

The Regional Municipality of York

Committee of the Whole
Planning and Economic Development
September 19, 2019

Report of the Commissioner of Corporate Services and Chief Planner

Mid-Year Development Activity Summary 2019

1. Recommendation

It is recommended that this report be received 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. Planning and engineering development applications are set out in Attachment 1.

Key Points:

- In 2019, staff responded to/provided conditional approval for 4,784 residential units, a 20% decrease over the previous year (mid-year 2018 – 5,968 units)
- 1,242 residential units were cleared for registration by mid-2019 and the Region collected \$45,051,970 in development charges, which is an 82% decrease from mid-year 2018. This is the lowest over the past four years due in part to the significant number of units cleared for registration prior to the Region's Development Charges rate increases in 2017 and 2018
- Revenue from planning and engineering application fees so far in 2019 (\$1,379,204) has decreased compared to mid-year 2018 (\$3,537,610)
- From January 1 to June 30, 2019, the total number of planning and engineering applications processed was higher than the previous two years, with the Region responding to 256 development applications
- Combined, site plan and engineering approvals reached their highest level in 2019 (130). Engineering approvals are a precursor to clearance for registration
- The steady stream of applications receiving conditional approval in 2018/2019 and increased site plan and engineering approvals suggests a healthy supply of residential units are ready to be cleared for registration and proceed to construction

3. Background

The authority to approve certain development applications is delegated to Planning and Economic Development staff, subject to such approvals being reported to Council semi-annually

This report outlines development review and approval activities for mid-year 2019 and a comparison of the previous mid-year 2018. It includes a summary of the following approvals:

- Local Official Plan Amendments (OPA) with no Regional issues – delegated
- Local OPAs that are exempt from Regional approval – delegated
- Regional site plan and engineering approvals – delegated
- Issuance of conditions of approval for plans of subdivision and condominium
- Clearance of Regional conditions for plans of subdivision and condominium to permit registration

The Region is a commenting agency to the local municipalities for draft plans of subdivision and condominium, consent to sever, zoning by-law amendment and minor variance applications

4. Analysis

The number of development applications processed so far in 2019 is higher compared to mid-year 2018 with the Region responding to 256 development applications

From January 1 to June 30, 2019, Regional staff responded to 256 development applications, as follows:

- 47 Official Plan Amendment (OPA) applications responded to, exempted and approved, which included the Block 27 Secondary Plan in Vaughan that will accommodate an estimated minimum of 19,100 persons and a minimum of 1,500 jobs
- 67 plans of subdivision and condominium applications – comment letters and issuance of conditions of approval for 4,784 residential units
- 12 plans of subdivision and condominium applications – clearance of Regional conditions to permit registration for 1,242 residential units
- 87 site plan application responses and approvals
- 43 engineering application responses and approvals

As shown in Table 1, the number of development applications responded to and approved increased in the first half of 2019 as compared with the previous mid-year 2018, with the exception of clearance applications to permit registration. The reduction in clearance applications is due in part to the significant number of units cleared for registration prior to the Region’s Development Charge rate increase in 2017 and 2018.

Roughly half of the 47 Official Plan Amendment applications had no Regional interest and were exempt from Regional approval. The steady number of subdivision, condominium, site plan and engineering applications being reviewed and receiving approval is a key indicator of stable development activity. A breakdown of the type of development applications by municipality and application type is provided in Attachment 1. A full trend analysis over the past five years will be provided in the 2019 annual report in early 2020.

Table 1
Number of Regional Applications Responded to and Approved Per Mid-Year by Type in 2018 & 2019

Application Type (Responded to/Approved)	Mid-Year 2018	Mid-Year 2019
Official Plan Amendment	23	47
Subdivision/Condominium – Responded to/Conditional Approval	40	67
Subdivision/Condominium – Clearance for Registration	37	12
Site Plan	76	87
Engineering	30	43
Total	206	256

Number of development applications processed is anticipated to remain steady in 2019

Key stages in the planning approval process identified in Table 2 are an indication of development trends. Land use policy, development approvals and construction are three general planning stages that provide a development outlook. Figure 1 provides an overview of planning stages in relation to the development review process and development charge payment timeline. A high number of subdivision and condominium applications were responded to and received conditional approval and a high number engineering and site plan

applications received approval in the first half of 2019. The number of residential units responded to and conditional approved has remained steady in the last four years (Figure 2) with an average of 4900 units by mid-year from 2016 to 2019. While the number of units cleared for registration has decreased, overall, there is a healthy supply of residential units approved and ready to proceed to construction.

