

Development Workshop Notes July 10, 2017

BUSINESS HUB: MAKING BUSINESS EASIER IN THE CITY

Session 1, Table 1

Why is Victoria a good place to do business and development?

- City has been listening & reacting to concern from development industry
- Increase in tech jobs with good incomes to support development / business retail
- Concern with ability to support families
- Vibrant downtown & Council that is open to input
- Victoria is seeing more young people – diversity
- Blend of employment & amenities
- Compact scale – livability
- More affordable than Vancouver
- Sustainability focus helps to activate younger people & others with interests outdoors
- Ability to introduce next development
- Impacts on communities from increased development
- Climate
- Tourism attracts investment
- Good transportation options
 - Low traffic volume compared to the mainland
- Need to maintain tourism related businesses
- Location of universities, colleges, CFB Esquimalt

What can the City do to better support business & development?

- Provide data on business types / # of restaurants
 - Business profiles
- Cruise ship industry – opportunity to profile & highlight Victoria
- Track trends in other cities (e.g. retail saturation)
 - Allows for residential vs. requiring mixed use
 - Retail analysis
- Need to attract “clean manufacturing”
- Need to be more competitive with surrounding municipalities to attract industrial development (new)
 - Parking is expensive
- Update Home Occupation Regulations
 - Allow more than one business
- Risk of weakening Downtown by requiring mixed use in residential areas.

Session 1, Table 2

Why is Victoria a good place to do business and development?

- Vibrant arts and culture scene

- Keen on development
- Shift in “nearly dead / nearly wed” perception with tech companies growing
- No consideration for the senior community
- Location – not TO / Van
 - More affordable than big cities
 - Quality of life, air quality
- City’s done a good job updating the OCP / Downtown Area Plan to benefit development community
- Strategic Plan, living doc is beneficial to everyone
- Business Hub & partners like VIATEC / Alacrity strengthens the story and better represents what’s on ground
- There’s not a parking problem in Vic
- Victoria is authentic, innovating, creative

What can the City do to better support business & development?

- Engage with businesses on what the City can do to better support
- “What’s the economic proposition to better fill empty space?”
- Partner capacity with City owner spaces, parking, VCC, CityStudio
- Strategic role to hear feedback and engage in conversation with staff / business to make business better
- Neighbourhood planning, small / urban village concept?
- Challenges:
 - Affordable housing
 - Regional transportation (CRD)
 - Amalgamation?
 - Change is going to happen
 - Generational conflict – make a place for everyone
 - Parking capacity
 - Balance between bike & parking
 - Safety; more foot patrol
- Analyze by department the “Top 5” things that if staff were empowered to direct would expedite business / development
- Delegate more to staff and more responsibility / accountability to Business Hub
 - “formal teeth”
- Dev Investment:
 - Affordable housing should be more strategic than “whack a mole”
 - Supply led response to housing
 - City to be more neutral, more well-rounded when making decisions for inclusivity / diversity
 - Decision making with all municipalities

Session 2, Table 1

Why is Victoria a good place to do business and development?

- Safe, #1 banking system, harder in other municipalities
- Pride in community (invest / engage)
- Lifestyle, recreation
- 80% of Chamber members are 5 employees or less “known as the small big capital of Canada”
- Solid economic base of services, tourism, tech.

What can the City do to better support business & development?

- Don't be afraid to make tough decisions
- Limit Council decisions and empower staff
- Speeding of approvals, like that electronic submissions are coming, benefit to City staff and those submitting
- City is bearing the burden for the region, affordability, housing
- Small scale, know the people you are doing business with
- Zero vacancy rate; build & occupied
- Challenges:
 - Permitting / approvals – “common sense doesn't prevail”
 - Red tape with permitting
 - Procurement “rules”
 - “Time is money” (e.g. delays that are unnecessary such as colour of brick)
 - “Department of Common Sense”
 - Following the checklist with no flexibility
 - Having a primary person at City to call when issues / road blocks arise to “stick handle”
 - Frustrating to have office space at retail level (street) – economic need for this space & affordable
 - Fine balance of business development and keeping the character charm of the City; “keeping everyone happy”
 - Victoria has been undervalued for years... now construction costs are up and can't make the jump in rent / rate that they are moving is not the same
 - Margins are thin; cost of build / return
 - Trying to work on everything – not possible
 - The “NIMBY”
 - This small minority has a lot of power (e.g. Seattle & Oregon disempower the community)
 - CALUC'S – provide more boundaries / less empowerment
- Amalgamation, discussions with province, re-engage discussion
- Better governance by fewer governments
- Better regional transportation
 - Parking availability (would like to connect to developers to investigate other options)

BUILDING, ELECTRICAL, & PLUMBING PERMITS

Session 1, Table 3

What are the challenges? What works well?

