



**SUBJECT: City Hall Customer Service Window and Re-Entry**

**TO: Environment, Infrastructure & Community Services Cttee.**

**FROM: Environment, Infrastructure and Community Services**

Report Number: EICS-17-20

Wards Affected: All

File Numbers: 175-02

Date to Committee: August 10, 2020

Date to Council: August 24, 2020

---

**Recommendation:**

Table Report EICS -17-20; and

Direct the Executive Director of Environment Infrastructure and Community Services to report back in Q4 2020 with further long-term design concepts for the first-floor public areas of City Hall; and,

Direct the Executive Director of Environment Infrastructure and Community Services to advance to detailed design and construction for the redesigned service counters for the One Window Development and Service Burlington Customer Experience areas to accommodate physical distancing requirements and customer service needs as generally outlined in report EICS-17-20.

**PURPOSE:**

**Vision to Focus Alignment:**

- Support sustainable infrastructure and a resilient environment
- Building more citizen engagement, community health and culture
- Deliver customer centric services with a focus on efficiency and technology transformation

## **Background and Discussion:**

The City had initiated a study to review office space requirements and work space requirements in 2019 and had retained VG Architects to assist in this process. The purpose of this study was to establish new space standards, and work group adjacencies i.e. who needs to be co-located at city hall as well as a “kit of parts” for workstations to support various functions. This followed on industry trends that were emerging in terms of shifting space allocation from individual workstations/offices (me space) to more collaborative meeting space supply (we space).

Concurrent with this initiative The Red Tape Red Carpet Task Force report that was approved by council on September 23, 2019 included amongst its 22 recommendations, recommendation 16 to:

Create an “Open for Business” customer service window, ideally on the first floor of City Hall, co-locating key staff from different business-related departments for easy public access and on-the-spot collaboration & problem solving.

The Red Tape Red Carpet Task Force also included recommendation 12 to “Develop a clear vision and associated branding strategy at the City of Burlington with respect to business attraction and development.” Work on what is now known as the Burlington One Brand initiative commenced pre-COVID-19, but the bulk of the work has been paused as a result of the pandemic. However, the development of the One Brand and the Burlington brand promise will be front of mind as we design the look and feel of the customer service window, and how staff and customers will interact with the space. The Burlington brand will be directly influenced and guided by the physical space, technology, and culture at City Hall, so it is crucial that these initiatives are in alignment.

In March of 2020, both City Hall and Sims Square closed due to the global pandemic. All occupants in both civic administrative facilities were sent home and facilities were shut down as we awaited directions from the Province. Over the next few weeks, essential staff were identified and allowed to come back to both civic facilities in a very controlled and safe manner (approximately 20 employees). To provide some context, pre-COVID-19 occupancy was approximately 399 city employees and council members in both facilities, which resulted in 5% coming onsite and 95% working from home. During this period, no public were allowed to access these civic facilities and services were moved to an online / phone format. This facility closure also moved Council and Committee meetings into a virtual format.

In May 2020, City Council also passed a motion for staff to bring forward a plan on the reopening of City Hall:

*“ Motion to amend Report BEDC-02-20 Red Tape Red Carpet Implementation Update, Q1 2020 to direct the Executive Director of Environment, Infrastructure and Community Services to report back in July 2020 on preliminary service redesign plans for Phase 1 City Hall reopening including but not limited to customer experience interfaces and staff workspace accommodation changes required to meet COVID 19 workplace requirements. “*

This report will provide a high level overview of the processes, technology and physical modifications that are being proposed to support this vision as well as the working team’s plan and recommendations for the re-entry of city staff, council and customers back into the two civic administrative facilities: City Hall and Sims Square.

## **Strategy/process**

### **Space Accommodation Strategy**

Prior to the pandemic, a space accommodation strategy was being developed. This study looked at the city’s administration space work environment including the use of technology and amenity space. The emphasis was on reviewing the tools that are required in today’s work environment to maintain service levels including the review of workspace, collaboration space and mobile technology.

Meetings took place with all the administration staff in City Hall, Sims Square, Transit and Roads, Parks and Forestry to determine space and technology requirements for the various services. This work is also being done in alignment with the customer experience and strategy vision.

Some of the outcomes of the study included additional meeting room space and technology for a mobile work environment. As a result of the pandemic meetings were restricted to online meetings and staff were provided city network access remotely. Standard processes were put in place for video conferencing and within a few months it has been the new norm for meetings including council and committee meetings. In essence the pandemic has forced a major acceleration in the deployment and use of mobile technology and work resulting in the need to reconsider both interim and future

administrative space requirements as more staff can effectively work and collaborate remotely and more of our customer interactions move on line.

