



## STAFF REPORT

THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF COBOURG

### Public Works, Planning, and Development Standing Committee

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Report to: Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and Councillors  
From: Anne Taylor Scott, MCIP, RPP, Director of Planning & Development  
Standing Committee Date: February 7, 2024  
Report Number: DS-2024-005  
Council Meeting Date: February 28, 2024  
Subject: **2023 Growth Trends Report – Planning & Building Departments**

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#### 1. Recommendation:

THAT Council receive this Report for information purposes.

#### 2. Executive Summary:

The Planning and Development Division is pleased to present an on-going annual reporting process by which to identify emerging development-related issues and trends within the Town of Cobourg.

This report will summarize Divisional activity from 2023 as it relates to:

- Development Application Activity
- Status of Long-Range Planning Projects; and
- Building permit activity

There is a companion report from the Planning and Development Division that is also scheduled for review and information as part of the Community Protection

and Economic Development Standing Committee on February 7, 2024 and provides the 2023 annual report from the Economic Development Department including an overview of last year's activity at the at the Venture13 facility.

Departmental data can be used as indicators of housing and employment activity within Town of Cobourg, the level of local investment, and economic performance. This annual report also serves to implement tracking and reporting of key performance indicators within the Division which is a key objective of the KPMG Service Delivery Report from 2020.

The report concludes with an overview of broader economic and real estate trends and provides an outlook for Planning & Development in 2024.

### **3. Background**

Many municipalities report on development activity on an annual basis. This is the second annual Planning and Development activity and growth trends report.

Monitoring development activity can assist in understanding past development activity and how economic and market forces are at play. Monitoring also assists in developing departmental work plans for the year ahead. This summary of development activity can be referred to by Staff, Council, media and the broader development community as we enter 2024

Staff's analysis of trends experienced in 2023 will be organized as follows:

This report will summarize divisional activity as it relates to:

- Planning Department
  - Development Application Activity
  - Status of Long-Range Planning Projects; and
- Building permit activity

### **4. Discussion:**

#### **4.1 Planning Department Overview**

At full Staff complement, the Planning Department is comprised of 6 land use planners and is divided into two streams of work. Firstly, the Development Review section which is responsible for the processing of applications under the Planning Act and secondly, the Long-Range Planning section that is responsible for updates to the Official Plan and Zoning By-law, special planning projects and heritage conservation.

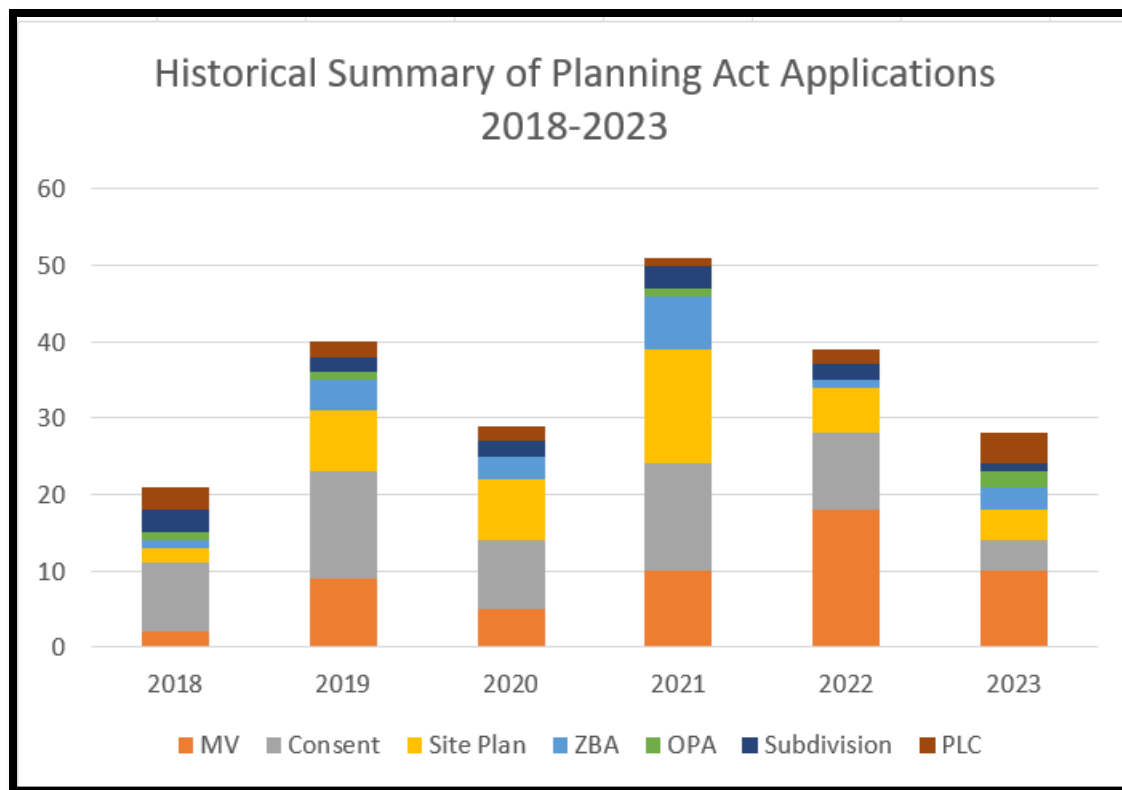
The Planning Department reached full staff complement for a brief period in 2022 including filling the position of Manager of Development Review - a key recommendation of the Organizational Review. However since early 2023, the Planning Department has not been at full staff complement. The Department currently has 3 vacancies (1 temporary and 2 permanent full-time). The Department is actively recruiting for the 3 positions.