- Langford 1 week/How to get there in Vic
- Electronic permitting/applications
- Permit reviews take too long e.g. Jukebox
- Workflow process transparency – online
- Abilities to provide mid-stream input to address comments

- Process transparency
- Pre – Application meetings are beneficial
- T.I.'s generally moving efficiently
- Culture is improving at City – heading in the right direction
- Development summits are engaging and positive
- Permits should take the proper amount of time to review to allow for a thorough review. Fast isn't always better!
- Interdepartmental process, approvals, and communication needs to improve DP & BP

Electronic Processing – as we build this system, what are the most important aspects to you?

- Transparency (window into the review)
- Trouble shooter (file manager)
- Improved process timing

Project Signage – what do projects under construction need?

- Fees engineering, permits (Build, Dev)
- Streamline Noise Bylaw Exemptions (Council?)

Session 2, Table 2

What are the challenges? What works well?

- Timeline – from submission to receipt
- Permit clerks are outstanding and have always been – they are a lifeline who bridge changes
- Comments are well itemized – good that the person who made comment is listed
- # of copies gets confusing
- Early warnings of costs that are on permit (deposits / fees) – what are they for? Whether you get them back or not
- feedback during review / corrections – getting it in one lump
- Civil services / tying in / capacity
- Hydro
- Early warning of big ticket / surveys
- Engineering checklist to inform BP submission
- Clock should not be reset to 20 days for corrections

Electronic Processing – as we build this system, what are the most important aspects to you?

- Ability to avoid physically moving plans around
- Killing less trees
- Easier with re-submissions to substitute / supersede
- Reduce \$ of paper
- Online form is easier
- Less room for error
- Having a point person still available

- Progress bars
- Need summary of comments as well as comments on plans
- Is there a way to get comments as they come in, but need to guard against conflicting comments
- Simple dash board
- Some prompts
- Establish a stakeholder user office during development
- User feedback form
- Could track outstanding permits & deposits, occupancy issues, etc.

Project Signage – what do projects under construction need?

- What is allowed is a problem
 - Sign can't go on hoarding which is on City property – need a different Bylaw to allow signage on hoarding
- Scaffolding is in the way of putting on building
- Signs need to be bigger so sign Bylaw needs to be amended
- Temporary signage should be revised to deal with TI's, papering windows
- Real estate sign exempt – need bigger scope of exemptions
- Separate bylaw for construction phase
- Timeline to occupancy
- Deposit?

Other

- Status list of permits – to make sure they're all signed off

Session 2, Table 3

What are the challenges? What works well?

- Communications between professionals and City Officials
- Feedback to consultant not clear (what's lacking)
- Electronic submission better
- Staff helpful
- Accountability to a staff member
- Permits are complicated and sometimes overlap and contradictory information
- Meeting with City early in process
- City Staff is a facilitator to Community
- Consultants asking to City for guidance
- Feedback loop should be less formal (e.g. phone conversations)
 - Might eliminate a lot of delay
 - Prior to formal letter
- Good to know staff you're dealing with – letter from City
 - List of staff reviewed, inspected, etc.
- 20 day process
- Comments – arch resubmission
 - Another 20 day review
 - Should be less time
- Electronic submittal would speed up process

- Older submissions should be prioritized
- Too long of process

Electronic Processing – as we build this system, what are the most important aspects to you?

- Submission by PDF files
- Visualizations by electronic form (via Internet)
- Submittal for changes only for small amount required & entire set of drawings
- Digital draws more flexible to move drawing
- Project Signage – what do projects under construction need?
- Speeds up process
- Conveys information better
- Better storage
- Move to electronic drawings
 - Submission
 - Review
 - Changes
 - Archiving
 - Not as personal as desk/counter experience
- Other municipalities
 - Person at front of process
 - Submittal received with electronic drawing
- Benefit to pre-submission meeting
- Consistency with staff
- Reviewer/Inspector may give inconsistent information
- Inspector should be involved earlier in the process
- Reviewer needs time to communicate

Project Signage – what do projects under construction need?

