One-Stop Development Shop
Options To Improve Customer Service
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“Transforming Our Service
Focusing On Our Customers
Moving Towards A More Sustainable Future”
Introduction to Service Delivery Model Options

The City of Saint John has a clear vision for a prosperous and sustainable community. That vision is detailed in PlanSJ. One way that our community will realize that vision is through the creation of the One-Stop Development Shop, a “one counter” approach to ensure the development and building permitting process for customers such as developers and other property owners is clear, consistent and efficient. This brings together the City’s Planning, Building and Infrastructure service areas under one roof. It puts the right information and approvals in one place in a customer-centered way.

This project began under the leadership of Common Council in 2012 with the corporate realignment of City Services to create the Growth and Community Development Services Department (the GCDS).

Over the past year and a half, the “One-Stop” team has undertaken extensive consultation and research to develop the best way to meet the needs of our community. The focus is on collaboration with our customers – everyone from a developer building a large apartment building to a homeowner adding a new deck.

A set of guiding principles for the One-Stop Development Shop program was developed from discussions with our stakeholders and endorsed by Common Council on May 26, 2014. These guiding principles are:

- Innovation and Continuous Improvement
- Predictability and Clarity
- Facilitated and Streamlined
- Customer and Community Focused
THE ONE-STOP TEAM BEGAN A COMPREHENSIVE PROCESS TO DEVELOP NEW SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL OPTIONS THAT REFLECT THESE GUIDING PRINCIPLES. This included a detailed internal process review, exploration of best practices in other municipalities, discussions with local stakeholders, site visits and more. Based on this extensive effort, a range of customer-focused service delivery model options have been developed for the One-Stop Development Shop. These options correspond to the five primary features of the One-Stop Development Shop.

1. **Improve customer experience**

2. **Provide customers with access to a dedicated and knowledgeable Development Service team**

3. **Provide an efficient, consistent and seamless process for customers**

4. **Ensure transparency, while improving communication and engagement**

5. **Collaboratively increase levels of compliance**

The One-Stop team is bringing forward these service delivery model options to Common Council for review and discussion. These options are listed as either Core Improvements or as Further Improvements. Core Improvements are considered essential to the One-Stop Development Shop service improvement initiative.

Further Improvements are also offered for consideration. These go further in terms of service delivery, but have other considerations, not the least of which is cost. In addition to feedback from Common Council, the One-Stop team will also present these service delivery model options to our customers and other community stakeholders, seeking their direct input as we work together to finalize the service delivery model for a "made in Saint John solution".

When the service delivery model is finalized and approved by Common Council in the first half of 2015, it will lead to a series of changes, including extensive updates to City by-laws. Service delivery improvements will be made regularly in this process and will culminate with the formal opening of the One-Stop Development Shop in 2016.

The One-Stop Development Shop service delivery model options outlined in this paper have been organized according to the feature to which they best correspond. It is important to note that many of these options have the potential to impact positively on more than one feature, and many options—particularly the Core Improvements—may be seen as mutually supporting.

"A made in Saint John solution"
1. Improve Customer Experience

ONE CENTRAL GOAL OF THE ONE-STOP DEVELOPMENT SHOP IS MAKING THE PERMITTING AND APPROVAL PROCESS CONVENIENT FOR OUR CUSTOMERS. WE WILL ACHIEVE THAT GOAL WITH THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDED CORE IMPROVEMENTS AND OPTIONS:

### ONLINE

**Core Improvements**

- All of our applications and supporting materials will be made easily available online via a new One-Stop website.
- A web conferencing program will facilitate application and pre-application consultations for out of town and mobility-challenged customers.
- A protocol will be developed for receiving applications by email. Detailed instructions on the electronic submission process will be available to applicants.

**Further Improvements**

- A portal could be established on the One-Stop website for receiving online applications for applicable processes.

### APPLICATION PROCESS

**Core Improvements**

- Applicants for major projects will be encouraged to take advantage of a pre-application process to facilitate improved information exchange on requirements.
- Formal application standards and requirements for each type of application will bring greater clarity to customers, and promote transparency in One-Stop evaluation methods.

