

## Report to Planning and Environment Committee

**To:** Chair and Members  
Planning & Environment Committee  
**From:** G. Kotsifas, P. Eng  
Managing Director, Development & Compliance Services &  
Chief Building Official  
**Subject:** Update on Subdivision Ambassador Role in Development  
Services  
**Meeting on:** January 6, 2020

### Recommendation

That, on the recommendation of the Director, Development Services, the following report **BE RECEIVED** for information on actions taken to date with respect to the strategy for Living in New Neighbourhoods and Unassumed Subdivisions.

### Executive Summary

#### Summary of Request

On September 5, 2017, Council directed staff to develop a strategy to improve enforcement and compliance in new subdivisions to resolve typical complaints from homeowners living in these unassumed developments. As a result, the 'Subdivision Ambassador' was hired in August of 2018, and this report highlights the progress made to date on key initiatives and processes.

#### Purpose and the Effect of Recommended Action

Development and Compliance Services (DCS) strategy identifies methods for connecting home owners to City resources related to living in a new subdivision and home ownership. It also identifies the appropriate City contacts for compliance and enforcement matters in new developments that have not had parks, pipes, and roads assumed by the City.

### Analysis

#### 1.0 Proposed Strategy Update:

##### Overall Strategy Update

Pre-Strategy Action – Hire “Ambassador” position

The “Subdivision Ambassador” position was filled in August 2018.

Phase 1 – Fees, Customer Service and Streamlining

The establishment of updated content in regards to New Homeowner Packages, Clarification of Roles, and the link to [www.london.ca/newsubdivisions](http://www.london.ca/newsubdivisions).

Phase 2 – Build Performance and Resources

Comparing neighbouring municipalities and their approach to new development, as well as the creation of materials for outreach events, including additional ways for City of London residents to interact with the Subdivision Ambassador via Facebook.

Phase 3 – Improve Regulatory Framework and Process

New GIS resources in CityMap and the background of CRM to help direct internal and external inquiries to the appropriate group for resolution.

## Phase 4 – Continuous Improvement

Development Services has integrated the pillars of continuous improvement into the day to day work. The work of the Subdivision Ambassador, by nature, involves assessing issues and highlighting opportunities for improved communication and or consistency.

## 2.0 Improvements, Actions and Illustrations

### Phase 1 – Fees, Customer Service, and Streamlining

#### 1. New homeowner packages

A simplified web address ([www.london.ca/newsubdivisions](http://www.london.ca/newsubdivisions)) has been created to help direct people to the appropriate page on the City of London’s website for information in regards to living in new subdivisions. Updates are planned in 2020 to refresh and refine the messages and information being delivered.

**Living in a New Subdivision**

The following information is directed toward people who have moved into a new home, and into an area of the City that is newly developed.

**Subdivision Assumption**

In the early stages, when new home construction begins in newer subdivisions, the services and the upkeep of the streets are the responsibility of the Developer: The City of London has not yet *assumed* the land, and this can take several years depending on the speed with which the developer sells the lots, and the builder builds the houses.

During all phases - from planning to construction - City staff monitor the development to ensure that it will comply with the Subdivision Agreement. The City won't take over (assume) any subdivision until it has inspected all work, and the Developer has satisfied all parts of the Subdivision Agreement.

**Making Changes to Your Property**

Though you may have moved into your home, it is advised that you make few, if any, changes to your yard or driveway prior to assumption, in order to avoid complications and delays in the assumption process. You will be required to remove structures that are built without permits, or constructed such that they interfere with the assumption of the subdivision; this can include altering the grading and drainage pattern. Make sure you read the associated pages thoroughly, or call if you have any further questions.

**Contact Us**

Development Services  
Phone: 519-930-3500  
Fax: 519-930-2355  
E-mail:  
[developmentsservices@london.ca](mailto:developmentsservices@london.ca)

**Related Content**

- [Yard and Lot Maintenance](#)
- [Property Standards By-law](#)
- [Winter Road Maintenance](#)
- [Street Lights](#)
- [Garbage](#)
- [Find a School \(Thames Valley Board\)](#)

In an effort to better help educate and inform homeowners, development of easier to understand materials that assist homeowners in navigate complex bylaw and zoning matters has begun. The issues experienced by the homeowners can be exasperated by the long subdivision assumption process where service is provided by both the City and the developer. For example, the pamphlet below identifies the important components of the Streets By-Law and the Zoning By-Law that a resident constructing a driveway should take into account.



#### 2. Clarification of Roles

The delineation of roles has been an organic process. The volume of calls, emails, etc. remains consistent within Development Compliance. Following the hiring of the

Subdivision Ambassador, the amount of general inquiry interaction by DS's Inspection Technologists has decreased due to the majority of contact being routed through the Subdivision Ambassador. This has had the desired effect of focusing the technical and assumption process issues to the inspectors with the customer and resident-oriented questions to the Ambassador. The Ambassador role has also opened direct lines of communication with the Councillors Office, resulting in faster turnaround times for area residents' concerns, questions and comments.

