

SUBJECT: Planning and building fee review update (April 2026)

TO: Pipeline to Permit Committee

FROM: Development and Growth Management  
Community Planning

Report Number: DGM-30-26

Wards Affected: All

Date to Committee: April 16, 2026

Date to Council: April 21, 2026

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## **Recommendation**

Receive for information development and growth management report DGM-30-26 providing a planning and building fee review update (April 2026).

## **Purpose of report:**

This report provides Council with an update comprehensive update of the City's development application and permit fees currently underway, outlines factors influencing the project's timeline, and confirms the scheduling of a Council workshop on May 14, 2026, to seek direction on key principles and assumptions.

# Information Report

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## Background

The Community Planning and Building Departments have retained Watson & Associates Economists Ltd. (Watson) in 2024 to undertake a comprehensive update of the City's development application and permit fees. Since that time, staff have worked with Watson to define application types, analyze historic application volumes, and refine level-of-effort estimates across each category and sub-category of application, review, and inspection to inform interim costing estimates.

On September 11, 2025, Watson presented initial findings on the cost to process building permits and planning applications to the Pipeline to Permit Committee. Through the ensuing discussion with Committee members, staff, and Watson, it was identified that greater transparency and benchmarking were needed, and that indirect cost assumptions should be revisited along with cost recovery objectives. Staff proposed that these matters be addressed through a dedicated Council workshop on the principles and assumptions underpinning the costing model.

Two significant changes have emerged since the September 2025 Watson presentation that are expected to influence the fee study's findings, and which support the approach of seeking Council direction before finalizing fee estimates.

### *Process Modernization Through SDAP*

Staff in both Building and Community Planning have been advancing the Streamlining Development Applications Process (SDAP), which is modernizing and streamlining the development application review process from the Official Plan/Zoning By-law Amendment stage through to the Building Permit stage. This work is already yielding measurably reduced levels of effort in application processing. As additional solutions and process improvements are implemented and become routine, it will be important that costing estimates reflect these efficiencies rather than the baseline processes from 2024. Level of effort directly drives cost, and the fee schedule should reflect the City's current and improved practices.

### *Provincial Legislative Reforms*

Since October, there has been three significant changes in legislation and regulation including implementation of Bill 17, *Protect Ontario by Building Faster and Smarter Act (2025)* through new regulation, Bill 60, *Fighting Delays, Building Faster Act (October 23, 2025)*, and most recently, on March 30, 2026, the Province introduced Bill 98, *Building Homes and Improving Transportation Infrastructure Act (2026)* and approximately 20 other proposed policy changes,

all of which are currently under public consultation through a series of Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO) postings.

Bill 98 proposes reforms to Official Plan and Site Plan processes (including submission requirements), a Building Code review, revocation of the Parkway Belt West Plan and associated Minister's Zoning Orders, and changes to Parkland Dedication requirements, among other matters. Staff are actively reviewing the ERO postings and will continue to monitor the legislation's progress. Many of the proposed changes align with work already underway in Community Planning and Building and have the potential to affect processes and costs once Royal Assent is received and implementation occurs.

Given that the full implications of this legislation are not yet known, the fee study will be designed to accommodate refinements as provincial direction is confirmed.

The fee study will recommend planning and building fees based on the revised processes identified through the SDAP and in accordance with any applicable legislative changes.

Staff will facilitate a Council workshop on May 14, 2026 to seek direction on the foundational principles and assumptions of the fee study. The workshop will review the City's legislative obligations and the City's historic approach to setting planning and building fees, and will seek Council's feedback on:

- Direct and indirect costs associated with the processing of planning applications and building permits;
- The appropriate percentage of cost recovery from application fees, distinguishing between discretionary and non-discretionary services;
- Cross-subsidization of permit types under the *Ontario Building Code*; and
- Integration of the updated fee schedule with future budget approval processes.

Following the Council workshop, staff will update level-of-effort estimates to reflect process improvements achieved through SDAP, refine costing estimates, and apply updated application volume projections. These updates will be guided by the direction provided by Council at the May workshop.

Staff will also engage development industry partners in a peer review of the costing models. A report presenting proposed new fee schedules for both Community Planning and Building is anticipated to be brought forward to Council by Q2 2027, to inform the budget process.

This phased approach is designed to ensure that the proposed fee schedules reflect Council's direction, the City's modernized processes, and fair, transparent, and competitive development application costs.

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## Key Dates & Milestones

Council Workshop: May 14, 2026

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## References

- [DGM-36-25](#) (Development application fee review update (April 2025))
    - Staff shared the background on both the previous planning and building fee reviews (2022 and 2019) as well as some insights into the Activity Based Costing Model and an overview of Watson's workplan.
  - [DGM-58-25](#) (Planning Application Fee Review Update – July 2025)
    - Provided an update on Watson's work including draft cost allocations and benchmarking and outlined key considerations around cost recovery and right-sizing application fees for multi-site and multi-building developments.
  - [PP-10-25](#) (Presentation from Watson & Associates regarding Building Department and Community Planning Department Fee Reviews).
    - Watson & Associates presented early findings on costs related to the community planning and building fee reviews.
  - [DGM-89-25](#) (Planning and Building Fee reviews update memo – October 2025)
    - Provided an overview of Watson's presentation at Pipeline to Permit and the discussion that followed. The update memo recommends a Council workshop related to key inputs into the costing models.
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## Strategic Alignment

- Designing and delivering complete communities
  - Providing the best services and experiences
  - Protecting and improving the natural environment and taking action on climate change
  - Driving organizational performance
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**Report Approval:**

All reports are reviewed and approved by the Commissioner, Head of Corporate Affairs, Chief Financial Officer, and Commissioner of Legal and Legislative Services/City Solicitor.