

The Regional Municipality of York

Committee of the Whole
Planning and Economic Development
September 9, 2021

Report of the Commissioner of Corporate Services and Chief Planner

2021 Mid-Year Development Activity Summary

1. Recommendation

Council receive this report for information.

2. Summary

Council has delegated authority to the Chief Planner and Director of Community Planning and Development Services to issue approvals for development applications, subject to such approvals being reported to Council semi-annually. Delegated approval authority includes routine Local Official Plan Amendments (OPAs), including exemption from Regional approval and approval of works adjacent to Regional rights-of-way and infrastructure. York Region is a commenting agency to local municipalities for draft plans of subdivision and condominium, site plans, consent to sever, zoning by-law amendment and minor variance applications on matters of Regional interest.

Information on the mid-year 2021 development application activity for each local municipality is included in Attachment 1.

Key Points:

- In the first half of 2021, Planning and Economic Development received 256 new development applications for review, an 8% increase over the previous year (235 development applications)
- Application resubmissions increased by 11% to 413 from 369 in 2020
- Development Charge collections increased by 131% to \$237,026,190 in the first half of 2021 from \$102,448,127 (2020)
- Thirteen Official Plan Amendment applications were exempted from Regional approval, two OPAs were not exempt and two notices of decision were issued by the Director of Community Planning and Development Services on local OPAs

- Proposed residential units in new draft plan of subdivision applications decreased to 845 in the first half of 2021 from 4,801 in 2020 and proposed residential units in new site plan applications decreased to 4,615 in 2021 from 5,620 in 2020. The higher volume in 2020 of new development applications were primarily within the three recently approved Secondary Plan in the City of Markham and City of Vaughan.
- Application submissions and approvals are cyclical, and the Region continues to have a healthy supply of residential inventory undergoing development review.

3. Background

Authority to approve certain development applications is delegated to Chief Planner and Director of Community Planning and Development Services, subject to such approvals being reported to Council semi-annually

In addition to reporting on OPA approvals, the mid-year 2021 development activity report summarizes the number of new residential applications and associated proposed residential units received, together with the total number of residential units registered. The following information is presented in the Development Activity Summary Report:

- Approval of Local OPAs with no Regional issues – Delegated
- Exemption of Local OPAs from Regional approval – Delegated
 - The Region has the authority to exempt an OPA from Regional approval if it is determined to be of local significance and there is no Regional interest. The Regional Official Plan sets out criteria to determine if an amendment is eligible for exemption. If the application qualifies for exemption the local municipality will issue a decision for the Official Plan Amendment.
- New development applications received
- Proposed residential units received
- Number of registered plans of subdivision and registered units
- Approval of works in the Regional right-of-way as part of site plan applications with Regional interest – Delegated
- Engineering approval on works in the Regional right-of-way – Delegated
- Planning and Development Engineering review fee and Development Charge collection

All nine local municipalities provide data to ensure an accurate Regional development activity report

York Region, with assistance from our local municipalities, has been collecting and tracking development related information and data received on each application in YorkTrax. Application information on location, nature of proposal, number of units, square footage for non-residential, status, progress, and associated applications is captured, and development trends can be analyzed for reporting. As data continues to be collected in YorkTrax, staff can

more accurately track proposed development activity in each local municipality and York Region as a whole to assess trends. A full trend analysis will be provided in the final 2021 annual report in early 2022.

Digital intake and review of development applications became the new norm in 2021. Planning and development activity continued during the COVID-19 pandemic and Regional staff were able to process development applications remotely without interruption using the Region's electronic development application tracking system – YorkTrax, in place since 2017. Early this year, the Region received funding from the Province through the Audit and Accountability Fund to investigate opportunities to modernize development approval in the Region. A consultant has been hired to identify efficiencies and savings that could be achieved through data standardization and integration with local municipalities and commenting agencies (e.g. School Boards). The results of this study will be shared with Council later this year.

4. Analysis

So far in 2021, 13 Local Official Plan Amendment applications have been exempt from Regional approval

The Region received 44 local official plan amendment applications in the first half of 2021. Not all applications received a decision within the first half of the year and some decisions issued were for amendments from applications received prior to 2021. The Director of Community Planning and Development Services issued decisions on a total of 17 local OPA applications in the first half of 2021.

Of these, 13 local OPAs were exempted from Regional approval, two OPAs were not exempt from Regional approval and two notices of decision were issued on Local OPAs. A majority of exempted OPAs related to changes to building height, density, built form and urban design. The consistent number of OPA applications received in the first half of 2020 and 2021 indicates that development continues to remain strong for growth within the Region. A list of local OPAs with approval status by municipality is provided in Attachment 1.

