



Development Services Center

June 4, 2018

In order to ensure that housing and business opportunities can continue to be created in a timely and high quality manner, Durham's City Manager is proposing the addition of nine new positions in City-County Inspections, City-County Planning / Development Services Center, Public Works, and Water Management.

Specifically, these positions are intended to address engineering and stormwater development review service delays, help to quickly evaluate water and sewer utility availability, support new development review programs (right-of-way management program and a small cell wireless program), and to enable an expedited review pilot program for building inspections.

In 2018, the volume and value of land development activity in Durham reached historic highs, surpassing the previous peak year of 2007. The value of this new construction in Durham County in 2017-2018 is estimated to be \$1.635 billion, a 46% increase over the value of development activity in 2014-2015 (\$1.117 billion in that year).

A challenge of this growth is ensuring the City's requirements for environmental protection, infrastructure quality and for protecting neighborhood character are met for all new development. Staffing levels in City Departments tasked with reviewing development applications are not adequate to keep up with current workload while maintaining a sufficient level of quality and timeliness for our customers. Additionally, resident demand and changes in State law have created demand for new programs to protect Durham's infrastructure and quality of life.

For example, we have had almost 800 reviews of individual building sites to ensure that the sites are built to City infrastructure and environmental standards, and over 4200 building permits this year, to date – these are historically high levels, and up almost 20% in just three years.

In order to meet this demand, Durham's City Manager has recommended adding nine new positions to ensure that the City's development standards are met and that new residential and business opportunities can continue to be created. To fund these positions, development review fees would be increased in program areas benefited by the proposed positions. There would be no cost to the City General fund (i.e. no cost to Durham taxpayer through taxes). The amount of the proposed increase is intended to cover only the costs of the new positions, and the positions will be fully dedicated to development review activities.



This will allow these positions to be accountable both to residents and to applicants seeking development review approvals, for timely and quality reviews. The Durham Development Services Center (DSC) will track review timeliness and monthly reports on review quality, so that all parties can see the progress in development review timeliness brought about by these new positions.

Staff are developing a program to ensure that low-to-moderate income entrepreneurs and homeowners can pursue development opportunities at low or no cost in City fees.

Proposed fee increases will be effective July 1, 2018, pending City Council approval in conjunction with the City's 2018-2019 budgeting process.

A list of the proposed new fees, and increases to existing fees, is [here](#).

Below is a summary of job duties associated with the proposed new positions.

Development Services Center / Public Works

- One engineer to support floodplain building and development review, minor engineering approvals, and engineering customer service.
- One engineer to support review and inspections of Small Cell Wireless facilities (state-mandated new program) and a proposed Temporary Right-of-Way Closure Program. The Temporary Right-of-Way closure program is new program intended to ensure adequate mobility and pedestrian safety, as well as recover losses in on-street parking revenues due to construction.
- Two engineers to support review of building permits, rezonings, site plans, preliminary plats, construction drawings, and final plats for engineering and stormwater development review.
- One engineer to assist in the evaluation of construction securities, as-built drawings, and Closed Circuit TV inspections.

Building Inspections

Two plans examiners and an administrative assistant to support a new expedited review program.

Water Management

One engineer to perform residential development review and process will-serve permits. A will-serve permit is a proposed new pre-development review process for utility capacity. The intent is to provide an up-front evaluation of water and sewer capacity for multifamily and nonresidential development, which helps provide greater certainty regarding utility availability, development, and maintenance costs.