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## CITY OF KELOWNA

### MEMORANDUM

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**Date:** November 20, 2002

**File No.:** 6480-40

**To:** City Manager

**From:** Director of Planning and Development Services

**Subject:** URBAN CENTRE DEVELOPMENT INCENTIVES RECOMMENDATIONS

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#### RECOMMENDATION

THAT the November 20, 2002 report from the Planning and Development Services Department be received for information;

AND THAT staff undertake pro forma analyses of representative properties to determine the extent of grants that would be necessary to initiate Urban Centre development of affordable market housing;

AND THAT staff prepare a plan for an Urban Centre tax incentive program for the rehabilitation and/or restoration of commercial buildings on the Heritage Register to promote upgrading of commercial retail space and/or the conversion of upper floors to residential occupancies;

AND THAT the impact of reducing or eliminating Urban Centre parking requirements triggered by conversion of upper floors, or construction of additional floors of residential occupancy to older buildings, be examined in conjunction with possible grant and/or tax incentive programs for such types of development;

AND THAT staff identify and review with Council, Urban Centre sites suitable for City acquisition to foster development consistent with OCP objectives where the redevelopment of such sites is critical and unlikely to happen without a City role in land assembly;

AND FURTHER THAT staff identify and forward for Council's consideration, Urban Centre sites that could benefit from being more pro-actively marketed to implement the OCP vision.

## BACKGROUND

For decades after the end of World War II, the primary development pattern in North American and other western countries has been the creation of large tracts of single family subdivisions. Those subdivisions were frequently created in such a manner that services and facilities needed on a daily basis were far away and only reachable by vehicle. That form of development used up great supplies of land, resulted in high servicing costs, and placed pressures on fragile ecosystems and rural/agricultural lands. In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, many citizens began to express growing disenchantment with these impacts as well as with the lack of alternatives for those wishing to pursue more urban lifestyles.

After decades of almost exclusive suburban development, the early 1990s saw increased interest in the concept of creating Urban Centres. These Urban Centres were intended to become vibrant nodes of activity catering to multiple uses (residential, office, retail) within a fairly compact area. Kelowna was among the communities that embraced this vision. The vision was, for the first time, clearly expressed in the 1995 Official Community Plan.

With what now amounts to roughly a decade of working towards the creation of Urban Centres, municipalities across Canada and the United States are evaluating how things have gone. There have not yet been any cases where the visions have been truly realized within the first decade. The achievement of long-term plans, does usually take a long time. However, there has been movement towards the vision. Some cities are now investigating whether there are ways to accelerate achievement of the Urban Centre vision.

## RECENT DISCUSSIONS

In recent years, the Urban Centre Implementation Committee has been increasingly interested in exploring options for accelerating development in Kelowna's urban cores. In response to that interest, staff have co-ordinated investigation of various initiatives for encouraging Urban Centre development.

The City engaged the firm of G.P. Rollo and Associates to explore the economics of developing in the City, Rutland, and South Pandosy/KLO Urban Centres<sup>1</sup>. In late April, Mr. Rollo interviewed sixteen individuals involved in Kelowna's development industry. Those interviews, as well as Mr. Rollo's independent preparation of proformas for test sites/developments were used to prepare recommendations for Council's consideration. On May 10<sup>th</sup>, Council and staff met to discuss the potential of development incentives for Kelowna. At that time, Mr. Rollo presented his initial findings and summary report. On May 10<sup>th</sup>, Council also heard from Mr. Ed Grifone of Urban Systems Ltd. who presented information on actions that have been taken in other municipalities. Mr. John Ritchie gave a brief presentation on his experiences in developing residential units in downtown Detroit. After this information was presented, Council gave staff some preliminary feedback on initiatives to be further explored.

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<sup>1</sup> The Highway 97/Springfield Urban Centre was not studied in Paul Rollo's initial assessments since development (both residential and commercial) seems to have occurred quite rapidly without the assistance of incentives. This has not been the case in the other Urban Centres.

