



MEMO / NOTE DE SERVICE

Information previously distributed / Information distribué auparavant

TO: Chair and Members of the Planning and Housing Committee and the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee

DESTINATAIRE : Président et membres du comité de l'urbanisme et du logement et du Comité de l'agriculture et des affaires rurales

FROM: Marcia Wallace, General Manager Planning, Development and Building Services Department (PDBS)

**Contact: Alexandre LeBlanc, Program Manager, Planning Operations Planning, Development and Building Services Department (PDBS)
613-580-2424 ext. 29232
Alexandre.LebLANC@ottawa.ca**

EXPÉDITEUR: Marcia Wallace, Directrice Générale, Direction générale des services de la planification, de l'aménagement et du bâtiment

**Personne ressource: Alexandre LeBlanc, Gestionnaire de programme (A), Opérations de planification
613-580-2424 poste 29232
Alexandre.LebLANC@ottawa.ca**

DATE: February 10, 2026

10 février 2026

FILE NUMBER: ACS2026-PDB-PS-0034

SUBJECT: Housing Acceleration Plan Item 11 – Terms of References Update

OBJET : Plan d'accélération du logement Point 11 – Mise à jour du mandat

PURPOSE

This information report provides Council an update on the implementation of Housing Acceleration Plan (HAP) action 11, with the launch of completeness check on February 2, 2026, and the publication of revised Terms of References for items listed on the Development Application Studies and Plans.

BACKGROUND

The Housing Innovation Task Force and Housing Acceleration Plan ([ACS2025-SI-SPO-0002](#)), is tailor-made to address the specific housing challenges facing Ottawa, while maintaining a holistic, balanced view that considers all aspects of city-building. The HAP, approved by Council on October 8, 2025, is an ambitious plan with more than 50 actions that goes far beyond continuous improvement, using every tool within the City’s municipal power to drive transformational change and clear the way for new homes to be constructed in the short term.

The five objectives of the Housing Acceleration Plan are:

- 1. Simplify the regulatory environment and expedite approvals processes:
- 2. Evolve city culture to be housing development friendly:
- 3. Introducing more flexibility in fees and charges:
- 4. Consolidate and strengthen capacity for affordable housing development: and
- 5. Unlock urban intensification and Transit-Oriented Development.

Specific to the recommendations of this report, HAP includes the following action:

11	Undertake a review of the terms of reference for items listed on the Development Application Study Policy (Information and Materials for Planning Applications (By-Law No. 2023-297) for opportunities to increase flexibility in interpretation, including:
a)	Reduce the number of studies and plans required, and timing
b)	Reduce the level of detail required for pre-consultation
c)	Streamline the approval process for applications of high quality
d)	Explore opportunities to remove the need for transportation studies in certain areas of the city

e)	Accept studies prepared by certified professionals without requiring duplicate review
----	---

On January 28, 2026, Council approved OPA 47: Housing Acceleration Plan Update ([ACS2025-PDB-PS-0075](#)). That report delivered two major outcomes. First, it amended the Development Application Studies and Plans By-law (DASP) to remove 13 requirements from the list, signaling the City's intent to reduce the thresholds for an additional 13 items within their Terms of Reference. Second, it confirmed the City's intention to replace the existing completeness review with a more streamlined completeness-check.

Together, these changes represent a significant shift in how development applications are processed, positioning the City to support housing approvals more efficiently. The new completeness-check process allows applications to be circulated quicker and to all stakeholders at the same time, within a single coordinated review window. This approach aims to enable staff to prepare a complete, conflict-free, and timely set of comments. Meanwhile, the updated DASP provides applicants with a clearer and shorter list of required studies and plans, improving predictability and reducing unnecessary work.

The City continues to collaborate with internal and external stakeholders to refine study and plan requirements to better address site-specific issues. Thresholds within the Terms of Reference are being updated so that a study or plan is only required when it is genuinely needed – either because of a specific risk, a clear technical need, or a legal obligation under municipal responsibilities.

DISCUSSION

This information report speaks to progress on updating thresholds for plans and studies and implementing a completeness-check.

Implementation of HAP action 11.e: implementing a completeness-check to replace the completeness review

The City has now fully implemented the completeness-check, replacing the previous completeness review, for all development applications submitted after February 2, 2026. Several applications piloted this new process in December and January, allowing staff to test the approach in real time and refine procedures based on practical experience.

The lessons learned from these pilot applications helped shape the finalized completeness-check process now in place.

The completeness check means that completeness will no longer:

- include a 14-calendar-day subject matter expert (SME) circulation;
- include a review by Development Review or SME against the terms of reference to identify deficiencies; and
- duplicate the review that should occur during circulation, after an application is deemed complete.

Instead, completeness will change to enable Development Review staff to:

- check if required documents are submitted, and prepared by appropriate professionals;
- reach out to applicants to obtain a revised document, as needed;
- check that plans are the right size (A1 or Arch D);
- check if payment has been received; and
- set up the circulation list and comment table.

