



Planning, Building and By-law Services

Prepared for: Council-in-Committee

Report: PBBS-53-2025

Meeting Date: July 7, 2025

1. Title

PBBS 2025 First Quarter (Q1) Development-Building-Planning-By-law Status Report

2. Recommendations

That: Council receives Report PBBS-53-2024 regarding development, building, planning and by-law statistical reporting for information purposes, and further

That: Council directs staff to forward a copy of Report PBBS-53-2025 to Regional Niagara Planning and Development Services, the District School Board of Niagara and the Niagara Catholic District School Board.

3. Relation to Council's Corporate Strategic Plan

Priority: Sustainable and managed growth

Initiative: Managed growth in a responsible manner by determining and responding to the impacts of legislation (i.e. Bill 23 and Bill 109 on growth, more impact on taxpayers, and fees to support growth).

4. List of Stakeholders

Land Owners/Developers
Region of Niagara
School Boards
Fort Erie Economic Development and Tourism

5. Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide data for the 2025 first quarter (Q1) and performance relative to subdivision, building permit, planning application intake and by-law activity and volumes, and to further provide comparative information to assist in assessing and illustrating the activity.

This report tracks and examines the residential, commercial, industrial and institutional building permit activity, related development charge information, planning application activity and the Town's by-law enforcement caseload by way of quarterly report.

This report assists staff in monitoring new development and intensification occurring throughout the Town, thereby assisting in the Town's growth management initiatives. The data allows staff to compare the growth in relation to growth targets and unit projections based on approved land use designation in the Town's Official Plan, Secondary and Neighbourhood Plans. The reporting identifies areas where residential activity is occurring and reports on actual permits drawn for each Neighbourhood Area. The report also supplies a breakdown of residential dwelling types/mix being constructed.

All levels of government share an interest in tracking this data for comparative purposes, particularly when it is used to gauge effectiveness of the Provincial Growth Plan and Regional Growth Management Plan. These growth numbers have and will continue to be used to inform the Niagara Region and will also be useful in review of their current Growth Management exercises in correlation to Provincial Plans, particularly that of the Places to Grow Act, 2005.

6. Analysis

The information supplied in this report will be used to generate data for the annual Statistical Reporting requirements and the Financial Information Return for the municipality. **Appendix 1** provides statistical information pertaining to the first quarter (Q1) building permit, planning application and by-law enforcement activity. The Report provides the aforementioned data for the Planning and Development Services Department including statistical information and is divided into the following 3 sections:

Section A: Building

Section B: Planning & Development

Section C: By-law Enforcement

SECTION A: BUILDING

2025 First-Quarter (Q1) Building Permit Overview:

In the first quarter of 2025, the Building Department issued 102 building permits, representing an estimated construction value of \$15.7 million. This marks a 40% decrease in permit volume and a 62% decrease in construction value compared to Q1-2024, which saw 170 permits issued with an estimated value of \$41 million.

Breaking down the Q1-2025 data by permit type, the top categories were:

1. Additions/Alterations/Other Improvements – 36 permits (35.5% of total permits issued)
2. New Residential Construction – 18 permits (17.6%)
3. None Residential Construction – 26 permits (25.5%)
4. Other Permits (e.g., signs, tents, etc.) – 22 permits (21.6%)

Figure 1 of Appendix 1 to this report further illustrates the 2025 first-quarter permit volume and estimated values. Detailed information pertaining to the number of issued new residential permits is captured below:

Residential Dwelling Permit Report Q1-2025 (Section A of Appendix 1)

New Residential Permit Overview

The first quarter of 2025 experienced a noticeable decline in residential building activity across the Town. This trend may be influenced by a combination of factors affecting the housing market. While mortgage rates have begun to ease from 2024 highs, overall affordability remains a challenge for many prospective buyers due to continued high home prices and economic uncertainty. Additionally, the recent increase in development charges may be deterring investment in new housing projects, as developers reassess project feasibility. Tariff increases on construction materials have also likely raised pricing concerns, further impacting the decision to move projects forward. Collectively, these factors appear to have contributed to the overall decline in permit volumes and construction value compared to the same period in 2024.

New Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Tracking Process

Starting in Q1-2024, staff began tracking accessory dwelling units (ADUs) as a separate permit category to reflect their growing presence in Fort Erie, largely due to Bill 23, which allows up to two additional residential units on lots with single-detached, semi-detached, or townhouse dwellings without a zoning amendment. ADUs are no longer grouped with apartment units, and while not all are counted as standalone permits, staff continue to monitor the total number created. A new chart has been introduced to better illustrate unit growth by type.

