

TOPIC as described in June 28 Audit Committee Meeting:
“Open for Development” Process Mapping and Tool Proposal

A. Scope

The development process in Saint Paul requires developers to intersect with multiple City departments from the Department of Safety and Inspection (DSI), to Planning and Economic Development (PED) to Public Works and other related partners such as Saint Paul Regional Water Services and District Councils. The existing process can be confusing, hard to navigate, and creates barriers to entry for new and emerging developers, including Black, Indigenous, Persons of Color (BIPOC) developers. In addition, a lack of internal coordination across departments often leads to delays, frustrations, and miscommunications during a project.

The scope of this project would include conducting a comprehensive review of residential development services (large and small projects) and mapping project processes to find opportunities to streamline systems, implement best practices, and organize the steps into an easy-to-navigate process, leading the City to become a better partner to developers and attract new, more diverse developers to Saint Paul. In Saint Paul, the development process for commercial and residential properties are significantly different; therefore, an examination into commercial development is not advisable at this time. Instead, the scope should focus on residential development projects. This residential focus aligns with the Committee’s interest in affordable housing and will provide the opportunity to study how the process for single unit and multiple unit developments could be improved.

A consultant could:

- Map the process for residential development projects distinguishing between 1-2 units, 1-4 units, and over 4 units.
- Examine department processes related to land use/zoning, engineering, building code, code enforcement, regulatory application programs, permits, approvals or actions, with outcomes/goals of providing efficient internal processing, excellent customer service and effective public access.
- Recommend process improvements and tools to improve or enhance the city’s plan review process for Planning and Economic Development, Department of Safety and Inspection, Public Works, and other related departments.
- Review the existing codes and regulations as they relate to development projects and recommend improvements.

Following the consultant’s work, if the determination is made that an “Open for Development” tool could assist in better documenting, streamlining and improving the development process, the [“Open for Business” pocket guide](#) could be used as a template. The guide is a step-by-step tool for business owners to follow when opening a business in Saint Paul. Each step in the process includes details on “things to know”, “how the city can help”, and “actions to take”. Examples of development guides and handbooks from other cities are provided for reference as well:

- <https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/46426095/the-developers-guide-to-omaha-city-of-omaha>
- <https://www.granbury.org/DocumentCenter/View/2163/Development-Guide-July-2020?bidId=>
- <https://arvada.org/source/Development%20Review/2019%20Developer%20Handbook.021219.pdf>

B. Cost Estimate of Study

- Unknown at this time. The audit committee has budgeted about \$50,000 for a Constituent and Customer Services Study in FY2021.
 - The FY 2021-2022 scope of this project includes project coordination, stakeholder interviews, systems mapping, and report development.

C. Ability to Effect Change

1. Policy –

- The creation of a single document to access information about developing a large or small project including identifying relevant codes and regulations to help developers and small businesses navigate the City's requirements.
- Key success metrics would include a more streamlined internal handoff process, better coordination between departments, and an increase in the number of first-time and BIPOC developers who achieve success in completing projects in Saint Paul above a baseline level in x unit of time.
- Document key metrics for monitoring effectiveness of policies and processes.

2. Budget – Variable

- The audit consultant would be responsible for facilitating the development project process mapping work and producing recommendations to streamline the existing processes. The recommendations will also include strategies or processes that would allow for timely customer response, efficient data entry, and effective project management of all development projects.
- The cost and work associated with the implementation of any study recommendations, including an enhanced "Open for Development" tool fall outside of the scope of this project.

D. Study Approach

- The approach could include processing mapping; interviews with key stakeholders; evaluating existing relationships between departments to identify opportunities for more formal collaboration; studying best practices from other cities; determining instances where Saint Paul makes it harder or less desirable to develop in than other municipalities; and, examining previous attempts by departments to create a unified, one-stop approach to service delivery.

E. Key Challenges

- Staff capacity to participate in the process mapping work. The project timeline may need to be extended through 2022 depending on staff capacity to assist.
- Collecting data around past attempts of interdepartmental collaboration.

F. Next Steps

- Clarify scope.
- Develop written scope of work with clear deliverables.