After the completeness-check, the application will be circulated to all stakeholders, in a single review window. This means the following all receive the application at the same time for their singular review:

- Internal SMEs;
- External technical agencies; and
- Members of the public, community associations and Council, via DevApps.

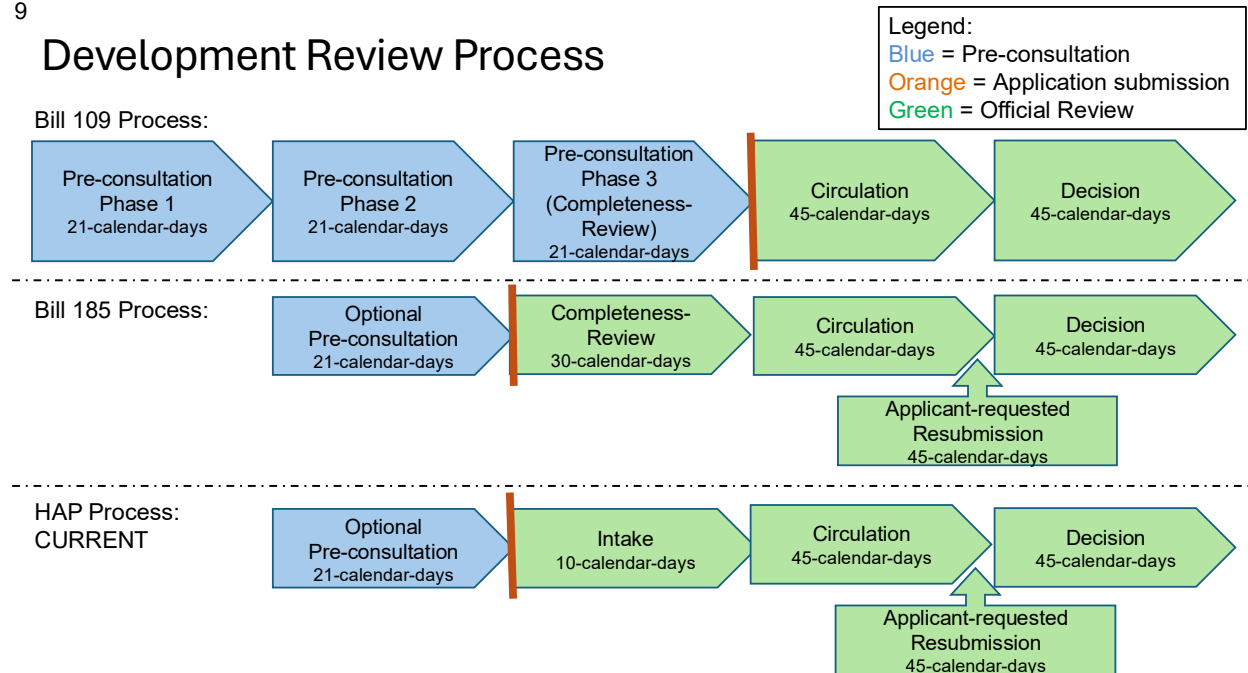
Internal subject matter experts will continue to have a 14-calendar-day window to provide their complete set of comments to Development Review staff.

In person meetings are encouraged to discuss and resolve internal issues.

The graphic below provides the evolution of the completeness process from Bill 109 to the HAP's implementation, for major Zoning Amendments and concurrent Site Plan Control applications. Of note, the third box indicates the "Phase 3 Pre-consultation" as the first iteration of the completeness review, all the way towards the future process which decreases the focus from completeness and more on the intake.

9

Development Review Process



The outcome of this work is a more efficient, transparent, and predictable development review process. By replacing the completeness review with a streamlined completeness-check, the City is reducing unnecessary processing time, eliminating duplication, and ensuring that applications enter circulation faster. Applicants now benefit from a clearer intake process and faster access to coordinated comments, while staff can focus their efforts on resolving substantive issues rather than administrative steps. Together, these improvements strengthen the City's ability to support timely housing approvals, meet the commitments of the HAP, and provide a more consistent and service-oriented experience for all development applicants.

Implementation of HAP action 11.c: Updated Terms of References for DASP items to reduce thresholds:

The DASP By-law establishes the complete list of documents that the City may require as part of a complete planning application. Its purpose is to ensure clarity and

transparency for applicants. Importantly, inclusion on the list does not mean a study or plan will always be required; requirements depend on the specifics of each application.

Each item included in the DASP has a corresponding Terms of Reference (ToR) on Ottawa.ca, which outlines:

- the purpose of the study or plan;
- which application types require it;
- site-specific triggers;
- guidance on required content; and
- the type of professional qualified to prepare the document.

As part of implementing HAP action 11.c, thresholds within the ToR are being updated to ensure a study or plan is only required when genuinely needed—in response to a specific risk, a technical necessity, or a clear legislative requirement under municipal responsibilities.