- Case by case evaluation
- Impedance of public right of way
- Size of signage – distinguished measurements

ENGINEERING PLAN REVIEW

Table 4, Session 1

Challenges? What works well?

- Streetscape / Form and Character Standards in Downtown Zones
- Existing Infrastructure Sewer Drain and Water (size , age, confirmation of location , capacity)
- Heads up on Capital Works Planning
- Sewer attenuation
- BC Hydro
- Engineering Requirements as itemized in deficiency list at Building Permit
- Ease of Access to Staff
- Individual accountability for reviews and requirements

- What Engineering input valuable at this early stage?
- Pre Application meetings at rezoning, development permit.
- We encourage meeting with applicants at building permit stage 6 weeks prior
- Central point of contact.

What are the challenges during the site servicing plan review process?

- Existing Infrastructure Sewer Drain and Water (size , age, confirmation of location , capacity)
- Heads up on Capital Works Planning
- Sewer attenuation

Is there clear communication of Engineering items (fees, deposits, etc.)?

- Methods of Payment (Cash ,Cheque, LOC)
- Better detail on what is being paid for.
- Accountability in estimates being provided by City, are they industry standard ?
- Detailed accounting after work completed , are providing value for work , accountability.

Additional remarks/suggestions

- Engineering Submission Checklist
- Earthquake standards and reference material with respect to existing ground conditions in neighborhoods.
- Request that developments post project signs with contact info for developer
- (pro and con) keep an eye out for vandalism, reporting noise, un kept work sites etc

Table 4, Session 2

Challenges? What works well?

- BC HYDRO turn a around times for design and scheduling, changes in staff and requirements, inconsistency.
- Electronic submissions and Engineering reviews wanting to see improvement
- One point of contact
- Reduce paper copies of drawings
- Improvement in identifying expectations of Engineering requirements
- City of Vancouver not good example
- Overall improvement in Engineering Review process
- North Vancouver model = Good

What are the challenges during the site servicing plan review process?

- BC HYDRO
- Sewer attenuation
- Sewer attenuation Cash in Lieu for upgrades?

Is there clear communication of Engineering items (fees, deposits, etc.)?

- Lack of clarity in costing
- Can Developers hire third party installers for servicing , competitive bidding
- Timing of installations too long , changes in servicing costs.

Additional remarks/suggestions

- Bicycle Storage and Schedule “C”
- Garbage Bins, location ,ceiling heights, space and its impacts to affordability
- BP related – differences in what is a certified professional
- Signage on hoarding, project advertising etc when hoarding on private property
- Stage occupancy

Table 5, Session 1

Challenges? What works well?

- Not always the same answer between staff (in person)
- Time and volume
- Trouble meeting response rates
- Requirements for small projects too much
- Checklists would be helpful
- TIPS need to move quickly
- Vast difference/improvement over the last 8 years
- Staff seem supported
- Staff goes out of their way
- Have conversations early
- Bring up design process early – City involvement
- TIPS walking – in works well, face to face
- Looking at things theoretically
- Connections with clients
- Go in early & continuous conversation
- Have engineer review
- Staff involved at the very beginning
- Communication to CALUC/citizen that shovel is in ground
- Timeline changes
- Hard to trust
- Electronic format would be helpful
- Streamline – may help with silos
- Having Civil Engineer not join project until BP stage (after Rez/DP)
- Quality of reviews because of volume
- Staff recruitment
- Development Tracker swamped by electrical permits
- Elsewhere: one person in charge of project, through the whole project (single point of contact)
- Pre-application meetings
- Benefitted from staff time put in neighbourhood

What input is valuable at early stages?

- Amendment to highway Access
- Need to know all Eng. reviewers ASAP even if high level – this allows for no late hits
- Provide all bylaw documents in an easy to access/understandable format that is kept up to date

- Put in CRD Map/GIS App
- Can all documents come up on VicMap?

What are the challenges during the site servicing plan review process?

