

Expedited Processing Program - Ground-Oriented Residential Infill Development Applications

Recommendation:

THAT Council direct staff to develop the implementation details of an Expedited Processing Program for Ground Oriented Residential Infill Development Permit applications for triplexes and fourplexes in specified areas as set out in the report dated December 9, 2025.

Report Purpose and Summary Statement:

To provide Council with information on a proposed Expedited Development Permit Program which aims to reduce processing times for development permits for specific housing forms, in specified areas of the City.

Previous Council Action:

The exploration of a proposed Expedited Processing Program for simple applications to accelerate housing supply is one of the Housing Accelerator Fund initiatives the City committed to secure the funding.

Funding Source:

Housing Accelerator Fund Action Plan

Strategic Alignment:

Liveable Community; Governance & Corporate Excellence

Expedited Processing Program - Ground-Oriented Residential Infill Development Permit Applications

BACKGROUND:

In late 2024 the City was successful in receiving Federal Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) funding administered by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation for up to \$16.6 million payable over four installments between 2025-2029. In accepting the HAF grant, the City committed to the implementation of a comprehensive action plan consisting of 22 new and ongoing initiatives, aimed at making housing more accessible and affordable in the community. The proposed Expedited Processing Program set out in this report fulfils one of the HAF initiatives. It aims to develop a procedure that streamlines the processing of uncomplicated development applications, such as triplexes and fourplexes in the specified areas, so that development permits could be obtained more quickly.

Encouraging Gentle Density through Small Scale Multi-Unit Housing:

Under the Provincial Small Scale Multi-Unit Housing (SSMUH) legislation (i.e., Bill 44), qualifying properties within the City's Urban Area Boundary may now accommodate up to four or six dwelling units. Previously, achieving this level of urban infill density required rezoning to the RT-2 (Ground-Oriented Residential Infill) zone and approval of a Ground Oriented Residential Infill (GORI) Development Permit.

Since the incorporation of the SSMUH provisions into the Zoning Bylaw in July 2024, there has been significant interest from the development community for this housing type due to a market demand for additional housing forms. This aligns with the [2024 Housing Needs Report](#), which found that rising housing costs in Maple Ridge are outpacing income growth, making single detached housing increasingly unattainable, and highlighting the need for more affordable ownership options.

DISCUSSION:

Ground Oriented Residential Infill Development Permits:

The Urban Infill Residential use supports diverse housing forms, ranging from single detached buildings to multiplexes with up to six dwelling units. As a preliminary step, those wishing to construct three principal units, such as triplexes, fourplexes, and courtyard configurations, are required to obtain a GORI Development Permit before applying for a Building Permit. Single detached and duplex buildings are exempt from this requirement.

The GORI Development Permit was introduced to ensure that infill residential development is incremental and sensitive to the existing and emerging neighbourhood contexts. It is a requirement of the application to declare how a proposed design has met the associated GORI Development Permit Area Guidelines contained in [Chapter 8 of the Official Community Plan](#). The guidelines include: incremental and sensitive integration into existing neighbourhoods, similarity of scale, massing and appearance to a detached single detached dwelling, and providing sensitive transitions to adjacent properties including by stepping the massing of the building down.

Overview of the Proposed Expedited Processing Program:

Under the current Provincial legislation, a municipality can implement an expedited approval program for priority housing types. Expedited approval programs are becoming a widely adopted tool for those municipalities responding to immediate housing needs. By prioritizing certain housing types, these programs can shorten approval timelines, eliminate unnecessary rezoning and public hearing steps, and reduce development costs tied to delays.

The proposed Expedited Processing Program (EPP) is a one-year pilot aimed at reducing the processing times for GORI Development Permits for triplex and fourplex developments in specified west Maple Ridge areas. The EPP sets out a streamlined process where a Qualified Professional certifies compliance with City standards and submits an assurance statement. Applications would receive only a high-level compliance check by staff, eliminating the need for the referral stage and substantially shortening approval timelines.

Key points of the proposed EPP include the following:

- The program will not permit additional density or uses beyond what is already permitted under the Provincial SSMUH legislation and Zoning Bylaw's Urban Infill Residential use.
- The program is intended to encourage urban residential infill in the specified areas and reduce development costs by shortening processing times and lowering land carrying costs.
- Properties outside the specified areas remain eligible for similar housing types but would still be required to follow the standard development permit process.

Expedited processing programs such as the EPP have been implemented throughout the Province, and in other communities in Canada and worldwide. For instance, Kelowna's Fast-Track process is a specialized development approval pathway enabling pre-approved designs for 2 to 6 dwelling units per property, to be moved into their "Fast-Track" processing stream. In Singapore, the "Plan Lodgement Scheme" allows development works to be "lodged" or registered with the Urban Redevelopment Authority and would be considered authorized without obtaining planning permission. Other examples of similar programs are summarized in Attachment A.

