



Development Approvals Review Report



Submitted to: City of Fernie
Prepared by McElhanney Ltd.



McElhanney

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Acknowledgement

This report was prepared from the efforts of Fernie Planning Team and McElhanney Ltd. The project team would like to extend our deepest gratitude to the Fernie's local development and construction communities, local housing societies, and City staff for their unwavering support and invaluable contributions throughout the project engagement process. Their dedication, expertise, and collaboration were integral to the success of these engagement activities.

Acknowledgement would also like to be given to City of Fernie's Council and Staff who provided insight throughout the project. The project team is appreciative of their commitment to enhancing the development approval processes in the City of Fernie.

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McElhanney acknowledges that the City of Fernie is located within Qukin ʔamakʔis, the unceded traditional territory of Yaʔit ʔa-knuqʔi'it. We recognize that we live and work within their vast lands. ʔakanuxuník are from Yaʔit ʔa-knuqʔi'it and are members of the Ktunaxa (Kootenay) speaking peoples of British Columbia, Idaho and Montana.



Executive Summary

Introduction

This report presents an in-depth analysis and strategic action plan for enhancing the City of Fernie's development approval process. The City of Fernie has seen substantial growth in terms of population and housing, leading to unprecedented levels of construction and development. The community is facing significant challenges in homeownership and rental housing. To accommodate the community's growth and contribute to attainable housing, the City of Fernie needs to develop adaptive strategies. One of the priorities identified by the City is to enhance its development approvals process.

The initiative, launched in October 2022 and funded by the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) via the Local Government Development Approvals Program, comprises three major components: a thorough review report, a digital permitting software needs assessment, and a set of development application guides.

The report serves as the first major deliverable of the project. The overarching objective of this report is to enhance the efficiency, transparency, predictability, and responsiveness of Fernie's development approval process. This aim is driven by the city's need to address housing shortages and align development initiatives with its growing and evolving housing needs.

The methodologies of this report include the provision of a robust engagement program with internal staff and external project interested parties, policy review, data analysis, and best practice reviews. The ultimate goal is to create a set of evidence-based strategies that directly address the core challenges identified in the approval process.

Strategic Recommendations

The report identifies the root causes in the development approvals delay. It also provides opportunities for streamlining the process and creating a more efficient, responsive system. Seven strategic recommendations are made to address these challenges:

1

Establish a holistic staff training and professional development initiative

aimed at endowing staff with the essential skills, knowledge base, and resources to proficiently navigate and expedite the development approval procedures. This initiative will ensure that staff members effectively perform their duties and obligations, thereby enhancing the applicant's experience throughout the process.'

2

Develop and implement a cost-recovery model

for application and inspection fees to cover the actual costs of the services provided.

3

Foster internal collaboration and clear communication

via a strategy that clearly defines roles and responsibilities, establishes a technical review committee, and standardizes procedures.



4

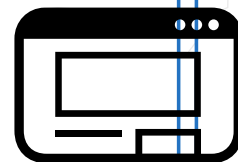
Enhance the application intake process

and develop comprehensive external communication materials to improve applicant experience and application quality.

5

Adopt a comprehensive digital transformation strategy

to improve efficiency and transparency, including a user-friendly online system and modern digital records management.



6

Modernize Fernie's legislative frameworks and implement strategies that encourage infill and multi-family housing

to align with the current development needs.

7

Bolster affordable housing in Fernie through a fast-track approval system, public-private collaborations, and relevant policy development.

Each recommendation is complemented by a three-stage action plan - **quick wins, progressive gains, and transformative achievements.**

This allows for a phased approach to implementation, starting with easily achievable tasks and progressively moving towards more complex actions. The report also outlines key performance indicators (KPIs) to track and measure progress for each recommendation.

The report concludes with a comprehensive implementation and monitoring strategy, designed to ensure effective execution and measurement of the recommendations. This includes establishing baselines, implementing periodic check-ins, feedback loops, interim assessments, benchmarking, detailed performance analysis, and long-term impact studies.

USE OF THIS REPORT

The report should be consulted in its entirety to avoid misinterpretation. The report is specifically designed for the purpose of aiding the City of Fernie in refining their development approvals process and should not be relied upon by third parties. McElhanney reserves the right to revise any part of the report in light of any newly obtained information.

LIMITATIONS

While the report provides comprehensive analysis and strategic recommendations, it's worth noting its limitations. The effectiveness of the recommendations depends on the accuracy of the data, feedback provided, and the availability of resources. Any use of this report by third parties or for purposes other than improving the development approvals process in Fernie is done at their own risk. McElhanney will not be held responsible for any loss incurred as a result of misuse of this report.



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1. Background Context

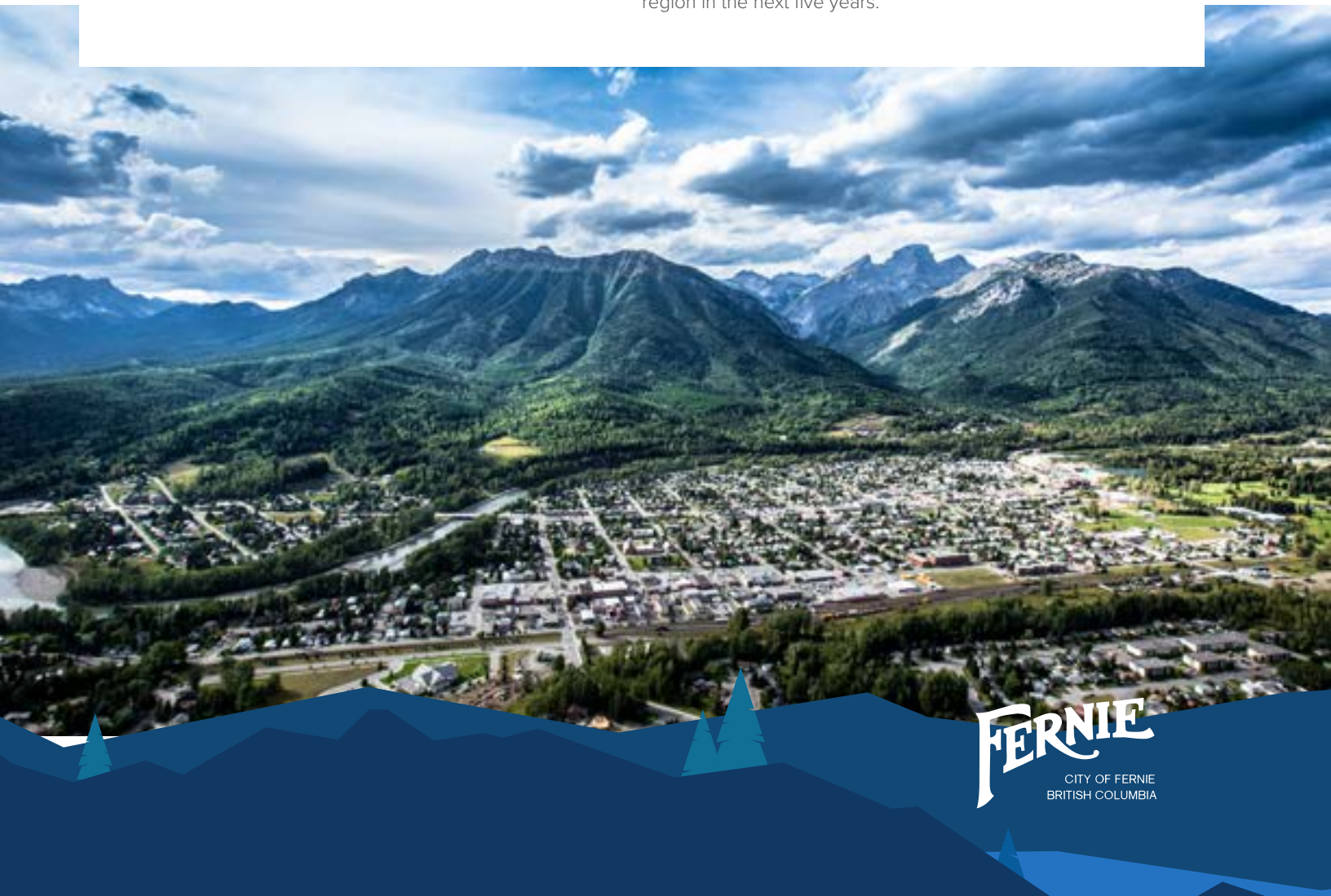
1.1. POPULATION AND HOUSING GROWTH

Fernie, a picturesque town nestled amidst snow-capped peaks, has emerged as a premier destination for outdoor enthusiasts. The allure of its natural beauty has attracted a significant influx of residents in recent years. According to the 2021 Federal Census, the population of Fernie experienced a notable upswing, reaching 6,320 individuals in 2021. This represents a substantial 17% growth rate between the years 2016 and 2021. Fernie's growth rate far exceeds both the British Columbia and Canadian averages, establishing it as the fastest growing community within the Regional District of East Kootenay.