**Further Improvements**

- A policy could be developed to enable fast-tracking approvals of permits for developments in accordance with key PlanSJ or City objectives.
- A comprehensive pre-application process could be introduced for major projects. Applicants would submit detailed plans and studies for team review, and associated fees would be discounted from the cost of any resulting application submission.
- A regular promotion could be introduced for specific types of applications, in the spirit of the ‘Backyard Project Day’ event. This would be heavily advertised during the building season, and could offer a same-day turnaround for the review and approval of the highlighted permits.
• A Project Champion(s) could be designated to act as a central liaison for the customer in dealing with all aspects of permitting and approvals.

INSPECTIONS

Core Improvements

• To improve efficiency, mandatory inspections will be scheduled in advance and carried out within a specified period of time. Customers will call in to schedule an inspection and a One-Stop team member will notify them to confirm the inspection date. Customers will also have the option to schedule inspections by emailing a request.

Further Improvements

• An online program for scheduling inspections could allow customers to request inspections take place on a given date. Inspection times would be confirmed by a One-Stop team member via the client’s preferred method of communication.

• An online program for scheduling inspections that is linked to the internal departmental inspection scheduling calendar would allow customers to personally book their inspection appointment online.

AT THE COUNTER

Core Improvements

• Technical staff from each service area will come together to form a Front Counter Team ensuring that applicants have easy access to answers for their questions, and allowing certain approvals to be provided at the front counter.

• A “one counter” approach will bring together services currently found at three separate locations.

Further Improvements

• A customer-focused Development Service office could be established within City Hall that is accessible, convenient and user-friendly. This option is dependent on long-term plans for the City Hall building.

• A pilot program of extended hours could be scheduled at peak periods to better accommodate customers.
2. A Dedicated, Knowledgeable Development Service Team

PROVIDING OUR CUSTOMERS WITH TOP QUALITY SERVICE IS A KEY PRIORITY. THE FOLLOWING SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL OPTIONS WERE DEVELOPED AS A WAY TO ENSURE THE ONE-STOP TEAM BRING A HIGH LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING AND COMMITMENT TO THEIR ROLE.

ONE-STOP TEAM TRAINING, CROSS-TRAINING, & EXPECTATIONS

Core Improvements

• A newly developed team orientation and training program and tailored customer service training will ensure consistent and quality service to our customers.

Detailed procedural manuals will encourage greater consistency in team operations. These manuals will be used to train new One-Stop team members.

Periodic cross-training sessions and job-shadowing will allow team members from one part of the development service to learn about another portion.

A process improvement team will be created. This team (with rotating membership) will meet quarterly to discuss service concerns and potential improvements.

A survey will be created and circulated periodically to members of the One-Stop team to create a space for raising concerns and sharing ideas.

A service auditor role will monitor service efficiency and quality and oversee improvements.

Further Improvements

• In-depth course modules could be developed to cross-train the One-Stop team. Completing these modules would be required of all team members, and included in the training of new team members.

TEAM EMPOWERMENT

Core Improvements

• Team members will have greater authority to enable faster decision making and granting of approvals, often directly at the counter for certain types of applications.
A High Performance Recognition Program will provide non-monetary incentives to the team for meeting service targets and other forms of top-level job performance.

A filing system integrating paper and digital files will be introduced.

Scanning of large plans will be done at the One-Stop counter.

An online “drop box” will be created to receive large digital file submissions. These digital files will ensure faster circulation of project plans.

3. An Efficient, Consistent and Seamless Process

MANY OF OUR CUSTOMERS ARE WORKING IN TIGHT TIMEFRAMES, AND PROVIDING THEM WITH AN EFFICIENT SERVICE IS ONE OF THE BEST WAYS WE CAN HELP THEM. SERVICE CONSISTENCY AND INFORMATION INTEGRATION ARE ALSO TOP CONCERNS. THE CORE IMPROVEMENTS LISTED BELOW WILL BE CENTRAL TO OUR ABILITY TO BETTER SERVE OUR CUSTOMERS.

