

**Extract From  
Economic Development Task Force Meeting  
EDTF#01-18 held June 13, 2018**

**Scheduled Business**

**5. Proposed Business Concierge Pilot Program – (Staff Report SRCAO.18.07)**

Moved by: Councillor Cilevitz

That the Economic Development Task Force recommends to Council:

- a) That staff report SRCAO.18.07 regarding the Proposed Business Concierge Pilot Program be received;
- b) That staff be directed to implement the Proposed Business Concierge Pilot Program identified in staff report SRCAO.18.07;
- c) That staff report back to the Economic Development Task Force in 2019 at the conclusion of the Business Concierge Pilot Program on its success.

Carried Unanimously



## **Staff Report for Economic Development Task Force**

**Date of Meeting:** June 13, 2018

**Report Number:** SRCAO.18.07

**Department:** Office of the Chief Administrative Officer  
**Division:** Strategic Initiatives

**Subject:** SRCAO.18.07 Proposed Business Concierge Pilot Program

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### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this report is to seek approval from Council on a proposed Business Concierge Pilot Program.

### **Recommendation(s):**

- a) That Staff Report SRCAO.18.07 on the proposed Business Concierge Pilot Program be received.
- b) That staff be directed to implement the proposed Business Concierge Pilot Program identified in SRCAO.18.07.
- c) That staff report back to the Economic Development Task Force in 2019 at the conclusion of the Business Concierge Pilot Program on its success.

### **Contact Person:**

Graham Sue, Manager, Economic Development, ext. 6515

### **Submitted by:**

"Signed version on file in the Office of the Clerk"

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Gwen Manderson  
Director of Strategic Initiatives

### **Approved by:**

"Signed version on file in the Office of the Clerk"

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Neil Garbe  
Chief Administrative Officer

## **Background:**

Goal 4 of Richmond Hill's Economic Develop Strategy is to "Promote a confident community identity", where the objective is to "Deliver a best in class approach to economic development marketing that is based on engagement with our diverse business leaders and a brand that identifies Richmond Hill as a premier business location in the Greater Toronto Area." This goal acknowledges that providing enhanced support to businesses and business leaders that operate in the Town's target sectors may assist in the attraction and retention of investment. Based on this premise, the Strategy includes several action items for Economic Development staff to consider, one being to "Investigate the need, benefits and feasibility of a concierge service for the Town."

Strategic Initiatives staff have partnered with staff in the Planning and Regulatory Services Department to develop a Pilot Program that is aimed at reducing the approval time for certain types of development applications. The purpose of this report is to provide Council with information about the proposed Business Concierge Pilot Program and seek approval for its implementation for one year.

## **Discussion:**

A report written by the Association of Municipalities Ontario refers to a Business Concierge program as one that "provides business owners, developers, and investors with a formal service that offers simplified and time-sensitive development process facilitation and/or rapid and coordinated issue resolution through the convenience of a single point of contact." If implemented, such a program could help Richmond Hill achieve its Economic Development vision of "Sustained economic growth built on innovation, investment, entrepreneurship, creativity and quality of place", by supporting the Town's Economic Development goals, which focus on supporting innovation, creativity, technology businesses, and a confident community.

Focusing on sizeable office and industrial development, a Business Concierge Program at the Town will assist in efforts to encourage developments needed to attract knowledge-based companies and workers by potentially reducing the amount of time needed for development applications to be approved. This is beneficial to companies as they may be able to start their operations earlier.

## **Business Concierge Programs in Other Municipalities**

Several municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area have introduced a business concierge program. These municipalities include the Town of Ajax, Town of Aurora, City of Barrie, and the City of Brampton. A summary of the implementation approaches of these municipalities is found below. Additional details on each program can be found in Appendix A.

### Town of Ajax

Led by the its Business Development team, the Town of Ajax offers businesses its PriorityPath™ program, where customers are provided expedited site plan and building approvals, enabling them to fast-track their business plans. Through a multi-departmental approach that is customized according to the project, the program provides priority assistance with site selection, process facilitation, research services, marketing assistance, and counseling on key issues impacting the speed of the application.

### Town of Aurora

Led by Economic Development, the Town of Aurora offers a formalized Business Concierge Service to provide a single conduit to help businesses navigate Town Hall, expedite processing whenever possible, and to provide counseling in order to help guide applicants and avoid potential issues with development applications. A Business Concierge Committee consisting of Case Managers (from Economic Development), Directors from Planning and Building departments and approval leads meet with clients to assess project needs. The Case Managers are the advocate for the project and the conduit between the applicant and Town departments.