Table 2
Development Trends by Planning Stage

Planning Stage	Application Type	Development Trends
Land Use Policy	Official Plan Amendment	While the number of OPA applications does indicate development activity, in many cases they are indicative of increase in height and density. OPAs are required for applications that do not conform with existing Official Plan policies. A significant number of OPAs reviewed in first half of 2019 relate to changes to building height, density, built form and urban design.
Development Approvals	Draft Plan of Subdivision and Condominium – Commented/ Conditional Approval	The number of residential units responded to and receiving conditional approval has remained steady in the last two years (Figure 2). The Region will continue to experience strong growth as the steady stream of units receiving conditional approval in 2018 and 2019 proceed to clearance and construction.
Construction	Site Plan, Engineering and Clearance of Subdivision and Condominium Conditions for Registration	<p>Subdivision and condominium clearances reached its lowest in 2019 as compared with the previous four years, with 12 applications. The number of site plan and engineering approvals combined reached its highest in 2019 (130) as compared with the previous two years (Table 3). The high number of applications will result in increased clearance requests and residential construction in the future.</p> <p>The number of applications proceeding to construction is generally tied to the number of applications receiving conditional approval. Given the number of applications responded to/conditional approval increased from 40 in mid-year 2018 to 67 in mid-year 2019, suggests a healthy supply of residential units are ready to proceed to clearance and construction.</p>

Figure 1
Development Review Process and Development Charge Payment

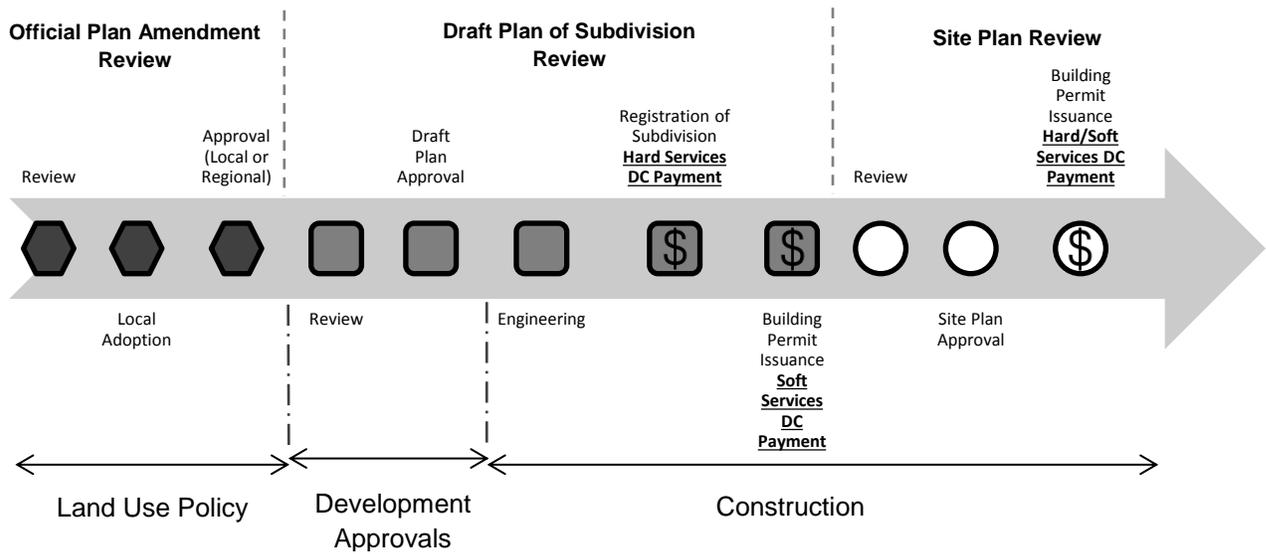


Figure 2
Residential Units Responded to/Conditional Approval and Clearance for Registration from Mid-Year 2016 to 2019

