

Municipality of Lakeshore – Report to Council

Growth and Sustainability

Planning Services



To: Mayor and Members of Council

From: Daniel Mercer, urbaniste, RPP, MCIP, Division Leader - Community Planning

Date: January 8, 2025

Subject: Community Planning Division 2024 Year End Status Update

Recommendation

This report is presented for information only at the February 4, 2025 Council meeting.

Strategic Objectives

3b) Modernizing and Enhancing Municipal Functions - Revise business processes to establish and employ a risk management framework, improved workflow management, and financial modelling to inform management of reserves

Background

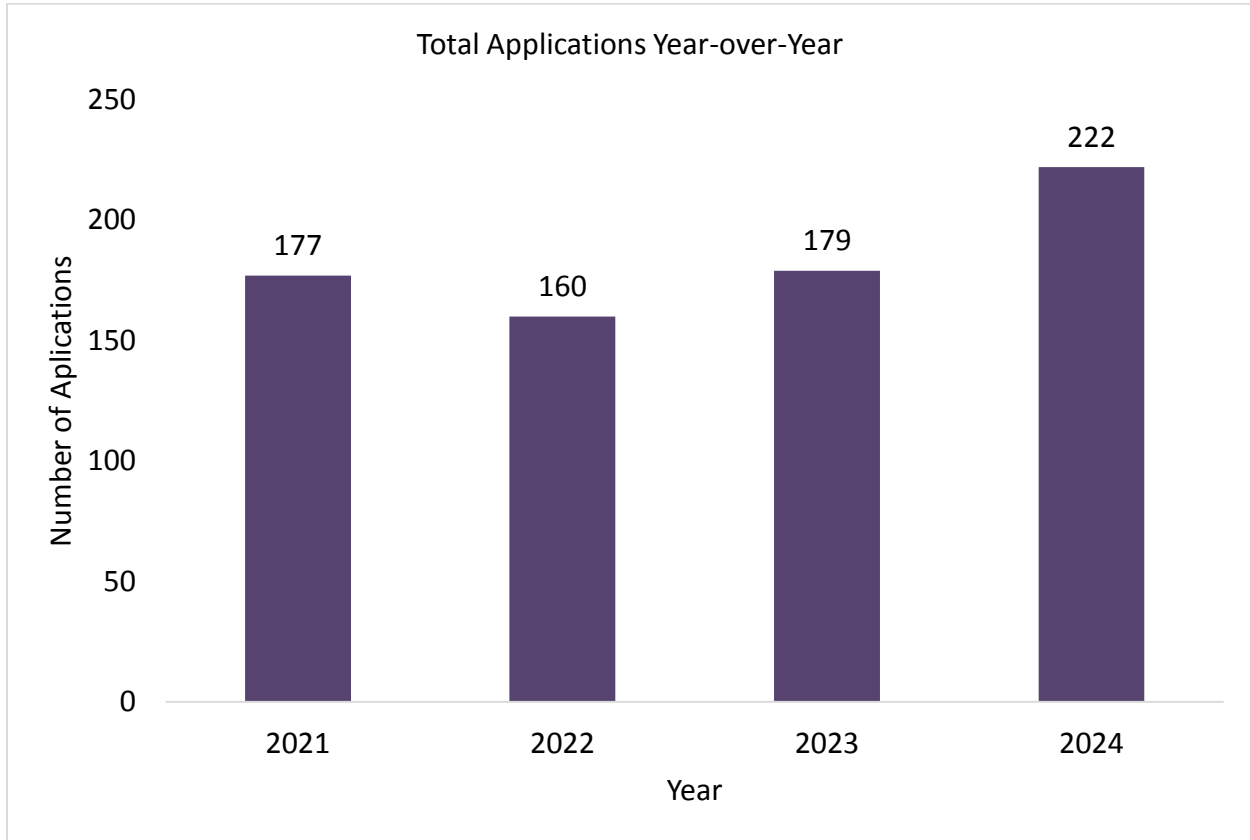
This report is to provide a summary of all *Planning Act* applications underway from January 1, 2024, to December 31, 2024, typical processing times, and ongoing or upcoming continuous improvement initiatives. Annual comparisons are made with previous years back to 2021.

Planning Applications

The following applications are included as part of this review:

- Pre-consultation (PCN)
- Site Plan Control (SPC)
- Temporary Patio (SPC-Temp Patio)
- Zoning By-Law Amendment (ZBA)
- Part Lot Control Applications (PLC)
- Condominium (C-A)
- Subdivision (S-A)
- Minor Variance
- Consent

The following graph outlines a year-over-year comparison of total applications between the 2021 to 2024 calendar years.