Prior to the pandemic City Hall had reached staffing workspace capacity and the study was to look at efficiencies and real property strategies to accommodate future staffing requirements. Currently as mentioned in this report City Hall and Sims Square are at 5% capacity and, we are identifying numbers to reach 40% at City Hall and Sims Square as we move into the Province's Stage 3 recovery and re introduce staff and customers to City Hall while at the same time accounting for COVID related constraints such as physical distancing requirements. This has changed the way we are looking at the Space Accommodation strategy as there are a number of staff that can continue to work in a flexible work environment and not rely on City Hall and Sims Square as their only means of meeting their service levels. Even post pandemic this trend is anticipated to continue.

As we continue to move into the next provincial stages, City Hall will gradually be able to open to a new way of serving customers, as part of this, the first floor customer service area will undergo a renovation to accommodate the One Window requirements and provide for better opportunities to maintain physical separation and circulation in common areas. As we have seen, the City is now doing business a little differently, but still meeting most customer expectations. This new way of doing business will change the way we are servicing customers at the counter. A new strategy has been underway with detailed review of individual services areas. This has now been completed and a new first floor customer service window is now in design and is anticipated to start construction late fall 2020. Until then, temporary modifications to the first floor will take place to assist with social distancing as the service counters start to reopen.

### **Service Burlington**

The Customer Experience program, which focuses on the customer journey highlights the need for space improvements to allow deliverance of outstanding customer service for the best Burlington experience possible. The newly launched vision and strategy will lead staff by following the objectives of hearing, knowing, informing and assisting the various customers that we interact with. A redesigned service area will provide the space required for customers to comfortably wait in a line where staff have a better visual of the service need and can adjust the number of staff at the counter accordingly. Offering a more inviting and functional space helps ensure that our service processes can follow best practices by putting the customer first, so they feel

valued. This will strengthen the community minded environment desired and allow the organization to build lifelong relationships and trust with our customers.

### **One Window Development**

Prior to the pandemic, Development Services (i.e. Planning, Building, Site Engineering, Transportation and Forestry) were spread on multiple floors of City Hall (lower level, ground floor, and second floor) and in the case of Forestry (in another off-site building).

As a result of the above, customers were required to travel to multiple floors (or a separate building) to apply for or consult on various items. This led to one of the initiatives outlined in the Red Tape Red Carpet report (*create an “Open for Business” customer service window, ideally on the first floor of City Hall*) and is being discussed in this report.

With the onset of COVID 19 it provided the City an opportunity to examine their existing services including Development Services. Internal discussions have been had to innovate certain City Services and how they directly interact with their respective customers.

An interim solution has been thoroughly examined for development files which encompasses approvals from planning, zoning, engineering, forestry, building and licensing. This interim solution will focus on the initial interactions and application intake that occurs at the initial stages of a development file.

The interim solution will create a common counter on the first floor of City Hall where customers can obtain most of the relevant technical information for their proposed development from relevant staff members in a timely manner without the need to visit various counters within City Hall. This new arrangement will provide customers an opportunity to raise any pertinent questions for their respective property and proposed development and have those questions addressed in a timely manner with all the necessary information being provided at the same time.

During the interim solution, interactions between customers and staff (subject matter experts) after a development application has been submitted, will be conducted via virtual online solutions such as Skype and Teams. This new form of collaboration addresses a few efficiencies:

- ensures the customer receives any additional information or feedback in relation to their application/file in a safe and efficient manner
- there is no need to visit City Hall as this is conducted while the customer is in the safety of their home or office.

- Reduced parking congestion near City Hall and reduced green house gas emissions.

The success of the interim solution will be monitored and evaluated to inform the implementation of a long-term solution when it is safe to further open up City Hall to staff and customers (post COVID-19 vaccine). Changes in staff accommodations, workspace needs and customer interfaces may be required.

As several City services are associated to development files these services have also onboarded new technology 'BlueBeam' to assist with the review and mark-up of electronic plans. This has given these services the opportunity to migrate from a paper-based service to an electronic review process which will ultimately eliminate the need for paper submissions and refine business practices. It is noted that BlueBeam is just the first step in the digital migration of development services. Further technology improvements such as updating folders in AMANDA, creation of an online public portal, and any associated hardware investments will be required to truly modernize planning applications and building permits to further improve overall customer experience.