Alongside the notable population growth in Fernie, the housing sector has experienced a parallel upward trend. In 2021, the total number of dwelling units in Fernie was estimated at 3,256. Among these units, 2,597 were occupied by year-round residents, while the remaining units were shared among seasonal workers and absentee / recreational homeowners.

Comparing the Federal Census data from 2016 to 2021, Fernie witnessed a 7.4% increase in the total number of dwelling units. This growth rate positioned Fernie as the municipality with the second largest increase in dwelling units among other municipalities in the East Kootenay region, including Kimberley, Sparwood, Invermere, and Elkford.

According to the City of Fernie Housing Needs Report 2020, community growth is expected to continue in the Elk Valley region in the next five years.



1.2. RECORD-HIGH BUILDING AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

The growth of Fernie's population and housing market has been closely tied to the city's record-high building and development activities. In 2022, the City processed a notable number of 138 residential permits, totaling \$49 million in construction values. This resulted in the creation of 79 new dwelling units, with single-family dwellings accounting for 46% of the new constructions.

While residential development reached its peak in 2022, recent data indicates a slowdown in housing activities during the first two quarters of 2023. Between January and May 2023, the reported construction value amounted to \$9.3 million, reflecting a substantial decrease of 60% compared to the \$21 million construction value recorded during the same period in 2022.

1.3. CRISIS IN HOMEOWNERSHIP AND RENTAL AVAILABILITY

The rapid growth experienced by Fernie has brought about significant challenges in terms of housing accessibility for its residents. Similar to other rapidly growing municipalities in the region and province, Fernie has faced unprecedented difficulties in providing housing opportunities. In recent years, rising construction costs and land values have contributed to an increase in housing prices within the city. This surge in prices has made it particularly challenging for local residents, especially first-time homebuyers, to afford housing either through home ownership or rental.

The decrease in rental housing availability has further compounded the housing issue in Fernie. This scarcity of rental properties has affected both seasonal workers and full-time residents, leaving them with limited options for affordable housing. As a result, many local residents find themselves unable to enter the housing market, exacerbating the housing crisis.

Recognizing the pressing need to address these challenges, the Housing Needs Report has identified the urgency of providing more attainable housing units and expanding housing options for the local population. It is crucial for the city to navigate the balance between fast-paced development and ensuring housing affordability and access for all residents.

1.4. LACK OF ADAPTIVE STRATEGIES TO FACILITATE COMMUNITY GROWTH AND ACHIEVE ATTAINABLE HOUSING

The City of Fernie has faced significant pressure due to the high volume of development applications in recent years. While there has been a recent slowdown in housing activities, it is important to recognize the dynamic nature of the housing market and the need for adaptive strategies. The limited amount of proper information materials, tools, systems, and processes has posed challenges for city staff, leading to interruptions and delays in permit approvals.

1.5. LOCAL GOVERNMENT DEVELOPMENT APPROVALS

The City successfully secured grant funding from the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) through the Local Government Development Approvals Program in September 2021. The Local Government Development Approvals Program aims to assist local governments in identifying and overcoming obstacles related to processing development and building applications. By obtaining this grant funding, the City of Fernie was able to embark on the City of Fernie Development Approvals Enhancement project (the Project).

2. Project Purpose, Objectives and Scope

2.1. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The primary purpose of the Project is to improve the overall capacity of the City's organization to handle the increasing demand for development approvals and address the pressing issues related to attainable housing, access, and streamline processing of development applications.

The Project has set forth three key objectives to guide its efforts towards improving the development approvals process. These objectives encompass different areas critical to achieving the desired outcomes.

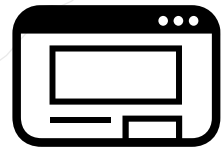
A road map for implementing process improvements in a variety of areas.:



Clear and transparent development applications information.



Transformation of paper-based permit taking and processing to fast-track digital permitting system.



2.2. MAJOR PROJECT COMPONENTS

Guided by the project objectives, the Project will deliver three major outcomes:

1

Development Approval Review Report

(this report): The purpose of the Development Approval Review report is to identify issues and gaps in the City of Fernie's development approvals processes and the planning framework and develop recommended implementation actions. The recommendations in the report will be based on data collections, technical research and analysis, specific application reviews, and in-depth consultation with the City Project Team, Council, internal staff, and external project interested parties.

2

Development and Permitting Software Needs Assessment

The vision for the system is that it will be a one-stop online portal where the applicant can find application requirements, make complete application submissions, and track application status. The system will assist internal City staff to issue, tracking, and consolidate internal and external agency referrals.

3

Development Applications Checklist:

The purpose of the Checklist is to provide clear, concise, and consistent direction and information on development application submission requirements along with a visual interpretation of the City's various development permit application guidelines. Whether an applicant is doing development in Fernie for the first time or has years of experience, the Guidebook is designed to answer key questions that may arise during the development process in the City of Fernie. The goal is to assist the applicant to navigate through the complex process and provide the necessary resources for the applicant to submit a proper and complete application.

This report serves as the first major deliverable of the Project. The Development Applications Guidebook and the software Needs Assessment will be separate documents.

2.3 Project Phases

The Development Approvals Enhancement project will be advance through four phases:



Phase 1 - Project Initiation

The project kicks-off as a collaborative process between the consultant and the City of Fernie to set the framework for the project, fine tune the work plan and develop a *Communication and Engagement Plan*.



Phase 2 - Development Approvals Review

The consulting team will research and analyze the City's policies, bylaws, and planning framework to draft a *Policies Review Report*, identifying issues and recommending actions for implementation.



Phase 3 - Development and Permitting Software Needs Assessment

A Needs Assessment will be completed to identify a development and construction permit tracking system that best serves the Fernie community. The vision for the system is that it will be a one-stop online portal where the applicant can find application requirements, make complete application submissions, and track application status.



Phase 4 - Process Mapping and Prepare Development Application Checklist

This phase works to build on the knowledge learned in the Policies Review Reports, and form a foundation for a future Development Applications Procedures Bylaw. An easy-to-follow Process Map and comprehensive Development Application Checklist will be created to educate the public and development community on how to navigate Fernie's improved pathways to approving development and construction projects.

3. Engagement Process

3.1. PROJECT ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

The primary purpose of the Project is to improve the overall capacity of the City's organization to handle the increasing demand for development approvals and address the pressing issues related to attainable housing, access, and streamline processing of development applications.

The Project has set forth three key objectives to guide its efforts towards improving the development approvals process. These objectives encompass different areas critical to achieving the desired outcomes.

A **Project Communication and Engagement Plan (Plan)** was developed during Phase 1 – Project Initiation. The purpose of the Plan is to provide organized and inclusive communication and engagement strategies for internal City departments, external interested parties, and Council. A detailed implementation plan was also created in the document.

The Plan is founded on three guiding principles: Multi-departmental Collaboration, Clear Communications, and

Always Reporting Back. It adheres to the International Association of Public Participation's best practices and incorporates the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation to create a cohesive engagement approach. The engagement will include two levels: outcome-based questions for the external interested parties and targeted discussions with interested parties.

To achieve effective engagement, the Plan outlines recommended tools, including the "Let's Talk Fernie" online engagement hub, virtual meetings, interactive presentations, 1-on-1 in-person interview, and focus group in-person workshops.

The Plan identifies primary, secondary, and external interested parties with varying levels of engagement and recommends suitable engagement methods for each group. Interested parties include City Planning Team, City Council, local development and construction communities, Fernie and area Housing Societies, indigenous communities, and external referral agencies.

3.2. SUMMARY OF ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

In February 2023, the project team carried out a series of in-person engagement activities in Fernie, following the Project Communication and Engagement Plan. These activities included workshops with the local development and construction communities and housing societies, extensive interviews with departmental representatives, and a workshop with City staff, and a presentation to Fernie City Council. The primary objective of these engagements was to conduct a thorough assessment and improvement of the City's development approvals process. For a comprehensive overview of the insights gathered from the engagement process, please refer to the attached engagement summary reports for external interested parties and internal staff.

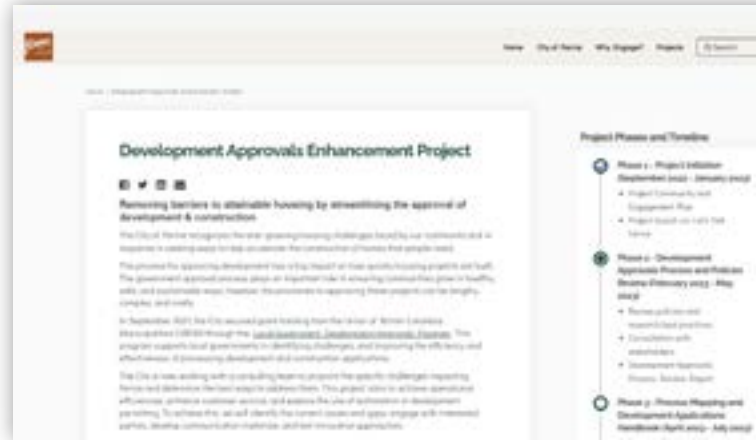


3.2.1. Let's Talk Fernie Project Webpage:

The City's engagement platform, "Let's Talk Fernie" – <https://letstalk.fernie.ca>, hosts all of the City's major projects, serving as a central hub to communicate project information to the public and facilitate online engagement activities.