On May 28<sup>th</sup>, staff provided further information related to the initiatives previously identified by Council. That material triggered more detailed discussion of several options and resulted in the selection of a few priority initiatives. These were that the City:

1. Focus Capital Investments In Urban Centres
2. Initiate a Program of Land Assembly
3. Provide Grants and/or Tax Incentives
4. Relax Parking Requirements
5. Re-examine the Potential for Implementation of a DCC Density Gradient
6. Maximize Retention and Recruitment of Businesses to the Urban Centres
7. Ensure Adherence to Design Guidelines that Provide for Pedestrian-Friendly Building Frontages
8. Pre-Qualify and Package Information on City-Owned or -Partnered Development Opportunities within Urban Centres.
9. Undertake Visioning Sessions
10. Streamline the Development Approval Process

## ANALYSIS

The purpose of this report is to provide additional information on the above-noted initiatives identified by Council as warranting further exploration, with the aim of obtaining Council direction for “next steps”.

Over the past few months, staff have evaluated the initiatives identified for further exploration. A detailed analysis of each initiative is included in Attachment 1 of this report. Based on preliminary analysis, staff suggest that the most promising approach involves a combination of grants, tax incentives, and a reduction of parking requirements. Further evaluation, including a full pro-forma analysis of hypothetical projects could be undertaken. A comprehensive assessment would allow for consideration of the relative “bottom-line” impact of each of these incentives and allow for selection of the most effective approach. A program aimed at smaller scale, affordable market housing developments appears worthy of exploration. As well, it is recommended that strategic development sites and strategies be identified for the subject Urban Centres. Investigation into grants, tax incentives, and parking strategies could start this winter. Supportive peripheral actions including helping to establish business improvement associations and formulating design guidelines could be undertaken as staff resources become available.

Development incentives are a tool to stimulate specific types of development, and/or to stimulate development within identified geographic locations. Incentives are intended to catch some portion of a “latent” market. They can help counter the development industry’s focus on proven markets enough to create a product that buyers can see and touch prior to committing themselves. Once that product is created and proven financially viable, the stage can be set for

further similar projects, possibly to be built without incentives. Incentives should continue in effect until the market identified becomes sustainable or until desired objectives are achieved. Incentives are not intended to be on going.

Due to their dynamic nature, it will be necessary to monitor market conditions. Significant changes in the market could warrant adjustments or major changes to any incentive program.

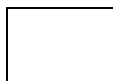
### SUMMARY

In summary, it is recommended that the report of November 20, 2002 from the Planning and Development Services Department be received for information and that staff be directed to commence actions spelled out in the report.

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Signe K. Bagh, MCIP  
Long Range Planning Manager

Approved for inclusion



R.L. (Ron) Mattiussi, ACP, MCIP  
Director of Planning & Development Services

PM/SB/pm

Attachment

## ATTACHMENT 1: EVALUATION OF IDENTIFIED OPTIONS

### BACKGROUND

Recent work done by Mr. Paul Rollo of G.P. Rollo and Associates identifies the potential for residential and commercial development in the City, Rutland, and South Pandosy/KLO Urban Centres. Mr. Rollo cautions that some types of development may not happen in the short-term unless the City acts to encourage those particular types of development.

Given that development could eventually occur of its own accord within the subject Urban Centres, the principal objective of development incentives is to stimulate development in the short term. Staff have assumed that “short term” means “the next five years”.

### DEVELOPMENT INCENTIVES

Initiatives that will *directly* stimulate private sector development are “Development Incentives”. The purpose of this section is to evaluate each identified initiative against certain criteria. The criteria used in this report are as follows:

- (a) ability to achieve outcomes in the short-term (five years),
- (b) the degree to which any initiative helps fulfill OCP and prior planning directions for each of the subject Urban Centres,
- (c) the degree of control over potential outcomes, and
- (d) expected demands on City resources (dollars and staff) in relation to expected effectiveness.

### **1. Focus Capital Investments in Urban Centres**

#### Evaluation

Public capital investment can take many forms. It can include streetscape improvements as well as new parks, and utility/roadway upgrades. It can also include special projects like public art and construction of facilities such as the Chapman Parkade and the Rotary Centre for the Arts.

OCP policy 6.1.2 directs the majority of capital improvements to Urban Centres and consistent with this policy, the City has made significant capital investments within most of the subject Urban Centres, often in partnership with the private sector.

Past research and experience in other communities have shown that potential residential purchasers consider neighbourhood amenities as important as unit features. Most prospective owners are not willing to “pioneer” ahead of neighbourhood amenities. This highlights the importance of civic investments. Local experience substantiates this finding.

Implementing capital improvements is usually a lengthy process. Major projects can take years to complete. The potential for conceiving and completing a project and creating development

benefits within the short-term (5 years) is relatively low. The City would have little control over the timing or nature of the “spin-off” development.