While the Department is responsible for Development Review and Long-Range Planning, the Department has also made great strides in continuous process improvement:

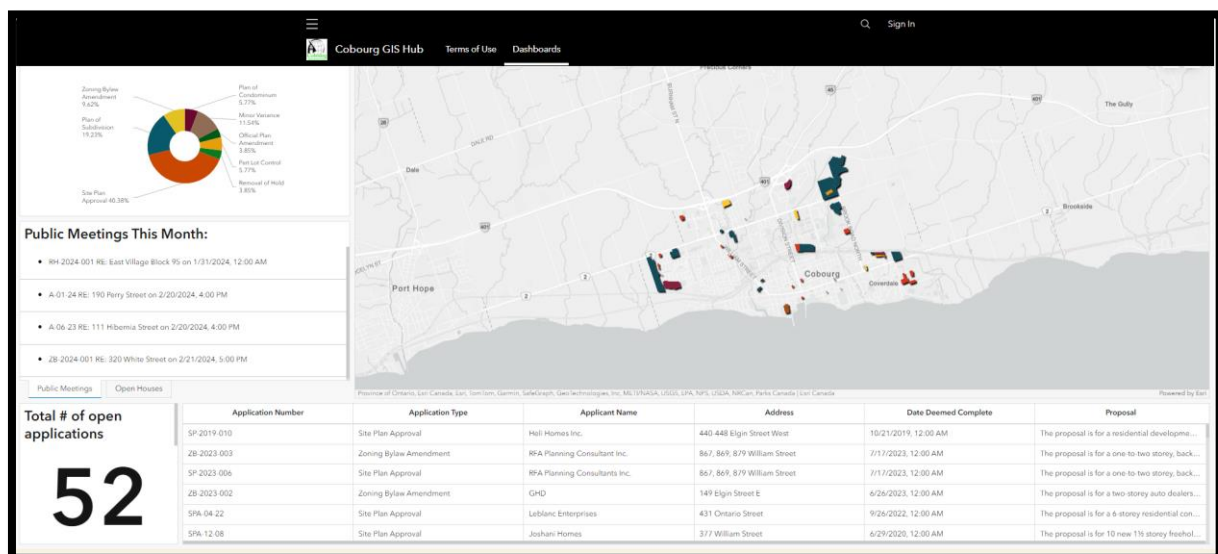
1. Responding to provincial changes from Bill 109 and Bill 23 – including a work program to update impacted municipal processes and by-laws as a result of changes at the provincial level
2. Delegated Authority By-law for various planning functions passed by Council
3. Continuing to revamp the development application and heritage permit forms, including online fillable forms available on the website
4. Launching the Development Dashboard which is a GIS-based portal showing active development applications, submission material, and upcoming public meetings. The Dashboard is publicly accessible on the Town's website
5. Ongoing work with consulting team on Planning Fee by-law update, process mapping and effort estimation
6. Committee of Adjustment Procedural By-law passed by Council, including developing a formal training and orientation process
7. Endorsement of a new Principal Planner position (with a focus on development review) and now approved by Council, with recruitment process underway