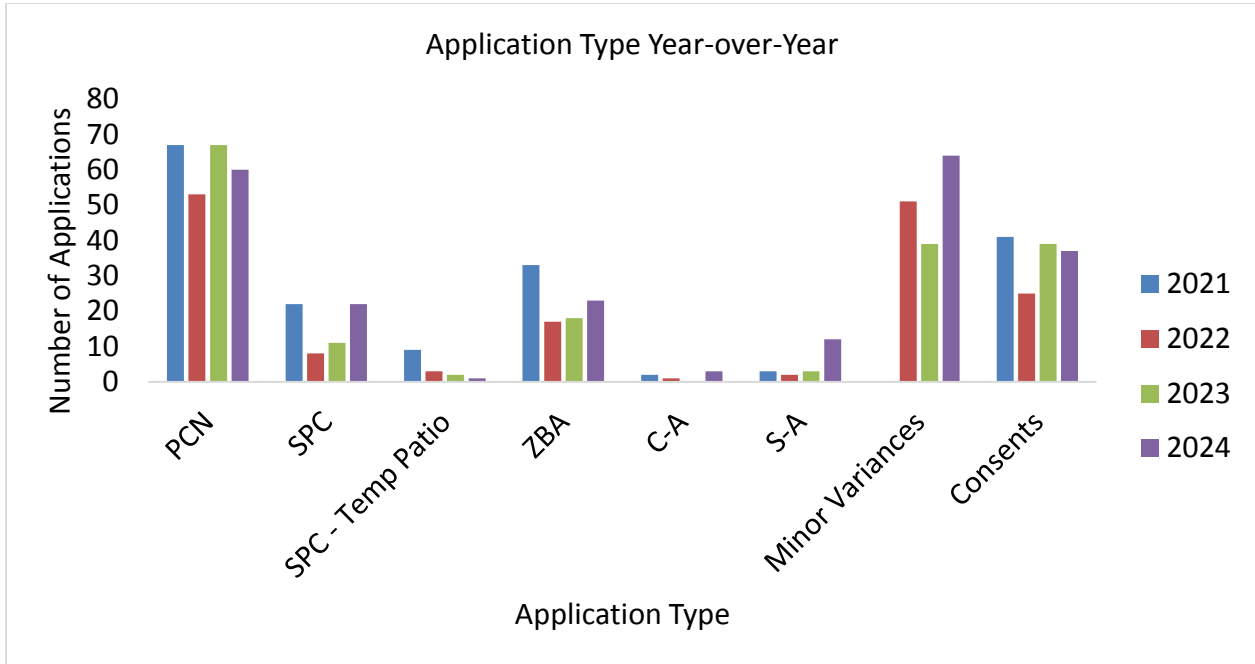


The following chart outlines the specific numbers of applications for each category for the 2024 year, with explanatory notes. Figures from the previous report submitted in October 2024 have been updated to reflect the full calendar year, including those applications that were rejected and fees refunded (therefore removed from the totals). The totals do not identify the number of applications approved or denied.

Type	Volume	Comments
Pre-consultation (PCN)	60	Total applications received in 2024.
Site Plan Control (SPC)	22	Total number of files currently open and actively being processed. (14 received in 2024, 8 remain open from previous years)
Temporary Patio (SPC-Temp Patio)	1	Total applications received in 2024.

Zoning By-Law Amendment (ZBA)	23	Total applications received in 2024. (23 received in 2024, 15 complete, 8 currently open.)
Condominium (C-A)	3	Total applications open.
Subdivision (S-A)	12	Total applications open. (1 received in 2024, 11 remain open from previous years.)
Minor Variance	64	Total applications received in 2024. (37 received and deemed complete, 27 received but not yet been deemed complete)
Consent	37	Total applications received in 2024. (14 received and deemed complete; 23 received but not yet been deemed complete)
TOTAL	222	

The following graph outlines the total number of applications by category and calendar year.



Of note, a significant backlog of approximately 20 planning applications still exists in the system. These include a high level of involvement and technical analysis on behalf of staff such as subdivision applications, site plan applications, and zoning by-law approvals, as noted in table. As provided below in expected processing timelines, these complex applications can often take more than one year to complete.

Planning Process Timelines

The following chart presents the expected timelines for planning applications to be processed by the Community Planning Division.

The average timeline for any planning application can vary greatly depending on several internal and external factors. For the purpose of highlighting the expected processing timelines in this report, outliers have been removed so that it is assumed that the quality of submissions by the application are of average to good quality and the applicant is responsive to required amendments. Significant time for review can also be added for each circulation and review of the application package, depending on the complexity of the proposal and the willingness of the applicant to address highlighted issues. This is particularly relevant for more detailed applications such as Site Plan Control, Zoning By-law Amendments, Subdivisions, and Condominiums.