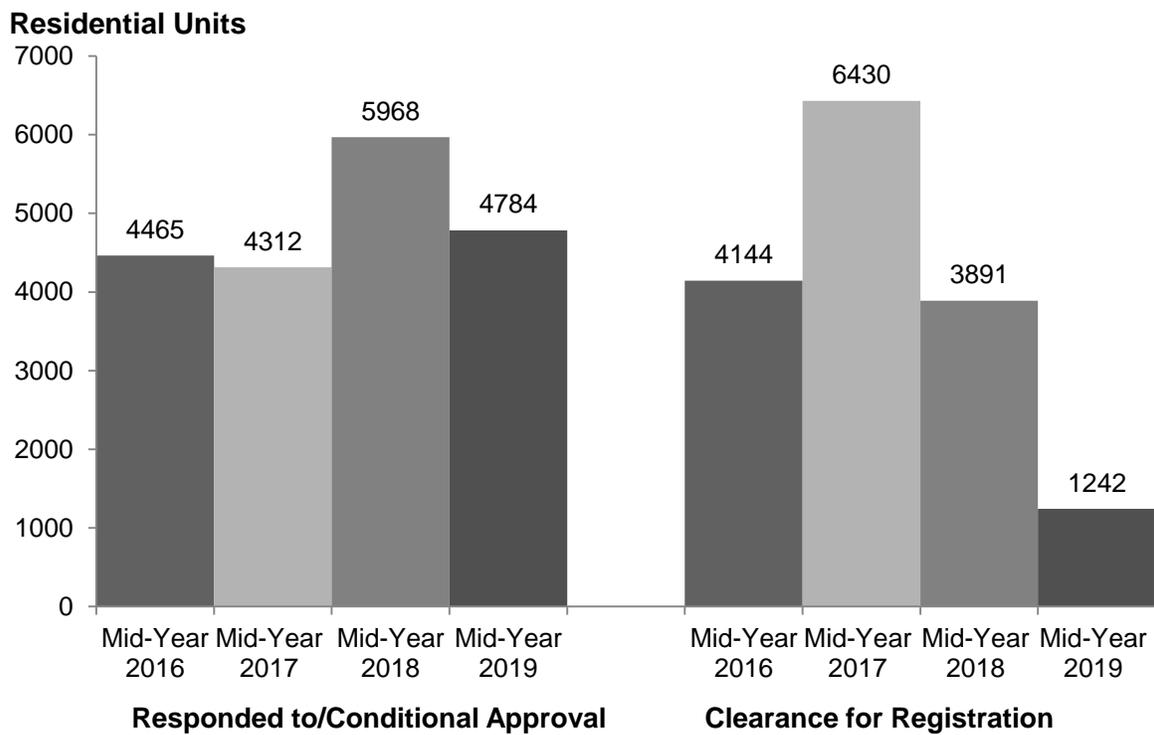


Table 3

Site Plan and Engineering Applications Responded to and Approved Per Mid-Year in 2017 to 2019

Application Type (Responded to/Approved)	Mid-Year 2017	Mid-Year 2018	Mid-Year 2019
Site Plan	21	76	87
Engineering	14	30	43
Total	35	106	130

New residential units are moving through the development review process but are not carrying forward to construction

Clearance of units for registration tends to sharply decrease in the year after a development charge rate increase is enacted through a bylaw update or amendment. The 2017 and 2018 Development Charge rate increases resulted in a significant number of units registered and paid development charges in 2017 and 2018 (Figure 2 and 3). Provincial policy and housing market uncertainty have also played a factor in the significant decrease of units being registered in 2019. As a result of these factors, new residential units are moving through the development review process (Figure 1) but many units are not carrying forward to construction.

