REPORT

Report Date: May 17, 2021
Contact: Liz Jones
Contact No.: 604.871.6169
RTS No.: 14498
VanRIMS No.: 08-2000-20
Meeting Date: June 8, 2021
Submit comments to Council

TO: Vancouver City Council

FROM: General Manager of Finance, Risk and Supply Chain Management in consultation with the General Manager of Development Services, Building and Licensing Services as well as the General Manager of Planning, Urban Design & Sustainability

SUBJECT: Funding Application to UBCM's Local Government Development Approvals Program

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council endorse a funding application to UBCM's Local Government Development Approvals Program for $2,000,000 toward the Interactive Digital Development Application project.

REPORT SUMMARY

This report seeks Council's approval of the submission of a funding application for the Interactive Digital Development Application project (IDDA) to the Local Government Development Approvals Program (the Program). The Program is a component of the Canada-BC Safe Restart Agreement. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs has provided $15 million in funding and the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) is administering the Program.

This funding application supports the work being undertaken by the Internal Development Application and Permitting Modernization Task Force to increase the efficiency of the development approval process. The Council motion of March 2021 directed staff to identify and pursue funding opportunities to support work related to improving this process.

COUNCIL AUTHORITY/PREVIOUS DECISIONS

March 2021: At the Standing Committee on City Finance & Services meeting, Council approved the motion "Calling for a Plan to Clear Vancouver's Permit and License Backlog and Revamp this Critical City Service", which includes a direction to staff to identify and pursue funding opportunities to support the work to clear the backlog.

CITY MANAGER'S/GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The City Manager, the General Manager of Finance, Risk and Supply Chain Management, the General Manager of Development Services, Building and Licensing Services and the General Manager of Planning, Urban Design & Sustainability recommend approval of the report.

REPORT

Background/Context

The Local Government Development Approvals Program was launched earlier this year. The Program is a component of the Canada-BC Safe Restart Agreement. Funding for the program ($15 million) is from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs. The Program is being administered by the UBCM.

The intent of the Program is to support the implementation of established best practices and to test innovative approaches to improve development approvals processes while meeting local government planning and policy objectives.

The Program can contribute a maximum of 100% of the cost of eligible activities – to a suggested maximum of $500,000. Funding requests for more than this suggested maximum may be considered if applicants are able to provide a strong rationale for the request.

The application deadline was May 7, 2021. An application was submitted for the IDDA project. The Program requires a resolution of Council in support of the funding application. Resolutions must be submitted before the UBCM award (if the application is successful) can be made final.

Strategic Analysis

There is a limit of one application per municipality to the Program. City staff reviewed potential projects and selected the Interactive Digital Development Application or IDDA project because it aligns with desired Program outcomes.

IDDA will bring together newly created digital regulations with existing geo-spatial data and digital application journeys to provide timely, accurate, predictable and consistent experiences for customers and staff. It is a key enabler of the City's efforts to modernize its permitting and licensing services across three core dimensions:
   1. digital,
   2. regulation, and
   3. service design and customer support.

A team comprised of representatives from the Development Services, Building and Licensing Services department and the Planning, Urban Design & Sustainability department, will lead the implementation of the IDDA project.

When complete, IDDA is expected to deliver a range of positive outcomes including improved consistency in the application process output and improved monitoring of the progress of the development application.

These improvements will increase the efficiency of the City's development approval process by reducing the complexities of the policy framework for developers and builders and increasing the speed of delivering permits. Increased efficiency in the development approval process will help alleviate challenges the City faces in other areas including supply of affordable housing.

Financial Implications

The estimated total eligible cost of the IDDA project is $2.23 million. Given the size of Vancouver (15% in terms of population size) relative to the province, and the high volume of development activities in the City, the funding request is for $2 million or approximately 13% of the $15 million that is available to the program. To demonstrate alignment of City's priorities with those of the Program, the balance of $0.23 million will be funded through the 2021 operating budget within Development Building and Licensing.

CONCLUSION

Improving the development approval process is a priority for Council as evidenced by its motion of March 2021. The proposed Interactive Digital Development Application or IDDA project is an action to improve the development approval process. Therefore, Council's support is sought for the City's application to the Local Government Development Approvals Program for funding this project.

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