Development applications received in 2021 have increased compared to 2020

Table 1 identifies the number of new applications received by York Region by type in 2020 and 2021 with percentage change. The primary applications York Region received for review and response are Official Plan Amendments, Block Plans, Draft Plan of Subdivisions, Zoning By-Law, Draft Plan of Condominiums, Engineering and Site Plans, which totaled 256 new development applications. In the first half of 2021 the number of these primary applications increased by 9% compared to 235 applications for the same period in 2020. In addition to primary applications, York Region received other development applications, including site plans (with no Regional interest), pre-consultation, consent to sever and minor variances for review and information purposes. The number of these development applications also increased significantly from a low point in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is anticipated that development activity will remain healthy in 2021.

Approximately 65% of new applications received in 2021 were in the cities of Markham, Richmond Hill, and Vaughan. A breakdown of new development applications by municipality is provided in Attachment 1.

Table 1
Number of New Applications Received by York Region
by Type in Mid-Year 2020 & 2021

Application Type (New Applications)	Mid-Year 2020	Mid-Year 2021	Per Cent (%) +/- change
Official Plan Amendments	44	44	0%
Block Plans	1	2	100%
Draft Plan of Subdivision	18	15	-17%
Zoning By-Law Amendments	68	76	12%
Draft Plan of Condominium	8	10	25%
Engineering Review	14	26	86%
Site Plans Applications (Minor and Major) ¹	82	83	1%
Total Development Applications	235	256	9%
Site Plan (No Regional Interest) ²	39	60	54%
Pre-Consultation Meetings	219	369	68%
Consent to sever Applications	44	46	6%
Minor Variances Applications	221	346	57%
Total Applications Received	758	1077	42%

¹ Major and minor site plans are determined based on the value of construction work proposed in the Regional right-of-way. More complex right-of-way works require more detailed review.

² No Regional interest e.g. not adjacent to a Regional road or infrastructure, source water protection area. Applications are received for information purposes only.

The number of resubmitted development applications has increased

York Region received 413 resubmissions of development applications in the first half of 2021. Along with the steady flow of new development applications, the number of

resubmitted development applications increased by 11% compared to 369 in 2020. Regional staff work closely with local municipal partners and applicants commenting on and approving development applications.

Proposed residential units decreased compared to mid-year 2020 but Region has a healthy supply of residential inventory undergoing development review

In the first half of 2021, the number of proposed residential units received by the Region for review as part of new draft plan of subdivision applications was 845; this is lower than 4,801 units received by mid-year 2020, representing an 82% decrease. There were 4,615 proposed residential units received for review as part of new site plan applications compared to 5,612 units received in 2020, representing an 18% decrease (Table 2).

Development activity fluctuates from year to year and is often dependent on a number of factors that contribute to the increase of proposed residential units in 2020 and the decrease in proposed units in 2021. In 2019, York Region Council approved three major Secondary Plans in the City of Markham and City of Vaughan. New development applications within the approved Secondary Plan areas were received by York Region in 2020, which results in an increase in residential inventory. The Region has a healthy supply of residential inventory undergoing the development review process.

Table 2
Proposed Residential Units Received per Mid-Year in 2020-2021

	2020	2021	Per Cent (%) +/- change
Proposed Subdivision Units ¹ (Single/Semi/Townhouse)	4,801	845	-82%
Proposed Site Plan units ²	5,612	4,615	-18%
Total proposed units	10,413	5,460	-48%

¹ Proposed residential units associated with draft plan of subdivision applications (no apartments)

² Proposed residential site plan units. Units include site plan applications with no regional interest.

Total residential units registered in 2021 increased from 2020

The number of registered plan of subdivision and condominium applications decreased from 29 in 2020 to 24 in 2021 (Table 3). The associated residential units increased from 2,956 registered units in 2020 to 3,142 in 2021, representing a 6% increase.

The increase in residential units registering in the first half of 2021 indicates an upward trend in development activity from 2020 in terms of providing building permit ready lots. Unit registration is expected to continue to remain strong throughout the remainder of 2021.

Table 3
Registered Plans of Subdivision and Condominium Mid-Year 2020 and 2021

	2020	2021
Registered Plans of Subdivision/units	14 (1,696 units)	15 (1,646 units)
Registered Plans of Condominium/units*	15 (1,260 units)	9 (1,496 units)
Total	29 (2,956 units)	24 (3,142 units)

* Includes apartment units

The number of site plan applications ready to receive Regional approval slightly decreased

York Region approves Regional engineering matters in site plan applications for projects that impact Regional roadways and infrastructure. Site plan applications are reviewed by staff for planning and legal considerations in accordance with the Planning Act, protection of Regional wellheads, property requirements, travel demand management, transit, intersection and access design, road and servicing design, and development implications to the Regional road system and rights-of-way. Site plan applications consist of both small ground related infill proposals and major development applications. Both minor and major site plan applications contribute towards the residential and non-residential inventory.