In Q1-2025, the Building Department issued 18 new residential building permits, resulting in the creation of 26 residential units. The total estimated construction value for all permits issued during this period was \$15.7 million. This represents a 48% decrease in residential units compared to Q1-2024, which saw 39 permits issued for 50 units.

Of the 26 residential units created in Q1-2025, 11 were single-detached dwellings, 7 were townhomes, and 8 were accessory dwelling units.

While residential permit activity has slowed, there are early signs of improvement. With interest rates stabilizing and market conditions beginning to recover, staff are optimistic that development activity will gain momentum in the coming months. Fort Erie remains well-positioned for growth, and staff are encouraged by continued interest in residential construction across the Town. **Figure 2 of Appendix 1** to this report illustrates the first quarter residential permit volume from 2021 to 2025.

In the first quarter of 2025, the Garrison neighbourhood led residential development, accounting for 69.2% of all residential building permits issued primarily due to activity within the Garrison area. Ridgeway/Thunder Bay and Spears/High Pointe followed with 11.5%, and rural areas contributed 3.8%. In recent years, residential permit activity has been largely concentrated in the Ridgeway–Thunder Bay neighbourhood, driven by the build-out of The Oakes at Six Mile Creek subdivision. However, Q1-2025 reflects a notable shift, with permit activity now concentrated in the Garrison area, particularly within the Peace Bridge Village subdivision. **Figure 3 and Figure 4 of Appendix 1** to this report illustrates the distribution of residential permit data by neighbourhood.

It's important to note that the number of building permits issued does not always reflect the number of residential units created. For example, a single permit for an apartment building can account for multiple units, while a permit for a detached home with an accessory apartment may result in two units. In the first quarter of 2025, 18 new residential building permits were issued, comprising 11 single-detached dwellings, 7 townhomes, and 8 accessory dwelling units. Collectively, these permits resulted in the creation of 26 new residential units. **Figure 5** of this report portrays the first quarter statistical data for total number of dwelling units created by residential new construction.

Industrial / Commercial / Institutional (ICI) Permit Activity and Development Charge Collections Q1-2025 (Section B of Appendix 1)

Due to exemption changes within the new Development Charges By-law this report will now identify Regional and Town development charges collected amongst applicable categories.

The value of Industrial/Commercial/Institutional (ICI) construction in Q1-2025 was approximately \$1.9 million

Industrial

Industrial permit activity increased in Q1-2025, with 7 permits issued compared to 3 in Q1-2024. However, the total estimated construction value was significantly lower this year, at \$172,645, compared to \$6,343,190 in Q1-2024.

Commercial

Commercial permit activity decreased in Q1-2025 compared to Q1-2024, with only 6 commercial permits issued this quarter, down from 11 in the same period last year. All commercial permits issued this quarter were for renovations, additions, or alterations. The total estimate value of the 6 issued commercial permits in Q1-2025 equalled \$658,900.00, a reduction when compared to the 11 commercial permits issued in Q1-2024 which equalled 3.47 million.

No commercial permits triggered development charges within the first quarter of 2025 as all commercial permits issued were for renovations/alterations.

Institutional

Institutional permit activity declined in the first quarter of 2025 compared to the same period in 2024. Only three permits were issued, with an estimated construction value of \$1.06 million down from \$1.8 million in Q1-2024.

SECTION B: PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

In previous years, statistical reporting on Development Planning Application volumes aside from active, draft, and registered Plans of Subdivision was not included in this report. However, as development applications have continued to rise in recent years, staff began tracking planning application volumes in 2022 to establish benchmarks for future departmental planning.

This report quantifies the number of pre-consultation, minor variance, consent, site plan, official plan amendment, zoning by-law amendment, deeming by-law, and removal of part-lot control applications. It also continues to monitor the inventory of Plans of Subdivision and Condominium developments.

In the first quarter of 2025, a total of 61 development application submissions were received. These included 20 minor variances, 19 pre-consultations, 9 zoning by-law amendments, 5 consents, site plan (3) and one application each for an official plan amendment, plan of subdivision, removal of part lot control, plan of condominium and a deeming by-law. It's important to note that these figures represent applications submitted, regardless of whether they have been deemed complete. Overall, this reflects 13 fewer submissions compared to the same period in 2024. **Figure 6 of Appendix 1** to this report illustrates the application volume by type for the first quarter of 2025.

Staff will continue to monitor the trends in application submissions as they correlate to the increase of development within Fort Erie in order to provide data above and beyond plan of subdivisions statistics which are further detailed below.