The project engagement webpage was initiated on "Let's Talk Fernie" on February 10, 2023. The webpage offers an overview of the project along with a summary of the project phases and timeline. Project-related documents, including the Workplan and Schedule, Communication and Engagement Plan, and Phase 2 Engagement Activities, are readily available for download.

The project webpage is regularly updated throughout the duration of the project, ensuring the public stays informed and up to date. Residents have the opportunity to pose questions to the project team through the Q & A section available on the webpage.



www.letstalk.fernie.ca/development-approvals-enhancement

3.2.2. Workshop with Local Development and Construction Communities

The interactive workshop with local development and construction communities involved 28 participants, with five attending virtually.

The main goal of the workshop with the development and construction communities was to empower them with an enhanced understanding of the planning framework and approval process. Key focuses of the educational part included detailed walkthroughs of the planning and legislative framework, the various stages involved in the approval process, the roles and responsibilities of both the City and the applicants, and the importance of proactive planning, comprehensive submission, and timely communication. The purpose was to establish that expedited and efficient approvals demand concerted efforts from both the City and the applicants before and during an application process. The interactive nature of the workshop allowed for

clear communication, addressing concerns, and creating a shared vision for a streamlined development approval process.

The productive discussions that unfolded during the workshop provided an in-depth assessment of the City's current performance in handling the development approval process. This dialogue highlighted the City's on-going efforts in streamlining the approval process, while also giving participants an opportunity to openly share their concerns and thoughts regarding where they felt improvements could be made.



3.2.3. Meeting with Local Housing Societies

In a meeting with Fernie's housing societies, the project team aimed to understand their needs and develop strategies for more housing developments led by local housing societies. The session included an interactive question-and-answer segment to gauge insights, expectations, concerns, and suggestions related to the project. Responses were documented and included in the engagement summary report, providing transparency on how the housing societies' feedback guides the project's progress.

3.2.4. Internal Staff Interviews

McElhanney's team conducted comprehensive one-on-one interviews with eleven key representatives from the City, including the Chief Administrative Officer, to gather insights on topics such as staffing, operations, fee structures, development approval processes, attainable housing strategies, and technology usage. The interviewees provided open and insightful responses that contributed to a better understanding of the current situation and potential improvement opportunities.

3.2.5. Internal Staff Workshop

The staff workshop on the development approval process engaged eighteen City staff members from various departments, fostering a collaborative environment and improved communication channels among departments. The discussions generated a wealth of insights, resulting in a total of 936 responses, representing a rich array of perspectives and ideas. These responses covered a wide range of topics, from streamlining internal processes to enhancing communication with external interested parties, and from exploring software utilization to considering policy updates. The staff workshop proved to be an invaluable engagement activity



that provided a deeper understanding of the development approval process from the perspective of City staff. The insights gathered from the workshop served as a foundation for the subsequent analysis and recommendations, enabling the project team to develop strategies to enhance the City's development approvals process in a manner that aligns with the needs and experiences of the City staff and the broader community.

3.2.6. Phone Interviews with Interested Public Members

In addition to these engagement activities, the project team also conducted one-on-one interviews with three interested public members, including a local developer, a representative from a local residential construction company, and a Calgary-based realtor. These discussions provided valuable insights into specific concerns and questions, contributing to refining and advancing the project.

3.3. WHAT IS WORKING WELL

The City of Fernie excels in its Development Approvals Process, reflecting its commitment to streamlining Development Approvals process. The engagement process highlights several key strengths:

- **Effective Implementation of Development Variance Permit Approval Delegation Bylaw:** This accomplishment has significantly minimized the number of Development Variance Permits (DVPs) needing Council approval. By accelerating the DVP approval and issuance process, the bylaw has streamlined development approval process, thereby enriching and fortifying Fernie's housing diversity.
- **Effective Communication:** The Planning Department maintains clear and responsive communication channels, addressing inquiries and concerns promptly.
- **User-Friendly Application Process:** Fernie's application submission process is straightforward and accessible, with information readily available on the City's website.
- **Efficient Planning Collaboration:** The City's approachability fosters a collaborative atmosphere among interested parties, contributing to efficient planning.
- **Transparency:** The development review process is seen as transparent, accountable, and accessible, fostering trust among applicants.
- **Service Exceeds Expectations:** Fernie consistently exceeds expectations in its approval process, reinforcing its positive reputation.

Additionally, significant strides have been made in critical areas such as floodplain mapping, land subdivision, and slope assurance. Although these measures may increase costs for builders, they offer the community enhanced protection against liability claims. The City's proactive approach to floodplain management has earned national recognition, and numerous successful collaborations with developers have demonstrated its commitment to community safety.

Key Challenges and Opportunities

3.4. Challenges and Opportunities

Alongside the strengths, a number of challenges were identified, which also revealed opportunities for improvement. Challenges highlighted during the process include slow response times, unclear checklists, defining complete applications, and a lack of an online portal.

Opportunities include establishing a comprehensive training program, developing a staff skills matrix, and implementing a formalized professional development approach to enhance employee capabilities and efficiency. Additionally, updating fees and charges to align with growth costs and transitioning to a digital work environment with an online permitting system can streamline processes. Recommendations to improve internal and external collaboration include providing clear expectations, creating a guide, and coordinating internal application reviews.

4. Existing Policy Review

The project team completed a comprehensive review and analysis of Fernie's existing development policy documents. This analysis provides an in-depth assessment of the existing documents contributing to the City of Fernie's development approvals processes, aiming to identify gaps and areas for improvement. Each bylaw related to the development process underwent thorough evaluation based on various criteria, including format, definitions, amendments, structure, and ease of accessibility.

Several strengths and weaknesses were identified within the evaluated bylaws. For instance:

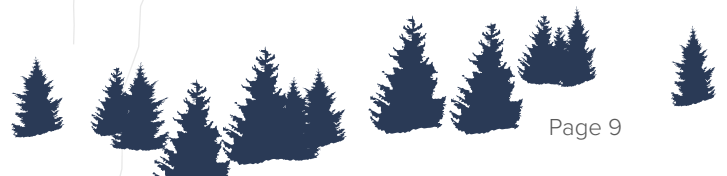
- The Land Use Application Procedures Bylaw No. 1706, 1996 was found to lack updated application forms, clear procedures, and definitions, presenting opportunities for enhancement in these areas. On the other hand, the Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 2231, 2014 demonstrated a comprehensive vision and clear goals, with opportunities identified for considering design competitions and incorporating development approvals information in application forms.
- In terms of the City of Fernie Consolidated Zoning Bylaw 1750, it revealed outdated references and inconsistent definitions, suggesting the need for refinement and the inclusion of tables for consistent regulations. Meanwhile, the COF Board of Variance Bylaw No. 2053, 2007 posed challenges in terms of accessibility, lacking a dedicated webpage and information, calling for improvements in advertising and ensuring active board members' participation.
- However, the COF Delegation Bylaw No. 2467, 2022 stood out for its transparency and ease of accessibility, effectively delegating minor variances to staff for faster approvals. In contrast, the COF Development Applications Fees Bylaw No. 2008, 2005 required updating to include Agricultural Land Commission fees and better reflect staff time and resources spent on applications.
- The COF Development Cost Charge Bylaw No. 2276, 2015 proved to be comprehensive but could benefit from the inclusion of housing exemptions and increased accessibility. Similarly, the COF Subdivision Development Servicing Bylaw No. 1727, 1998 revealed structural challenges and would benefit from reformatting for consistency.
- Additionally, the COF Floodplain Management Bylaw No. 2348 was challenging to find and lacked proper structure, indicating a need for enhanced visibility and accessibility.

In light of these findings, several recommendations are proposed in Section 6 to address identified gaps and improve the development approvals process in the City of Fernie.

5. Best Practice Research and Analysis

The project team conducted an extensive best practice research and analysis exercise to identify leading practices from comparable organizations and understand what constitutes best-in-class approaches. The insights were gathered through interviews with other jurisdictions, relevant third-party research reports, benchmarking studies, and industry-leading practices. The City of Fernie collaborated closely in this process, identifying a set of peer jurisdictions locally that share similarities with Fernie. Additionally, McElhanney's network and research provided further input.