- 3rd party utilities/Hydro
- Deficiency list – conveying visual information
- Ability to append marked up drawings
- Good to have contact/extra step to clarify
- A picture is worth 1000 words
- Civil Engineer needs to show everything (numerous “layers”) – yet professional association don’t want you signing/sealing these drawings
- Revisions need to be clear & well documented
- Building Code Equivalency:
 - Can you still discuss with City staff?
 - If you create a level of confidence with staff
 - Generally flexible
 - Building permits are a bit stickier
 - A lot of documentation

Is there clear communication of Engineering items (fees, deposits, etc)

- Yes & no
- How many drawings
- Submission requirements
- Communication to client instead of Engineer who has not seen communication
- One point of contact would help
- Phased permits are a bit clunky

Table 5, Session 2

Challenges? What works well?

- Seeking clarification on regulations – single point of contact
- Avoid different answers and encourage continuity
- Turnaround times on applications
- Allow for e-applications & comment tracking
- Ability for communities to better understand engineering complications/challenges with projects
- Repetition of staff comments/quality of comments
- Process is good (e.g. consolidation and sharing of comments on applications)
- Deficiency list is helpful

What input is valuable at early stages?

- Tech comments to allow applicant to have better understanding of project costs (e.g. sidewalk standards)
- Early consultation with community
- Avoid late comments from City & community – impacts on design

What are the challenges during the site servicing plan review process?

- Consistency in responses – “no late hits”
- Additional requirements at later stages – identify earlier
- Comments can be avoided with face to face discussions
- Better clarity between requirements vs. guidelines/requests
- Better understanding by communities of transportation access issues – identify early

Is there clear communication of Engineering items (fees, deposits, etc)

- Fees are clear
- Victoria has clear standards – construction specs
- Lack of clarity of costing
- Timing is challenging

CONSTRUCTION TO BUILDING COMPLETION

Table 6, Session 1

What are the engineering related challenges during your build? What works well?

- Sewer Attenuation
 - Not a good long term strategy
 - once the City's infrastructure is implemented then the tank is not needed
 - Extra cost to the development site
- Private overhead utilities – strategic plan required to implement to underground corridor & cost

How can we assist and improve on our process during construction?

- Scheduling & locations – installations of service connections from Engineering & PW
- Coordination process with the Fire Department in relations to the Building Code.
- Interpretation of the Building Code during construction process as they V.Design building inspector changes
- Noise Bylaw – receive an exemption for a simpler process such as concrete finishing. It is cheaper to pay for the ticket than to follow this bylaw.
- Remote trades parking site & shuttle service to major construction sites as parking becomes more restrictive

What are the issues and challenges with frontage restoration & project completions?

- Consistency of the design, inspection, and sign off process. City of Victoria is going a good job!
- Allowing development signage on hoarding to advertise construction site for sale

Table 6, Session 2

What are the engineering related challenges during your build? What works well?

- Noise Bylaw exemptions
 - Concrete pours/approvals
 - Simplifying the process
- Coordinating services installations
 - Timelines- when do we ask?
- Parking for workers

- Overrunning neighbourhood
- Site servicing plans
 - Submission early/approvals
 - Coordinate/integrate civil and landscaping
- Pre-intake meeting works well!
 - Group meeting is best
 - Standard process
 - City coordinated
- Make info more available/VicMap?!
 - Upcoming Capital projects
 - Beautification/Hydro undergrounding

How can we assist and improve on our process during construction?

- Parking management
- Site signage/hoarding – more flexibility
 - marketing, aesthetics, info sharing
- Communications – trees
- Reduce paper
- Electronic review/circulation
- Transparency
 - Deposits
 - Comments
 - One point of contact/portfolio manager
 - Straddles all departments
- Pleased with where the City is going
 - Listening
 - This session more granular
 - Methodical

What are the issues and challenges with frontage restoration & project completions?

- Deposits/Invoices – getting money back
 - making the math make sense
 - plain language
 - already improved, could still be better
- Inspections process
 - Formal clarification
- Coordinating frontage works
 - Clarify roles/responsibilities
 - Communicating timelines for City crews to install services
- Staging approvals for commercial units
 - Inspector discretion – good!
 - Goal – “get business open ASAP”
- Staff response on parking

Table 7, Session 1

What are the engineering related challenges during your build? What works well?