#### **4.1.1 Development Review**

- 2023 development activity – New applications received in 2023
  - 32 Heritage Permit Applications
  - 54 Zoning Compliance Letters
  - 10 Minor Variance Applications
  - 4 Consent Applications
  - 4 Site Plan Control Applications
  - 1 Proposed Draft Plan of Subdivision
  - 4 Proposed Plans of Condominium
  - 3 Subdivision Clearances
  - 1 Draft Plan Extension Request
  - 2 Official Plan Amendments
  - 3 Zoning By-law Amendments
  - 4 Part Lot Control Exemption By-laws
  - 6 Removal of Holding Provision Requests
  - 10 Pre-consultation Requests



**Key observations:** 2023 Planning Act applications have slowed for the 2<sup>nd</sup> year in a row. However as demonstrated in the figure below Staff continue to process and review a high number of open files.



**Visit the new Town of Cobourg Development Dashboard**

[Dashboards | Cobourg GIS Hub \(arcgis.com\)](https://arcgis.com/Dashboards/CobourgGISHub)

## 2023 Application Approval Summary

In 2023, the following Staff recommendations were brought forward to Council or received staff for approval as delegated:

- 7 CHAC/Council Heritage Approvals and 25 Staff Delegated Approvals
- 54 Zoning Compliance Letters
- 7 Minor Variances (decision made by Committee of Adjustment)
- 4 Consents (decision made by Committee of Adjustment)
- 6 Site Plan Approvals (Staff Delegated)
- 1 Draft Plan of Subdivision Approval
- 1 Subdivision Clearance
- 4 Plans of Condominium (Staff Delegated)
- 1 Draft Plan Extension Request
- 1 Official Plan Amendment
- 1 Zoning By-law Amendment
- 1 Deeming By-law
- 5 Part Lot Control Exemption By-laws
- 6 Removal of Holding Provision Requests
- 17 Pre-Consultation Checklists

Staff await the Ontario Land Tribunal decision on the appeal of the minor variance for the coach house (use of 2<sup>nd</sup> floor) at 48 Park Street.

### 4.1.2 Long-Range Planning Section

While great focus of the Planning Department in 2023 was on the processing of a of development applications, following the hire of a second Planning Manager, the Division advanced key special projects and long-range Planning initiatives in 2023, including approval of the Tannery District Secondary Plan and the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan. A full overview of Long-Rang Planning projects and anticipated timelines are provided below:

Project	Next Steps	Timing
Official Plan & Cobourg East Secondary Plan Reviews	Issue RFP(s) to update policy documents – CEC requires an update to accommodate east end growth	February/March 2024
Integrated Community Sustainability Plan, incl. Green Development Standard and Green	1. ICSP approved 2. GERFS pending 3. GDS pending	June 2023 Spring 2024 Summer/Fall 2024

Energy Retrofit Feasibility Study		
Tannery District Secondary Plan	Approved	June 2023
Comprehensive Zoning By-law Update – inclusive of addressing residential treatment centres and institutional uses	1. revise mapping and text 2. Statutory Public Meeting 3. Recommend approval	Ongoing  Prior to Council's summer recess  Fall 2024
Affordable Housing Community Improvement Plan & Downtown Community Improvement Plan	1. Recommend approval of 2023 Applications 2. Intake of 2024 Applications	Spring 2023  Commence Spring 2024
Heritage Conservation	1. Kick off New Heritage Conservation District 2. Revised Delegation By-law 3. Address properties on Heritage Registry as per Bill 23 limitations	February 2024  Fall 2024  Ongoing – 2-year time frame comes to a close January 1, 2025
Land Inventory (Furnace St)	Disposition plan	Spring 2024
117 Durham Street (Lands formerly owned by the School Board)	RFP for development opportunities	To be issued in February 2024
Short Term Rental Accommodations	Co-ordinate with Clerks and By-law Enforcement	2024
Housing Accelerator Fund	Should the Town be successful in the funding request it will be imperative for staff to begin the implementation of the initiatives outlined in the Housing Action Plan to support new housing development	Pending funding announcement

