

Restaurant and Brewery Industry Business Experience Improvement Program

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Business Advisory Committee (BAC) direct Administration to return to BAC no later than Q2 2022 to provide a full progress update on all of the focus areas.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The purpose of this report is to provide an update on Calgary Building Services' action plan to improve the business licence experience for the restaurant and brewery industry. Administration recommends returning to the Business Advisory Committee in Q2 2022 in order to allow sufficient time for the improvements to be realized by the customers.
- What does this mean to Calgarians? Calgary Building Services is executing initiatives to enhance the business licence experience for the restaurant and brewery business owners.
- This matters to Calgarians because streamlined business licence approval will support a business-friendly approach and continue to improve Calgary's reputation as a great place to do business.
- Calgary Building Services has three key goals in mind for the improvement initiatives, which are: fast and predictable timelines; customer service that is knowledgeable, prompt, and tailored to business type; and demonstrated value for the cost of a business licence.
- Performance measures which includes clear timelines, differentiated among business types and customers that will be monitored, reported on, and improved upon, will be developed by 2021 Q3.
- A suite of deliverables will be completed concurrently by the end of the second quarter of 2021, as detailed in Attachment 2.
- Council directed Administration to report back to the Business Advisory Committee with a progress update on focus areas 1, 3, 3a, 3b, 3c, 4, and 5 identified in the "What We Heard" report by the end of Q1 2021. These focus areas are outlined in Attachment 2.
- Strategic Alignment to Council's Citizen Priorities: A prosperous city
- Background and Previous Council Direction is included as Attachment 1.

DISCUSSION

Calgary Building Services is committed to improving the business approvals service for restaurants and breweries by providing them with:

- Fast and predictable timelines that are measured and monitored with clear metrics
- Customer service that is knowledgeable, prompt, and tailored to business type with sufficient information available and accessible at all times
- Demonstrated value for the cost of a business licence.

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In order to advance the solutions previously presented to the Business Advisory Committee on 2020 November 16 and to achieve the above goals to improve the business licence experience for customers, Calgary Building Services has created a Business Experience Improvement Program for the restaurant and brewery industry, where three streams of work were identified:

- Customer Experience – focus on the relationship between business customers and The City, and the availability of resources to help customers open their business.
- Education and Training – focus on clearly communicating, externally and internally, relevant information that is required for a business customer to be successful in their journey, and for staff to deliver a consistent service.
- Business Licence – focus on articulating the value of a business licence and the opportunities to modernize it.

A number of meaningful workshops were held with internal stakeholders to build a deeper understanding of a customer's journey. As a result, staff have become even more vested in supporting the continued implementation of solutions that improve the business customer experience and address issues. The improvement program has already accomplished some key tangible actions:

Customer experience

Key issues: Lack of opportunity to meet, consistency and knowledge from staff when responding to inquiries

- In 2021 February, identified that Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) concerns are a common cause of delays for restaurant and brewery business customers. Through the improvement program, HVAC approvals was realigned with business approvals to support businesses more appropriately.
- In 2021 February, launched the new role, called the Business Experience Representatives, nine month pilot and as a result, assembled a multi-discipline team. Team members are participating in the pilot offered to customers starting or modifying a restaurant or brewery business. The Representative will be well-trained on the application intricacies of each business type, and ready to support the customer's business licence journey once started, or provides advice before the journey starts. Focus groups will be held after the pilot.

Education & training

Key issues: Inspections process requires more changes than what was approved on the plans/drawings; cost increase due to over design; code requirements too vague; lack of clarity on HVAC requirements; lack of consistency/subjectivity from inspections staff

- Created a checklist of the most common deficiencies found during the permit application and inspections stages of the journey. An awareness campaign will be launched between April to June 2021. This work represents the foundation to focus on what and how to address potential roadblocks that restaurant/brewery businesses face when opening and managing their business.

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- Completed a deep dive on the restaurant/brewery customer's journey with focus on the permit application and inspections stages. Key barriers to be removed for business customers were identified.

Business licence

Key issues: Lack of perceived value in paying for a business license

- Created an awareness campaign on the value of a business licence which will be launched in the second quarter of 2021.
- Through the Organization Realignment, the service line ownership of business licensing is planned to be moved from the Community Services department to the Planning & Development Services department. Community Services will continue to provide peace officer functions.

Please see Attachment 2 for further details on Calgary Building Services' deliverables that are underway/planned. Performance measures which includes clear timelines, differentiated among business types and customers that will be monitored, reported on, and improved upon, will be developed by 2021 Q3.

Finally, the progress of the improvement program so far has created an ideal environment to continue executing the solutions to address the issues identified by the restaurant/brewery stakeholders. Even though the focus of the work has been on the restaurant/brewery sector, the solutions being implemented will support the entire business community in Calgary.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION (EXTERNAL)

- ☐ Public Engagement was undertaken
- ☒ Public Communication or Engagement was not required
- ☐ Public/Stakeholders were informed
- ☐ Stakeholder or customer dialogue/relations were undertaken

IMPLICATIONS

Social

Remaining responsive to the needs of the business community through these unprecedented times is a critical social consideration.

Environmental

There are no environmental implications anticipated.

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Economic

Supporting businesses will keep the economy moving.

Service and Financial Implications

Self-supported funding

Calgary Building Services has dedicated \$900,000 per year from its self-funded operating budget, which includes six full-time equivalents and all associated costs, to support ongoing improvements for businesses.

RISK

It is important to identify opportunities to improve the business journey to open and manage a business in Calgary. With the current challenging economic conditions plus the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on the foundations of a strong and vibrant local economy are even more important.

ATTACHMENT(S)

1. Previous Council Direction, Background
2. Business Experience Improvement Program Deliverables

Department Circulation

Stuart Dalglish	Planning and Development	Approve
Katie Black	Community Services	Approve