### **Proposed City Hall First Floor Renovations**

In order to support the new One Window Development vision and enhanced Customer Experience through Service Burlington physical modifications will be required to the first floor/lobby areas of City Hall. These modifications will also allow for better circulation and opportunities for customers and staff to maintain physical distancing through this area. The proposed concept looked at current restrictions and barriers as well as service delivery requirements to enhance the customer experience. The flow within the existing floor plan includes multiple entrances and lacked architectural wayfinding to guide the customer to their destination.

The first phase in developing this vision is the construction of enhanced One Window Development and Service Burlington Counters on the first floor. Pushed back into the existing space, these new counter locations create a sense of entering the One Window Development and Service Burlington Counter areas and allows for queuing within the space rather than within the atrium corridor. The One Window Development counter repositions staff from the lower level and second floor to one Development counter on the First Floor. The Service Burlington Counter is also enhanced to include seats for future staff at the counter. In the current pandemic environment, this allows for staff social distancing at the counter area.

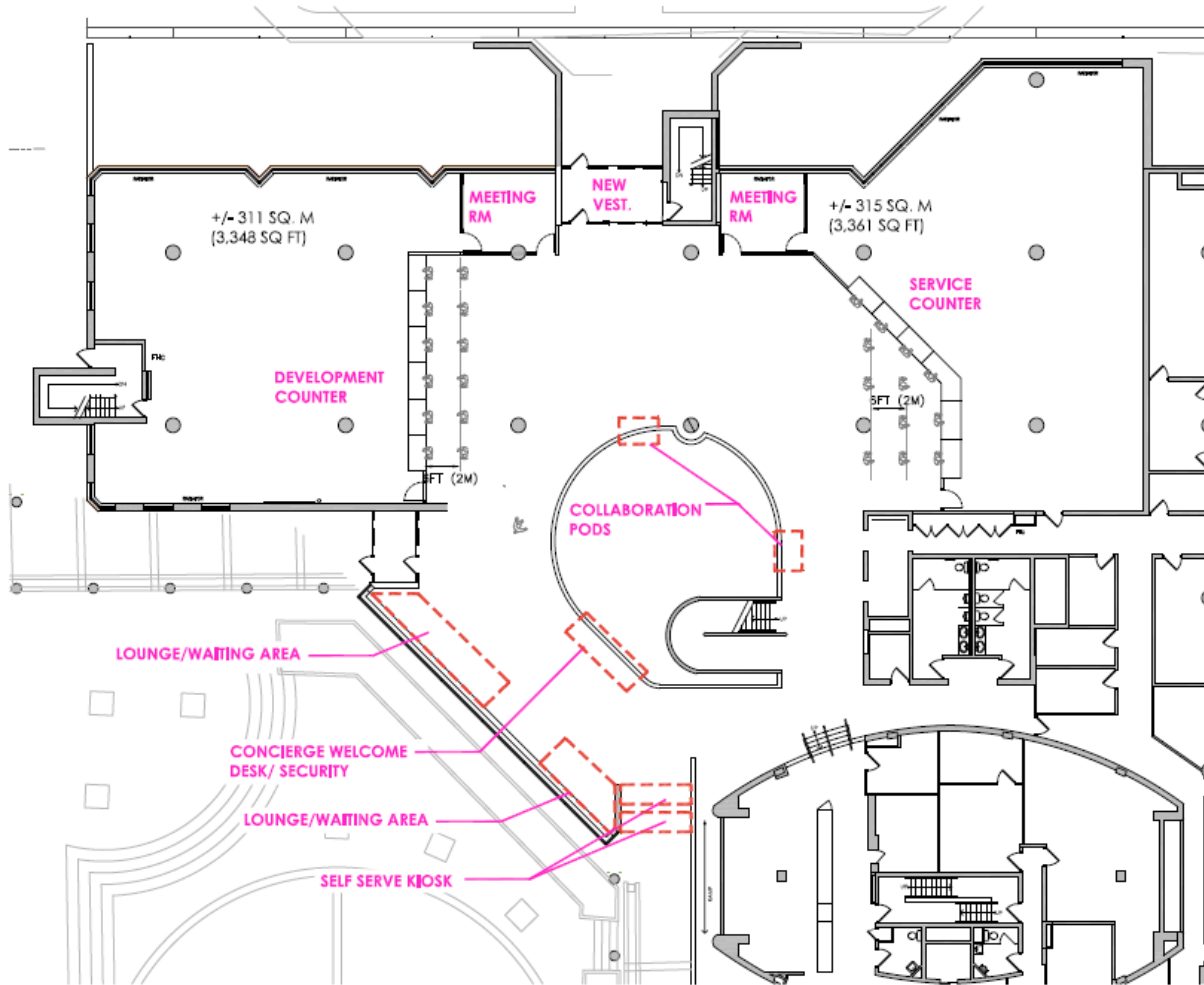
The space behind the counter will be utilized for staff that will be supporting the One Window Development and Service Burlington counter along with amenity space including small meeting rooms for One Window Development and Burlington Service

customer meetings. Staff access to the First floor from the lower and second floor will be via the internal stair wells or main elevators