#### **4.2 Building Department Overview**

The Building Department is led by the Chief Building Official and includes 3 building inspectors/plans examiners. The Department operates in accordance with the Building Code Act, 1992, S.O. 1992, c. 23, as amended, and the administration and enforcement of the Ontario Building Code (OBC) including:

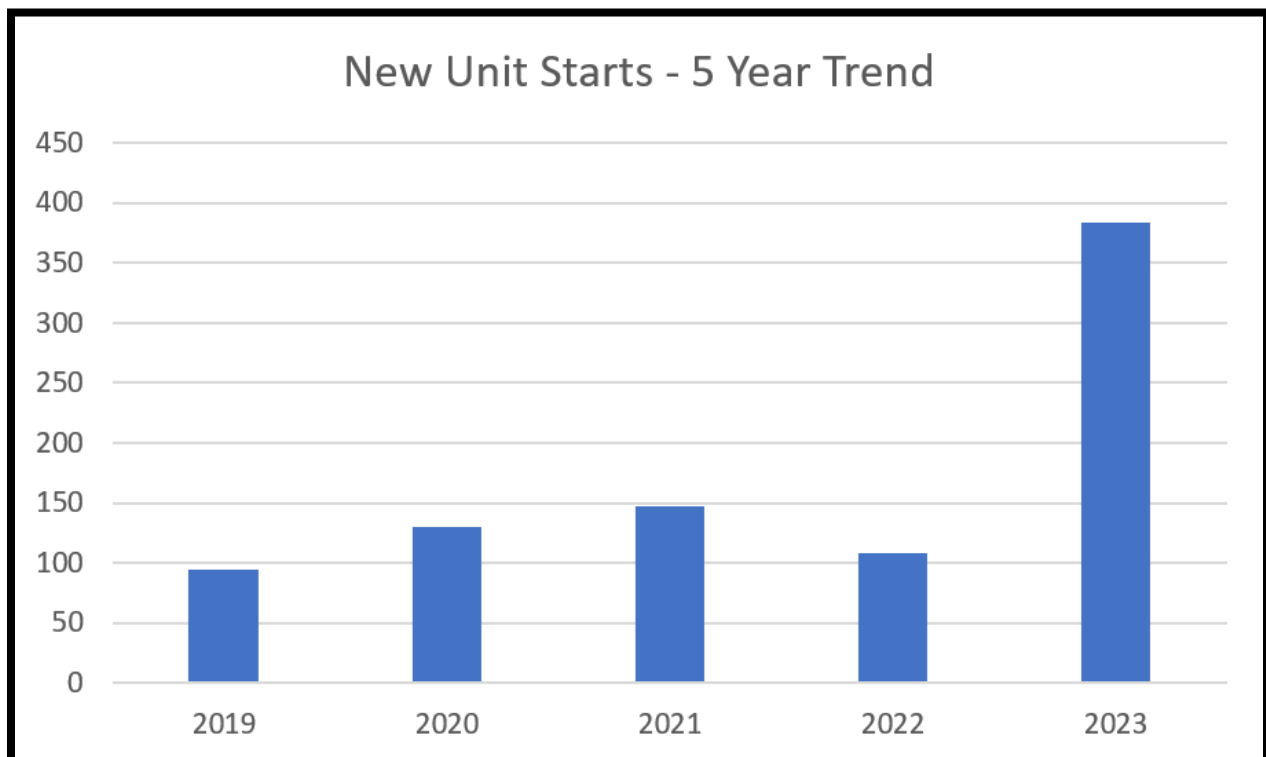
- Review of building plans

- Issuance of permits
- Following prescribed timeframes
- Inspection of building construction
- Enforcement of OBC