Consistent with the May 28, 2018 Living in New Neighbourhoods and Unassumed Subdivisions report, these include questions on the following;

- Sidewalks not constructed, or sidewalks that have been constructed are not maintained;
- Street lights are not functioning or are too bright;
- There is no safe access and connectivity within school zones;
- Construction traffic not adhering to identified construction routes outlined in the subdivision agreement, resulting in cut-through traffic within new neighbourhoods;
- Location of construction trailers on development blocks that are parked next to backyards of single family homes;
- On-street parking of trades and contractors that block the road of residents living in the subdivision;
- Catch basins that flood on a regular basis;
- Dust control not addressed either from dirt and debris on the streets, or nearby dirt stock piles; and
- Understanding the City's role in garbage collection and how to deal with construction debris and litter.

### 3. Development agreement streamlining

The City has continued to work closely with the development industry to review and streamline the Draft Plan Conditions and Subdivision Agreement Conditions to ensure that they are actionable and relevant. From time to time, reviews of this nature are necessary to improve efficiency and effectiveness of the development approvals and build-out process. Through this project, there has been significant discussion on the enforcement and compliance components of our agreements. While this review has improved the language, a more detailed process review is required to understand how City staff across the Corporation interact and enforce the conditions in the agreements. It is anticipated that tracking interactions in the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system will provide the opportunity to identify issues related to litter and construction debris, dust control, garbage pick-up, etc. during the course of build-out that would inform a future review of development agreement conditions.

### 4. Fees and charges review

Development Services has been identified as a participant in Council's Deep Dive Service Review. This review will include a complete assessment of fees and charges related to development applications from pre-consultation through to the assumption of City infrastructure. A report to Council is targeted for Fall 2020 to allow any changes to the fee structure to be in place by January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021.

## **Phase 2 – Build Performance and Resources**

### 1. Develop Performance Measures

One of the components of the Annual Development Report could include performance metrics related to customer service interactions. These metrics have not been developed, and the resources to track them are still being established in conjunction

with Service London. To date, Development Services is unaware of another municipality in the province of Ontario that has a role similar to the 'Subdivision Ambassador'. By providing a conduit for Councillor's, residents, developers, builders, and internal City staff, the City of London is leading the way with our customer service focused initiative.

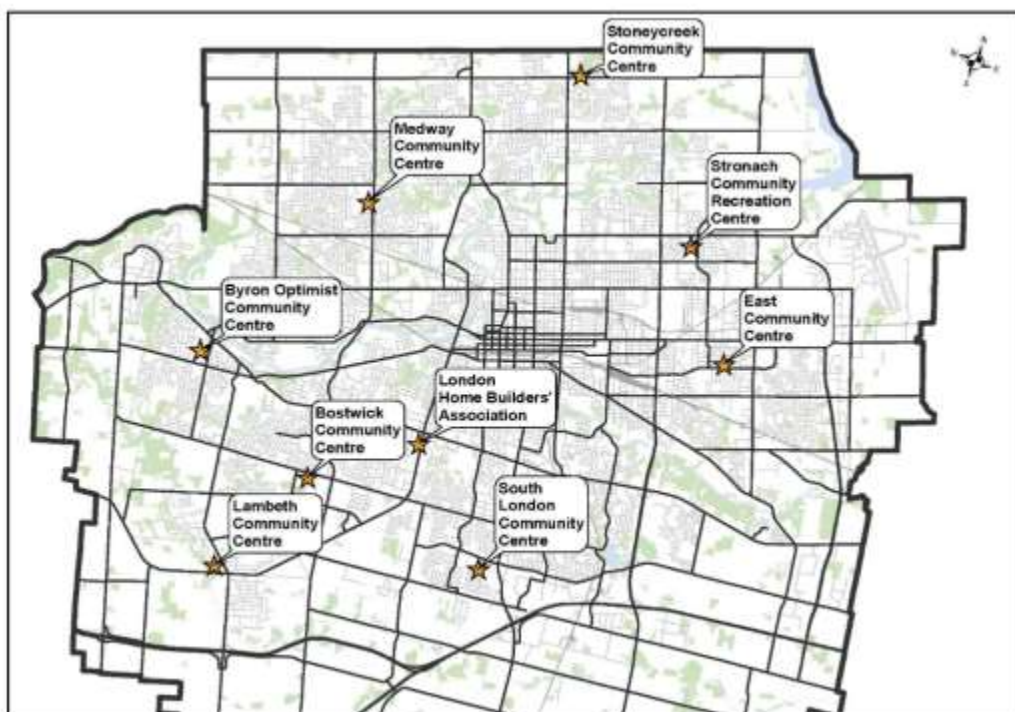
City of London staff have been reviewing outreach and education initiatives from these other municipalities to assist developing programs here for our residents in newly developed areas. A best-practice review has been undertaken with some neighbouring municipalities, including the City of Kitchener, City of Waterloo, City of Hamilton, Town of Oakville, and the City of Windsor.

