

Region of Waterloo
Planning, Development and Legislative Services
Community Planning

To: Committee of the Whole
Meeting Date: April 13, 2021
Report Title: Building Permit Activity 2020

1. Recommendation:

For information

2. Purpose / Issue:

New building construction in 2020, as measured by building permits issued, is an indicator of the continued strength of the local economy through a year of COVID-19 restrictions. Building data are also used in population and employment growth monitoring, development charge estimations, development tracking, budgets and forecasts.

The purpose of this Briefing Note is to provide information to Council.

3. Strategic Plan:

Tracking and reporting building permit activity contributes to Strategic Focus Area 2: Growth Management and Prosperity.

4. Key Considerations:

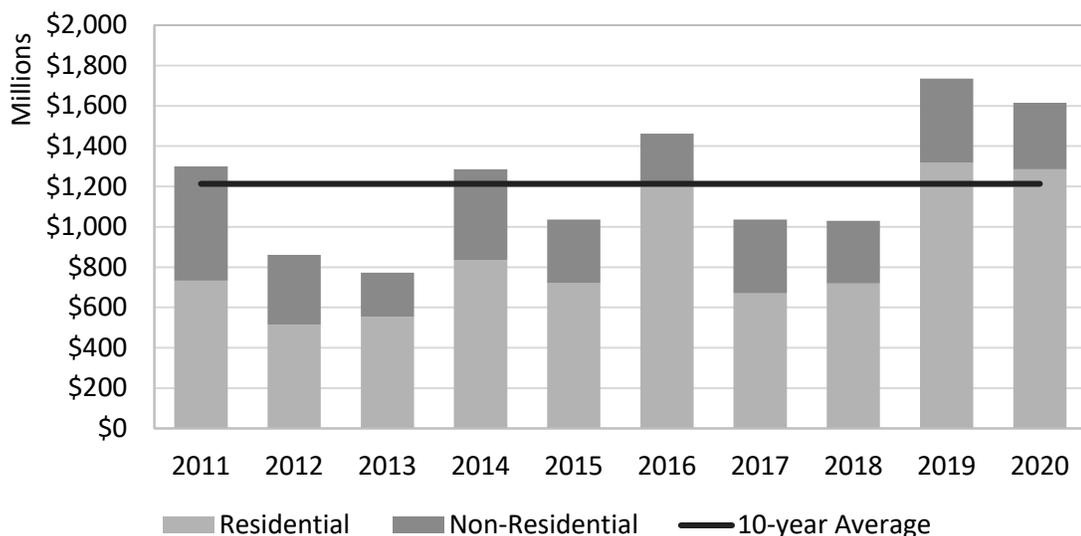
Building permit issuance in March and April of 2020 was affected by COVID-19 as area municipal offices that issue permits and the construction industry adjusted to provincial regulations. However, by the first six months of the year, the average number of residential units were back to the ten-year normal, and by the end of 2020, the total value of building permit activity in the Region was 33 per cent above the ten-year average, and only seven per cent lower than 2019, which was a record year.

Of note:

- The total value of building permits issued in 2020 for new residential and non-residential buildings was \$1.6 billion, well over the ten-year average of \$1.2 billion and only seven per cent below the 2019 record value of \$1.7 billion.

- Residential activity accounted for 80 per cent of the total value, down only two per cent from the previous 2019 record value.
- At \$329 million, the non-residential sector was on trend with the ten-year average of \$357 million. While the industrial sector was 76 per cent lower than 2019, the commercial and institutional sectors experienced increased value from 2019 (14 per cent and 34 per cent, respectively). The Breithaupt Block Phase III, a high-quality project, contributed almost half the total non-residential value.
- While non-residential value remained average, it was a soft year in terms of new square footage, coming in at 1.1 million square feet, the lowest in the past ten years, and about half that of 2019.
- With 5,111 new residential units, 2020 was the third strongest year in the past thirty years, well over the ten-year average of 3,953 and thirty-year average of 3,364.
- The mix of new units was 63 per cent apartments, 23 per cent single and semi-detached, and 14 per cent townhouse. Not all apartment units are low- or medium-rise buildings; eight per cent of all units are accessory apartments added to single and semi-detached homes.
- Housing for students continues to be built; three condominium buildings (558 units) and one student residence (107 units) were initiated.
- It was another strong year for urban intensification, with two-thirds of all new units within the within the built-up areas of the Region, well above the Regional Official Plan target. Almost 70 per cent of non-residential floor space was within the built up area.

Total Value of New Building Permits, 2011-2020



5. Background:

Building Activity reports are prepared for Council semi-annually. Due to COVID-19 and an interest in monitoring the economy more frequently, reports are now also prepared monthly.

6. Area Municipality Communication and Public/Stakeholder Engagement:

Building permit data are collected by Area Municipal staff and compiled by Regional staff. Municipal staff are consulted on interpretation.

7. Financial Implications:

Nil

8. Conclusion / Next Steps:

Nil

9. Attachments / Links:

Attachment 1: 2020 Building Permit Activity and Growth Monitoring (DOCS 3573304)

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