INTEGRATING INFORMATION

Core Improvements

• The use of the existing technology system will be expanded to improve communication, document management and workflow. This will include supplemental system training for the One-Stop team.

Further Improvements

• Options for new software to improve online customer service and efficiency would be explored. This would be an enhancement to the existing system used by GCDS.

• Digitizing the department’s historical files would enable access to all records and quicker response to information requests.

ENSURING CONSISTENCY

Core Improvements

• An orientation program about the development service will be delivered to new members of Common Council, the Planning Advisory Committee and the Heritage Development Board.

• Regular communication on improvements to service delivery and new procedures will be maintained with Common Council, the Planning Advisory Committee and the Heritage Development Board.
PROCESS EFFICIENCY

Core Improvements

• A tiered system of targeted permit approval turnaround times will be developed. These tiers will be established according to project size and complexity (e.g. deck permits will be processed quickly whereas permits for commercial developments may be expected to take longer) and will be used to promote greater process efficiency and clarity.

• Targeted processing times for tiered permits will be posted on the website alongside monthly results.

4. Improve Transparency, Communication and Engagement

FOR THE ONE-STOP DEVELOPMENT SHOP TO PROVIDE ITS CUSTOMERS WITH THE BEST LEVEL OF SERVICE, THE REQUIREMENTS FOR APPLICATIONS AND OUR REVIEW PROCESSES MUST BE AS CLEAR AS POSSIBLE. THE FOLLOWING CORE IMPROVEMENTS WILL IMPROVE PROCESS TRANSPARENCY AND EFFICIENCY BASED ON QUALITY INPUT FROM OUR CUSTOMERS.

IN PRINT

Core Improvements

• Easy access to information will be offered through printed pamphlets, brochures and FAQs featuring information on preparing plans, application submission and approvals processes. These materials will be available from key venues.
• Comprehensive application packages will provide applicants with detailed information on the application and approvals process, and will include a checklist to help applicants ensure their application includes all required components.

• Comprehensive development manuals outlining all service areas, permits, approvals and municipal by-laws will be developed to allow for a better understanding of the complete service system.

Further Improvements

• Customers with large-scale projects would be able to access information tailored to their specific development needs. Customized manuals would cover pertinent information with the required level of detail.

ONLINE

Core Improvements

• A new website will provide an online resource for all information on the One-Stop Development Shop.

• Customers will be able to easily find out about applications going to the Planning Advisory Committee, the Heritage Development Board and Common Council through the One-Stop website, with active links displaying pending applications.

• Active building permits will be visible online through a new resource on the One-Stop website.

• Help will be provided to applicants to understand our application processes and the purpose of different by-laws through a series of short, informative YouTube videos.

• Email notifications will be available for permit status updates.

• An online customer satisfaction survey offered following all permit applications will provide a user-friendly feedback opportunity.

• Improvements to our internal permit tracking procedure will better ensure that applications are processed within targeted turnaround times, using metrics and service targets-based guidelines to determine success rates.

Further Improvements

• A clear picture of real-time developments in our city could be made available online with an interactive map displaying active building permits and planning applications.

• An integrated web application could help customers stay informed of the status of applications and to access planning, building, and infrastructure comments associated with their applications.

• Services could be made accessible to customers on site or on the road with a mobile app for tracking applications, submissions, filing complaints, scheduling and for accessing general information.

• Increased Facebook and Twitter presence could allow the One-Stop team to keep developers, stakeholders and citizens informed through social media.
FACE TO FACE

Core Improvements

• Applicants will have the opportunity to meet casually with the One-Stop team at regular events. All manner of customers (from contractors to homeowners) can receive updates on process changes, get useful information on the spot and have their questions answered.

• Opportunities for engagement between customers and the One-Stop team will be increased, including attending relevant association meetings and ensuring regular collaboration for continuing improvement.