### City of Barrie

The City of Barrie has a Business Concierge Program to provide eligible development projects or business issues with personalized guidance through City processes. Efforts are made to expedite approvals wherever possible, including the assignment of a Project Lead to carry the project/issue through to completion, with the aid of members of a Tactical Team (individual members from departments required on the specific project), and ongoing monitoring of progress by an Advisory Committee of senior management. An Investment Readiness Team meets bi-weekly to discuss potential upcoming development projects to help anticipate resources required for future Concierge projects and potential issues that may arise with those projects.

The Program focuses on non-residential, non-retail businesses/developments that fit within the City's business development strategic sectors (high-tech, advanced manufacturing sectors in particular), or other businesses located in or locating to strategic locations, larger developments, complex projects, or projects with larger potential employment growth. It should be noted that at the current point in time, the program is currently being reassessed.

### City of Brampton

The City of Brampton offers expedited service led by a dedicated resource (an “Expeditor”) from the Economic Development team. The role of the Expeditor is to provide support to commercial and industrial development within the City’s key sectors, provide one-on-one assistance to help guide developers and investors in getting through the development process, and provide solutions and valuable connections for investors looking to establish or expand their business in Brampton. The program focuses on development projects with more than \$1M in investment, and that provide 75+ jobs. The Expeditor may also provide assistance with other projects where necessary.

### **Proposed Business Concierge Pilot Program**

Supporting the Town’s Economic Development Strategy of attracting and retaining high-growth and high-value businesses, staff propose the implementation of a Business Concierge Pilot Program. The purpose of the Pilot Program is to determine whether a Business Concierge Program can assist with achieving the Town’s Economic Development vision and goals, specifically the development of office and industrial buildings to accommodate growth in the Town’s sectors of focus. The Pilot Program will also work in conjunction with the Town’s Community Improvement Plan to further encourage office development in the Town.

Success of the Business Concierge Pilot Program is dependent on a commitment from various stakeholders to prioritize the evaluation of eligible development applications and respond within a reasonable timeframe. This includes both internal and external stakeholders such as Town Departments, York Region, external commenting agencies such as the Toronto Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) and the applicant.

Town staff have met with both York Region and TRCA staff to determine their support for a Business Concierge Pilot Program. Both have indicated they are supportive of the Pilot Program and will do their part to support its success. Having a concierge program is consistent with York Region’s objectives for development of centers and corridors in the region.

### Eligibility Criteria

Staff have developed a set of criteria that applicants must meet in order to be eligible for the Pilot Program.

The eligibility criteria for the Business Concierge Pilot Program are as follows:

- Office or industrial development
- Non-residential, non-retail, non-institutional (except for University or College campuses)

- Must be a new development or large addition (large additions are defined as being greater than or equal to 50% of the current GFA)
- Minimum size of 10,000 square feet (approx. 929 square metres)
- Must have a minimum of 35 full-time jobs (based on Planning estimates of 1 employee per 25 square meters of office space)
- Business should be located in Richmond Hill business parks, centres or corridors
- Business must not negatively impact the Town's image or reputation

Development applications that do not qualify for the Business Concierge Pilot Program continue to be important to the Town and will still receive excellent customer service.

### Duration of Pilot Program

Staff are recommending that the proposed Pilot Program be in place for 12 months, beginning in Summer 2018, after which the program's feasibility and effectiveness will be assessed.

It is anticipated that staff will report back to Council in Summer 2019 to discuss the outcome of the Pilot Program and recommend to Council whether the Business Concierge Program should continue.

### How the Pilot Program Works

As the "Business Concierge", Economic Development staff will focus on ensuring that there is frequent communication between Town staff and applicants to assist in the processing of prioritized applications. The Business Concierge will support businesses through the development approvals and building permit application process by working alongside staff in the Planning and Regulatory Services Department. Economic Development staff will be the single point of contact with the Town that applicants can communicate with for information related to their development application. The Business Concierge ensures that the needs of the client and the Town are being attended to, and by doing so, potential delays arising from communication challenges can be minimized, thereby improving the experience of the applicant and all other stakeholders. The Concierge does not interfere with or circumvent planning processes in any way and is communicating between all parties.

### Roles and Responsibilities of Town Staff

#### Business Concierge Eligibility Review Team

Projects will be assessed for eligibility by an "Eligibility Review Team" composed of the Economic Development Coordinators and representatives from the Development Planning Division in PRS. The responsibility of the Eligibility Review Team is to:

- Review all incoming Planning applications to determine eligibility for the Concierge program
- Meet with all clients that qualify for the program (this can be incorporated into the pre-submission meeting organized by Development Planning)
- Prioritize approved projects within own respective staff workplans and development processes

Once a project has been approved for the program by the Eligibility Review Team, a member of the Economic Development team will be assigned as the “Business Concierge”.

