

A Guide to the Planning Approval Process for Development Applications

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Planning Services Division

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What Is a Planning Application?

An application for a use of land that is enabled by a Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) and Land Use By-Law (LUB) that requires approval by Council. Planning applications include development agreements, rezonings and other amendments to the Land Use By-Law or the Municipal Planning Strategy .

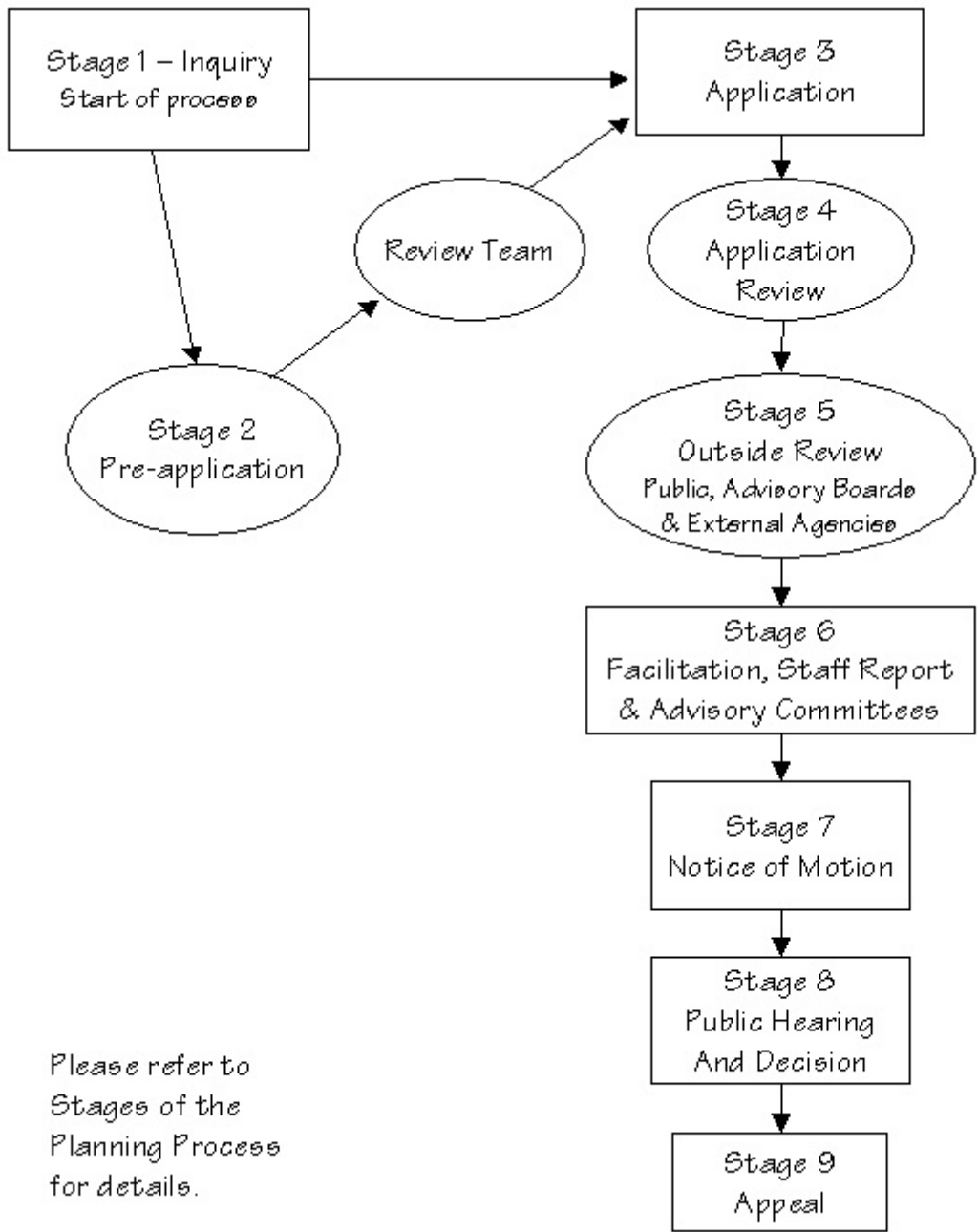
Why is a planning application required?