Following internal and external consultation, the first batch of four (4) ToR have been updated and are now published on Ottawa.ca. A summary of the changes is provided below.

1) Building Elevations

a) Description

- i) A Building Elevation is a two-dimensional drawing that helps to understand the facade of a building, the height and materials (example: windows and cladding).

b) Key outcomes

- i) Detailed architectural materials (window, doors lighting) which have no impact on zoning decision are not required.
- ii) Following the *Planning Act*, only buildings with 25 or more units would require this document.

c) Summary of changes:

- i) Removed requirement to provide for Official Plan Amendments and for applications where no external changes to the building are proposed.
- ii) Clarified elevations are required for 25 or more residential units and non-residential buildings, but may be required for less than 25 residential units.

- iii) Introduced the option to provide simplified elevations with less detail for Zoning By-law Amendments. These do not need to be drawn by an architect or BCIN holder.
- iv) Clarified grade and building height requirements.
- v) Added a requirement to show colours and any breezeways (not required on simplified elevations for Zoning By-law Amendments).

2) Grading and Drainage Plan

a) Description

- i) A Grading and Drainage Plan establishes the grading relationships between connecting (or abutting) properties. It serves as the basis for controlling and directing water surface runoff away from buildings.

b) Key outcomes

- i) Allows submission of a high-level concept plan for draft plan of subdivision stage. Also known as a Functional Grading and Drainage Plan.

c) Summary of changes:

- i) Updated to clarify that Functional (concept) Grading and Drainage Plan are accepted for the Draft Plan of Subdivision stage which aligns with current practice. Detailed grading and drainage plans are required at the detailed design stage.
- ii) Reorganized to provide clarity on required information for all grading and drainage plans, functional grading and drainage plans, and detailed grading and drainage plans.

3) Noise Control Study

a) Description

- i) Studies and informs mitigation of noise levels from sources of noise such as roads, railways, employment areas and equipment for building facilities.

b) Key Outcome:

- i) For zoning applications – only required proximity to site specific stationary noise for sensitive use, based on separation distance (criteria is from the OP).

c) Summary of changes:

- i) Re-organization of triggers based on noise and vibration source type (transportation, stationary, airport, vibration)
- ii) Clarification of location triggers documented in Official Plan sections 10.2.1 Environmental noise control, and 10.2.2 Protection of airport and aircraft operations, for OPA and ZBA applications.

iii) Language and formatting edits to improve clarity

4) Planning Rationale

a) Description

i) States why the applicant believes their proposal represents good planning and how the *Planning Act* application is consistent with the Official Plan, relevant secondary plans, other Council adopted plans and policies and the Provincial Policy Statement.

b) Key outcome

i) Simplifies the information into a checklist for Minor Zoning By-law, reducing lengthy text review.

c) Summary of changes:

i) Introduced the option to provide a Planning Rationale Checklist for Minor Zoning By-law Amendments and Major Zoning By-law Amendments where the requested uses are within an existing building envelope.

ii) Added a requirement for a full Planning Rationale to summarize how the Official Plan and/or the Zoning By-law is proposed to be amended.

iii) Removed reference to complex proposals and the requirement for a separate Integrated Environmental Review Statement (IERS) for them.

iv) Various minor wording changes that should have no material impact.

Expected to be published in future batches, which will be reported to Committee via IPD, are the following:

Next Batch:

- Landscape Plan
- Environmental Site Assessment (Phase 1 and Phase 2)
- Geotechnical Study and Guidelines
- Hydrogeological and Terrain Analysis
- Mineral Aggregates Study

Future Release:

- Agricultural Impact Assessments (a new study requirement, as required by the new 2024 PPS)
- Site Plan and Facility Fit Plan (within Site Plan Control)
- Rail Proximity Study
- Site Servicing Study

Separate releases as a result of substantial work on technical guidelines which impact Terms of References:

- Transportation Impact Assessment Guidelines
- Urban Design Guidelines and Terms of References
- Tree Conservation Report Guidelines and By-Law
- Hydrogeological and Terrain Analysis Guidelines Update (2027)

CONCLUSION

In summary, the implementation of the completeness check and the first set of updated ToR, under HAP action 11, mark meaningful progress in modernizing the City's development review system and supporting the timely delivery of new housing. The completeness check, now active for all applications submitted after February 2, 2026, streamlines intake, accelerates circulation, and ensures applicants receive coordinated, high-quality comments within a single review window. Similarly, the revised ToR reduce thresholds and clarify expectations so that studies are only required when they provide clear planning value, improving both predictability and efficiency for applicants. Together, these changes strengthen the City's ability to meet its commitments under the HAP, respond to provincial direction, and provide a more transparent, consistent, and housing focused development review process.

Marcia Wallace

General Manager Planning, Development and Building Services Department (PDBS)

CC: Alexandre LeBlanc, Program Manager, Planning Operations Planning,
Development and Building Services Department (PDBS)