Based on the research findings, several key opportunities were identified for Fernie. These include pre-zoning eligible properties to promote innovative infill housing, implementing measures to fast-track affordable housing projects, exploring the potential of higher-density zoning, and adopting inclusionary housing policies. By embracing these best practices, Fernie can significantly enhance its housing and development processes, supporting effective and efficient approvals process and contribute to housing attainability in Fernie.



6. Strategic Recommendations and Implementation Plan

This section includes a set of strategic recommendations and a detailed list of implementation actions aimed at addressing the root causes of delay in application approvals and facilitating the city's development process. The recommendations and implementation actions are designed to align with the city's objectives and address key factors affecting the efficiency and effectiveness of its development approval process. These recommendations and associated implementation actions serve as a roadmap to aid the City in planning its next course of action. However, the final decision on how to adopt and execute these recommendations and actions ultimately lies with City staff and Council.

The focus of this section is divided into four areas: Strategic Recommendations, Root Causes, and Implementation Actions, and Key Performance Indicators.

Strategic Recommendations

This section outlines the strategic strategies that the city needs to take to address the identified challenges. These actions are derived from a careful analysis of the city's current situation and are designed to drive meaningful improvements in the application approval process.

Root Causes

This section delves into the underlying causes of the current challenges. Understanding these root causes is critical as it ensures that the recommendations and actions are targeted at the real issues, rather than just addressing symptoms. This deep understanding is key to achieving transformative improvements in the approval process.

Implementation Actions

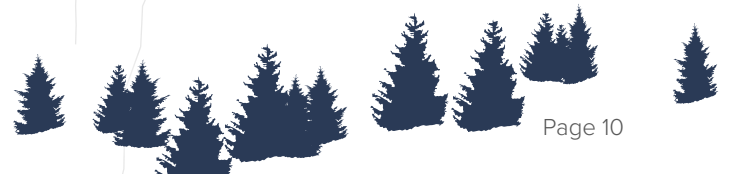
This section breaks down the implementation of each recommendation into a series of actionable steps. The steps are organized into three categories:

- **Quick Wins:** These are actions that can be taken immediately and can yield results in a short time. They are typically easy to implement and do not require significant resources. They serve to build momentum and provide early evidence of improvement.
- **Progressive Gain:** These actions require more planning and resources to implement but have the potential to drive more significant improvements. They represent the next level of change after the quick wins have been achieved.

- **Transformative Achievement:** These are the most ambitious actions that aim to drive fundamental changes in the approval process. They require significant investment and effort to implement, but they have the potential to fundamentally transform the way the city manages development applications, leading to substantial long-term benefits.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are proposed for monitoring and evaluating the progress of the implementation actions. *Please note that this is not an exhaustive list and can be tailored to the specific goals and objectives of the City.*



6.1. STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATION #1:

Establish a holistic staff training and professional development initiative aimed at endowing staff with the essential skills, knowledge base, and resources to proficiently navigate and expedite the development approval procedures. This initiative will ensure that staff members effectively perform their duties and obligations, thereby enhancing the applicant's experience throughout the process.

Root Causes #1:

- Incomplete staff skillsets and expertise can lead to delays in processing development applications. Without a well-rounded understanding of relevant regulations, technical knowledge, and soft skills, staff members may struggle to navigate complex applications, resulting in extended review times.
- Inconsistent interpretation of City of Fernie's regulations and policies may result in varying outcomes for similar applications, undermining transparency and fairness in the process.
- Untrained staff may take longer to complete tasks and make more mistakes, ultimately impacting overall productivity and slowing down the development approvals process.
- Knowledge gaps may lead to delays in processing development applications when key staff members leave the organization.
- Without a plan to enhance their expertise and advance their careers, staff members may miss professional growth opportunities. This can lead to reduced job satisfaction and limited motivation to contribute fully to the approvals process.
- A lack of training in soft skills, such as communication and collaboration, can hinder effective internal and external communication, leading to misunderstandings and delays in the approvals process.
- Without proper training and skill development, staff may struggle to adapt to changes in regulations, technology, and best practices, impeding the efficiency and agility of the process.
- Without a comprehensive onboarding training program, new employees may take longer to get up to speed, causing disruptions and inefficiencies in the development approvals process.
- A lack of a comprehensive staffing plan can lead to resource shortages, uneven workloads, and the inability to address unexpected fluctuations in demand, all of which contribute to delays in the approval process.

Implementation Actions #1:

Quick Wins

1.1. Develop a Staff Skillset Matrix:

1.1.1. Define the specific skills and competencies required for the key roles and positions involved in the development approvals process, including technical expertise, knowledge of relevant regulations, and soft skills like communication and project management.

1.1.2. Evaluate the current skillsets of key staff members in the development approvals process. This can be achieved through self-assessments, manager evaluations, or skills assessment surveys. Map the existing skills against the required skills for each position to identify areas of strength and potential gaps.

1.2. Leverage existing training materials and online courses that align with the identified skill requirements. This will expedite the training process.

1.3. Organize informal knowledge-sharing sessions and workshops where senior and experienced staff from different departments can share best practices and insights with staff involved in the Development Approvals Process.

1.4. Establish and implement a user-friendly onboarding manual that provides new employees with essential information about the Development Approvals Process, including the development approvals process, application processing procedures, and relevant software tools.

1.5. Consider temporary or contract staffing to fill immediate gaps, particularly in areas experiencing high workloads in the Development Approvals Process.

1.6. Initiate a system to measure satisfaction levels among developers and organizations involved in the City's development approval process. A Net Promoter Score (NPS) could be a good starting point, given its widespread use and simplicity.

Implementation Actions #1:

1.7. Design and implement a comprehensive training program that includes specialized technical training for different aspects of the Development Approvals Process, such as planning, engineering, and building regulations.

1.8. Conduct regular feedback sessions with staff to identify areas of improvement in the training program and adjust the curriculum based on emerging challenges and industry developments.

1.9. Based on the skill mapping results, identify the priority areas for training and development. Design targeted training programs to address the identified skill gaps. This could include workshops, webinars, online courses, and external training sessions.

1.10. Collaborate with relevant training providers and industry experts to ensure the training content is up-to-date and aligned with industry best practices.

1.11. Encourage cross-training among staff members to broaden their skillsets and increase their versatility within the development approvals team.

1.12. Establish mentorship programs or job-shadowing opportunities to facilitate knowledge transfer and skill development among staff members, ensuring a smooth transition of expertise.

1.13. Start identifying key roles in the development approval process and potential internal candidates to fill these positions in the future.

1.14. Utilize the staff skillset matrix as a tool for performance management and career development discussions; Regularly review and update the staff skillset matrix to reflect changing needs, new regulations, and evolving industry standards.

1.15. Continually evaluate and refine the Net Promoter Score (NPS) system based on feedback and data obtained. Incorporate more detailed feedback mechanisms such as surveys or interviews to gain a deeper understanding of user experience and satisfaction. Use the insights gained to inform improvements in the approval process.

Implementation Actions #1:

1.16. Develop a comprehensive centralized training hub accessible to all employees within the City of Fernie. This hub will serve as a one-stop-shop for a wide range of training courses, certification programs, and cross-departmental learning opportunities related to the development approvals process and other relevant areas. The hub will also serve as a quick reference guide for staff members, offering them instant assistance with troubleshooting, best practices, and other useful tips related to all sorts of areas in the development approvals process.

1.17. Populate the training hub with a diverse range of courses tailored to different roles and skill levels within the organization. Offer both technical training, such as software proficiency, GIS mapping, and planning and development 101, as well as soft skills development, including communication, project management, and leadership.

Transformative Achievement



1.18. Introduce on-demand learning options, such as self-paced online courses and webinars, to accommodate employees' busy schedules. This flexible approach will allow staff to access training materials when they suit them best.

1.19. Partner with subject matter experts, both internally and externally, to deliver specialized training sessions. Inviting experienced professionals to share their knowledge will provide valuable insights and enhance the learning experience.

1.20. Invest in leadership development programs to prepare high-potential employees for leadership roles.

Implementation Actions #1:

1.21. Develop a diversity and inclusion strategy to ensure the workforce in the City of Fernie represents a range of perspectives and experiences.

1.22. Create a dedicated section in the training hub that houses all training information about the development approvals process, including procedures, policies, guidelines, and best practices. This resource will act as a knowledge repository accessible to all staff involved in the process.

Transformative Achievement



1.23. Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the training hub and courses through employee feedback and performance metrics. Use this data to continuously improve the training offerings and ensure they remain relevant and impactful.

1.24. Fully integrate the evolved Net Promoter Score (NPS) system into the City's development approval process. Use it as a key tool for continuous improvement, regularly reviewing the feedback and scores and taking action to address any identified issues.