#### Recommendations/Next Steps

Capital investment is necessary to attract private investment to Kelowna’s Urban Centres, but is not an effective tool for doing so with any degree of certainty in the short term. Staff recommend that the City continue to direct the majority of capital improvements to Urban Centres and that the City reconsider the amount of capital investment upon the next review of the 10-year Capital Plan. It is recommended that special attention be paid to identifying appropriate capital improvements for the Rutland area since that Urban Centre has, in that regard, not yet been a major focus.

## **2. Institute a Program of Land Assembly**

#### Evaluation

Mr. Rollo’s report identified the cost and difficulty of acquiring development parcels as a barrier to development. His report went on to suggest the City “...explore ways to facilitate development...with an aim to reducing uncertainty for developers” (p. 11) and to “...acquire key strategic ...sites to facilitate future development in downtown Kelowna” (p. 11).

There are some potential downsides to this approach. For example, the value of City-acquired properties could decrease. Another consideration is that, like the strategy of making significant capital investments in the Urban Centres, land assembly can involve an extended timeline to realize desired outcomes. Having said this, it is also possible to acquire pertinent properties in a relatively short period of time, the complexity of the process depending upon how much land needs to be assembled, how many property owners are involved, etc.

The positive side is that land assembly can change development industry perceptions about a high-risk area. By taking a lead role, municipalities can send a strong message and act as catalysts for new private sector development. Moreover, the City could exercise a high degree of control over project outcomes by participating as an equity partner or by attaching terms and conditions to a lease or sale.

This form of intervention can increase assessed values and result in other positive spin-offs, e.g., reduced policing and maintenance costs, such that long-term benefits may offset direct costs.

#### Recommendations/Next Steps

Staff suggest that strategies other than land assembly will be more effective in stimulating development in the short-term. However, land assembly could be key to addressing specific sites or sub-areas within the subject Urban Centres where there is strong long-term potential, but where these sites/areas are perceived by the private sector as high risk. Staff’s recommendation is that staff identify, and review with Council, any Urban Centre sites or sub-areas characterized by such conditions before the City considers a role in land assembly.

### 3. Provide Grants

#### Evaluation

The recent analysis by G.P. Rollo and Associates has indicated that the provincial economy is at or near the bottom of a business cycle and that markets for higher density commercial in most locations are weak to non-existent. The implication is that for many such projects it would take a significant amount of public money to positively influence the bottom line in these markets.

Some residential markets appear viable in the current economic climate. For example, high-end residential waterfront development is currently selling quite well. On the other hand, sites without the waterfront context (or other major amenity) and sites in less desirable areas are currently not the subject of great interest – even for “affordable”<sup>2</sup> types of units. Mr. Rollo’s report indicates that the market for “affordable” 3-4 storey apartments within the Urban Centres may verge on economic viability. Recent research by the Planning and Development Services Department confirms strong demand, but rapidly dwindling supply, of such units. The opportunity to kindle the provision of affordable market housing through grants would therefore seem to be worth exploring.

The viability of affordable market housing identified by Mr. Rollo is based not only on market demand, but also on the lower average construction costs associated with lower- to medium density projects, the lower costs being achieved principally through wood-frame construction. Other similarly scaled projects involving wood frame construction could include:

- (a) Residential suites on second and third storeys of heritage buildings within Downtown, or on upper, under-utilized storeys of older, commercial buildings within any of the Urban Centres<sup>3</sup>.

The development of under-utilized upper storeys of older buildings, heritage or otherwise, within Urban Centres, is consistent with the directions of the OCP and the *Kelowna Downtown Plan*. Such development would add diversity to Urban Centre housing options. The mix of commercial and residential uses would help provide surveillance of the streets, and in turn enhance the appeal of the Urban Centres as places to live, work, and shop.

- (b) Artist live / work space.

Nurturing local artistic talent is necessary for the long-term success of the City’s cultural tourism initiative, and this direction is identified in the *City of Kelowna Cultural District Implementation*

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<sup>2</sup> For the purpose of this report, “affordable” is considered to mean units which meet the criteria spelled out in OCP policy #8.16.

<sup>3</sup> Although development of upper floors of older 2-3 storey buildings typically involves wood frame construction, it also typically triggers building code upgrades that can add a premium to the cost of the project.

*Strategy and Marketing Plan*<sup>4</sup>. With the community's cultural initiatives, in particular construction of the Rotary Centre for the Arts and other recent developments within the Cultural District, the market for artist live/work space may also verge on economic viability. If a concentration of artist live/work spaces near the Cultural District can be initiated, it could help attract other types of complementary development.