Regional staff work closely with local municipal and external partners to review and approve development applications in a timely manner in order to expedite the development review process (Figure 1). Senior Regional and local municipal staff have recently met meeting to align growth opportunities where infrastructure exists. Prioritizing growth in areas with existing infrastructure capacity in the short-term will help position the Region to manage debt and deliver new infrastructure investments required to accommodate long-term growth.

YorkTrax continues to track comments and status on all development applications

YorkTrax has improved staff's ability to collect development related data and track responses provided to municipalities on all application types. Development applications received by York Region are uploaded into Yorktrax for data capture and comment circulation. Each applications status and progress is captured throughout its lifecycle.

In addition to responding to local Official Plan Amendments, plans of subdivision and condominium, site plan and engineering applications, Regional staff responded to pre-

submission consultation, consent to sever, zoning by-law amendment and minor variance applications, as follows:

- 263 pre-submission consultation proposals
- 93 consent to sever applications
- 104 zoning by-law amendment applications
- 249 minor variance applications

Future development activity reports will provide trends and analysis on non-residential development applications as more data is collected.

Regional staff participate on advisory committees and working groups for the planning of new development areas

Planning and Economic Development staff actively participate in a number of 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. The quick facts section for each municipality in Attachment 1 provides a list of committees and working groups in which staff were engaged in 2019.

5. Financial

Revenue from planning and engineering application fees so far in 2019 has decreased

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 4, Regional Development fees collected in the first half of 2019 decreased. Revenue from combined planning and engineering application fees have been trending upwards over the past five years. The decreased fee revenue from January 1 to June 30, 2019 is a result of fewer complex engineering and site plan applications. The lower fee revenue is also a result of submission fees being received in 2018 as part of the application submission, while comments and approvals on these applications were issued in 2019.

Table 4
Fee Revenue for Development Planning and Engineering
Mid-Year 2016 to Mid-Year 2019

Section	Mid-Year 2018	Mid-Year 2019
Development fees	\$3,537,610	\$1,379,204

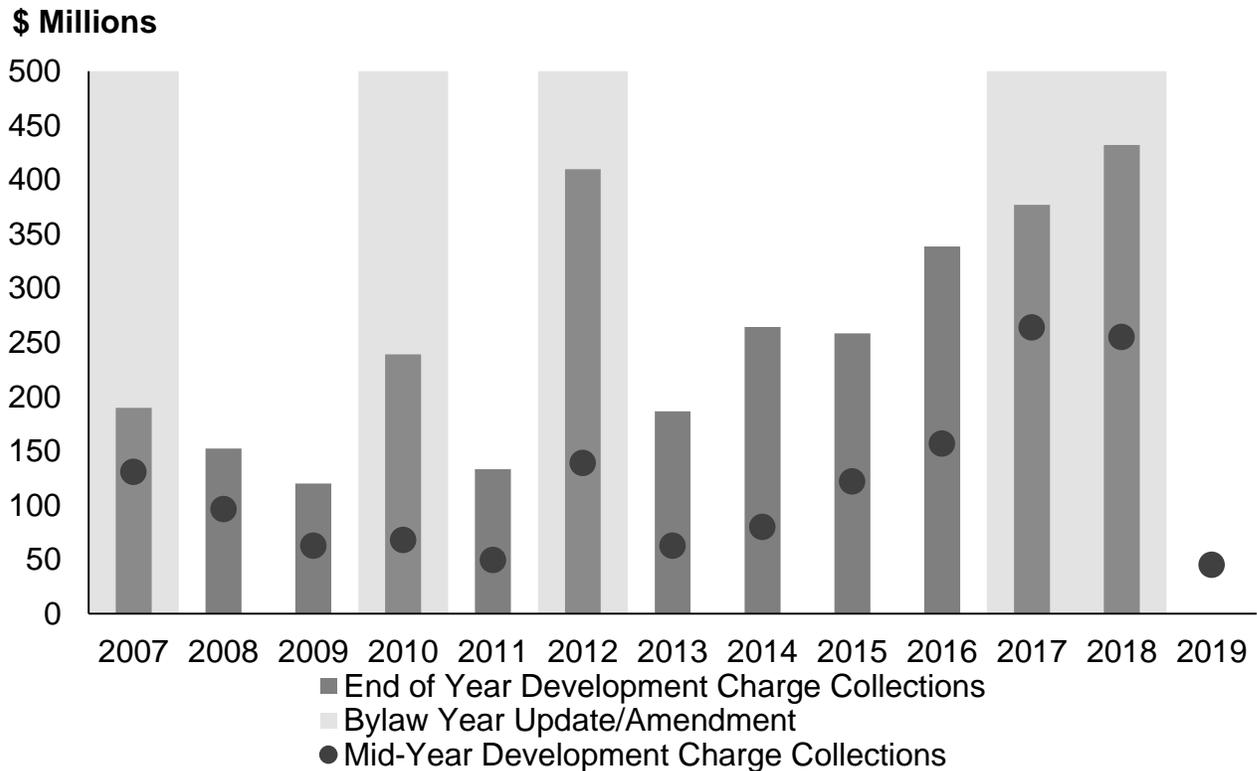
Development Charge collection has decreased significantly from mid-year 2018