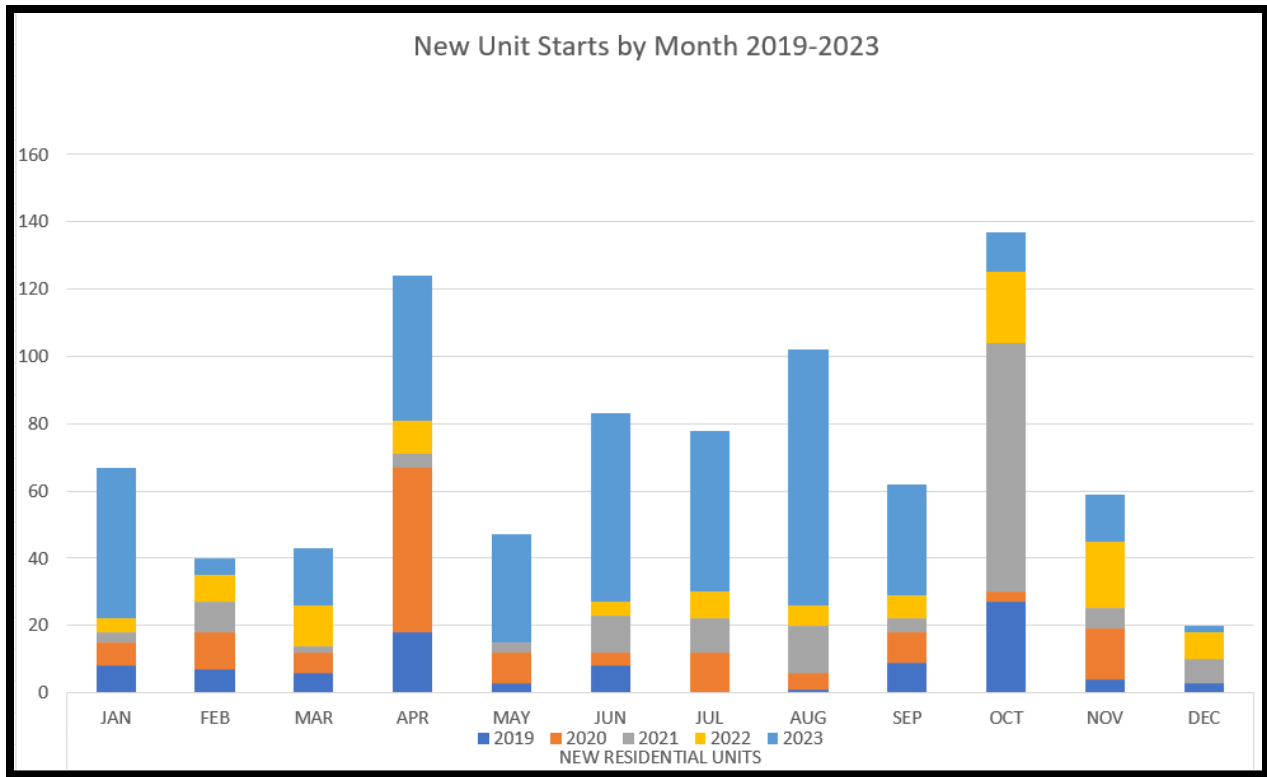
Key performance indicators in the building department tell us how strong construction activity is within the Town of Cobourg.

It is worth noting that the intake, review and issuance was significantly supported by the successful implementation of the CloudPermit software. Implementation of this software prior to Cobourg's construction boom was integral in the seamless issuance of close to 400 building permits for new dwelling units in the Town.

