Appendix 6: Jurisdictional Scan of Permitting Productivity Measures and Inspection Time Frames

Cities reviewed: Calgary, Saskatoon, Windsor, London, Hamilton, Mississauga, Ottawa, and Halifax.

Key Findings

1. Measuring Productivity

   In regards to how other jurisdictions measure inspections productivity, most (but not all) municipalities reviewed rely on weekly or monthly reporting of data inputted during the inspections process. A variety of performance standards or Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were noted, including:

   - Number of hours to complete inspections (from time of request to inspection completion)*
   - Number of inspections per day
   - Duration of inspections
   - Number of open permits
   - Number of completed permits
   - Number of permits without inspections (within 30, 60 days)
   - Number of orders issued
   - Number of complaints
   - Number of follow-up inspections
   - Number of failed vs acceptable inspections
   - Number of permits per district

   * In Ontario, there is a standard target of 48 hours for building inspections to be completed (from the time of the request to the completion of inspections).

   Responders noted that understanding team capacity/productivity is helpful in balancing workload between inspectors and districts.

   One municipality noted the ability to monitor the status of inspections (by discipline) at key stages of construction by project/property, which is also referenced in GIS mapping systems.

2. Estimating inspection timeframes

   In Ontario, timeframes are measured to ensure compliance with provincial standards (e.g. 48 hr inspection response times).

   Most municipalities contacted indicated that inspection timeframes, once on-site, depend on the complexity of the project involved, and as a result, that it is difficult to set standards on actual inspections times.

Only one municipality (outside of Ontario) identified inspection duration times as a KPI that they measure/monitor. In support of this system, inspector work on a 'toggle' that allows the inspector to hit the start/stop on arrival and completion of an inspection (including report writing time).

3. Additional Findings

The following aspects of inspections services were also learned as a result of the jurisdictional scan:

- Most of the municipalities surveyed aim to provide next day service. 4 of 7 municipalities specified a daily cut-off time to request next day inspections (2 or 3 pm).
- Customers request inspections through a variety of ways (by phone, email, online). Several municipalities utilize a call centre/central intake centre.
- Most municipalities surveyed indicated that they carry out all required inspections
- Most municipalities surveyed noted the use of inspections checklists to ensure greater consistency between inspection activities.
- Most municipalities surveyed identified inspection results are real time and require internet connection from vehicle or on-site.
- Certifications in lieu of inspections are not widely used by the municipalities reviewed. A few municipalities noted the use of certifications in specific instances:
    - o Progress reporting,
    - o For exceptions where external reports are accepted (presumably to resolve an issue), or
    - o For VOCs (Verifications of Compliance) for non-mandatory inspections

City of Winnipeg Recommendations and Next Steps

With the introduction in 2019 of daily inspection planning and completion logs, daily reports on inspections activity (via AMANDA system), and shared outlook calendar logging of inspections, there is an opportunity in 2020 to better understand current productivity/capacity levels within both inspections branches.

Recommended KPI measurements to be put in place in 2020 include:

- Number of inspections per day
- Duration of inspections by type of project
- Inspection completion timeframes (from initial request to inspection report completion)
- Number of open permits
- Number of completed permits
- Number of orders issued
- Number of failed vs acceptable inspections
- Number of permits per district

Once a baseline for each KPI is established, improvement targets can be set and monitored, as the teams adjust operations to create efficiencies and improvements in response times.
To support the above process, PP&D has requested the assistance of Corporate Innovations to help develop live 'dashboards' and to assist with digital collection of inspections data.

In support of greater efficiencies, it is also recommended that:

- Both branches formalize and communicate requirements for mandatory inspections, as has been done in municipalities such as the City of Calgary.
- Commercial Inspections develop an inspections checklist to standardize the inspections process and assist in identifying common defects found during inspections.

The above recommendations have been integrated into the overall action plan for 2020 (Appendix 8).