KPI #1

- Decrease in skill gaps identified through the Staff Skillset Matrix.
- The usage and effectiveness of existing training materials and online courses.
- The participation and engagement level in informal knowledge-sharing sessions and workshops.
- How effectively and quickly new employees are onboarded using the new manual.
- The effectiveness of temporary or contract staffing in managing high workloads.
- The satisfaction levels among developers and organizations involved in the City's development approval process.
- The improvement in staff's skills and knowledge after the implementation of the comprehensive training program.
- The percentage of feedback suggestions implemented in the training program.
- The percentage of staff who have undergone the targeted training programs designed to address the identified skill gaps.
- The percentage of staff who have participated in cross-training.
- The number of staff members engaged in mentorship programs or job-shadowing opportunities.
- The number of employees who have progressed in their career paths due to the staff skillset matrix and associated performance management.
- The usage rate of the comprehensive centralized training hub.
- The percentage of staff who have completed the courses in the training hub.
- The number of staff who have used on-demand learning options.
- The number of high-potential employees who have successfully completed leadership development programs and assumed leadership roles.
- The diversity in the workforce and the success rate of the diversity and inclusion strategy.
- The effectiveness of the training hub and courses based on employee feedback and performance metrics.

6.2. STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS #2:

Develop and implement a cost-recovery model for application and inspection fees to cover the actual costs of the services provided.

Root Causes #2:

- When the application fees and charges do not accurately reflect the actual costs associated with the development approvals process, it can lead to budget constraints and a reduced ability to fund essential activities. This, in turn, hampers the city's ability to expedite processes and allocate resources effectively.
- The lack of adequate revenue to hire additional staff and invest in resources results in limited manpower and capacity to handle the increasing workload of development applications.
- With limited resources, existing staff members may become overwhelmed with a high volume of applications, causing delays in reviewing and processing applications in a timely manner.
- The lack of sufficient revenue may hinder the city's ability to invest in modern technology and software systems that could streamline the development approvals process.
- Insufficient revenue can also impact the city's ability to provide training and development opportunities for staff, hindering their ability to stay updated with the latest best practices and regulations.
- Without adequate revenue, it may be challenging for the city to attract and hire specialized staff with expertise in areas like building, planning, and engineering.
- The combination of outdated fees, limited revenue, and resource constraints can lead to delays in decision-making, as the city struggles to allocate resources effectively and prioritize applications.

Implementation Actions #2:

Quick Wins

2.1. Explore the feasibility of implementing a short-term cost recovery model for specific high-priority projects.

2.2. Introduce a graduated fee structure where accelerated development applications incur higher fees. This structure will only be applicable for fully completed applications, serving a dual purpose of not only creating an additional revenue stream but also promoting the submission of thorough applications by applicants. Ultimately, this reduces the demand on staff resources and improves the overall efficiency of the process.

2.3. Set up a cross-departmental team responsible for developing a cost recovery model and revenue distribution matrix.

2.4. Conduct a comprehensive review of the current application fees and charges to identify any immediate adjustments that can be made to better align them with the actual costs of processing applications.

2.5. Initiate a comprehensive research process to investigate successful planning fee and cost recovery strategies implemented by other municipalities. Identify key successful strategies from other municipalities, focusing on those that are most relevant to the city's current situation and challenges. Implement those strategies that are relatively easy to adopt and align with existing processes.

2.6. Conduct an analysis of the existing distribution of fees and charges among departments. Identify any imbalances or issues that need immediate attention.

Quick Wins



2.7. Implement a mechanism to readily share relevant financial data among departments.

2.8. Based on the findings of the current revenue analysis, make immediate adjustments where possible to provide quick relief to departments that are currently under-resourced.

2.9. Develop clear guidelines outlining when third-party or peer review costs will be borne by applicants, ensuring these costs are fairly allocated.

2.10. Implement a formal time-tracking system to measure how much staff time is spent on different tasks related to processing applications. This can help in allocating costs more accurately.

Implementation Actions #2:

Progressive Gain

2.11. Explore the possibility of establishing a development reserve fund to set aside revenue specifically for staff expansion and resource improvements.

2.12. Determine the full costs of providing services, including indirect costs such as overhead, administration, and support services. Develop a methodology for allocating these costs to different types of applications.

2.13. Allocate funds for hiring temporary staff to assist with application processing and reduce delays.

2.14. Establish clear cost-recovery goals. This could be recovering 100% of costs for some services, or a lower percentage for others, depending on policy decisions.

2.15. Develop clear policies on cost recovery. These policies should define which costs are recoverable, the level of cost recovery for different services, and how cost recovery will be implemented.

2.16. Conduct a legal review to ensure that the cost-recovery model complies with all relevant laws and regulations.

2.17. Engage with departments and create a comprehensive matrix that breaks down the fees and charges collected by the municipality, the services provided by each department, and the percentage of total revenue each department should receive. This should reflect the actual effort and resources required by each department to process applications.

2.18. Develop a standardized reporting format for the Finance department to share insights about development application-generated revenue, inspection fees collected, and other pertinent data.

Implementation Actions #2:

2.19. Conduct a thorough assessment of the city's long-term financial needs related to development approvals and create a sustainable funding model that accounts for future growth and demands.

2.20. Implement the cost recovery model.

2.21. Advocate for policy changes or legislative updates that allow for greater flexibility in setting application fees and charges, enabling the city to adjust them based on actual costs and changing economic conditions.

2.22. Communicate clearly about the cost-recovery model, including why it's being implemented, how it works, and how it benefits the development approval process.

2.23. Implement the revenue distribution matrix gradually to distribute new revenue according to the new guidelines. Monitor this process closely to identify any issues or adjustments needed.

Transformative Achievement

2.24. Establish a process for regular reviews of the revenue distribution matrix. This should include a mechanism for updating the matrix based on changes in workload, costs, or other factors.

2.25. If not already in place, consider implementing a centralized financial management system that can be accessed by relevant departments. This system will offer real-time data and insights for more informed and timely decisions.

2.26. Create clear policies around the sharing, access, and use of financial data to ensure consistent standards, avoid misunderstandings, and maintain compliance with regulations.

2.27. Over time, consider linking the revenue distribution matrix to department performance metrics. This could involve adjusting the distribution of revenue based on factors like efficiency, customer satisfaction, or other relevant measures.

KPI #2

- Additional revenue generated from the tiered fee system.
- Balance of distribution of fees and charges among departments.
- Percentage change in revenue after immediate adjustments have been made.
- Increase in the percentage of complete applications after implementing higher charges for expedited permits.
- The ease and speed of sharing relevant financial data among departments.
- The reduction in delays as a result of hiring temporary staff.
- The progress towards reaching cost recovery goals.
- The degree to which the funding model is able to meet the city's long-term financial needs.
- The accuracy of the revenue distribution matrix in reflecting actual efforts and resources.
- The impact of policy changes or legislative updates on the flexibility of setting fees and charges.
- The level of understanding among interested parties about the cost-recovery model and its benefits.
- The effectiveness of linking the revenue distribution matrix to department performance metrics.

6.3. STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATION #3:

Foster internal collaboration and clear communication via a strategy that clearly defines roles and responsibilities, establishes a technical review committee, and standardizes procedures.

Root Causes #3:

- The absence of clear and well-defined roles and responsibilities among staff members involved in the development approval process leads to confusion, duplication of work, and delays in decision-making.
- The absence of formalized and documented application approval processes and procedures contributes to inefficiencies, as staff may struggle to navigate the process effectively, resulting in delays and inconsistencies.
- Departments working in silos without clear communication and collaboration channels often lead to overlapping responsibilities, miscommunication, and a lack of accountability.
- Insufficient communication and collaboration among different departments in the development approval process hinder the flow of information, problem-solving, and timely decision-making, resulting in delays and bottlenecks.

Implementation Actions #3:

Quick Wins



3.1. Communicate with all staff members involved in the development approval process to understand the current situation, their roles, and their issues.

3.2. Identify areas of overlap, gaps, and miscommunication to create a clearer and more defined framework.

3.3. Start delegating non-technical inquiries and activities to existing administrative staff.

3.4. Form a provisional technical review committee with representatives from the relevant departments. Define the structure, responsibilities, and governance of the technical review committee. This includes setting terms of reference and determining decision-making processes.

3.5. Organize cross-departmental meetings to encourage open discussion about the issues at hand and to foster an atmosphere of collaboration.

3.6. Start compiling frequently asked questions and develop standard responses for them. Also, create a standard response template for internal referrals to improve efficiency.

Implementation Actions #3:

3.7. Work towards defining roles and responsibilities formally in written documents; Define and document the responsibilities of each department for each type of application. Make sure that the defined roles align with the competencies of each department.

3.8. Develop formal, well-documented procedures for application approval; Roll out the FAQ and standard responses to all relevant staff. Conduct training if necessary to ensure everyone understands how to use these tools.

3.7. Work towards defining roles and responsibilities formally in written documents; Define and document the responsibilities of each department for each type of application. Make sure that the defined roles align with the competencies of each department.