The downside of providing grants is the out-of-pocket and opportunity costs<sup>5</sup> of a dedicated reserve of funds. The upside of such programs is that they are usually relatively easy to administer, and do not normally involve extensive staff time. A significant aspect of a grant approach is the immediacy of the impact on both developer cash flow and profit (depending upon when funds are released). Results are therefore easy to measure. As such, grant programs can be set up on a limited or trial basis, and terminated or continued, based upon response of the development industry.

Through the terms set for such programs, specific types of development can be targeted and a high degree of control exercised over desired outcomes.

#### Recommendations/Next Steps

It is recommended that staff undertake pro forma analyses of representative properties to determine the extent of grants that would be necessary to initiate development of affordable market housing, including 1) the conversion of under-utilized upper floor spaces to residential units and 2) the provision of artist live/work spaces.

In addition to determining the amount of the benefit that might apply to any particular project, initiating a grant program would require that specific terms for qualifying for any benefit be set out, and that the total cost of any program be estimated. Obtaining this information may involve consultant expertise as well as dialogue with stakeholders including UDI, the DKA, the Chamber of Commerce, the general public, and others.

## **4. Provide Tax Incentives**

### Evaluation

Tax incentives are another tool that cities can use to stimulate development. However, under provincial legislation, tax incentives can only be applied to revitalization of heritage buildings<sup>6</sup>. Tax incentives can be in the form of moratoriums, rebates, and/or deferrals.

To keep a community's heritage buildings economically viable usually means making better use of space and undertaking property improvements to attract tenants that will pay higher market rents. However, the costly building code upgrades triggered by renovations/redevelopment often

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<sup>4</sup> Combining live and work space is consistent with cultural goals because it helps members of the arts community minimize overhead costs, particularly in the early stages of their careers.

<sup>5</sup> The cost of forgoing other initiatives because resources are committed elsewhere.

<sup>6</sup> Buildings on the Kelowna Heritage Register.

impede change. Incentives can help counter these costs. A survey of Canadian municipalities indicates that tax incentives<sup>7</sup> are a well-accepted approach to offsetting the cost of building code upgrades.

As discussed above, there has not yet been much conversion of upper floors of older commercial buildings to residential occupancies (see 3. Provide Grants). It would seem that such conversions are not economically viable, no doubt at least partly because of the cost of building code upgrades. There could be an opportunity therefore for a tax incentive program to stimulate the conversion of upper floors of heritage buildings to residential occupancies.

Mr. Rollo's report suggests there is a trend to redevelopment of older, heritage style buildings to "specialty retail space" and that this trend will continue. Some renovation of at-grade commercial space within heritage buildings<sup>8</sup>, including façade upgrades has taken place in the recent past. However, the pace of such change has been slow in light of the key role that such specialty retail could play in revitalizing the Downtown and the Cultural District. A tax incentive program could help speed the upgrading of commercial space in heritage buildings.

Tax incentives could be offered with the condition that the subject buildings be rehabilitated in a manner that respects heritage values.

Tax incentives could result in the simultaneous achievement of heritage preservation and rehabilitation, the provision of affordable housing, and the provision of specialty retail.

The advantages and disadvantages of tax incentive programs are similar to grant programs. Tax incentive programs are relatively easy to administer. As well, they tend to have short-term impacts on both developer cash flow and profit. Results are relatively easy to measure and tax incentive programs lend themselves to implementation over trial periods. A principal difference between tax incentive programs and grant programs is that the former involves a loss or deferral of a revenue stream while the latter involves an out-of-pocket cost.

#### Recommendations/Next Steps

Staff recommend analysis to determine the merits of a tax incentive program for the rehabilitation and/or restoration of commercial buildings on the Heritage Register for the purposes of upgrading commercial space and/or converting upper floors to residential occupancies. This investigation could possibly include further market studies as well as pro-forma analysis of representative projects. The analysis would help determine the amount of any grant, i.e., how much would be necessary to make a project economically viable.

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<sup>7</sup> Often done in conjunction with a grant program.

<sup>8</sup> The majority of heritage buildings suitable for such purposes lie within the City Centre. At present there are approximately 24 buildings on the Heritage Register within the City Centre, and none in any of the other Urban Centres.