A subsequent critical feature in the re design of this area is to expand the visual space in City Hall with the addition of a main entrance from Civic Square through the middle of the existing glass lobby wall. This feature visually brings the Civic Square features into the City Hall Atrium and guides the customer into City Hall. This positions the customer immediately in front of the Welcome/Security counter which aligns with the Service Burlington Counter in the distance. This also provides the opportunity to close off one or both Brant and Elgin Street entrances and create a technology-based service kiosk in one location. The Locust Street entrance is planned to be widened to allow for building code and accessibility requirements as primarily a staff only entrance.

These concepts are illustrated on Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1: Proposed Conceptual City Hall First Floor Design Elements**



### Phased Re-Entry to City Hall

Concurrent with this initiative a staff team has been working on phased re-entry plans to City Hall and Sims Square. As the Province begins to lift restrictions and provide guidelines for the safe operation of services, the City has developed a Re-Design Strategy for all City services to help support the recovery phase of this pandemic. This Re-Design Strategy was presented to Council in May 2020. Part of this strategy was the creation of a small working team to focus on the re-entry process of staff, council and customers back into the two civic administrative buildings; City Hall and Sims Square.



The working team includes staff from a variety of areas including Health & Safety, Customer Experience and Facilities. This team has been working on a plan and connecting in to both the Burlington Leadership Team (BLT) and the Strategy and Risk Team (SRT). As an extension of this working team, a connection to our Regional counterparts in Milton, Halton Hills, Oakville and the Region of Halton was developed to support consistency, timing and to share resources and ideas. Below is a summary of the teams guiding principles in the development of the Re-Entry Plan:

1. Continued Safety of our Council, Staff and Customers
2. Broad-based Corporate Approach with Personal considerations addressed
3. Guided by Occupational Safety and Health legislation and Provincial Directives
4. Customer Experience Vision and Strategy
5. Workplace Productivity
6. Phased in approach that is slow and measured, with evaluation completed between each phase
7. Alignment with the Space Accommodation Strategy
8. Coordination with Civic Administrative facilities with our Regional counterparts.

This principle-based approach helped in the development of the overall plan. In addition, a resource was also used and relied upon in the development of this plan; the City of Burlington Health & Safety Toolkit specifically related to the health & safety of staff during a pandemic. This toolkit was created by Health & Safety officials in the Human Resources Department and is an internal document for all service areas and departments to use when redesigning their services.

The re-entry plan is also aligned with the refreshed Customer Experience Vision and Strategy recently approved by BLT. The team did walk throughs of city hall to ensure we understood the customer journey, we are also making efforts to design signage with a friendly/welcoming tone.

The Re-Entry Plan will occur over three Phases: A, B, C. These three phases are guided by the principles noted in this report and will see a gradual reintroduction of city staff, council and customers over a period of 12 to 18 months. As starting point, new COVID-19 occupancy levels were developed for both City Hall and the spaces occupied by city staff at Sims Square. This occupancy adjusts the total occupancy in both facilities from 399 to 165, or approximately 40%. This adjustment is based on a number of factors including a 16m<sup>2</sup> radius per occupant which ensures the continuation of physical distancing and also accounts for the many touch points and common spaces like elevators, stairwells, hallways etc. Post-Pandemic, and with the development of a vaccine (estimated to be 12-18 months), would be when new occupancy rates above the 165 target, may be considered. This adjustment represents approximately 60% of

staff working from home and 40% of staff coming into City Hall and Sims Square, with a small threshold for customers (10-25).

It is also important to note that it would be unsafe and not recommended to go from the current state of 20 staff to 165 staff all at once. A gradual introduction with careful evaluation with a level of flexibility as we proceed through the various Phases is what is being recommended. Moreover, if a second or third wave of the virus occurs, timing may have to be adjusted.