3.8. Develop formal, well-documented procedures for application approval; Roll out the FAQ and standard responses to all relevant staff. Conduct training if necessary to ensure everyone understands how to use these tools.

3.9. Standardize the referral process to ensure smooth handover of tasks between departments. Clearly define which department refers to which, and what information needs to be passed on.

3.10. Begin developing a common vocabulary across departments. This could be a list of terms and definitions related to the development approval process. Distribute this to all staff and incorporate it into training programs.

3.11. Implement and test the new documented application approval process and procedures.

Implementation Actions #3:

3.12. Train staff members on the workflow of the entire process, even if they are only responsible for one part. Understanding the big picture can help them carry out their roles more effectively.

3.13. Develop training programs for administrative staff to handle non-technical inquiries effectively.

3.14. Begin an assessment to identify whether the current administrative staff capacity is sufficient to handle the extra workload.

3.15. Establish formal communication and collaboration channels between different departments, including the use of collaborative software tools.

3.16. Implement a regular assessment system to continually evaluate the workload of technical and administrative staff.

3.17. To make the organization more resilient and flexible, consider cross training for some staff. This means that some administrative staff may learn technical skills, and technical staff may learn some administrative tasks.

3.18. Create a feedback mechanism to enable employees to express concerns and suggestions regarding the new processes.

Implementation Actions #3:

3.19. Conduct regular reviews of roles and responsibilities to ensure they remain relevant and effective as the organization evolves.

3.20. Regularly update the FAQ, standard response templates, and the common vocabulary based on new questions or issues that arise. Ensure all updates are communicated to relevant staff.

3.21. Regularly review the effectiveness of the technical review committee. This could include assessing their impact on the development approval process.

Transformative Achievement



3.22. Foster a culture where each department understands its responsibilities and is held accountable for their part of the process. This should be supported by leadership and integrated into performance evaluations.

3.23. Develop a transparent system where all staff can see the status of each application. This could be a shared dashboard or a project management tool.

3.24. Utilize technology to streamline the referral process, such as automated workflows or notifications when tasks are completed, or applications are referred.

KPI #3

- The rate of participation and engagement in communication sessions to understand the current situation, roles, and issues.
- The reduction in areas of overlap and gaps identified.
- How effectively non-technical inquiries and activities have been delegated to existing administrative staff.
- The successful formation and functionality of the technical review committee.
- The rate of participation in cross-departmental meetings.
- How frequently FAQs and standard responses are used and their effect on the efficiency of the process.
- The successful creation of well-defined roles and responsibilities, their implementation, and acceptance.
- The successful implementation and testing of new documented application approval procedures.
- The number of staff participating in cross-training and the success rate.
- The number of feedbacks collected and the percentage of those implemented.
- Review regularity: monitors how regularly roles, responsibilities, FAQs, and other key documents are reviewed and updated.
- Transparency level: tracks the successful development and usage of a system where all staff can see the status of each application.

6.4. STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATION #4:

Enhance the application intake process and develop comprehensive external communication materials to improve applicant experience and application quality.

Root Causes #4:

- If developers and applicants heavily rely on city staff as their consultants during the pre-application phase, this could lead to staff being overburdened and may contribute to delays in processing other applications. If pre-application meetings with city staff requested by applicants are free and unlimited, applicants might use them extensively, taking up significant amounts of staff time that could otherwise be used for reviewing and processing applications.
- Without a fee attached, some applicants might come to pre-application meetings without having prepared adequately, meaning the meetings are not as effective or efficient as they could be. This could result in longer timelines as staff must spend extra time explaining basic information or dealing with incomplete applications. Some applicants might request meetings with staff when they are not serious about pursuing an application, thus diverting staff resources away from serious applications that are waiting to be processed.
- The absence of a formalized, structured pre-application process could lead to inconsistency in the advice provided to applicants, miscommunication, and ultimately, delays in the application process as staff spend additional time clarifying requirements.
- Without a dedicated contact within the City for development applications, it can create confusion and inefficiency. Applicants may need to communicate with various city staff across different departments, which can lead to information being lost or miscommunicated. It can be unclear who is responsible for addressing an applicant's questions or concerns, leading to delays as applicants try to identify the right person to speak with. If applicants receive information and guidance from multiple city staff, there may be inconsistencies in the advice given, leading to confusion and potential delays in application completion and submission.
- If the City of Fernie is frequently receiving incomplete applications, it suggests that there might be a lack of clarity or communication about what information needs to be submitted, contributing to process delays.
- Without a uniform system for application intake and verification, the City of Fernie's process may be subject to inconsistencies and errors, slowing down the approval process.
- Without comprehensive guides, applicants may not fully understand the application process and requirements.
- One of the key root causes of delays in building permit approval is the submission of inadequate or incomplete drawings. If the plans submitted with the application are lacking in detail, do not comply with the building code or city ordinances, or have significant errors or omissions, it can lead to lengthy back-and-forth communications and multiple rounds of corrections.

Implementation Actions #4:

Quick Wins

4.1. Create preliminary pre-application guidelines that clearly define the expectations and requirements for starting the application process. These guidelines should include information on necessary preliminary plans, site details, proposed uses, and any other relevant information, and be easily accessible for prospective applicants.

4.2. Provide a summarized version of legislation relevant to the application process during the pre-application stage. This will ensure that applicants understand the legal context of their proposed development, helping to avoid any potential legal issues further along the process.

4.3. Develop comprehensive and detailed checklists for the application intake and completeness verification process. These checklists should outline all the necessary documents and information required from applicants.

4.4. Create clear and straightforward guidance materials to help applicants understand the application intake process and what constitutes a complete application. These materials should be readily accessible and understandable for all applicants.

4.5. Assess the feasibility of establishing a standard timeline for determining the completeness of applications, starting from the date of submission.

4.6. Explore ways to use the existing City's software system to provide applicants with regular updates on the status of their applications. This could be in the form of automated emails.

4.7. Initiate a pilot program for expedited review of applications that meet certain predefined conditions. The success of this pilot can inform potential expansion or modification of the program in the future.

4.8. Determine the average staff cost involved in pre-application consultations to develop an appropriate fee for such services.

4.9. Establish key staff members who will act as primary points of contact for applicants based on their expertise and availability.

4.10. Researching and benchmarking Certified Professionals programs in other cities, gathering insights about best practices and potential pitfalls. Engage with interested parties to understand their needs and expectations and begin laying out a preliminary framework for the program in Fernie.

Implementation Actions #4:

Progressive Gain

4.11. Establish a formal pre-application process that guides applicants through the necessary steps before application submission. This process should include consultations with city staff, preliminary reviews, and early feedback from applicants.

4.12. Develop a comprehensive toolkit or guidebook for applicants that includes all necessary information related to the pre-application process, including checklists, templates, tips for a successful application, and other resources.

4.13. Create standard templates and checklists for application intake to ensure consistency across all applications. This could include templates/checklists for application forms, review forms, and communication templates for correspondence with applicants.

4.14. Prepare regular reports detailing the time taken to process applications, with explanations for any delays beyond the standard timeline.

4.15. Based on the success and learnings from the pilot program, expand the expedited review process to include a broader range of applications.

4.16. Develop and implement training programs to equip identified primary points of contact for applicants with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively guide applicants through the process.

4.17. Develop a formal Certified Professionals program, including comprehensive guidelines and training protocols. Identify the building permit applications and approvals that will be part of the program and pilot the program on a small scale to fine-tune its operation.

Implementation Actions #4:

4.18. Introduce a mandatory pre-application review process to identify potential issues and provide early feedback to applicants, thereby reducing the chance of incomplete or unsuccessful applications.

4.19. Implement a digital platform for the pre-application process, allowing applicants to submit preliminary plans, receive feedback, and track the progress of their pre-application process online.

Transformative Achievement

4.20. Implement a quality assurance process to ensure that all applications are reviewed and verified in accordance with the standardized procedures. This could involve periodic audits or the implementation of a peer-review system.

4.21. Introduce performance standards and metrics for staff related to processing timelines.

4.22. Fully implement the Certified Professionals program citywide, actively promoting it among potential participants.

KPI #4

- Accessibility and comprehensibility of guidelines as reported by potential applicants.
- Quantity of summarized legislation available during pre-application stage.
- Clarity and completeness of checklists, based on applicant feedback.
- Accessibility and usefulness of guidance materials, based on applicant feedback.
- Reduction rate of incomplete applications over time.
- Usefulness and timeliness of status updates as perceived by applicants.
- Number of applications processed in the expedited review pilot program.
- Number of applicants submitting complete applications and receiving priority scheduling.
- Effectiveness of priority scheduling as perceived by applicants.
- Average staff cost for pre-application consultations.
- Applicant feedback regarding interactions with key staff members.
- Number of applicants utilizing the pre-application process.
- Consistency and effectiveness of application intake templates, based on staff and applicant feedback.
- Number of applications processed through the expanded expedited review.
- Number of applicants benefiting from the tiered fee structure.
- Reduction rate of incomplete or unsuccessful applications.
- Number of performance standards and metrics introduced and corresponding staff performance improvement.
- Number of Certified Professionals actively participating in the program.
- Feedback from Certified Professionals and interested parties on program effectiveness.