Technical Considerations:

Consultations with internal departments on the EPP have been carried out. The technical feedback received has been taken into consideration and helped identify the initial specified areas, to ensure that sufficient transportation and utility infrastructure can support the potential “gentle density” forms. Staff will continue to review the uptake and suitability of these areas throughout the pilot phase.

To support the proposed EPP, staff intend to build out the current GORI Development Guidelines to develop a more comprehensive design checklist to address critical design elements such as building and entrance orientation, building height and setbacks, maintaining neighbourhood character, the provision of private outdoor spaces, and sustainable development measures including permeability, stormwater management, trees and green infrastructure. Consistent with the current GORI Design Guidelines, there will not be prescriptive guidelines pertaining to architecture style, building materials or colour; these will continue to be at the discretion of the designer, thereby encouraging a hybrid of character and architectural styles in a neighbourhood. This is consistent with most single detached dwellings that also do not have prescriptive design requirements. The regulations of the respective zone will continue to apply.

Proposed Specified Areas for the Program:

The EPP program is proposed to apply to specific, targeted areas in west Maple Ridge that includes over 2,600 properties (Attachment B). These specified areas tend to have larger residential lot sizes, site configurations and infrastructure that is generally well-positioned to accommodate infill residential development. Encouraging intensification and infill in these areas aligns with existing and planned transportation networks that improve safety, connectivity, and travel options and the City’s focus on developing complete communities, i.e., neighbourhoods where homes, schools, shops, services, and jobs are close together reflecting the policies of the Official Community Plan that encourage the concentration of growth near amenities and along rapid and frequent transit corridors.

The selected target areas are outside of the Provincially-designated Transit-Oriented Areas, the Lougheed Transit Corridor Area Plan, and the Town Centre Area Plan where the intended development densities are much higher, and land uses continue to be refined with transit-oriented development. Properties within the Fraser River Escarpment area and within known environmentally sensitive areas are also excluded from eligibility as they would require additional specific design review and potentially other environmental review requirements.

Proposed Eligible Applications:

EPP applications will be required to fulfill all of the eligibility criteria. The EPP is proposed to only be applicable for form and character development permit applications for triplex and fourplex buildings that are located on properties within the specified areas (Attachment B). A sample of a possible EPP Application Checklist is provided as Attachment C to illustrate how applicants could determine whether their application is eligible for the EPP.

checklist, bylaw compliance checklist and letter of assurance from the Qualified Professional is required.

What is a Qualified Professional?

The objective of the GORI Development Permit is to promote urban design excellence in the City's built environment. Since the elements of the Development Permit include guidance respecting the character of development, such as landscaping, the siting, form, exterior design and finish of buildings and other structures, the EPP requires a Qualified Professional to submit the application on behalf of the applicant.

In British Columbia a "qualified professional" is a broad term that refers to individuals registered with specific professional bodies, depending on the type of design work involved. Examples of Qualified Professionals include:

- *Building Designers*: the British Columbia Association of Building Designers represent designers who typically work within the scope of Part 9 of the BC Building Code for standard construction practices.
- *Professional Architects*: those who are registered with the Architectural Institute of British Columbia and qualified to design buildings and other structures, particularly complex projects, and can act as a Certified Professional associated with building permit applications.
- *Professional Engineers*: those who are registered with Engineers and Geoscientists BC Engineers and essential for structural, mechanical, electrical and other technical aspects of design, and can also be a Certified Professional associated with building permit applications, sign off on design registrations for technical systems, and declare competency for specialized engineering work.