## **5. Relax Parking Requirements**

### Evaluation

Urban Centre parking requirements are currently less than for locations elsewhere within Kelowna. Soon-to-be-proposed changes to the C7 zone could further reduce parking requirements (to one stall per residential unit regardless of the number of bedrooms). If these requirements remain too onerous, developers have the option of requesting yet further reductions (through Development Variance Permits). Despite this, some developers cite parking requirements as an obstacle to development (especially in the downtown core).

A cautionary note regarding a further reduction in Urban Centre parking requirements is that it would not likely reduce the demand for parking. Rising demand in the context of stable supply may have an impact on the price of parking and existing merchants would likely not view this very positively. These cause and effect relationships therefore need careful scrutiny.

To maintain a supply consistent with demand, parking facilities would likely need at least partial taxpayer funding. This would be necessary because the cash-in-lieu funds that would otherwise result from the existing parking requirement would no longer flow into the Parking Reserve Fund used to finance future off-street parking facilities.

In many respects, this approach is similar to grant or tax incentive programs. Each approach has a positive effect on the developer's revenue / cost equation. With each, the expectation is that the long-term benefits would outweigh the short-term costs. With each, there is also the possibility of introducing time limits, which will place the onus on the developer to act in the short-term. It is the time limit which would stimulate short- to immediate-term development.

A more specific discussion revolves around parking as it pertains to heritage buildings and older commercial buildings. Some local developers have identified parking requirements as an impediment to adding new residential units by converting upper floors or by constructing additional floors on existing buildings<sup>9</sup>.

### Recommendations/Next Steps

Staff's recommendation is that Urban Centre parking requirements continue in force but that the City continue to be open to considering variances. Staff also recommend that the City consider the impact of reducing or eliminating parking requirements triggered by conversion or construction of residential units in the upper stories of older buildings.

## **6. Pre-qualify and package information on development opportunities within Urban Centres**

### Evaluation

The City could be well poised to pro-actively promote specific sites within the subject Urban Centres. This could include sites owned by the private sector as well as sites currently owned

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<sup>9</sup> Existing buildings were grand-fathered when the current bylaw was instituted. Conversions of existing space and new construction trigger the bylaw's parking requirements.

by the City. Potentially, this approach could reduce the uncertainty associated with specific projects and expose development opportunities to a wider audience of qualified developers.

This approach would mean providing information on estimated off-site servicing costs, Development Cost Charges, and permit fees. The City currently provides such information upon request. Additionally, in the past, the City has assembled a complete package of information on City-owned sites where the City has been interested in developing those sites (e.g. Skyreach Place) or where private sector developers have expressed interest in developing City-owned sites (e.g. the lot adjacent to downtown library).

Taking a pro-active approach to marketing development sites would require preliminary economic analysis of potential sites to determine what type of projects might be economically viable under current market conditions (e.g. density, type of construction, parking requirements, etc.). In assessing the subject sites, staff could also consider the impact that grants, tax incentives, or parking relaxations might have on the viability of developing the subject sites. The staff time required to gather information, to undertake analysis, and to package information could be considerable.

#### Recommendations/Next Steps

Staff recommend assembly of a team to identify and forward for Council's consideration, sites that could benefit from being more pro-actively marketed to implement the OCP vision.

### **7. Re-examine implementation of a DCC density gradient**

A density gradient would institute lower Development Cost Charges (DCCs) for higher density development and increase the charges for lower density development in order to make up the difference.

Past endeavours to institute a density gradient have been met with resistance from that portion of the development industry that focuses on single / two unit housing construction. Although there are developers of multiple-unit projects who would be in favour of a density gradient, there is division within the local chapter of the Urban Development Institute (UDI) over this issue.

Although some local developers have indicated DCCs are a barrier to development within the Urban Centres, Mr. Rollo's analysis suggested that DCCs are, in today's market, likely only a barrier to certain small-scale projects. With such projects, lower DCCs could nudge balance sheets into the black. There are other projects which would not be economically feasible even if DCCs were reduced to zero.

If the goal is to make "marginally viable" Urban Centre development financially attractive, other means such as grants could be more expedient given the complexity of the DCC issue.

#### Recommendations/Next Steps

Staff's recommendation is that the density gradient continue to be discussed with the local development industry, with the possibility of introducing the gradient in phases. The purpose of

the density gradient would be to support and reinforce the goal of encouraging Urban Centre development.

## PERIPHERAL ACTIONS

In addition to the initiatives discussed above, Council made a number of suggestions for peripheral actions which although not strictly qualifying as incentives, could assist in furthering the economic viability of private sector development within Kelowna's Urban Centres.

