

Attachment 1: Successes to Date

Working with the business community and city building partners to reduce barriers to investment continues to be a priority for Edmonton. Since 2017, service improvements are estimated to have saved planning and development customers 260,933 days and \$4.6 million in delay costs annually based on demonstrated reductions in permit timelines.

In 2017, Edmonton launched the Urban Form Business Transformation (UFBT) initiative to address inconsistent service delivery, common customer frustrations and internal resource challenges. UFBT served to build momentum within Administration, focusing attention on the customer experience, efficiency, and taking action to improve planning and development services.

While significant progress was made with UFBT, the work to make Edmonton an attractive location for investment is ongoing. The Permit and Licensing Improvement (PLI) initiative was launched in 2020, and continues to listen to customers, city building partners and staff, and implement changes that improve the experience of customers and enable staff.

This attachment provides a robust overview of improvements and positive outcomes already realized from the ongoing work to reduce barriers for Edmontonians and investment in Edmonton.

Urban Form Business Transformation

Reduced Timelines

The Table below provides an analysis of timelines before and after process improvement efforts of UFBT, demonstrating the impact of streamlined processes for Land Development Applications. Reductions in timelines serve to reduce the cost of capital for development projects, encouraging investment and economic prosperity in Edmonton and the region.

Application Category	Sub-Category		Pre-Process Improvement			Post-Process Improvement			Timeline reduction
			2017	2018	2017/2018 Total	2019	2020	2019/2020 Total	
Land Development Applications	Rezoning	Volume	142	171	313	110	92	202	-4.45%
		Average days to issues	205	160	180	161	186	172	
Subdivisions	Non-Complex/Complex Conditionally Improved	Volume	162	165	327	146	139	285	-11.32%
		Average days to issues	139	119	129	120	108	114	
	Lot Splits Conditionally Improved	Volume	337	303	640	201	104	305	
		Average days to issues	42	46	44	41	40	41	-7.47%

Please Note: In 2019 Land Development Application timelines improved by 11%. In 2020, however, impacts of COVID-19 limited the ability to bring the applications to Public Hearing, resulting in larger than planned timelines

Enhanced Service for High-Impact Developments

UFBT also formally established Administration’s Client Liaison Team and processes for providing enhanced service on major development projects. Recent successes include Air Products, Edmonton Hospital, Ploykar, Labatts, and The Parks tower downtown. For these high impact investments, project timelines are established with the client up front based on their project needs.

In addition to enhanced service, the Client Liaison Team is able to trial innovative approaches to meeting applicant needs.

- One recent project prototyped a fee phasing service (ie. spreading large Building Permit fees over quarterly installments aligned with project phasing) to support investment by easing cash flow spikes resulting from review fees. Preliminary feedback from local and out-of-province investors has been positive.
- The team also recently prototyped and refined an approach for selective-conditional release of permit conditions, which shorten the timelines between a development permit and a building permit. This change saves four to eight weeks in the overall project timeline by allowing servicing work to proceed in parallel with early phase construction, which supports speed to market on major commercial-industrial investments. This innovation has now been adopted as a standard process beyond the Client Liaison Team.

Commenting on the Client Liaison Team, a national commercial developer recently reported that Edmonton's continued commitment to customer success has supported additional investment from their Bay Street investment partners, which is enabling further building to capitalize on growing warehousing and logistics demand.

External Benchmarking Analysis and Recognition

A third party Municipal Benchmarking Study for residential development was released by the Canadian Home Builders' Association (CHBA) in September 2020. This independent study reviewed and scored municipalities for the following categories: planning features, government charges, and approvals timelines. In the report:

- the City of Edmonton scored favourably, ranking second highest out of 23 Canadian cities included in the report; and
- the report noted the Urban Form Business Transformation as a best practice for partnering with industry on regulatory service improvements.

Permit and Licensing Improvements

Reduced Timelines

A number of process improvements and technology enhancements have been implemented since the beginning of 2020 aimed at reducing permit and licence timelines.

- Introduced automatic permit review for simple deck applications that can be issued in as little as one day. Over 750 permits annually will benefit from the one day service, compared to a timeline of three to six weeks. The online system automatically reviews lower-risk applications for completeness and compliance with the Zoning Bylaw and applicable Building Code requirements. The new process provides quicker, more consistent timelines for permits, especially during peak times.
- Transitioned sign permits to a digital service, allowing for 99 per cent of sign permits to be applied for online. The changes cut processing times in half for most applications, reducing from approximately 60 days to 30 days.
- Improved the business licence process to reduce the time it takes customers to get a business licence from 20 days to approximately 10 days when a building permit is not required.

- Improved the permit process for businesses by allowing some interior demolition work to proceed while awaiting commercial interior alteration building permit approval. This improvement does not reduce overall permit timelines but does allow work to begin sooner and help businesses become operational earlier.
- Exempted 25 types of business uses from requiring a development permit entirely, which shortens the overall project timeline and helps remove barriers to selecting a business location.

Simplifying Application Processes

In addition to efforts to reduce timelines, a number of changes have been made to streamline application requirements and regulations, and reduce administrative burden on applicants.

- Simplified fire safety plan requirements for commercial renovation projects, making it easier to meet fire code requirements.
- Implemented a new Business Licence Bylaw, which reduced fees to operate a business in Edmonton, streamlined the licensing process, and allows the City to respond more quickly and decisively when innovative new business types emerge.
- Streamlined land use planning tools by repealing 74 plans with an omnibus bylaw on June 8, 2021. The plans, some dating back to the 1970s, included area structure plans, outline plans, neighbourhood area structure plans, neighbourhood structure plans, area redevelopment plans and other various plans that no longer served their intended purpose and resulted in an overly complicated planning system.

Responding to Customer Needs

Listening to customers and responding to rapidly changing business conditions is an important part of continuous improvement and serving the public. The following actions have been taken in recent years to respond to the needs of city building partners.

- Added seasonal supports and additional work hours to supplement service during peak summer construction season.
- Quickly introduced a permit and fee-free program to allow restaurants and retail shops to temporarily create and expand patios in response to COVID-19, allowing businesses to stay open and supporting vibrancy in Edmonton.

Attachment 1

- Implementing Remote Video Inspections (RVI) for building and trade permit inspections of occupied construction sites to allow these inspections to continue virtually during the pandemic.