In the first half of 2021, 63 site plan applications received Regional approval on matters of Regional interest compared to 75 approvals in 2020, representing a 16% decrease (Table 4). The number of new minor and major site plan applications stayed consistent with last year. The decrease in site plan approvals is attributed to the development industry's shift of focus to engineering approval and registration of plans of subdivisions and condominiums. Additionally, there was a 54% increase in site plan applications that did not have a Regional interest. These minor infill development proposals were not commenced in 2020 by Owners due to the uncertainty caused by COVID-19 pandemic but are now coming in as new development applications in 2021.

Table 4
Approval of Regional Interest as Part of Site Plan Applications
Mid-Year 2020 -2021

	2020	2021
Approved Site Plan Applications	75	63

Regional interest e.g. adjacent to a Regional road or infrastructure, within source water protection area.

Engineering approvals increased by 23% as applications prepare for registration and construction

Regional staff issue engineering approvals for works proposed as part of subdivision applications or local municipal capital projects, which involve Regional infrastructure or located in the Region's right-of-way. From January 1 to June 30, 2021, Regional staff issued approvals for 16 subdivision-related engineering plans and other projects compared to 13 in 2020. Additionally, in the first half of 2021, 26 new engineering approval applications were received involving matters of Regional interest compared to 14 application in 2020, representing an 86% increase. These applications involve both above-ground and below ground engineering works, including but not limited to, intersection and access improvements, road widening, electrical and signalization, storm, water, and sanitary servicing connections, property grading and construction access.

The number of engineering approvals is tied to approvals required for applications to proceed to clearance for registration. Given the number of new applications received and number of engineering approvals in 2021, the Region will continue to experience strong growth as these applications proceed to registration and construction.

Regional staff participate on advisory committees and working groups to plan new development areas with local municipal partners

Planning and Economic Development staff participate in Regional and Local Technical Advisory Committees (TACs) and Project Working Groups. This includes urban expansion areas, new Secondary Plans and Key Development Areas. Input to these committees and working groups is important to ensure Regional interests are identified early in the planning process. Region staff also review pre-consultation requests to provide comments and submission requirements for future development applications.

5. Financial

Application fee revenues increased significantly compared to previous mid-year collection

Development application fees are collected in accordance with Regional Bylaw No. 2010-15, as amended, for land use planning approvals and the plan review function. As shown in Table 5, Regional Development fees collected in the first half of 2021 increased by 66% compared to 2020. The increase in revenue is attributed to a higher number of new submissions and resubmissions in 2021. Fee revenue from Development Planning and Engineering applications has been trending upwards for the last two years.

Table 5
Fee Revenue for Development Planning and Engineering
Mid-Year 2020 to Mid-Year 2021

	2020	2021
Total	\$1,574,584	\$2,607,100

Development Charges revenue of \$237,026,190 represents a 131% increase from mid-year 2020

Development Charges are collected through development approvals to pay for growth-related infrastructure. Currently, development charges are collected at subdivision clearance and building permit issuance (Attachment 2). From January 1 to June 30, 2021, \$237,026,190 in development charges was collected. This is an increase of 131% over mid-year 2020 (\$102,448,127). Almost half (47%) of the development charge revenue was collected at building permit stage. The increase is attributed to a high number of site plan approvals in 2020 and development charges being collected in 2021 by the local municipality at the building permit stage. Additionally, a significant increase in new site plan applications with no Regional interest were submitted in 2021. The Region collected development charges on these applications when building permits were issued.

Table 6
Development Charges Collected by Mid-Year 2020 to 2021

	2020	2021
	\$102,448,127	\$237,026,190

6. Local Impact

Regional staff work closely with local municipal staff to ensure timely review of development applications, Regional and local policy objectives are met, and approvals occur within the timelines prescribed by the *Planning Act*.

7. Conclusion

The 2021 Mid-Year Development Activity report summarizes delegated approvals and new development applications received by York Region in 2021 with a 2020 comparison, using data collected from YorkTrax, to Council for information.

Planning and development activity continued during the COVID-19 pandemic and Regional staff were able to process applications without interruption through the Region's electronic development application tracking system – YorkTrax.

While the number of applications fluctuate annually due to the cyclical nature of development, the first half of 2021 has had an overall increase in applications compared to last year. The increase in development charge collection is an indicator of a higher level of construction as charges are payable either at registration of plans of subdivision or at building permit. Development charge collection increased by 131% to \$237,026,190 in 2021 (2020 - \$102,448,127). The increase in development charge revenue is partially attributed to a high number of site plan approvals in 2019-2020 with the development charges being collected in 2021 by the local municipality at the building permit stage.

Regional staff will continue to work closely with local municipal partners to achieve Regional and local policy objectives through the development review and approval process. Continued process improvement through YorkTrax helps Regional staff ensure timely approvals within the timelines prescribed by the Planning Act.

For more information on this report, please contact Asif Abbas, Planner, at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 77271. Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.



Recommended by:

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Approved for Submission:



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Attachments (2)
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