## 2. Additional Resources/Outreach Events

Council's Strategic Plan identifies a target of twelve (12) Subdivision Ambassador outreach events within Strengthening Our Community. These can include 'piggy-backing' on neighbourhood gatherings within new subdivisions (i.e. Neighbourhood Movie Nights in the Park, etc.), and attending City of London-wide festivals and events (i.e. London Home Show, Victoria Park Events, etc.).



To help introduce the role into the community, an InfoCard was created and distributed in early 2019. The cards were placed in community centres and arenas that were located as close as possible to areas of the City that are experiencing subdivision growth.



Further outreach has been achieved in the digital realm with the creation of the Subdivision Ambassador Facebook page. To date, regular posts on the page have dealt with everything from winter maintenance to dust and debris accumulation on

streets. Significant interaction was achieved with a video post, produced internally by the City of London Communications, in regards to construction traffic.



The video is available to be viewed on the Subdivision Ambassador Facebook page, at <https://www.facebook.com/SubdivisionAmbassador/>.

### Phase 3 - Improve Regulatory Framework and Process

1. Leverage customer interaction (build work flow into CRM)

From the May 2018 PEC Report:

#### Leverage Customer Interaction

*The City has made significant investments into Service London over the past number of years, including the development of the CRM software system. Recently, DCS staff have been in conversations with Service London staff to determine the best way to incorporate unassumed subdivisions into the CRM and leverage the tracking data and work flow that is already established. Many of the services requested by new homeowners will ultimately be provided by the City and these property owners are simply looking for ways to connect and resolve their issues.*

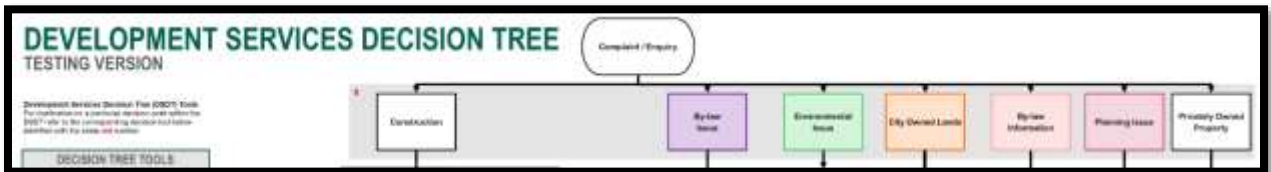
Through a working group including staff from Service London, Information Technology Services and our internal GIS team in Development Services, a new 'Subdivision Assumption Status' layer has been created the City of London's internal CityMap. This provides further opportunities to disseminate information throughout the organization.

The information now available via this layer can help identify the status of a subdivision, and when a complaint is received regarding a specific property or construction activity in general. It is much easier to identify whether the area is Assumed, Not Assumed (Unassumed) or Assumed with Warranty.



The layer is currently active in the 'background' of Service London. When new service requests are created by users, or City of London staff, they are then automatically sorted and categorized based on their assumption status. This service allows for items submitted to the portal to be triaged by Subdivision Compliance on a trial basis. The ultimate goal is to direct concerns, questions, or comments received via [subcompliance@london.ca](mailto:subcompliance@london.ca) through the CRM environment, which will allow for better tracking of each issue that is brought forward to ensure that the loop is closed in regards to the service request.

Further to the above, a Development Services Decision Tree was created to help staff in Development Services and Service London direct enquiries in regards to new development. Created in conjunction with Service London, Site Plan staff, and Building Division and Zoning staff, the Decision Tree is currently in a testing phase within Development Services. Updated versions of the Decision Tree will be made available once staff feedback has been received and evaluated in regards to its completeness, ease of use, etc.



Using the continuous improvement model, further updates to the 'Subdivision Assumption Status' layer are being explored which will facilitate the inclusion of engineered drawings, subdivision agreements, and more documentation that relates to subdivision approval. This will help with knowledge exchange internally at City Hall between divisions.

## 2. By-law review and alignment

In conjunction with the ReThink Zoning project and partners in Bylaw Enforcement, revisions to existing bylaws that would help bring development compliance related issues in line with other divisions will be investigated in the future. This will involve discussion with other divisions / departments including City Planning, Environmental Services, By-law Enforcement, etc.

## Phase 4 – Continuous Improvement

### 1. Annual review and tweaks of strategy to match market conditions and resident needs

Efforts in this area will become more focused as the progression of the aforementioned policies, partnerships, and new and improved processes are refined moving forward.

There has been a great deal of change in the past 18 months in this service area, and improvements in regards to customer interaction and assistance will continue.

### **3.0 Conclusion**

The strategy, which was developed in response to Council's direction from September 5, 2017, is progressing and continues to improve customer interaction during the development process. Process improvements, allocating resources more effectively, growing our outreach strategies and finding ways to "close the loop" when the work is completed all contribute to improving our corporate customer service strategy.

This report has been prepared with the assistance of Matt Feldberg, Manager, Development Services (Subdivisions).

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December 16, 2019

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