6.5. STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATION #5:

Adopt a comprehensive digital transformation strategy to improve efficiency and transparency, including a user-friendly online system and modern digital records management.

Root Causes #5:

- Current systems might be outdated, inefficient, or lack the necessary functionalities to support a streamlined application process. This includes the lack of an online permitting and tracking system, an electronic plan review system, online payment options, and an online booking system for inspections.
- The absence of a system that mandates all requirements to be met before submission could be leading to an influx of incomplete applications.
- The lack of effective digital records management systems and procedures could be causing issues with tracking applications, storing documentation, and ensuring accountability, further slowing down the application process.
- The absence of readily available infrastructure models might lead to repeated requests from developers and slow down the process.
- If bylaws, maps, and illustrations are not easily accessible and available in high-resolution digital formats, applicants may have difficulty understanding the requirements and constraints of their projects, leading to delays.
- The absence of a one-stop source for all relevant city information and maps may lead to a lengthy research process for developers and property owners, causing delays. Even when data is available, it might not be in a user-friendly format, making it hard for developers to use it effectively and causing potential project delays.

Implementation Actions #5:

Quick Wins



5.1. Conduct a thorough review of the current system to understand its limitations and areas for improvement. Identify the key features that a new system must have to better serve the city's needs.

5.2. Research and identify a user-friendly online permitting software that is flexible, scalable, and adaptable to changing needs. The software should be compatible with the City's current record management system and meet the needs of the City of Fernie.

5.3. The City of Fernie should research and identify suitable permitting software that includes electronic plan review systems and digital signature tools, a user-friendly online payment system that can be integrated into the application intake system, and an intuitive online booking system for efficient scheduling of inspections.

5.4. Develop and implement an open data policy which outlines the types of data that can be made public, the processes for making data available, and the responsibilities of different departments in ensuring data openness.

5.5. Set up a basic data portal on the city's website where datasets can be uploaded and accessed by the public.

5.6. Conduct in-house training workshops to familiarize staff with updated GIS services.

5.7. Allow preliminary access to some basic infrastructure models to help developers in the initial stages of their projects.

5.8. Before fully implementing the new system, conduct a pilot test with a few applicants to gauge its effectiveness and identify any potential challenges. Feedback from this pilot test can help refine the system before it's rolled out to all applicants.

5.9. After successful pilot testing, roll out the online permitting system in phases, starting with simpler permit applications. This progressive approach allows for continuous improvement and adjustment before the system is fully implemented.

5.10. Introduce an AI-powered validation process that can review applications in real-time and highlight any missing or incorrect information.

5.11. Invest in comprehensive records management software that not only stores and tracks documents but also manages workflows, sets access permissions, and generates automatic reminders for pending tasks.

5.12. Implement a data catalogue which provides metadata on all available datasets. This includes descriptions of the datasets, information about the data sources, and details about when and how often the datasets are updated.

5.13. Design a well-documented, step-by-step process for developers to request and access city infrastructure models.

5.14. Develop an online library of bylaws, maps, and illustrations that is easy to navigate and provides high-resolution digital copies of all documents.

5.15. Start designing and developing an online GIS mapping portal that is user-friendly and meets the needs of developers and property owners.

Implementation Actions #5:

5.16. Fully implement the online permitting system. This will provide a central place for internal departments to provide review comments, track and monitor applications, and generate statistics.

5.17. Aim for a complete digital transformation of the application process, with an intelligent system that not only checks for application completeness but also guides applicants through each step, provides explanations for requirements, and offers real-time help.

5.18. Once the online permitting system is well-established, look at ways it can be integrated with other city systems (like finance or GIS) to further streamline operations and provide a comprehensive, one-stop platform for applicants and staff.

Transformative Achievement

5.19. Aim for a fully integrated records management system that communicates with other city systems. Explore the use of AI-powered records management systems that can automatically classify and tag documents.

5.20. A fully integrated open data platform that is connected to the city's internal data systems. This allows for real-time updates of datasets and reduces the manual work involved in uploading data to the portal.

5.21. Set up a robust open data governance structure, including a dedicated open data team, a data governance board, and regular data audits. This can ensure the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of the open data program.

Transformative Achievement



5.22. Develop a secure, centralized online platform where updated infrastructure models can be stored and accessed by developers after permission has been granted.

5.23. Integrate the process of accessing infrastructure models into the online application system, allowing developers to request access to models as a part of their application.

5.24. Achieve full digitization and online accessibility of all bylaws, maps, and illustrations, ensuring that they are easily amendable and updated versions are promptly made available online.

5.25. Fully implement a GIS Mapping Portal. Once the portal is fully developed, launch it and make it accessible to all developers and property owners.

KPI #5

- Completion rate of system review, number of limitations identified, number of improvements suggested.
- Number of developers given access to the City's models, feedback on the usefulness of models.
- Completion rate of online library, number of documents uploaded, user access frequency.
- Full implementation of the online permitting system: Number of permit types included, number of applications processed, feedback received. Number of internal departments utilizing the system; Accuracy in application tracking and statistics generation.
- Number of documents stored and tracked.
- Number of datasets with detailed metadata.
- Frequency and accuracy of dataset updates.
- Number of documents digitized.
- User accessibility and navigation experience.
- Number of regular data audits conducted.
- Number of developers accessing the platform.
- Number of developers and property owners using the portal.

6.6. STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATION #6:

Modernize Fernie's legislative frameworks and implement strategies that encourage infill and multi-family housing to align with the current development needs.

Root Causes #6:

- The presence of outdated bylaws can cause delays as they may not be relevant to current development projects.
- Current zoning bylaws might be too restrictive and not allow for the construction of secondary suites and detached dwelling units in various zones. This limitation can delay approval processes as applications for these types of developments might face opposition or require additional time for variances or rezoning.
- The current sign bylaw may require an excessive number of permits, resulting in a complicated and time-consuming process for applicants.
- Absence of clear and consistent policy guidance on asset management can lead to confusion and inconsistencies in how assets are managed during development projects. Without appropriate tools to manage and maintain municipal assets effectively, the process can be inefficient, prone to errors, and cause delays in the application approval process.
- A lack of systematic forecasting of future infrastructure needs can mean that development projects are approved without sufficient consideration of whether existing or planned infrastructure will be adequate.'
- Without a clear policy on densification, the approval process for denser developments may lack direction, consistency, and alignment with the council's goals, causing delays and confusion.
- The requirement for a public hearing can unnecessarily extend the approval timeline for compliant projects.

Implementation Actions #6:

Quick Wins

6.1. Perform a preliminary review of all bylaws to identify any obvious areas of outdated or irrelevant legislation.

6.2. Begin improving the online accessibility of bylaws, starting with the most frequently referenced ones.

6.3. Conduct a thorough review of the current sign bylaw and identify elements that make the process cumbersome and cause delays.

6.4. Use available data to perform a quick assessment of population growth trends and infrastructure needs to provide immediate insights for the application process.

6.5. Begin incorporating basic estimates of future population growth and infrastructure needs into the evaluation of development applications.

6.6. Review the current zoning bylaw and identify the areas where changes can be made to permit secondary suites and detached dwelling units.

6.7. Develop and implement a Densification Policy as a guide for the approval process for denser developments.

6.8. Develop clear criteria to identify projects that align with the OCP and could potentially have the public hearing requirement waived.

6.9. Research and develop a list of possible incentives that could be offered to developers of prioritized multi-family projects. These could include expedited review, reduced fees, or access to additional resources.

6.10. Design and initiate an Infill Housing Challenge to promote innovative and sustainable designs.

6.11. Carry out an audit of existing Short Term Rental (STR) in the city to understand the current scale of the issue and ensure all are compliant with the Business Licensing and Regulation Bylaw No. 2028. This could involve a data-driven approach, using publicly available data from STR platforms.

Implementation Actions #6:

6.12. Conduct a comprehensive review and revision of bylaws: Carry out a detailed review of all bylaws and update them to align with the city's current policy objectives.

6.13. Implement a zoning-like system for sign permits designed to streamline the process and reduce the number of permits required.

6.14. Collaborate with developers and other interested parties to create design guidelines for secondary suite-ready detached housing and detached accessory dwelling units. These guidelines should meet the needs of potential residents and comply with all City and Building Code requirements.

6.15. Work towards the creation and implementation of a detailed, comprehensive policy guidance for asset management that outlines the processes and requirements for managing and maintaining municipal assets in the context of development projects.