• Builders and developers will have the opportunity to make a contribution to ongoing improvements to the service delivery model options by joining a proposed Builders/Developers taskforce. This group will meet periodically with members of GCDS where we will discuss concerns and ideas regarding the development service processes.

Further Improvements

• Face to face service follow-ups will allow service users to discuss their experiences and gain insight from the One-Stop team in person, also alerting the team to service areas in need of improvement.

IN THE NEWS

Core Improvements

• Information campaigns will help keep customers, stakeholders and citizens up to date with One-Stop services.

5. Improved Compliance

CREATING A CULTURE OF RESPONSIBLE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOES HAND IN HAND WITH ENCOURAGING COMPLIANCE. THESE OPTIONS ARE DESIGNED TO ENCOURAGE HIGH LEVELS OF COMPLIANCE, WHILE ENSURING THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY AND THE VISION OUTLINED IN PLANSJ ARE RESPECTED.

OCCUPANCY PERMITS

Core Improvements

• Occupancy permits will be expanded in scope to include all new construction to ensure all requirements are met before buildings are occupied.

DEPOSITS AND SECURITIES

Core Improvements

• A deposit for development and building permits will be required. This will cover resubmission fees, additional inspections and compliance efforts for work undertaken without permits or where additional work is required to achieve compliance.
ENFORCEMENT

Core Improvements

• The position of Community Standards Officer will be created and the post-holder will work collaboratively with customers to ensure all appropriate standards are met.

• A dedicated legal resource will be established to offer assistance in handling compliance issues.

ADDITIONAL APPLICATION / PERMIT FEES

Core Improvements

• Higher permit fees for work begun without approvals / permits will be instituted to encourage customers to follow the appropriate process.

LAND GAZETTE

Core Improvements

• The use of Land Gazette, an online registry service that provides access to land related notices and information about properties, will be expanded to include non-compliance with the Zoning By-Law, Building By-law, Development Officer conditions and PAC conditions.

SIMPLIFIED LEGAL PROCEDURES

Core Improvements

• Legal procedures for issuing Stop Work Orders, Orders to Comply and initiating court proceedings will be simplified and streamlined whenever possible.

LOT GRADING CERTIFICATES

Core Improvements

• A future Storm Water Drainage By-law will require Lot Grading Certificates to ensure sites are graded in accordance with the approved plans.
AS BUILT DRAWINGS

Core Improvements

• As Built Drawings will be required following the completion of a new subdivision and municipal service extensions to confirm all by-law requirements have been met.

COMPLIANCE BLITZES

Core Improvements

• Compliance will be promoted through coordinated awareness campaigns.
Next Steps

The One-Stop Development Shop will play a crucial role in sending the message that Saint John is open for business: the kind of business that increases our city’s prosperity and grows our city in a sustainable, responsible way.

These options have been developed following extensive consultation with stakeholders and research into those best practices being used by cities that are flourishing as 21st century success stories.

By implementing the recommended service delivery model options for the One-Stop Development Shop, the City of Saint John will:

- Improve customer service
- Provide customers with access to a dedicated and knowledgeable Development Service team
- Provide an efficient, consistent and seamless process to customers
- Ensure transparency, while improving communication and engagement
- Increase levels of compliance

Saint John has huge potential for development. By working collaboratively with stakeholders such as developers, contractors and property owners, we can build a service delivery model that meets the needs of our community, and helps us all realize the vision for a prosperous and sustainable future for Saint John.

As a continuation of our ongoing efforts to obtain feedback on the service delivery model options outlined above, breakfast meetings for the development industry and economic development groups are currently being planned for early December. These recommendations will also be presented for discussion at the November Homebuilders meeting, and opportunities to obtain feedback from home renovation customers are presently being investigated.

Further information on these service delivery model options can be obtained on the website, or in the detailed research report attached to the report submitted to Common Council, both of which documents are available online.
One Stop Development Shop - Options To Improve Customer Service

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