Development Charges are funds collected through development approvals to pay for growth-related infrastructure. Currently, development charges are collected at subdivision clearance and building permit issuance. From January 1 to June 30, 2019, the Region collected \$45,051,970 in development charges. This is a decrease of 82% compared to the amount collected in the first half of 2018 (\$254,725,780). The reduction is due in part to the significant number of units registering and paying development charges prior to rate increases enacted through the Region’s 2017 Development Charges Bylaw and 2018 Bylaw Amendment.

The steady stream of applications received in 2018 and 2019 have not yet reached the approval stage where development charges become payable, and are expected to yield development charge collections. While development charge collections tend to sharply decrease in the year after a bylaw update or amendment (Figure 3), there are a number of additional factors at play including a backlog of matters before the LPAT awaiting hearing, Provincial policy uncertainty (including significant changes to the *Development Charges Act, 1997* and *Planning Act, 1990* through Bill 108) and uncertainty in the housing market.

As noted in the [Growth and Infrastructure Alignment report](#) tabled in June and to be considered by Committee of the Whole on September 19th, the Region’s Ten Year Capital Plan is predicated on achieving an annual average development charge collection of \$380 million over the next ten years. Monitoring of development activity and resulting development charge collections is integral to ensuring fiscal readiness to deliver the next phase of infrastructure projects.

Figure 3
Development Charge Revenue and By-law Rate Increase
2007 to 2019



6. Local Impact

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

7. Conclusion

This report provides a summary of planning and engineering applications responded to and approved by Regional staff from January 1 to June 30, 2019.

Regional staff responded to and conditional approved 4,784 residential units, which is a 20% decrease over the previous year. So far this year, 1,242 units have been cleared for registration and Development Charges revenue of \$45,051,970 has been collected. The significant reduction in number of units cleared for registration and Development Charges revenue is due in part to the substantial number of units cleared prior to the development charge rate increases in 2017 and 2018. Clearance of units for registration and Development Charges revenue tends to sharply decrease in the year after a rate increase is enacted.

Additional factors at play include Provincial Policy uncertainty, appeals to LPAT and uncertainty in the housing market.

York Region processed and responded to a total of 256 development applications, which is higher than the previous two years. Site plan and engineering responses and approvals combined reached its highest in 2019 (130). These applications enable developments to proceed to clearance for registration and construction. The steady stream of applications received in 2018-2019 and the high number of site plan and engineering applications have not yet reached the stage where development charges become payable. The Region is well-positioned with an increasing inventory of residential units with conditional approval that are ready for registration and are expected to yield development charge collection and construction in the future.

The Region will continue to experience strong growth as Residential inventory and supporting uses will increase once new draft plan of subdivision applications are received for the recently approved Secondary Plans in the urban expansion areas in Markham and Vaughan. Regional staff will continue to work closely with local municipal partners to achieve Regional and local policy objectives.

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: **Paul Freeman, MCIP, RPP**
Chief Planner

Dino Basso
Commissioner of Corporate Services

Approved for Submission: **Bruce Macgregor**
Chief Administrative Officer

September 6, 2019
Attachments (1)
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