- connections to mains – timing, locations, time for review by City staff
- Public utilities – Hydro is a challenge, Fortis
- Utilities can't get info from City (or using this as an excuse)
- St. Occupant fees – is there a different treatment for on vs. off street fees? More transparent
- Street Occ permits are rigid, expensive. Needs flexibility.
- Working with City staff to design frontage improvements has been a good experience
- Seem to be a lack of communication between staff in Engineering and PW. Different set of people than at front end. Having PW staff at up front meetings may be useful.
- Checks and balances. Building construction with proper zoning or not building to BP plans.
- Why the new fee for capping a water service?

How can we assist and improve on our process during construction?

- Improved transparency on inspections
- When are inspections? The process seems to change. Requires clarity. Mostly related to complex projects. Need 1 page summary of inspection process. Who is the key person- the inspector or the professional engineer/consultant? The 5 page summary of inspection process was useful. Duplication of inspection clarity & roles up front
- Preference for professional consultant to do inspections
- Need reduction in permit fees. If permit inspected external. St. Occupancy fees could be monthly and discounted for longer terms. And more transparent for estimating
- St. Occupant fees are not discussed that are a significant cost
- Better communication between PW and builder to coordinate work
- More notice from PW about when they will do work
- Minor DP process is working well

What are the issues and challenges with frontage restoration & project completions?

- Timing and coordination with PW & Utilities
- Keep having pre-construction meetings with PW/Utility companies
- Generally working well
- Better close-out process required upon completion
- Can the fee process be automated? The return of funds (deposits) should be automatic, the builder currently has to ask
- A provision in MDA that allows a developer to amend and simplify the document once one time requirements are completed at developers cost
- Good systems are in place. The City is way ahead of other jurisdictions

Table 7, Session 2

What are the engineering related challenges during your build? What works well?

- Noise Bylaw Variance is painful- should be part of the BP process
- Electrical permit not required for renovation
- Staff has been great, issue with the process
- Clarification on inspection sign off – is it the professional consultant or City inspector?
- Having City inspect is good
- The above refer to interim inspections

How can we assist and improve on our process during construction?

- More transparent and digital process (dashboard). Checkpoints along the way for inspections
- A PM at the City that follows project from start to finish
- Being able to provide more information to the public about development impacts
- Contact info signs on construction sites for builder & City

What are the issues and challenges with frontage restoration & project completions?

- Quality control issues with their own contractors
- Question about what the sidewalk surface should be. Public realm improvement clarification
- Scheduling with PW can be a challenge
- Shut down's at Christmas cause delay & cost \$\$ for street work
- Challenges with 3rd party (BC Hydro, Telus, Shaw)
- City to engage with BC Hydro about underground mains. Can mains be undergrounded on a single frontage?
- Do other municipal governments have the same issues with Hydro? UBCM?
- Electronic reporting on electrical/plumbing permits for general contractor. Permits are often applied for by GC's; contractors & GC is not aware of hold ups.

Table 8, Session 1

What are the engineering related challenges during your build? What works well?

- Timing to get City crews out for services or sidewalks
 - Coordinating with site crews and public works
- Record keeping of service locations – old documents
 - Shouldn't need to dig up more than one
- Can be difficult, not user friendly to individual homeowners going through the process (application, rezoning, development, etc)
- VicMap has improved
 - online database can download GIS files
 - automating processes/making available online

How can we assist and improve on our process during construction?

- Timing of site visits is critical to avoid fixing it later
 - Should be involved early in the process
 - At the beginning is important, middle is less important, at the end is also important
- Digital review back and forth between City and developer is very helpful
 - Not currently a formal process
 - Working toward formal digital review process (currently underway)
- What can be resolved through digital review?
 - Servicing
- VicMap is a major tool – are faster updates possible (e.g. real time data)

What are the issues and challenges with frontage restoration & project completions?

- Refreshed downtown Public Realm Plan will help
- Conflict between what the developer and the City want to see
 - Need to coordinate work & timing (e.g. development finished up to sidewalk, wasn't reviewed early enough and didn't match)
- Delays due to building boom
- Flexibility to have developers crew do restoration work
- List of approved developers/contractors
- Coordination issue between City & developers
 - need early reviews
- Order of operations issues