
MEMORANDUM

PDS-C 2-2021

Subject: COVID-19 Response and Business Continuity - Planning and Development Services

Date: January 13, 2021

To: Planning and Economic Development Committee

From: Doug Giles, Acting Commissioner

Community and Long Range Planning

Current Status of Operations

The community and long range planning group continue to successfully advance its projects in a work-from-home setting.

The next few months will include considerable policy drafting for the Niagara Official Plan. For most topics covered in the Official Plan, the background work is complete or nearing completion. Thus, we are preparing draft policy for public review. This will be provided in a report in late spring.

Further discussion of the Official Plan program is set out in PDS 4-2021.

Early in the New Year, we anticipate receiving inputs, separately, from Hemson Consulting and CANCEA. This data will help inform our land needs assessment and our housing needs. A key consideration for the Niagara Official Plan is affordability – the data should help provide us direction on this matter.

Considerable consultation is planned for the New Year. This will include one-on-one meetings with local planning staff, Regional and local Council, stakeholders and the public.

Development Planning & Approval Services

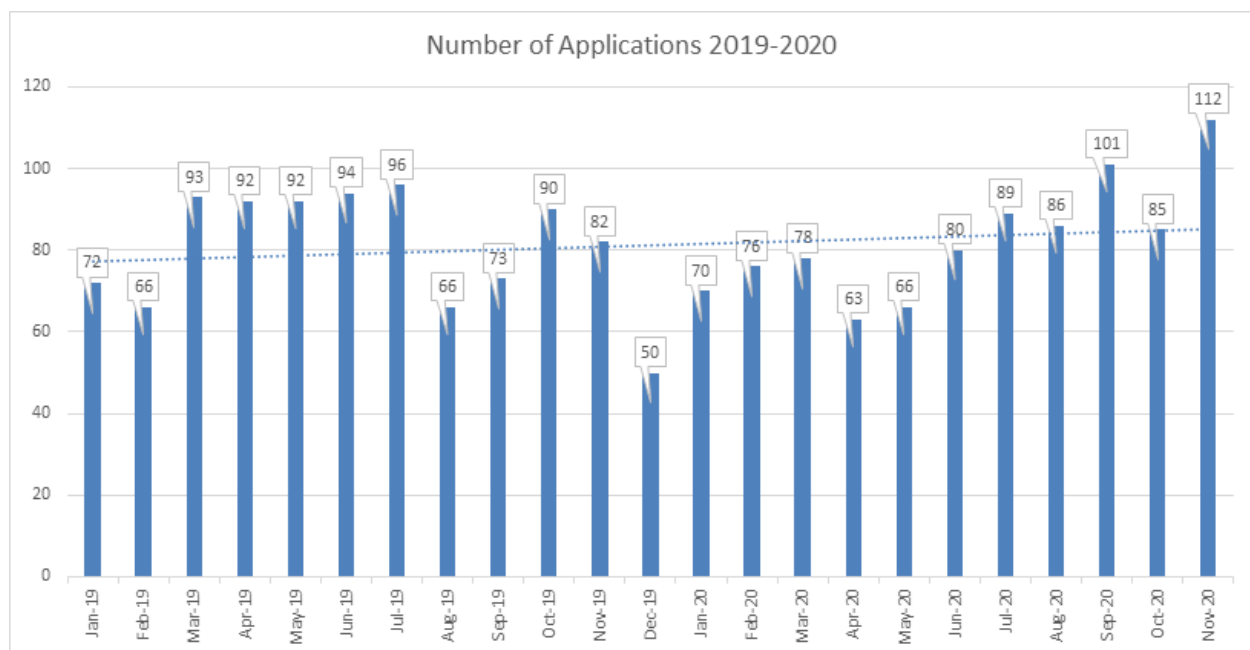
Current Status of Operations

Development Planning & Approval Services continues to adapt to ensure the delivery of core development review functions including: review and comment on all development applications from a Provincial and Regional perspective, coordinating and analyzing internal review/comments from Urban Design, Environmental Planning and Development Engineering for a “one-window” Regional response.

