ROCKY VIEW COUNTY

Governance Committee

Subject:	Planning Department Enhancement Strategy (DES) Update
Date:	March 11, 2025
Presenter:	Dane Sokol, Process Specialist
Department:	Planning

REPORT SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to update the Governance Committee on projects being undertaken as part of the Planning Department Enhancement Strategy (DES), which was initiated in Q2, 2023. A summary of the department's overall operations and performance for 2024 is also provided in the Planning 2024 End of Year report (Attachment A), together with the department's 2025 Roadmap listing forthcoming project work and initiatives for the coming year (Attachment B).

The projects within the Planning DES are largely focused on supporting Council's Strategic Plan Objectives relating to effective service delivery and include:

- Obtaining regular customer feedback and refining department processes in response.
- Creating a Customer Service Charter to create accountability and guide customer interactions.
- Developing comprehensive department performance measures and efficient data collection practices that support continuous improvement.
- Mapping the department's main processes to promote consistent and efficient service delivery, and to serve as an educational tool for customers.
- Collaborating with the County's Information Technology department to deliver customer-focused IT solutions such as online mapping tools and planning database improvements.

ADMINISTRATION'S RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Governance Committee receives the Planning Department Enhancement Strategy (DES) Update report for information.

BACKGROUND

The Department Enhancement Strategy (DES) was initiated in Q2 of 2023 following initial presentation to the Governance Committee in February 2023. The DES aims to create a framework of continuous improvement in how the Planning department operates. Specifically, the strategy promotes agility in the department structure and services and, most importantly, creates a culture that prioritizes customer service excellence.

Process improvements began with formalizing the pre-application process and initiating the Customer Feedback pilot project. Two Process Specialists were recruited in Q3 of 2023 to lead the DES projects, and significant progress has been made in drafting process maps and standard operating procedures (SOPs), creating a customer service charter, and the release of quarterly and annual reports to assist in performance tracking.

Planning Department Enhancement Strategy (DES) Update

DISCUSSION

Department Summary and Services

The Planning department is split into three broad service areas:

1. *Long-Range Planning* focuses on setting a vision for how the overall County, individual communities, and business areas will grow and develop.

2. *Current Planning* focuses on implementing the long-term vision through land use and development approvals.

3. *Customer Support Services* is the department's first point of contact for applicants and the wider public.

This Department Enhancement Strategy (DES) update provides information on what has been accomplished since the strategy was launched. Key highlights include:

Customer Feedback

In Q3 2023, Planning began the Customer and Stakeholder Feedback Survey. Distribution of the surveys started in August and customers were asked to grade the level of service they received on a scale of 1-10. Department supervisors proactively reached out to customers who submitted a score lower than 7 to better understand concerns and opportunities for improvement. Survey results were analyzed using the Net Promoter Score (NPS) method, an industry-wide approach, to understand the quality of a customer's experience.

In 2024, the Planning department was able to collect a full year of customer feedback survey results, which were analysed and summarized in the DES Customer Feedback Survey Summary Report. The purpose of this report was to summarize the feedback received on the quality, accuracy, and responsiveness of the department's customer service, which ultimately guides improvements based on the customer experience. Several recommendations are outlined in Section 7 of the Summary Report including:

*   The speed of service is a key concern for applicants and customers.
*   There is a need to present information in a less technical way when advising customers.
*   The majority of customers do not attend pre-application meetings, so raising awareness of this service should be a priority.
*   There is a need to better guide applicants through the various steps of planning, development and building permit approvals processes.
*   Customer surveys should be expanded to obtain more feedback from repeat customers and feedback across different service areas of the development process.

More information can be found in Attachment C: Customer Feedback Survey Summary Report 2024.

Planning and Development Map

In 2024, the Planning department and the Information Technology department successfully completed and released to the public the Planning and Development Map. The Rocky View County Planning & Development Map is an online interactive tool offering up-to-date information on recent development permits and planning applications, including their statuses. Users can search by address, application number, roll number, or explore specific areas on the map. The tool also provides links to notification and notice of decision packages for approved applications, promoting transparency and public engagement in the County's growth. More information on the mapping project and next steps can be found in the End of Year report (Attachment A).

Planning Department Enhancement Strategy (DES) Update

Performance Tracking

An important part of measuring progress for the Planning department is through collection and analysis of performance data. Since Q2 2023, quarterly reports have summarized performance across a range of department services. Performance tracking has assisted the Planning department in understanding overall trends and the impact of department improvements on service levels.

It is noted that although a broader range of data is now being collated and analyzed, the data collection process is still largely a manual undertaking by staff due to the absence of supporting technology to regularly output data. As technology improvements are implemented, the range and efficiency of data collection methods will improve, providing a better understanding of how the department is contributing to Council's key performance indicators.

More information on how progress is being monitored is illustrated in the range of data collected for presentation in the End of Year report (Attachment A).

Process Mapping and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

In 2024, the DES project team created multiple SOPs and process maps to act as a training aid for staff and to promote consistency in how processes are followed within the department. The process maps will also act as a basis for informational materials to guide customers on planning approval processes and timelines. The culmination of this work was the creation of a process mapbook, which includes all Planning department processes for easy staff reference and links to templates. In 2025, the SOPs created will act as a baseline for process refinement, identifying bottlenecks, opportunities for fast-tracking (overlapping tasks), and potential areas for automation of tasks.

Information Technology Solutions

In 2024, Planning continued to work with the County's Information Technology department on multiple projects that are being performed to create efficiencies and a better customer experience. Looking ahead to 2025, the Information Technology department will be leading multiple projects to support improvements in the Planning service, including a more effective utilization of CityView and development of an online portal to allow customers to submit applications, documents, and payment online.

DES 2025 Deliverables

The Planning Department 2025 Roadmap (Attachment B) outlines the strategic direction and key initiatives of the Planning department for the upcoming year. The roadmap serves as a guiding framework that aligns the goals, resources, and actions to fulfill the Planning department's vision. The 2025 Roadmap is guided by the 2024 End of Year Report, Customer Charter, and the strategic initiatives set out by County leadership. It positions the Planning department to act on opportunities, fosters collaboration with other departments, and, most importantly, delivers customer service improvements.

The Department Roadmap will integrate with the wider development process review being undertaken by the County's Strategy and Performance Department to look at the entire planning, development and building approval process. An update on this review project will be provided at a Governance Committee meeting in the near future.

ALTERNATE DIRECTION

Administration does not have an alternate direction for Governance Committee's consideration.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Planning Department End of Year Report 2024
Attachment B: Planning Department 2025 Roadmap
Attachment C: Customer Feedback Survey Summary Report 2024
Attachment D: Planning Department Enhancement Strategy (DES) Update Presentation - to be distributed separately prior to the meeting