The application process is designed to gather and present information about the proposal. The more accurate the information and the greater the detail given to Planning Services, the earlier and easier potential problems and issues with the proposal can be identified. This early stage “red-flagging” process gives the Planners and Applicants time to explore different options to produce an application with the best chance of approval. The application is presented to the public, advisory boards and other departments and agencies for feedback on the proposal. This feedback is used to determine the requirements the application must meet as well as gauge support towards the proposal. The final application is presented to Council for their review and decision in accordance with the requirements of the *Municipal Government Act*.

What is the Planner’s role in the application process?

Planners work with Applicants to help them provide all the information and detail needed to process the application. The Planner acts as a liaison and facilitator between the Applicant, the public, review agencies and Council. They will identify the requirements for the application and any specific studies needed to complete the application (i.e., a traffic impact study, erosion & sedimentation control plan, etc.). They will also identify and contact the agencies who need to be involved in the review and preparation of the application. Based on an analysis of HRM’s planning policies, technical studies and comments from review agencies and the public on the application, the Planner prepares a staff report on the application. This report provides recommendations for Council to consider and Council may chose to approve, refuse or modify the application.

Planning Approval Process



Please refer to Stages of the Planning Process for details.

Stages of the Planning Process

1. Inquiry

The Planner meets with the Applicant to gather information and discuss the proposal. The Planner will review the information and advise the Applicant if the proposal is generally permitted for the site and outline the information, forms and fees they will need to complete to proceed with the application. The Planner will also indicate the category of the application; applications are categorized as Type 1 (Major), Type 2 (Moderate) and Type 3 (Minor). Type 3 applications proceed directly to the application stage, Types 1 and 2 applications may go through a pre-application stage.

2. Pre-application

The purpose of the pre-application is to establish a Review Team and identify major issues surrounding the proposal. The Applicant completes a Pre-application agreement which the Planner circulates to the Team. The Applicant, Planner and Review Team then meet to discuss the proposal. After the meeting, the Planner notifies the Applicant of the Review team findings, the outside agencies involved in the application and requirements for the application.

3. Application

After Type 1 and 2 applications have gone through the pre-application stage and Type 3 applications have gone through the inquiry

stage, the Applicant submits the required information, forms and fees. At this stage, the application is ready to be processed.

4. Application Review

Once the application has been completed and all the requirements met, the Planner sends the application to the Review Team. The Review team evaluates the application, determines if additional information is required, identifies major issues and decides if the application can proceed to the Outside Review and Facilitation Stages. The Planner informs the Applicant of the Review Team findings and any additional information they need to provide.

5. Outside Review by Advisory Boards and Public

The application is presented to the public at a public information meeting to hear comments and concerns about the application and explain the process. The Applicant presents details about the proposed development. The application is also circulated to government and community agencies impacted by the application. The application may be circulated to the various committees such as the Watershed Advisory Boards and the Planning and Heritage Advisory Committees, where applicable.

6. Facilitation/Staff Report/Advisory Committees

Based on the feedback from the public and stakeholder agencies and after review of the technical and policy merits of the application,

the Planner writes a staff report. This report details the proposal, issues and public commentary and provides recommendations for Council to consider. The staff report may go to the Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) and/or the Heritage Advisory Committee (HAC) for their review and recommendation. If there is no PAC for the subject area, the report goes directly to Council.

7. Notice of Motion

Council sets a date for the Public Hearing. The public will be notified of the Application and Public Hearing via newspaper ads and by regular mail to neighbouring property owners two weeks prior to the hearing.

8. Public Hearing and Decision

Staff will present their Report and recommendations to Council. Members of the public have an opportunity to voice their comments or concerns about the proposed development, then Council may ask for clarification or additional information. Council will give their decision to support, refuse or modify the application.

9. Appeal

Aggrieved persons (Applicant, neighbours, community groups, etc.) may appeal Council's decision to the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board.

For more information, visit or call your local Planning and Development office.