Detailed Survey Reponses

1. **What kinds of inspection services do you provide (e.g. Building permits, Development permits, Occupancy permits)?**
   - All cities stated building permits.
   - Some specified separate areas such as plumbing, mechanical and electrical.
   - Occupancy mentioned upfront by 5/8 cities.
   - Inspections completed by discipline for some areas.
   - One city combined housing and commercial.
   - Specifics included swimming pool enclosures, proactive enforcement, development, complaints, unsafe buildings, marijuana grow-ops, condo applications, land-use by-law complaints, secondary suite registries, rooming house licenses and fire safety act inspections.

2. **What does your inspection scheduling system look like? How are inspections requests made? (by phone, online, staff roles/responsibilities)**
   - Inspections can be requested by phone, email, on-line, 311 calls or app, and by on-site communication
   - Two cities had a 2pm cut-off time for next day appointments.
   - Two cities had a 3pm cut-off time for next day appointments.
   - Ontario has a legislated mandate that all inspections but be completed within 48 hrs so that sets their scheduling.
   - Four cities mentioned a dispatch centre taking requests.
   - City is divided into districts.
   - One city specified needing 24hrs notice to book inspections.
   - One city specified inspections are pre-determined and automatically scheduled when permit is issued.

3. **Do you target specific inspection turnaround times? (e.g. within so many hrs. of the request) If so, what are the timeframes?**
   - Ontario Building Code specifies inspections must be completed within 48hrs, time starting the date after the request was made.

- Many provide next day service and will sometime accommodate specific requested times if inspector's schedule allows.
- One city specified work is distributed amongst inspectors so they are able to maintain turnaround times.
- One city specified will process requests same day if made before 7am.

4. **How do you measure the turnaround times?**
   - Two cities identified that inspection requests are "stamped" with date and time when they enter the system, and inspector's complete follow-up. Results are required to be entered within 24hrs.
   - Ontario has the legislated 48hrs so that affects their timelines.
   - Four cities identified that they use a computer based tracking system to run reports.
   - One city identified that the inspectors and program managers manage their times.
   - One city specified that they measure by the applicant calling to complain if the inspection was missed.

5. **How are inspectors assigned work?**
   - 6/8 cities identified that their city is broken into districts.
   - Boundaries are adjusted according to workload per inspector.
   - Inspector qualifications and experience may play a factor in inspections assigned, along with area.
   - One city identified a 'super Inspector" where they are cross trained for all disciplines.
   - Complaints are assigned by the Chief or Senior as required.
   - One city identified that they group inspections by area but didn't specify that the city is divided into districts. They distribute and share work based on current workload.

6. **How is productivity measured for inspection work done (e.g. number of inspections/day, number of entries in database)?**
   - 7/8 cities run weekly or monthly reports to capture data about inspections performed.
   - One city specified their inspectors turn in daily inspections to supervisors.
   - Workloads may be reviewed.
   - Monitor areas.
   - One city specified that inspections are marked as "outstanding" until marked "complete" in their system.

7. **How is quality measured for inspection work done?**
   - Five cities have mentorships and ride alongs are completed with Supervisors and peers.
   - Four cities identified that the Senior/Supervisor will spot check work on-site or comments logged occasionally.
   - In team meetings bring up questions or unique situations and have discussions, sometimes daily check-ins, others are less frequent.
   - Program Managers are responsible for supervising their inspectors and monitoring performance.
   - Two cities said they have no set inspection quality.
   - In-house training will be done as needed regarding building code changes, customer service, etc.

8. **What kinds of metrics do you collect in relation to your inspections services?**
   - One city collects information on permits that haven't been inspected in 30 or 60 days.

- One city uses AMANDA to record how many inspections have occurred per permit.
- Run reports weekly, monthly and quarterly on various items including but not limited to the amount of permits closed, the amount of inspections completed within a specific timeframe, number of deficiencies noted, number of outstanding permits, and complaints per area.
- Inspectors submit monthly reports indicating work.