6.16. Carry out a detailed review of all bylaws and update them to align with the city's current policy objectives.

6.17. Incorporate the use of population and infrastructure forecasts into the standard procedures for reviewing development applications.

6.18. Begin the process of amending the bylaw to allow for the waiver of public hearings for projects that meet the predetermined criteria and are consistent with the OCP.

6.19. Begin prioritizing eligible multi-family housing projects in the application process based on the established criteria; Offer incentives during the Quick Wins stage to developers of prioritized projects to encourage the development of multi-family housing.

6.20. Conduct a study to identify areas that would be suitable for multi-family housing. This could take into consideration factors such as access to public transportation, proximity to amenities, and existing neighborhood characteristics.

6.21. Implement a pre-zoning strategy and incorporate the winning designs from the recommended infill Housing Challenge (6.10) into the city's pre-zoning plan, which could serve as a blueprint for future infill housing developments.

6.22. Conduct a thorough evaluation of the impact of STRs on the housing market in Fernie. This could involve research into the rate of conversion of long-term rentals to STRs, the effect on rental prices, and the overall impact on housing availability.

6.23. Create a Pre-Approved Plans Library for different types of buildings. The Pre-Approved plans could start with Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) as they are an easy way to increase density in Single Family Zones. The Pre-Approved plans would be available to anyone for a minimal fee that can be purchased directly from the designer/City

Implementation Actions #6:

6.24. Set up a routine process for reviewing and updating bylaws to ensure they stay relevant and aligned with the city's long-term policy objectives.

6.25. Conduct a thorough review of the OCP to ensure it accurately reflects current community values and priorities.

Transformative Achievement



6.26. Formulate and implement a comprehensive policy to encourage the construction of secondary suite-ready detached housing, detached accessory dwelling units, and conversions of single-detached homes. Develop and implement a range of incentives to motivate developers to build these types of homes. Incentives could include fast-tracked permit approvals, reduced fees, and/or density bonuses.

6.27. Develop a comprehensive long-term strategy for managing STRs in Fernie. This strategy should balance the economic benefits of STRs with their impact on housing availability and affordability.

KPI #6

- Number of frequently referenced bylaws made accessible online.
- Number of applications evaluated using basic future population growth and infrastructure needs.
- Number of areas identified in the zoning bylaw allowing secondary suites and detached dwelling units.
- Development and successful implementation of a Densification Policy.
- Number of existing STRs audited and found compliant with the Business Licensing and Regulation Bylaw No. 2028.
- Number of bylaws reviewed comprehensively and revised to align with city policy objectives.
- Efficiency and streamlining gains from implementing a zoning-like system for sign permits.
- Number of interested parties engaged in developing design guidelines for secondary suite-ready detached housing and detached accessory dwelling units.
- Successful creation and implementation of a comprehensive policy guidance for asset management.
- Number of development applications reviewed using population and infrastructure forecasts.
- Number of projects for which public hearings were waived due to meeting OCP criteria.
- Increase in prioritized multi-family housing projects due to offered incentives.
- Number of pre-zoning strategies implemented for future infill housing developments based on the Infill Housing Challenge designs.
- Successful review of the OCP and alignment with current community values and priorities.
- Number of secondary suite-ready detached houses, detached accessory dwelling units, and conversions of single-detached homes constructed under the new comprehensive policy.

6.7. STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATION #7:

Bolster affordable housing in Fernie through a fast-track approval system, public-private collaborations, and relevant policy development.

Root Causes #7:

- Currently, there is no mechanism to expedite the permit approvals for non-market or rental housing.
- Opportunities for partnerships between the public and private sector are underutilized. These partnerships can leverage resources, knowledge, and capabilities from both sectors to accelerate housing and development projects.
- The absence of a robust policy and process that caters specifically to fast-tracking permit approvals for non-market or rental housing may be leading to delays.
- Delays in addressing letters of credit and restrictions on accepting letters of indemnity from secure non-profit groups could be causing bottlenecks in the approval process.
- The lack of policy or template for affordable housing agreements might complicate and extend negotiations between the City and developers, leading to delays.

Implementation Actions #7:

7.1. Initiate a study examining the feasibility and potential impacts of fast-tracking permit approvals for non-market or rental housing in Fernie.

7.3. Develop a comprehensive policy and process for fast-tracking permit approvals for non-market or rental housing. Pilot this process with a select group of projects that meet the criteria, refining the approach based on feedback and outcomes.

7.6. Fully implement a fast-track permit approval process for non-market or rental housing, while continually monitoring and adjusting the approach based on results.

Quick Wins

7.2. Identify potential opportunities for public-private partnerships in housing and development projects.

Progressive Gain

7.4. Formulate a policy framework to guide the establishment and management of public-private partnerships in housing and development.

7.5. Develop and implement a policy to address letters of credit in a timely manner and accept letters of indemnity from secure non-profit groups (ex BC Housing).

Transformative Achievement

7.7. Develop and implement a policy or template for affordable housing agreements in Fernie.

KPI #7

- Successful development and implementation rate of the fast-track permit approval policy.
- Number of projects processed under the pilot fast-track system.
- Applicant feedback and outcomes from the pilot fast-track system.
- Number of public-private partnerships established following the policy implementation.
- Number of non-profit groups benefiting from the letters of indemnity policy.
- Number of affordable housing agreements signed following the policy implementation.



6.8. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

It's important to consider the financial implications of implementing the recommended actions. Some strategies, such as technology enhancements and training for staff, will require an upfront investment, but could lead to longer-term cost savings by improving efficiency and reducing errors. Other strategies, such as changes to policies and processes, may have minimal direct costs but could require additional staff resources to implement and manage.

Provided below are several financial considerations:

- **Upfront Costs:** Some of the proposed actions will require an initial investment. For example, investing in technology systems or developing new resources, such as educational materials or online tools.
- **Ongoing Costs:** Some actions may require ongoing funding, such as the costs associated with maintaining new technology systems, ongoing staff training, or recurring community engagement activities.
- **Staffing Costs:** Changes to processes or the introduction of new strategies may require additional staff resources, either to implement the changes or to manage new ongoing processes.
- **Potential Savings:** Several of the proposed actions could lead to cost savings in the longer term. For example, improving efficiency could reduce the amount of staff time spent on each application, freeing up resources for other tasks.
- **Potential Revenue:** Certain actions could potentially generate additional revenue for the city. For instance, an efficient application process could encourage more developers to build in the city, leading to increased permit fees and property tax revenue.
- **Funding Opportunities:** Explore potential funding opportunities, such as grants or partnerships, to help offset the costs associated with implementing the recommended actions.

7. Evaluation and Monitoring

To effectively implement the proposed actions and ensure they are having the intended impact, it is critical to monitor and evaluate progress on an ongoing basis. The monitoring and evaluation plan can be structured around the three stages of action implementation: quick wins, progressive gains, and transformative achievements.

- Prior to the implementation of any actions, establish baseline measurements for the current state of the systems, processes, or conditions that the actions are intended to improve.
- Implement regular check-ins to assess the progress of the implementation and to identify any unforeseen issues or challenges.
- Identify key performance indicators (KPIs) that align with the goals of the quick win actions and monitor these metrics regularly.
- Establish channels for feedback from interested parties (such as city staff, developers, etc.) to gauge the effectiveness and reception of the implemented actions.
- Carry out regular interim assessments to review the effectiveness and efficiency of the new processes or systems put in place, making adjustments as needed.
- Compare the City's performance with similar municipalities to assess progress and identify areas for improvement.
- Conduct detailed performance analysis using the identified KPIs to measure the success of the implemented actions
- Conduct long-term impact studies to assess the effectiveness of the changes made and identify their long-term effects.
- Establish a process for continuous improvement, taking into account the results of monitoring and evaluation activities, to ensure that the transformative actions continue to deliver benefits.
- Regularly review the impact of the policies implemented as part of the recommended actions, making adjustments as necessary to ensure they continue to align with the city's evolving goals and objectives.

Closing

This report represents an exhaustive, evidence-based review of the current development approval process in the City of Fernie, coupled with a clear strategic roadmap for enhancement. Rooted in a comprehensive engagement process, policy review, data analysis, and best practice review, this document aims to provide the City of Fernie with robust recommendations to streamline its development approval process.

The critical issues identified highlight opportunities for improvement, creating the potential for a more efficient, responsive, and transparent system. The strategic recommendations offered, paired with a three-stage action plan, aim to tackle these challenges head-on. From comprehensive staff training and the implementation of a cost-recovery model to digital transformation strategies and modernization of legislative frameworks, these strategies focus on multiple facets of the approval process, ensuring a holistic approach to improvement.

To conclude, this report serves as a stepping-stone, ushering in a new era of efficiency and transparency in the City of Fernie's development approval process. The future of Fernie's housing and development landscape will be shaped by the actions taken now.



McElhanney

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