### Strategic Initiatives Division (Economic Development)

Economic Development staff are the lead for the Business Concierge Pilot Program. The responsibilities of the Economic Development team are as follows:

- Promote and recommend the program to clients that meet the eligibility criteria
- Participate as a member of the Eligibility Review Team to assess the eligibility of applicants for the Pilot Program
- Assign an Economic Development Coordinator to take on the role as the “Business Concierge” for eligible clients and give approved projects priority within own respective staff workplans
- Notify internal departments and external stakeholders (e.g. TRCA, York Region) of approved applications into the Pilot Program for resource prioritization
- Welcome new clients into the Business Concierge Pilot Program, explain program details, and set client expectations
- Identify who will represent the client as the main point of contact with whom the Business Concierge will communicate with
- Attend the Pre-Submission meeting with Development Planning for each approved client
- Copy Development Planning lead on all correspondence with the client
- Follow up with various departments as necessary to direct the client, provide assistance, and monitor the progress of the application escalating issues where needed to ensure project priority is upheld
- Correspond with Development Planning on a bi-weekly basis to discuss any potential issues related to program clients
- Correspond with clients (applicants and business owners) on bi-weekly basis to review any outstanding items
- Resolve issues as they arise and communicate resolutions to client and all internal stakeholders

Once the project is complete, the Concierge will close the project and exit the client from the Pilot Program. At that time, the client will be attended to by Economic Development as part of its client retention initiatives. After the 12 month Pilot Program is complete, and in consultation with PRS staff, Economic Development staff will report to Council on the success of the program.

### Development Planning Division

Staff from Development Planning play a key role in the success of the Program given their role in the development process. The responsibilities of the Development Planning team with respect to the Program are as follows:

- Review all incoming Planning applications to determine eligibility for the Pilot Program
- Assign a member of the team to act as the lead Planner for the project
- Prioritize approved projects within own respective staff workplans and development processes
- Co-ordinate the pre-submission meeting and invite all appropriate parties (i.e. the client, Economic Development, Development Planning, Zoning, Engineering, etc.)
- Copy the assigned Concierge on all correspondence with the client
- Proactively seek and offer clients opportunities to accelerate the process where possible
- Inform the Concierge of any potential issues or concerns related to projects
- Collaborate with internal departments and external stakeholders (e.g. TRCA, York Region) to ensure that projects are prioritized and that issues are resolved as quickly as possible

### Other Planning and Regulatory Services Department Divisions & Town Departments

Depending on the nature of the project, other internal departments in the Town may be involved as needed with a project that is eligible for the Program. In such cases, the responsibilities for these groups are as follows:

- Prioritize approved projects within own respective staff workplans and development process
- Copy the assigned Concierge and Development Planning lead on all correspondence related to the project



- Proactively seek and offer clients opportunities to accelerate the process where possible
- Inform the Concierge of any potential issues or concerns related to projects
- Collaborate with internal departments and external stakeholders to ensure that projects are prioritized and that issues are resolved as quickly as possible

## Applicants

The applicant must provide accurate and timely information for the application to be processed as quickly as possible. The responsibilities of the applicant are as follows:

- Provide a single point of contact that will work with the Concierge regarding the application
- Address all issues and concerns in a timely manner to ensure that application prioritization can be maintained by all parties

## Financial/Staffing/Other Implications:

There are no financial or staffing implications related to this Program.

## Relationship to the Strategic Plan:

Implementation of a Business Concierge Program supports the implementation of Richmond Hill's Strategic Plan Goal Three – A More Vibrant Richmond Hill, and Economic Development Strategy Goal Four – Promote a confident community identity.

A Business Concierge Program demonstrates the Town's ability to be one of the best places to live and do business supports Richmond Hill's approach to being a premier business location in the Greater Toronto Area.

## **Conclusion:**

A Business Concierge Program will help attract high growth, high value businesses to Richmond Hill by providing a level of service that demonstrates the Town's commitment to such businesses. Having one point of contact for applicants will help advance development applications that meet the eligibility criteria. Conducting a pilot Business Concierge Program for a one year period will allow the Town to determine the need, feasibility and effectiveness of having a permanent Business Concierge Program.

## **Attachments:**

The following attached documents may include scanned images of appendixes, maps and photographs. If you require an alternative format please call contact person listed in this document.

