

Report to Planning and Environment Committee

To: Chair and Members
Planning & Environment Committee
From: George Kotsifas P. Eng.,
Managing Director, Development & Compliance Services and
Chief Building Official
Subject: 2020 Annual Development Report
Date: February 8, 2021

Recommendation

That, on the recommendation of the Managing Director, Development & Compliance Services & Chief Building Official, the 2020 Annual Development Report **BE RECEIVED** for information.

Executive Summary

The attached 2020 Annual Development Report provides a summary of historic and forecasted near-term growth, 2018-2020 development application activity managed by Development Services, an update on the Permit Ready Lot Working Group activities, and process-based continuous improvement initiatives that were undertaken in 2020.

Linkage to the Corporate Strategic Plan

This report supports the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan for the City of London through the Building a Sustainable City strategic area of focus by advancing the growth and development policies of the London Plan through enhanced implementation tools and infrastructure. The creation and implementation of a framework for an Annual Development Report is a specific action of the strategic plan.

Analysis

1.0 Background Information

1.1 Previous Reports Related to this Matter

On June 17, 2019, the Planning and Environment Committee (PEC) received a staff report on the definition of Permit Ready Lots. As part of this report, Staff recommended that a regular reporting tool to communicate development statistics and progress on continuous improvement initiatives be developed and published within the first quarter of 2020. The recommendations were approved by PEC and Council.

The first (2019) Annual Development Report was received by PEC on February 3, 2020. At this meeting, it was resolved:

That the Civic Administration BE DIRECTED to include in future Annual Development Reports the percentage of residential units located within the Built Area Boundary, as defined in the London Plan, to aid in tracking progress towards the 45% intensification target.

The attached 2020 edition of the Annual Development Report includes the percentage of new residential units located within the Built-Area Boundary.

2.0 Discussion and Considerations

2.1 Key Findings

In 2020, total new dwelling permits were up 49.7% in the City in 2020 over 2019 which is largely due to a substantial increase in the number of apartment dwelling units. Of new dwelling units in 2020, 26.6% were single/semi-detached dwellings, 12.3% were rowhouses and townhouses and 61.1% of new dwelling units were apartments. The 2020 intensification rate (meaning new units created within the 2016 Built-Area Boundary as identified in The London Plan) was 38.7%.

For non-residential development, new commercial (retail and office) growth was down 64.9% in 2020, less than 30% of forecasted levels, and Institutional growth increased 243.6% in response to several long-term care, post-secondary, and elementary school projects. New industrial growth in 2020 was down 72.6% from 2019 as it returned to historic levels after an exceptional 2019 that was boosted by a permit being issued for a large food processing facility in the southeast.

Over the past few years, the number and share of apartment dwellings has greatly exceeded levels anticipated by the 2019 Watson growth forecast. Conversely, commercial development is trending well below forecasted levels. These variations have been noted and will be reviewed comprehensively through updated growth forecasts that are to be prepared following the release of 2021 census data.

Development application activity levels in 2020 were generally lower than those experienced in 2018 and 2019. Overall, application processing times are improving. While Official Plan and Zoning Amendments were processed within similar timeframes to previous years, reduced *Planning Act* timeframes for these application types that came into force in 2019 challenged their ability to meet statutory periods in 2020.

The Permit Ready Lot Working Group has established definitions and a process to monitor current permit ready lot supply. Over 2021, the group will continue to be engaged in creating benchmarks and actionable performance measures.

In addition, several continuous improvement initiatives are underway to improve the quality of development application submissions and application processing times.

3.0 Financial Impact/Considerations

There are no direct financial expenditures associated with this report.

Conclusion

The attached 2020 Annual Development Report provides a summary of historic and forecasted near-term growth, 2018-2020 development application activity managed by Development Services, an update on the Permit Ready Lot Working Group activities, and process-based continuous improvement initiatives that were undertaken in 2020.

Staff anticipate that the Annual Development Report will be a helpful monitoring tool for Council as well as a reference for market analysis studies undertaken by members of the community. It will also provide an enhanced input into the Growth Management Implementation Strategy and recommendations for infrastructure planning.

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