



STAFF REPORT TO COMMITTEE

DATE OF REPORT April 4, 2024
MEETING TYPE & DATE Electoral Area Services Committee Meeting of April 17, 2024
FROM: Development Services Division
Land Use Services Department
SUBJECT: Development Services Modernization Project
FILE: 0600-20 Dev Services Modernization

PURPOSE/INTRODUCTION

This report provides an update on the multi-year Development Services Modernization Project (DSMP).

RECOMMENDED RESOLUTION

For information.

BACKGROUND

The DSMP was initiated following a service review of the Development Services Division and guidance to local governments from the Province of BC Development Approvals Process Review ([DAPR](#)).

In 2021, the CVRD was awarded a UBCM DAPR Grant in the amount of \$500,000 to support the DSMP. This project has sought to enhance service quality and efficiency in five key areas:

- **Administrative Tools/Staff Resources** focused on the resources available to support the work of the Division, including both staff and administrative tools;
- **Culture and People** considered corporate culture and opportunities to build trust and capacity within the organization, and to improve the level of service provided to the public;
- **Internal Policy and Procedures** focused on administrative policies and processes;
- **Regulations** focused on challenges related to multiple bylaws for the electoral areas, numerous and often divergent policies and regulations, unclear development guidelines, and articulated the need to harmonize and modernize OCP and zoning bylaws; and
- **Public Process** considered the role and opportunities for the public in the development approval process.

Progress in these areas was reported to Electoral Area Services Committee (EASC) on May 3, 2023, and April 3, 2024, and included numerous changes to CVRD policies and procedures, administrative bylaw amendments, staffing, website enhancements, support to advisory planning commissions (APCs) and the Board of Variance (BOV), and workshops with elected officials.

Over the past year, policies, procedures and bylaws continued to be refined and updated and emphasis of the DSMP shifted toward acquisition of land management (i.e. development and file tracking) software.

Phase 1 of the DSMP concluded in March 2024 and a final grant report was provided to UBCM. Activities completed during Phase 1 are detailed in Appendix A. The CVRD subsequently received confirmation from UBCM that the CVRD had fulfilled its grant requirements.

ANALYSIS

Full release of the Land Management Software (LMS) is expected in Q4 2024. The software will enable Land Use Services to improve coordination across Development Services, Inspections & Enforcement Divisions; provide an online application portal (including online payments and application/document submission); allow staff to send and receive internal and external referrals for applications; and provide public and elected official access to live status updates and information materials on applications, displayed on a map viewer and in list view by Electoral Area.

As part of the LMS implementation and broader DSMP process, Development Services will create a new project page on Plan Your Cowichan to engage with and inform the development community and general public about the LMS, and to seek feedback on development approval process challenges and potential additional improvements. Engagement may take the form of webinars, guides, videos, surveys and polls.

Current (Phase 2) DSMP-related projects that are also underway include:

- New and improved development application guides for the website for each application type;
- Updates to the Development Applications Procedures Bylaw to add enforcement provisions;
- New policies and guidelines for Temporary Use Permits;
- Updates to the Development Applications Referrals Policy to include more details on referrals to First Nations and processing Agricultural Land Commission application referrals; and
- Coordinating with other divisions including Community Planning and Planning – Strategic Initiatives on Development Permit Area Guideline improvements, the Comprehensive Zoning Bylaw and the Modernized Official Community Plan and Local Area Plans.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Approximately 50% of DAPR grant funding was used for staffing, and the remaining funds were used for a combination of legal services (for bylaw updates), website and communications enhancements, workshops for elected officials, Advisory Planning Commission (APC) and BOV members, and staff, and purchase of LMS modules for Development Services, Building Inspection and Bylaw Enforcement.

UBCM DAPR grant revenue in the amount of \$250,000 was included in the approved 2024 budget for Function 325 (Community Planning).

Phase 2 of the DSMP and LMS implementation will be funded through a combination of core budget and (approved transfer from) operating reserves.

COMMUNICATION CONSIDERATIONS

Development Services will create a DSMP page on Plan Your Cowichan, to communicate recent and upcoming projects including the roll-out of the LMS, as well as to conduct engagement (potentially in the form of a survey and webinar) about how to further improve development approval processes.

STRATEGIC/BUSINESS PLAN CONSIDERATIONS

DSMP activities are part of the Land Use Services workplan presented by the General Manager to the EASC April 3, 2024, and fall under Strategic Plan Action 6.3:

Modernize and enhance the CVRD's Development Services:

- Implement a Land Management System

- Enhance development approval processes through improved policies, procedures and bylaws
- Enhance public awareness and participation in development processes
- Support Advisory Planning Commissions

GENERAL MANAGER COMMENTS

☐ Not Applicable

Referred to (upon completion):

- ☐ Community Services (*Arts & Culture, Cowichan Community Centre, Cowichan Lake Recreation, South Cowichan Recreation, Facilities & Transit*)
- ☐ Corporate Services (*Finance, Human Resources, Information Technology, Legislative Services*)
- ☐ Operations (*Parks & Trails, Recycling & Waste Management, Utilities*)
- ☐ Land Use Services (*Building Inspection & Bylaw Enforcement, Community Planning, Development Services, Strategic Initiatives*)
- ☐ Strategic Services (*Communications & Engagement, Economic Development, Emergency Management, Environmental Services*)

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Reviewed for form and content and approved for submission to the Committee:

Resolution:

☒ Corporate Officer

Financial Considerations:

☒ Chief Financial Officer

Attachment A - DSMP Phase 1 Activities Summary