Subdivision/Condominium Plan Registrations

With respect to subdivision plans registering in this first quarter, there were none. Subdivision registration had slowed last year with 1 registration made. At the end of Q1-2025 there were 1194 potential units available in Registered Plans, which equates to 6.3 years available supply of residential lots in Registered Plans of Subdivision using the 3-year rolling construction of average of 188.3 units per year of absorption. **Figure 7**, included in **Appendix 1** provides the statistical information on built-out Registered Plans of Subdivision and Registered Plans of Subdivision with remaining units.

Draft Plans of Subdivision

The first quarter of 2025 saw one draft plan receive approval from Council (modified from the previous plan).

Present supply provides for 2727 new residential units in approved Draft Plans of Subdivision with a healthy mix of 604 detached, 184 semi-detached and 1939 multiple unit dwellings (towns & apartments).

Presently, the available supply of residential lots in the Draft Approved Plan of Subdivision is equal to 14.4 years using the 3-year rolling construction average of 188.3 units per year of absorption. **Figure 8 of Appendix 1** to this report provides statistical information on the draft approved plans of subdivision and proposed units.

Active Plans

Active Plans refer to Draft Plan of Subdivision applications that are currently under review and have not yet received Council approval. **Figure 9 of Appendix 1** identifies two active plans: 0-15850 Rebstock Road and 2649 Stevensville Road. Presently, the available supply of residential units in Active Plans of Subdivision is equal to just under a 1-year supply using the 3-year rolling average of 188.3 units/year of absorption. **Figure 9** below provides statistical information on the present Active Plans of Subdivision Inventory.

Residential Inventory

The residential supply reported in the previous 3 categories (*Registered, Draft Approved and Active Plans*) of the process is representative of a comfortable housing supply.

The absorption rate used in determining how long these supplies will last is generated using the previous 36 months (3 years) worth of building permits issued to generate an average. The average is adjusted quarterly to produce an ongoing or rolling average covering a consistent 36-month period. If permit activity increases, the amount of years' worth of supply reflects this with a decrease. Currently, the average residential inventory is 188.3 units per year absorption.

At the time of reporting the 2025 first quarter and using the current average for annual absorption (188.3), the respective inventories are as follows:

- Registered Plans – 1194 units at 188.3 units/year = 6.3 years' worth of supply.
- Draft Approved – 2727 units at 188.3 units/year = 14.4 years' worth of supply.
- Active Plans – 180 units at 188.3 units/year = 0.95 years' worth of supply.

In general terms, the Town is in a healthy and comfortable position with its current inventory for residential supply reflected primarily by the 6.3 years' worth of supply in Registered Plans of Subdivision and 14.7 years' worth of supply in Draft Approved Plans of Subdivision.

THE INTRODUCTION OF TREE BY-LAW 33-2024

In response to concerns with tree clearing within the Town of Fort Erie, Council authorized staff on May 29, 2023 to initiate a comprehensive review and amendment to By-law No. 60-04, A By-Law To Regulate The Destruction, Injury And Harvesting of Trees. This initiative, aligned with the Municipal Act of Ontario and was outlined in Report No. PDS-54-2023, which aimed to enhance the Town's approach to tree protection and management.

After extensive review, public consultation, and consideration of best practices, Council passed By-law 33-2024 on March 24, 2024. The by-law offers numerous benefits for the community. Economically, it supports the stabilization of soils and slopes, reducing erosion and minimizing damage. By enhancing water absorption, it decreases stormwater runoff and flooding risks. The presence of trees also provides energy savings, with increased shade reducing cooling costs during summer months and windbreaks lowering heating expenses in winter. Additionally, trees act as a wind break adjacent to Lake Erie and provide much needed stop over areas for migratory birds.

The by-law contributes to the environment as trees' roots systems assist with the stabilization of soils and slopes while promoting carbon sequestration to combat climate change. Trees also provide essential wildlife habitats, supporting biodiversity within the region. Beyond these tangible benefits, the by-law enhances the aesthetic value of the community, improves physical and mental wellbeing through greener spaces, and reduces noise pollution.

Despite its many benefits, tree preservation in Fort Erie continues to face challenges, including land clearing for development, damage from severe storms and high winds, and threats posed by insects, diseases, and invasive species. In Q1-2025 the Town has received 17 tree permit applications, demonstrating the community's growing commitment to tree preservation. Of these applications, 2 permits were issued for regulated trees, 15 permits for dead or hazardous trees. For properties with limited space for replacement plantings, a cash-in-lieu option allows applicants to contribute to municipal tree-planting efforts. **Figure 10** outlines the 2025 first-quarter permit volume and estimated values.