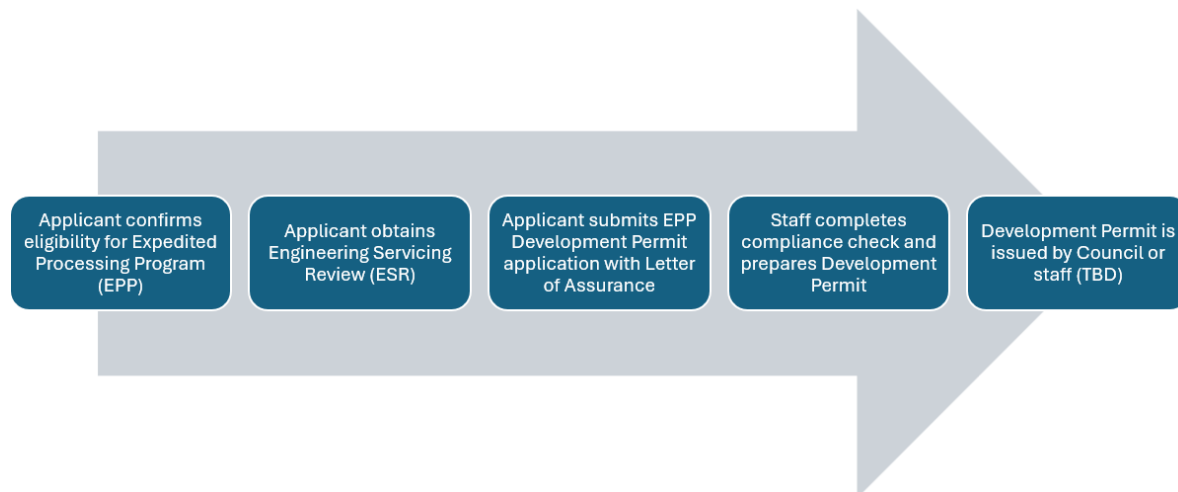
Step 4 – Staff Review

Staff will review the application to ensure that all required documents are provided and complete. Staff will not review the design of the proposed building. Once verified, staff will prepare a Development Permit for approval.

Step 5 – Permit Issuance

Currently, GORI Development Permits are approved by Council. However, under proposed *Development Procedures Bylaw No. 8081-2025* (which is to be considered by Council at its meeting on December 9, 2025), approval authority may be delegated to staff.

Figure 2. Proposed EPP Process for eligible GORI applications



Expedited Processing Program Application Processing Timelines:

Faster application processing times will translate into cost savings for applicants, as well as savings in staff time and resources for the City. The current processing timeline for a GORI Development Permit is approximately 9 to 12 months, including internal review and compliance checks, before Council considers issuance. Under the proposed EPP, the detailed review stage of applications would be completed by a Qualified Professional rather than staff, saving an estimated 5 to 8 months of processing time associated with a standard application (Figure 3).

Development Procedures Bylaw No. 8081-2025 (to be considered by Council on December 9, 2025), proposes delegating approval authority for GORI Development Permit applications to staff. This delegation of authority, if approved by Council, would further save approximately two months of processing time related to Council report preparation, agenda lead times, and Council meetings.

Figure 3. GORI Development Permit Processing Timelines

GORI Development Permit	Standard Processing	Expedited Processing Program
1. Engineering Service Review	1 month	1 month
2. Development Permit Application Intake	2 weeks	2 weeks
3. Staff Review & Applicant Revisions	5 - 8 months	N/A
4. Staff Report & Permit Generation	1 month	2 weeks
5. Council Consideration	2 months	TBD
6. Permit Registration	2 weeks	2 weeks
Total Processing Time	10 - 12 months	2 - 3 months

NEXT STEPS:

Staff are recommending that Council direct staff to develop the implementation details of an Expedited Processing Program for Ground Oriented Residential Infill Development Permit applications for triplexes and fourplexes in specified areas of Maple Ridge. Should Council be supportive of further exploring the proposed Program, staff will develop the implementation details further, in consultation with the affected internal departments, consider incentive and accountability measures, and seek legal input to ensure legislative compliance before returning to Council with a detailed program for consideration. Subsequently, feedback from the members of the UDI Liaison Committee could also be sought to further refine the operational details of a proposed EPP.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT:

The proposed EPP aligns with the Liveable Community and Healthy Community pillars of the 2023-2026 Council Strategic Plan by advancing the City's commitment to promoting housing diversity, safety, and accessibility. In addition, advancing work on the EPP fulfills the City's commitment to one of the HAF initiatives tied to the funding received.

CONCLUSION:

The Expedited Processing Program for eligible GORI applications would streamline development permit processing times, offering significant cost and time savings to applicants and to the City, while accelerating housing supply and meeting one of the City's Housing Accelerator Fund commitments. If Council is supportive of the EPP approach in principle as outlined, staff would proceed to develop the implementation details and return to Council for consideration at a later date.

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Attachments:

- (A) Expedited Processing Program Landscape Scan
- (B) Expedited Processing Program: Eligible Properties Map
- (C) Expedited Processing Program: Ground Oriented Residential Infill Development Application Checklist

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Expedited Processing Program (EPP) - Ground-Oriented Residential Infill Development Applications.docx
Attachments:	- Attachment A - Expedited Processing Program Landscape Scan.xlsx - Attachment B - Expedited Processing Program Eligible Properties Map.pdf - Attachment C - Expedited Processing Program GORI Development Application Checklist.docx
Final Approval Date:	Dec 1, 2025

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

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