9. **What kinds of tools/technology are used by the inspectors when they carry out inspections (e.g. video/photo documentation, digital plans, real time data entry)?**
    - 5/8 cities identify that their inspectors are given laptops to review permits while on site. Two cities use an iPads or tablet.
    - 5/8 cities identified inspection results are real time and require internet connection from vehicle or on-site.
    - Smart phones are utilized as well, especially since they are equipped with email access and cameras.
    - One city mentioned they have difficultly imputing data into their system from the field and are currently undergoing a replacement.
    - One city still uses hard copies of plans and paper inspection forms but are moving towards a digital platform soon.

10. **Are inspectors assigned to projects from cradle to grave or do customers get different inspectors on site throughout the lifecycle of a project?**
    - One city rotates its inspectors and their districts every three years one third at a time.
    - 5/8 cities identified that projects are assigned cradle to grave, with one specifying for Part 3 only. One city said mostly and ideally but not realistic for them.
    - One city identified that they do not use a cradle to grave approach as it depends on the qualifications of each inspector and usually multiple inspectors work on each permit.
    - One city specified that their inspectors are assigned to zones and not projects.
    - Ask for help from neighbouring district inspector as required.
    - One city specified that the inspectors carry out plan review and inspections cradle to grave for Part 3 buildings, but for Part 9 they have multiple eyes on the project.

11. **Do you consciously rotate the geographic areas that inspectors are assigned or do prefer for an inspector to stay focused on a particular geographic area?**
    - One city makes an effort to rotate inspectors throughout their county and use a logbook to track this.
    - Two cities indicated they rotate districts every three years.
    - Most prefer not to move around but will relocate as needed in situations like retirement, workload and qualifications.
    - Use a “buddy system” for larger projects to ensure proper continuity.

12. **Do you inspect all projects or accept other documentation (certifications, declarations, etc.) in lieu of inspections for certain categories? If so, what are the categories?**
    - All cities complete most inspections with many simply indicating “all”.
    - Final field reviews are accepted from design professionals at end of inspection from 1 city.
    - One city specified they carry out an inspection when the superstructure is completed and closed in and prior to that they accept reports from the design professional

- Some exceptions where one city will rely on professional include; architectural reports, alternative solutions, HVAC ventilation summaries, well certificates, wett certificates, electrical safety authority certificates for electrical systems , legal surveys for property lines or elevation confirmation and Part 8 septic systems.
- One city specified they do not inspect marijuana grow-ops due to the compromised nature of the building.
- One city specified a Quality management Plan which mandates the minimum number of site visits required and that they accept Verification of Compliance) for non-mandatory site inspections.

13. For Occupancy inspections, do you send an inspector from each discipline (structural, mechanical, electrical, etc) or do you have a dedicated cross trained occupancy inspector?

- Almost all cities identified occupancy is completed by the same inspector that completed the other disciplines, usually by area.
- One city has “super inspectors” which complete all inspections.
- One city has building officials that are cross trained and carry out all discipline inspections, excluding electrical, but divide groups by Part 3 and Part 9 buildings.
- One city specified they use occupancy as an opportunity to cross train their inspectors.

14. Are customers required to request their occupancy permit (and inspections) or is this an automatic process when the building and trade permits close?

- Permit holders must request occupancy in 5/8 cities polled and one city indicated that once final is requested there is a following process for occupancy.
- One city only requires occupancy if applicant wants to occupy an unfinished building.
- One city recently introduced mandatory occupancy for interim only.

15. How do you ensure consistency in code interpretation? Do you have a checklist of items to inspect for each discipline?

- Use policies, procedures, guidelines and checklists.
- Carry out weekly or monthly meetings and have clarifying discussions. Encourage team talks.
- One city identified having an inspections manual to deal with consistency.
- The Permit Holder is entitled to apply to the Building Codes Commission for an Interpretation or Ruling on the “Sufficiency of Compliance”, and they are also entitled to apply to the Building Materials Evaluation Commission with respect to innovative materials, systems, etc., for a decision.
- One city has a council policy that guides them as to what they inspect on site.
- Some cities reach out to larger Code bodies ie. Provincially for code interpretation.