SECTION C: BY-LAW ENFORCEMENT

By-law Overview

A straightforward statistical approach is used to track the volume and types of municipal by-law calls received. By-law Enforcement staff continuously monitor service calls, and this report provides a summary of those statistics. In the first quarter of 2025, By-law Enforcement received 323 new calls for service and carried over 129 calls from Q4-2024. Of the total 452 calls, approximately 70.1% were resolved within the quarter. In Q1-2025 the 323 new calls are comparable to the 326 new calls received in the first quarter of 2024. **Figure 11** provides a more detailed breakdown of the 2025 first quarter data for types and volumes of calls for service filled.

In Q1-2025, Lot Maintenance By-law calls accounted for the largest share of service requests at 34%, surpassing all other categories. This was followed by Traffic/Parking By-law calls at 20%, Other/Miscellaneous at 17%, and Property Standards at 12%. Drainage issues made up 5%, while Tree By-law concerns represented 4%. Zoning and Noise, Dead/Damaged Trees & Nuisance complaints each comprised 2%, and Short-Term Rental inquiries accounted for 1%.

Breakdowns of By-law Enforcement activity for the first quarter of 2025 are found in **Section C of Appendix 1 Figure 12** on the following page indicated the percentage of new calls for service by type during Q1-2025

Parking Violations

In the first quarter of 2025, By-law Enforcement staff issued a total of 91 parking tickets, down from 118 during the same period in 2024. This decrease is likely the result of several contributing factors, including a decline in parking-related service calls, improved overall compliance, and a strategic shift in enforcement priorities.

Overall 2025 First Quarter (Q1) Summary (Building, By-law Enforcement, Planning)

The first quarter of 2025 presented a modest slowdown in construction activity within the Town of Fort Erie, with both building permit volumes and construction values declining compared to Q1-2024. While this decline is reflective of broader market conditions including affordability challenges, interest rate fluctuations, and increased development charges there are encouraging signs that activity may stabilize in the coming months. Residential construction continues to be supported by a strong inventory of registered and draft approved plans, providing a comfortable supply to meet future demand.

Planning activity remains steady, with a diverse range of development applications submitted and reviewed. Staff continue to meet the legislated timelines under Bill 185, reinforcing the Town's reputation as an efficient and responsive municipality for development. Ongoing monitoring of planning trends and housing supply will inform future policy updates and resource planning. While the supply within Active Plans of Subdivision is currently limited to less than one year, a healthy inventory remains, with 14.7 years of residential supply available in Draft Approved Plans and 6.3 years supply of units in Registered Plans.

The implementation of the new Tree By-law demonstrates Council's commitment to environmental stewardship, and early activity suggests positive community uptake. Similarly, By-law Enforcement continues to manage service requests effectively, with timely resolution of the majority of calls and a continued focus on public education and compliance.

As Fort Erie continues to grow, staff remain focused on supporting responsible development, maintaining service levels, and implementing Council's strategic priorities. This quarterly report provides a snapshot of current activity and will continue to serve as a valuable tool for tracking progress, identifying trends, and supporting evidence-based decision-making moving forward.

7. Financial, Staffing and Accessibility (AODA) Implications

Any net proceeds from the Building and Inspections revenue will be transferred to the Building Permit Reserve as part of the Town's Reserve policy at year-end. And any end of year shortfalls will be funded through the same reserve. There are no financial or staffing implications as it related to the preparation of this report. Reporting of this nature is part of the Planning and Development Services normal operational activities and procedures. Operating Budget variances and impacts are reported in the Town's quarterly financial reports.

8. Policies Affecting Proposal

N/A

9. Comments from Departments, Community and Corporate Partners

Planning, Building and By-law divisions were consulted during preparation of this report. Statistical information relating to each division was provided by staff members who maintain statistics used to monitor and project activity in their relative areas of responsibility. The information conveyed is purely of a statistical nature for Council, stakeholder and public consumption.

10. Alternatives

As this is a recurring Information Report, there are no alternatives to consider.

11. Conclusion

Planning staff collect the information being reported for their continued monitoring and growth management purposes. The report is made available for public distribution to interested persons, organizations and governments for benchmarking new construction activity in our Residential and IC&I sectors and recording its monetary value.

12. Report Approval

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Director, Planning and Development Services

Approved by:
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13. Attachments

Appendix 1 – Title of Appendix