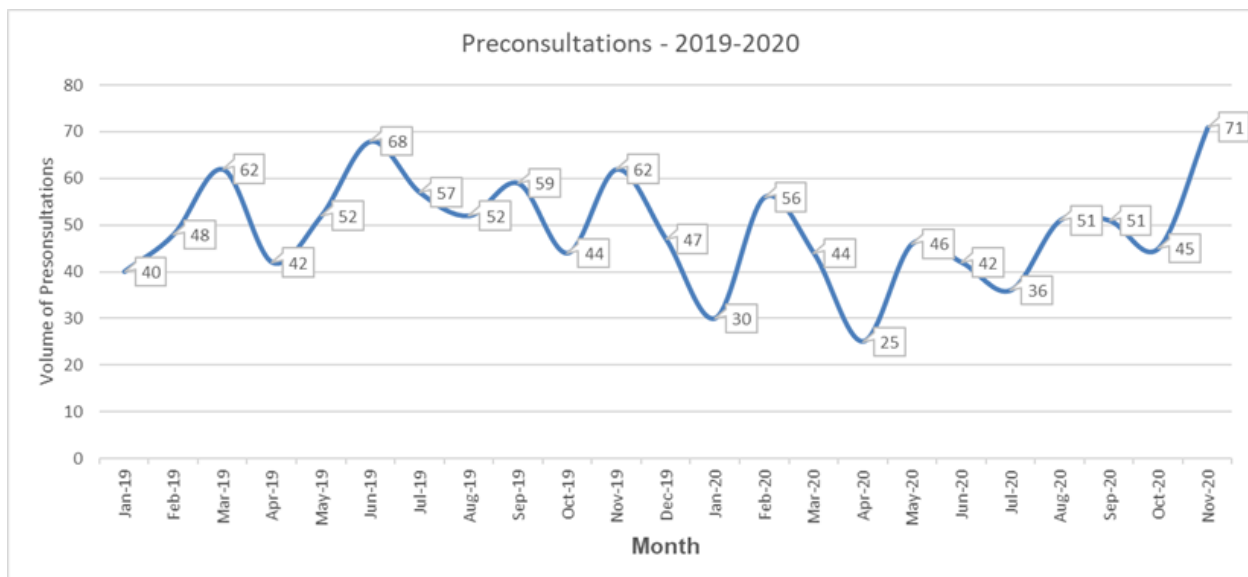
The following development volumes were received by the department during November:

- Planning Applications (includes zonings, subdivisions, site plans, etc.) - **47**
- Engineering Applications (includes servicing reviews, site plans, etc.) - **26**
- Private Septic Applications - **39**
- Pre-consultations – **71**

The total volume of formal applications (**115** - excludes pre-consultations) represents a **42%** increase of **22** applications compared to October 2019 (**85** applications). As previously reported, September volumes was the highest in the past two years, and November volumes has also exceeded monthly volumes since January 2019 as illustrated in the graph below.



Pre-consultations experienced a **37%** increase from the October volume of **45** development proposals. As pre-consultations represent potential future development applications, pre-consultation volumes are a possible indicator of anticipated future development activity. While there was a decline in pre-consultations at the early stages of the pandemic due to the shutdown, with the lowest volume for 2020 of **25** proposals received in April, volumes have continuously increased to similar levels to 2019. Also, the November volume of **71** proposals is the highest monthly level in 2020 and exceeds 2019 monthly volumes as illustrated below. Overall, however, the impact of the pandemic is evident as the current volume for 2020 (**492** proposals up to November) is not anticipated to reach the 2019 volume of **791** pre-consultations. Nevertheless, the exceptionally high level of pre-consultations in November may signal robust development activity in 2021.



In November the 2020 Niagara Biennial Awards was concluded with winning projects unveiled to PEDC (November 9th). Out of 68 submissions received in January 2020, 18 winning projects were chosen by an esteemed jury of five recognized members in disciplines ranging from urban planning, architecture, landscape architecture, interior design, and art. The Niagara Biennial has been well-received by the development and design sector with winning projects highlighted on social media. The next installment will be in 2022.

Infrastructure Planning & Development Engineering

Current Status of Operations

Development Engineering

We are continuing to respond to development applications with engineering comments, legal agreements for road works, and processing Environmental Compliance Approvals (ECA) under the Transfer of Review program for new sanitary and storm sewers. Additionally, we are continuing with Stormwater Management (SWM) review, Transportation review/meetings, and Water & Wastewater (W&WW) review/meetings as it relates to development applications and inquiries. We are working on the SWM Guidelines Project with Wood Consulting Engineers and assessing schedule/deliverables to adapt to current situation. We are participating in the MECP sessions on the proposed changes to the Consolidated Linear Infrastructure ECA Process for the entire sanitary or stormwater management system. Once fully implemented this will result in changes and new processes for all local municipalities and the Region for the two-tiered sanitary (wastewater) system and stormwater management system in Niagara.

Infrastructure Planning

We are reviewing the proposals received for the 2021 W&WW Master Servicing Plan (MSP) Update project in consultation with W&WW team. This is an important project for the Region and all local municipalities with urban water and sanitary sewer services. It will require significant effort, analysis, and consultation with the majority of work to be completed by end of 2021. The resulting growth capital water and wastewater projects are an essential input for the Development Charges Background Study and By-law update.

Collectively, there are ongoing corporate wide-efforts to coordinate long range planning/growth with infrastructure planning projects (2021 W&WW MSP update) and the upcoming Development Charges Background Study & By-law update.

Development Industry Liaison

We are continuing with the review of the potential build out scenarios for the urban areas in collaboration with planning group. This is necessary for the 2021 W&WW MSP update to evaluate servicing implications and supporting infrastructure. We are leading the development application process for the Linhaven and Gilmore Long Term Care (LTC) Redevelopment Projects and coordinating with St. Catharines, MTO, and other review agencies to ensure that site plan application can be approved and the timelines associated with this project remain on track (Government funding is tied to this as well). Participating with development industry meetings (NHBA) to understand impacts and restrictions from COVID to residential development industry and housing stock.

Private Sewage/Septic Systems Program

The Private Sewage System group (responsible for Part 8 of the Ontario Building Code) is continuing to receive and respond to septic permit applications, inspections, development applications, special requests and complaints.

Respectfully submitted and signed by

Doug Giles, BES, MUP
Acting Commissioner
Planning and Development Services