### **(a) Maximize retention of businesses in Urban Centres**

#### Evaluation

Recent work by the Planning and Development Services Department indicates that there is a sustained trend of Highway 97 attracting a large share of new businesses. This trend is compromising achievement of the OCP vision for Urban Centres.

The Planning and Development Services Department is in the process of conducting a commercial land use policy review. Staff have completed an inventory of currently available space. The next step is to assess the current supply relative to anticipated future needs. This will help determine the extent to which the City can allow commercial development outside Urban Centres without compromising OCP objectives.

#### Recommendation/Next Steps

Staff's recommendation is that the commercial policy review currently underway be completed and that any recommendations based on the findings be brought forward in a future report for Council's consideration.

### **(b) Maximize recruitment of businesses to Urban Centres**

#### Evaluation

Responsibility for recruitment most typically falls to organizations representing business. The Kelowna Chamber of Commerce, the Economic Development Commission, and the Downtown Kelowna Association (DKA), in conjunction with the City of Kelowna, currently form the Business Recruitment Team (BRT). With the presence of the DKA on this committee, the City Centre is well represented. Without BIA's in the Rutland and South Pandosy/KLO though, these Urban Centres are possibly under-represented. Given the importance of a BIA presence in the subject Urban Centres, there would seem to be a lead role for the City in establishing and nurturing BIAs in Rutland and South Pandosy. This could include seed money and/or staff resources to get such organizations started. Staff resources in these areas might provide logistical support to help representatives of the respective business communities educate their fellow business and property owners on the merits of BIAs, and in preparing formal recommendations to Council for seed money.

#### Recommendation/Next Steps

It is recommended that staff continue to work with business and commercial property owners to pro-actively realize a Business Improvement Association within each of the South Pandosy/KLO and Rutland Urban Centres.

### **(c) Ensure provision of, and adherence to design guidelines**

#### Evaluation

Concise, easy-to-understand guidelines send a clear message to developers and designers about the City's expectations.

The development industry would not typically consider the provision and application of design guidelines an incentive to development. In fact, developers may consider required adherence to add another level of complexity to the development process.

There is a need to both streamline the development process for projects within the subject Urban Centres and to provide pedestrian-friendly and context-sensitive buildings. The best approach to this may be to formulate guidelines that are easy to understand and to apply and to uphold them in a consistent manner. That approach helps clarify the City's expectations and therefore reduces uncertainty for the developer. Such an approach can help speed up the approval process.

Commercial and residential design guidelines currently exist for the Rutland Urban Centre. It is felt that the general OCP "Urban Centre" design guidelines are sufficient to guide development in the Highway 97/Springfield Urban Centre. There is a need for Downtown design guidelines consistent with the proposed changes to the C7 zone which would allow increased heights within the Downtown Plan area. Multiple-unit residential design guidelines were prepared for the South Pandosy/KLO Urban Centre in 1998 but were never forwarded for Council endorsement. There are currently no commercial development guidelines for the South Pandosy/KLO Urban Centre.

#### Recommendation/Next Steps

It is recommended that staff proceed with preparing commercial design guidelines for the City (Downtown) and South Pandosy/KLO Urban Centres and that staff forward South Pandosy/KLO Urban Centre multiple-unit residential design guidelines for Council's consideration.

### **(d) Streamline the development approval process**

#### Evaluation

Timely processing of development approvals reduces costs to developers.

A "one-window" system to create more customer-friendly application processing and a single point of contact for developers is almost fully implemented. The program, once it is complete, will increase convenience for applicants and the consistency of information flowing to property-owners. Additionally, the Director of Planning has the power to give "direct approval" to

Development Permits that meet specific criteria. Because they do not require Council review, such applications can be processed quickly.

#### Recommendation/Next Steps

Staff's recommendation is that the City continue working towards full implementation of the one-window program.

### **(e) Undertake visioning sessions**

#### Evaluation

The directions for each of the subject Urban Centres, as set out in planning documents to date seem reasonable and there do not, at this point, seem to be grounds to suggest significant changes. Further analysis of market dynamics may suggest the need for more intensive exploration of specific issues, programs, or sites. If that turns out to be the case, then there could be a role for visioning sessions, including charrettes.

#### Recommendations/Next Steps

Staff recommend that any incentives considered by Council be geared towards achieving the vision spelled out in current policy documents (OCP, Sector Plans etc.).