – thus requiring heavier workloads for those already processing applications; this, in turn, can lead to delayed processing times, or the delay in meeting project timelines while resources are directed away from projects and towards planning applications.

--	--

J.M. FLEMING

- Depleting the pool of planners available to work Planning Services projects, undermining the ability of staff to meet established timelines.
- Often, a significant amount of project-related knowledge leaves with a planner who has led a specific project. While file information remains intact, the expertise, understanding and relationships that are built up during a planning study, project or plan takes time to fill.

Other pressures have also emerged relating to completing the Planning Services work program. As anticipated, the new Tree Protection By-law is consuming a significant amount of time to administer and enforce. As presented to Council by Staff at the time that the By-law was adopted, defining Distinctive Trees as all those over 50cm in diameter has led to significant resource requirements. As expected, there are inadequate resources in Urban Forestry to administer the by-law with this definition in place and also address the Urban Forestry work program. First priority has been given to administering and enforcing the by-law and Urban Forest projects have been delayed as a result. A report to Council can be expected later this year on this subject.

Finally, the number of heritage alteration permits has escalated substantially. Staff processed the same number of heritage alteration permits by August of 2017 as they did for the entire previous year. They also reviewed an unprecedented number of heritage impact assessments associated with planning applications. The need to address these various applications has led to the necessary delay of a variety of heritage projects on the Planning Services work program.

Recognizing that the work program presented to Council earlier in 2017 cannot be met, Planning Administration has evaluated the work program, prioritized projects which are most critical and most time sensitive, and established a new work program presented in the attached Appendix A – Revised Planning Services Work Program – Projects (as of October, 2017).

While several project timelines have been altered, the following list summarizes the projects where completion timelines will be impacted substantially. Those projects which are included in Council’s Strategic Plan have been listed below, and it is recommended that the Strategic Plan Dashboard, that monitors strategic plan project completion, be amended accordingly.

Changes to Project Timelines for Projects Within Council’s Strategic Plan

The following is a list of projects that are included in Council’s Strategic Plan that will be impacted by Planning Services resource constraints resulting in a delay of more than one quarter. A new target date for completion is provided.

- Green Development and Resiliency Strategy – resources are not being dedicated to this project at this time as it is not time sensitive. This project is to be significantly delayed, and will not be completed until late 2019. However, many projects continue throughout Planning Services and the Corporation as a whole that address on sustainability and resiliency. **The new date for completion is Q4 2019**
- Lambeth Community Improvement Plan – substantial work has been completed on this project, with a significant amount of public engagement to date. This project will be delayed until a replacement is found for the planner previously working on this Plan, and that new Planner “ramps up” with the required knowledge to complete the project. It is anticipated that this project can be completed by the end of 2018, rather than the previously targeted beginning of 2018 if replacement staff can be hired in the near future. **The new date for completion is Q4 2018.**
- Boulevard Tree By-law Revisions – a report and refined by-law was prepared in 2015 and referred back to staff. The referral included direction for staff to reconsider the by-law, think about ways that the public may be able to plant on boulevards, and assess the opportunity for fruit trees on boulevards. Staff resources have been inadequate to address this item due to staff’s focus on implementing the new Tree Protection By-law. **The new date for completion is Q2 2018.**

--	--

J.M. FLEMING

- Urban Design Service Review – a project charter has been prepared, the steering committee has been established, a request for proposals has been released and proposals have been received and evaluated. A delay has occurred due to stakeholder concerns. The previously anticipated project timeline will not be achieved. A new target timeline has not yet been set.

Changes to Project Timelines for Projects Outside of Council’s Strategic Plan

Appendix A provides a list of other projects with adjusted timelines for Council’s review. These new timelines recognize the constraints created by the departure of several planners, increased applications for heritage alteration permits and other heritage-related processes, and the introduction of the new Tree Protection By-law, with a definition of distinctive tree as any tree over 50cm in diameter. Appendix A also provides information on the source of other project delays.

As shown on Appendix A, the vast majority of projects are either completed or on track.

CONCLUSION

This report provides Council with an updated work program for Planning Services, given a variety of emergent issues that are affecting the ability of the Service Area to complete projects as previously published. Of note, almost ¼ of the Planners in Planning Services have recently departed to take on management positions at the City or in positions outside of the Corporation.

The new timelines associated with these projects are shown in Appendix A, and discussed in this report, and should be reflected as the new target dates in Council’s Strategic Plan Dashboard.

RECOMMENDED BY:
JOHN M. FLEMING, MCIP, RPP MANAGING DIRECTOR, PLANNING AND CITY PLANNER