City Hall and Sims Square will also look and feel different with new signage, logistics, traffic flow measures and new protocols in place. For example, stairwells will be adjusted to allow for one way up, and one way down. New occupancy signage will also be developed for all areas to help manage numbers. All measures put in place will be developed for the health and safety of our staff and customers and align with our guiding principles. As part of the Re-Entry process and plan, over the summer months Facilities and Health & Safety staff will be meeting with each department / service area from City Hall and Sims Square to design their new floor plans and logistics. A part of these meetings will include a review of the Health & Safety Toolkit as previously mentioned. It should also be noted that the work, efforts, and standards applied to City Hall and Sims Square will also be used in all City administrative locations. Some locations have already undergone this process as related to the reintroduction of services. More detailed information on the re-entry plans and service resumptions strategies are provided through regular COVID-19 updates to the CSSRA Committee.

Related to the Re-Entry Plan are a variety of other topics to make note of:

- Facility Adjustments will be in place including new signage, hand sanitization stations, flow / logistics, an increase in fresh air intake, enhanced cleaning including the cleaning of all washrooms three times per day.
- Through the leadership of the Human Resources department, the further development of the Work from Policy and the creation of a Welcome Back guidance document for staff will be developed.
- As further systems, standards and processes are developed, the continued update of the Health & Safety Toolkit will be completed.
- The development of an external communication plan so our customers and residents understand how to access services.
- Through the Clerks Department, the development of the Council and Committee meetings will be brought forward in a separate report through the Clerks Department.

### **Next Steps Long Term**

Longer term additional work needs to be undertaken to develop post COVID-19 Work from home policies, space accommodation needs. We know through our COVID-19 experience to date that many of our services and staff work can be undertaken virtually through the use of various technologies. Longer term we need to better understand how this translates into actual physical office space requirements and work station configurations. What is clear at this point is that the COVID-19 experience has fundamentally changed the way we work and how we will be deliver many of our services. We now need to factor this into our longer-term accommodation needs, which will tie into the staff workspace requirements for the One Development Window and Service Burlington counters.

---

### **Financial Matters:**

As related to the construction work on the first floor, as part of the Space Accommodation Strategy, funds have already been approved and assigned for this work.

In addition, some added operating costs for the cleaning and disinfecting will occur over through Phase A, B and C. These added costs will be brought forward and reported on through the Chief Financial Officer as part of the ongoing financial COVID-19 impacts.

---

### **Climate Change Implications**

Buildings and transportation related emissions account for approximately 85% of our green house gas emissions. The existing city hall building was originally constructed in 1965 with a major addition including the atrium area constructed in 1986. While energy use in the existing city hall is efficient for a building of this age the building envelope and systems are limited in the improvements that can be achieved and remains significantly less efficient and more carbon intensive than a new building. To achieve Council's goal of having city operations net carbon neutral by 2040 will require carbon offsets elsewhere to account for emissions from this facility. Transportation emissions account for approximately 40 % of the Community's GHG emissions and not withstanding improvements in vehicle emissions and the introduction of EV vehicles,

total emissions from transportation has been stubbornly flat or increasing owing at least in part to longer commuting distances and more vehicle kilometers driven. The rapid introduction of virtual work and service platforms and work from home arrangements because of COVID-19 has the potential to make a very meaningful impact in the reduction of emissions from transportation sources. Certainly, in the short to medium term work from home arrangements will persist for a significant portion of city and industry employees reducing the emissions from this source. Longer term many of these behavioral changes are anticipated to persist and it is anticipated that the investment in technology and digital services will have a sustained positive impact on reducing green house gas emissions by reducing the number of trips required by customers and staff to city hall. Instead it is anticipated that the city's business will be increasingly conducted virtually utilizing the technology and process that we have implement in response to this Pandemic Emergency.

## **Conclusion:**

This report has tabled an update on design concepts for the first floor of City Hall to enhance customer experience for residents and business utilizing Service Burlington and the development review processes through a reconfiguration of the counter and lobby space in city hall. The proposed works will be phased and support the return to work and COVID 19 design Re-Entry Plans. Longer term this initiative will also tie into the Civic square renewal and Burlington One Brand Project. The initial Phase of this work will entail re-configuration of the service counters to provide the required customer and staff interface as well as provide for additional circulation and physical separation consistent with COVID-19 design requirements.

---

---

Respectfully submitted,

Ken Pirhonen

Manager of Facility Assets - EICS

905-335-7600 ext 7408

## **Report Approval:**

All reports are reviewed and/or approved by Department Director, the Chief Financial Officer and the Executive Director of Legal Services & Corporation Council. Final approval is by the City Manager.