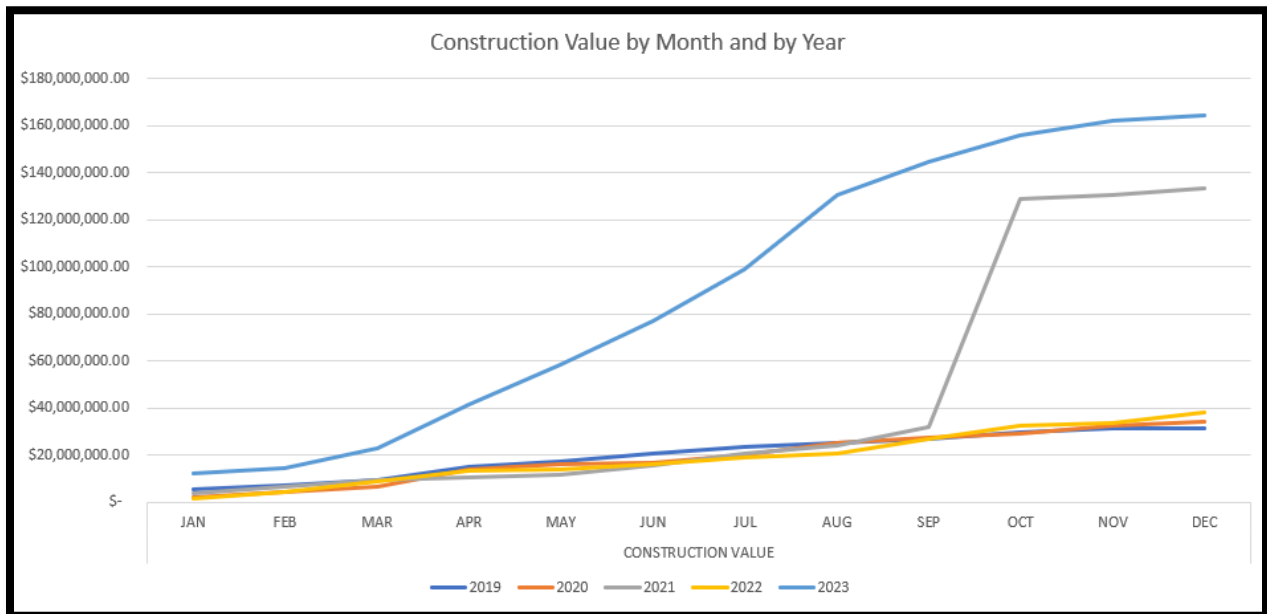
### Permit Activity



**Key observations:** As predicted in last year's report, construction activity in 2023 significantly surpassed previous years' development activity. New unit starts are expected to slow in 2024.



**Key observations:** New unit construction is seasonal in nature with peaks in the spring and fall. New unit starts slowed towards the end 2023 as the larger development sites advanced through their permit stages earlier in the year, with now focus on construction and inspections.



**Key observations:** Construction value significantly exceeded previous years' totals in line with the number of permits issued. Higher construction costs have also impacted this data.



### **4.3 Real Estate and Economic Trends**

While the previous sections provide an overview of internal activity within the Divisional departments, Staff continue to monitor area real estate trends, in addition to provincial and national economic trends.

#### **4.3.1 Trends in Local Real Estate**

Staff rely on trends observed in the local real estate industry. The Northumberland Hills Area Association of Realtors has merged with the Durham Region Association of REALTORS®, Quinte & District Association of REALTORS®, and Peterborough & the Kawarthas Association of REALTORS® to form a regional association.

The newly formed association is called the Central Lakes Association of REALTORS® (CLAR). The association posts current real estate data and a number of key indicators worth observing. A link to the Northumberland Housing Reports is provided below.

[Northumberland Region Housing Reports — Durham Region Association of REALTORS - Durham Region Real Estate \(durhamrealestate.org\)](https://durhamrealestate.org/northumberland-region-housing-reports)

#### **4.3.2 Trends in Provincial and National Construction Industry**

Planning staff rely on key economic messages as we observe and predict local impacts to development. This outlook can assist staff and Council as we look forward to 2024. Some key items to consider:

- Interest rates remain steady at 5%; inflationary rates are slowing; interest rates predicted to be cut at some point in 2024
- Sales and constructions starts appear to be slowing as of the end of 2023 and in the beginning of 2024
- Material costs have stabilized but remain higher than pre-pandemic
- Experts believe that the biggest challenge in housing supply is the shortage of skilled, highly trained labour
- Innovation in housing development is top of mind – stay on the lookout for modulizations, building information modeling and artificial intelligence

## **5. Financial Impact and Budget**

Not applicable.

**6. Relationship to Council's Strategic Plan Priorities 2023 to 2027 and beyond:**

☒ Thriving Community

Strong development activity contributes to the Town's strategic objective of fostering a "Thriving Community". Growth and development in the Town is the result of fulfilling the objectives of both the County of Northumberland and the Town of Cobourg's Official Plan. While a banner year of growth was experienced in 2023, development occurred in a manner that fulfilled the long-range planning of the Town that has been years in the making.

☒ Service Excellence

The Division places a high priority on "Service Excellence". Continuous improvement is our standard practice and this is in an effort to not only improve and find efficiencies internally, but to improve the customer and applicant experience. Much of this growth was supported by embracing new technologies, ie CloudPermit. This report forms the basis of tracking Key Performance Indicators within the Division and is a way to measure progress and activity year over year.

☐ Sustainability

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**7. Public Engagement:**

Not applicable.

**8. Attachments:**

Not applicable.

## Report Approval Details

Document Title:	2023 Growth Trends Report - Planning and Building Departments.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Jan 31, 2024

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

**Tracey Vaughan, Chief Administrative Officer - Jan 31, 2024 - 1:58 PM**