

Review of Notification and Community Consultation for Development Applications

ISSUE

This report provides information related to the planned improvements to the public notification process and consultation practices related to Development Applications processed by the Development Review Section, Planning and Development Division.

BACKGROUND

The *Planning and Development Act, 2007* sets out the requirements for public notification for planning matters. As the City of Saskatoon (City) has been designated an Approving Authority under the Act, the City has adopted Policy No. C01-021, Public Notice (Public Notice Policy), to give notice for any matters required under the *Planning and Development Act, 2007*. Under the Public Notice Policy, the City must provide notification for development applications prior to City Council considering the application.

The Development Review Section, Planning and Development Division, is responsible for processing development applications including applications for discretionary use, property rezoning, Bylaw No. 8770, Zoning Bylaw, 2009 (Zoning Bylaw) text amendments, Bylaw No. 8769, Official Community Plan Bylaw, 2009, (Official Community Plan) Land Use Map amendments and Concept Plan adoption and amendments.

The Public Notice Policy provides the minimum notification requirements; however, Development Review typically undertakes additional public consultation for development applications to hear feedback on the proposal and incorporate that feedback, as required, into recommendations for City Council.

As a result of various recent development activity in Saskatoon, at their January 20, 2019 Public Hearing Meeting, City Council adopted the following motion:

“That the Administration report back following a review of the community engagement approach for Land Use change requests.”

At their July 29, 2019 meeting, City Council adopted Policy No. C02-046, Public Engagement Policy (Public Engagement Policy) which provides a strategic and outcomes-based approach to public engagement for the operations of the City as a whole. Public Engagement is defined in the Policy as:

“a variety of formal and informal interactions ranging from information sharing to more active consultation through to collaboration in the decision-making processes”.

Section 5.2.4 of the Policy refers to engagement specific to development applications and states that the City Manager shall:

“Follow the approved processes for development applications submitted to the City”

Development applications fall into the “inform” and “consult” segments of public engagement, as they are subject to legally-regulated steps under the *Planning and Development Act, 2007*. As such, throughout this document, the term “consultation” will be used to reflect the level of engagement for these applications.

CURRENT STATUS

Public engagement activities, including direct consultation, is a key component of the Planning process as it provides an opportunity for members of the public to review a proposal, ask questions, identify issues and provide comments. All feedback received from the public is considered by Administration and a summary is provided to the Municipal Planning Commission and City Council with the application report.

Current Practices

Current practices involve the main steps of notification, consultation event, feedback review, documentation and public hearing. Appendix 1 and 2 provide an overview of these steps and their purpose.

The notification and consultation process involves Civic Administration, the public, relevant stakeholders and City Council. Appendix 3 provides a description of roles in the development application process.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

Administration has identified a number of proposed improvements to the notification and consultation process for development applications. These improvements have been developed based on a review of activities in other cities, consultation with past applicants and a review of current practices. Administration plans to undertake further consultation with stakeholders on the proposed improvements prior to implementation.

A survey of other Canadian cities has been done regarding their consultation and overall public engagement practices and tools, including written notifications, on-site signage and use of the municipal web pages to provide information on individual applications. The cities of Regina, Calgary, Winnipeg, Edmonton, Brampton and Victoria were included in the survey. A summary is included as Appendix 4.

Development Review consulted with past applicants regarding the notification and consultation process. Those consulted indicated the current consultation process works well; however, improvements need to be made; in particular, expanded usage of the City of Saskatoon webpage and on-site signage.

The following improvements have been identified based on the survey of other Canadian cities and the current needs identified by Administration.

1. Development Review has reviewed the written notifications and identified improvements to provide more information and better clarity.
2. Development Review will implement a new standard of practice for notification. The minimum of 75 metres will be retained in Policy No. C01-021, Public Notice (Public Notice Policy) and Bylaw No. 8770, Zoning Bylaw, 2009, (Zoning Bylaw) as it is deemed appropriate for standard applications where any implications of the development would only affect nearby property owners. This distance is typically appropriate for Discretionary Use applications where approval is delegated to Administration; however, the distance for notification will be increased in most cases to 150 metres and where warranted, expanded beyond this distance for larger projects.
3. All development applications will have a dedicated tile on the City's Engage Page which will include all available information related to the application. Administration will add information, as required during the application process.
4. New on-site signage will be implemented. Signage will be placed on the development site at the beginning of the application process and updated once the Public Hearing date has been set. A sample of the new signs are included in Appendix 5.
5. When signs are placed on-site, Planning and Development will notify the Service Saskatoon Customer Care Centre so any calls they receive can be appropriately directed.
6. Newspaper notifications which advertise public hearings will be revised and clearer language used.

When deemed necessary, the Communications and Public Engagement Division will be consulted on the engagement strategy for an application. This would typically be related to work on extremely complex or contentious files.

Notification for Major Infill Project – Pilot Project

In addition to the above improvements, Planning and Development is piloting a notification process to update residents regarding upcoming construction for major infill projects. This will be piloted for the development at 410 5th Avenue North (corner of 25th Street and 5th Avenue North). The proposed use is permitted on this site and therefore did not require notification to area residents; however, given the general impacts to existing residents in the area, it was felt a communications strategy to inform residents would be valuable to mitigate concerns and direct inquiries to the Service Saskatoon Customer Care Centre. Notifications will be distributed to nearby residents with information about the project, as well as contact numbers for the Customer Care Centre and the developer. This project will be monitored to determine effectiveness and future use considerations for major infill projects.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

There are no policy implications related to these changes. All proposed changes are activities that will enhance the level of communication beyond the minimum legal

requirements recognized in the *Planning and Development Act, 2007*, Public Notice Policy and Zoning Bylaw.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are costs associated with these program improvements; however, they are largely nominal increases, such as increasing the notification area. Costs related to on-site signage are more significant. Development Review will cover costs for signage for the early implementation phase to ensure the process and the sign design are working. This cost will be approximately \$2,000 and will be covered in existing operating funding.

Going forward, for Discretionary Use applications, the signage cost will be included in the application fee. For Official Community Plan Land Use Map amendments and rezoning applications, the actual signage and installation costs will be charged back to the applicant along with costs for advertising and public consultation that are already included.

NEXT STEPS

Administration will undertake further consultation with members of the development industry and the general public on the proposed improvements. The feedback received will be incorporated, as appropriate, into the planned changes. The improvements are planned to be incorporated into operations in 2020.

APPENDICES

1. Notification and Consultation Process Overview
2. Development Application Process
3. Roles in the Development Application Process
4. Survey of Selected Canadian Cities Consultation and Notification Practices
5. Development Application Notification Signs

REPORT APPROVAL

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