Removing outliers, these timelines represent the expected performance standards of the Community Planning Division and are communicated to applicants as they are submitting their applications. Unless otherwise noted, they represent the time from when the 'clock is started' with the application deemed complete by the planner assigned to the file with all information submitted, including fees paid.

Application Type	Average Timeline	Comments
<p>Pre-consultation (PCN)</p> <p>(Purpose: Conduct a preliminary review and provide guidance on information required to deem application complete)</p>	<p>2 to 3 weeks</p> <p>(From first point of contact until meeting is held)</p>	<p>Formal meeting notes are provided to the applicant within 2 to 4 weeks following the date of the pre-consultation meeting.</p>
<p>Site Plan Control (SPC)</p>	<p>6+ months</p>	<p>Does not require Council approval</p> <p>5-6 weeks for each circulation</p>
<p>Temporary Patio (SPC-Temp Patio)</p>	<p>2 weeks</p>	<p>All reviews are completed internally</p> <p>Does not require Council approval</p>
<p>Zoning By-Law Amendment (ZBA)</p>	<p>4+ months</p>	<p>Requires Council approval</p> <p>5-6 weeks for each circulation</p>
<p>Part Lot Control (PLC)</p>	<p>2 months</p>	<p>Requires Council and County of Essex approval</p>
<p>Condominium (C-A)</p>	<p>4+ months</p>	<p>Requires Council and County of Essex approval</p> <p>5-6 weeks for each circulation</p>
<p>Subdivision (S-A)</p>	<p>6+ months (usually 1 year +)</p>	<p>Requires Council and County of Essex approval</p> <p>5-6 weeks for each circulation</p> <p>Municipal Consolidated Linear Infrastructure Environmental Compliance Approval (CLI ECA) approval also required from Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.</p>

Minor Variance and/or Consent	3 to 4 months	Requires Committee of Adjustment approval.
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Community Planning Services – Continuous Improvement

In late 2023, as part of a comprehensive Service Delivery Review of the provision of planning, engineering, and building services, the Municipality engaged Strategy Corp. to develop recommendations for process improvements and efficiencies for the Community Planning Division. A report was presented to Council in May 2024. Digitization of the planning approvals process was one recommendation of that report that has been fully implemented in 2024.

All planning applications are now submitted and tracked through the chosen software, Cloudpermit. In addition to Planning, the Building Division is also fully using Cloudpermit for the building permits applications, greatly enhancing Lakeshore’s digitization processes. While already using the system for circulation of applications, the By-law Division will be using Cloudpermit in the future for compliance activities, which will streamline the processes and communication and file management between Planning, Building and By-law.

Additionally, throughout 2024 many external agencies are also coming online with the Cloudpermit system, allowing for circulation of files for review by partners outside of the Municipality. This reduces the potential for error or lost information by allowing tracking to be done entirely within the digital software. Over three-quarters of applications received in 2024 have been processed through Cloudpermit. 2025 will be the first full calendar year using the software. The public reception to the use of Cloudpermit has been largely smooth but not without some sporadic challenges. Planning staff are available to help work with the public in person to ensure applications are uploaded and processed accordingly. In the coming year, Community Planning will continue to explore new enhancements and tracking through Cloudpermit to improve processes.

Other recommendations from the Strategy Corp report will continue to be implemented into business processes as resources and budget permit. A significant identified weakness presented in the May 2024 report was a lack of long-term strategic vision. Within Community Planning Services, this means that almost the entire focus of the Division is on review of applications (e.g.: current planning) versus long-term planning policy review and implementation (e.g. forward planning). As Lakeshore continues to experience development pressures, this particular issue will begin to deeply affect service delivery as plans, policies and bylaws become outdated and out-of-step with the evolving brand and vision of Lakeshore as it continues to grow. Some other recommendations and potential actions included the need to review and streamline processes (e.g.: development of a permit process guideline and/or conducting of a Lean process improvement exercise), improve digitization and integration of GIS tools, and enhancing communication and transparency through website improvements. Staff are continuing to monitor these issues and are developing strategies to mitigate impacts,

continue to build public trust and a culture of continuous improvement in the planning system.

Financial Impacts

As this is a report for information as an update on the activities of the Community Planning Division, there are no direct financial impacts.

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Community Planning Division 2024 Year End Status Update.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Jan 28, 2025

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Prepared by Daniel Mercer

Submitted by Tammie Ryall

Approved by the Corporate Leadership Team