

January 23, 2019

Mayor Kennedy Stewart
City of Vancouver
453 West 12th Ave
Vancouver, BC

Mayor Stewart,

Thank you for meeting with the Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association on November 29, 2019. Permitting delays were discussed at that meeting, and per your suggestion we have conducted further consultations with our members to identify specific recommendations to improve the permitting process.

The recommendations are outlined below. We acknowledge that the majority of these are not new suggestions. The 2018 staff presentation *Commercial Renovation Permit Process Review* (attached) notes similar feedback from industry consultations with city staff. The recommendations below continue to be the ones that industry members feel will be most impactful.

- 1. Sprinkler permits - Expedite the processing of sprinkler permits by**
 - a. Onboarding additional staff trained to review sprinkler permits**
 - b. Creating a sprinkler drawing checklist**

Sprinkler permits are issued separately from building permits. It is our understanding that there are only two City of Vancouver staff trained to review commercial and residential sprinkler permits. Hiring additional staff to review sprinkler permits will expedite the process and reduce the backlog.

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Alternative solutions are requested by the sprinkler permit reviewers when information is missing from the application. Building owners are responsible for obtaining files from City archives which can take weeks. A checklist for permit drawings, similar to the existing checklist for tenant improvement permits, will help applicants avoid mistakes that will trigger alternate solutions requests.

2. Demising walls - Adjust the process so adding walls between suites does not trigger major building upgrades

City staff have indicated that this should be a relatively easy adjustment to the process so that new demising walls no longer trigger major building upgrades except when necessary.

3. Fast Intake Track (FIT) – Improve clarity around plan checker requirements and create opportunities for applicants to meet with plan checker before drawings are submitted

Applicants appreciate the FIT program. There is currently a three-strikes policy - if drawings are sent back three times the applicant loses eligibility for the program. We suggest that applicants be allowed to meet with plan checkers and ask questions in advance to avoid errors that would qualify as a strike against them. Furthermore, applicants asked for clarity and consistency around plan checker requirements.

4. Tenant Improvement Program (TIPs) – Reinstate the program and update the building list to include older buildings

The former TIPs program is no longer in effect. Applicants asked that it be reinstated, and that the list of eligible buildings be expanded to include older buildings.

5. Online Permitting - Implement technology to accept, review, and track permits online

Online permit submissions/reviews will improve efficiency and provide transparency for both applicants and reviewers.

6. Microfiche – Digitize city records

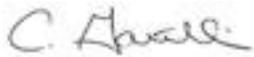
Applicants often need access to files (plans, permits, drawings) and retrieving these files is currently a time-consuming process for both city staff and applicants. It will be much quicker and easier to access files after they are digitized.

In regards to next steps, in our meeting, your Co-Chief of Staff, Neil Monckton had offered to convene a meeting with senior staff member, Theresa O'Donnell, ourselves, and some of our member building owners. We would also suggest that Jessie Adcock, General Manager, Development, Buildings, and Licensing, be at this meeting.

The purpose of the meeting from our perspective is to get a much-needed update on where staff are in regards to streamlining and speeding up the process and discussing our recommendations listed above.

I look forward to hearing back from you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,



Charles Gauthier, MCP
President and CEO