- Appendix A – Business Concierge Programs in Other Municipalities



## Appendix A – A Sample of Business Concierge Programs at Surrounding Municipalities

	Ajax	Aurora	Barrie	Brampton
Roles & Responsibility:	Led by Business Development.  PriorityPath™ customers enjoy expedited site plan and building approvals, enabling them to fast-track their business plans.  A Streamlined Municipal Process Dedicated to Successful Business Expansion.	Led by Economic Development.  <b>‘One Window’ Concept</b>  Case Managers (from EcDev) are the advocate for the project and a conduit between the applicant and Town departments.	Led by Business Development.  Development projects or business issues facilitated through the Business Concierge Program will receive personalized guidance through City processes. Efforts will be made to expedite approvals wherever possible, including the assignment of a Project Lead to carry the project/issue through to completion, with the aid of members of a Tactical Team, and ongoing monitoring of progress by the Advisory Committee of senior management.	Call it “Expedited Service”, led by a dedicated resource (Expeditor, Economic Development).  The role of Expeditor in the Economic Development Office works across the key sectors, supporting activities, and working to streamline client service by acting as a facilitator and conduit to municipal services for the business community.
	Other Departmental Involvement:	The PriorityPath™ team is a dedicated group of professionals that are on hand to personally help you navigate the site plan approval process.  There is multi-departmental involvement that is customized according to the project.	A Business Concierge Committee consisting of Case Managers, Directors from Planning and Building departments and approval leads will be convened to meet with clients.  Planners under the purview of the Office of Economic Development will guide non-residential projects through our ‘One Window’ concept with immediate input and access to key decision makers.	An Advisory Committee consisting of the General Manager of Infrastructure and Growth Management, General Manager of Community and Corporate Services, and Executive Director of Invest Barrie, will play an advisory role for complex or high profile projects or issues.  Tactical Team Members will be assigned on a process-by-process basis by Department Managers to represent the Departments required. They will be responsible to keep the Project Lead up to date on progress/actions related to the project.  The Investment Readiness Team

	Ajax	Aurora	Barrie	Brampton
			<p>comprised of Project Leads, Managers from Building, Planning, Engineering, &amp; Business Development, meet bi-weekly to discuss potential upcoming development projects to help anticipate resources required for future Concierge projects and potential issues that may arise with those projects. This team will also discuss any issues related to current Concierge projects and help determine if the Advisory Committee should be consulted for further assistance.</p> <p>Since provincial and regional agencies play a major role in the approval processes for creating and expanding businesses, the Business Concierge Program will rely on solid relations with the staff of the "approval" agencies, and will work toward a synchronized process with those agencies.</p>	
Services Offered:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site selection services (location &amp; land)</li> <li>• Process Facilitation (Planning &amp; Development)</li> <li>• Business Seminars &amp; Networking Connections</li> <li>• Business Research &amp; Publications</li> <li>• Ground Breaking &amp; Grand Openings</li> <li>• Marketing &amp; Awareness</li> <li>• Priority treatment including clearly defined partnership roles to expedite your project.</li> <li>• Counseling on key issues impacting the speed of your application.</li> <li>• Liaison and advocacy on</li> </ul>	<p>Priority processing and personalized service for <u>all</u> non-residential development projects</p> <p><b>Business Concierge Services Include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A single conduit to help navigate Town Hall</li> <li>• Pre-consultation to avoid unexpected steps</li> <li>• A dedicated committee of key decision-makers to meet with you</li> <li>• Expedited processing of approvals whenever possible</li> <li>• Counseling available for your development application</li> </ul>	<p>The goal of the Business Concierge Program is to provide business owners, developers, and investors with a formal service that offers simplified and time-sensitive development process facilitation and/or rapid and coordinated issue resolution through the convenience of a single point of contact within the City of Barrie.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assisting new businesses planning to set-up in Barrie</li> <li>• Assistance to existing Barrie businesses constructing new facilities or undergoing building expansions</li> <li>• Assisting existing Barrie businesses experiencing a City-related issue that is impeding business operations or growth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for commercial and industrial development in the City</li> <li>• Provide one-on-one assistance to help guide developers and investors, and deliver strategic advice in getting through the development process.</li> <li>• They also provide solutions and valuable connections for investors looking to establish or expand their business in Brampton.</li> </ul>

	Ajax	Aurora	Barrie	Brampton
	your behalf with various departments on approval and permitting issues.			
Eligibility Criteria:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project falls within target sectors set out by Economic Development strategy</li> <li>Site Plan Approvals do not need to be circulated to third parties (e.g. TRCA) since processes at external agencies cannot be controlled</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New development or addition</li> <li>Industrial or office use</li> <li>10,000 square feet or greater</li> <li>20 full-time jobs created</li> <li>Located in an employment area or the Aurora Promenade</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Non-residential, non-retail businesses/developments that fit within the City's business development strategic sectors (high-tech, advanced manufacturing sectors in particular)</li> <li>Other sector businesses located in or locating to strategic locations, larger developments, complex projects, or projects with larger potential employment growth may also be eligible</li> </ul> <p>Some business inquiries or applications will be "triaged" into conventional processes, with a specific point of contact, such as those with easily resolved issues or questions.</p>	Typically developments that invest more than 1 million dollars; and provide 75+ jobs are eligible for the expeditor service. However, the expeditor has assisted with other projects where necessary.
Notes:			The program is currently being reassessed due to changes in several senior management positions.	