

# Supporting Small Business In Edmonton

## A Path Forward in our New Reality | UFCSD Highlights



Our path is clear. We are moving forward with focus to position our city for the future. We are raising the bar; adapting and improving services and innovating and evolving to support the business community. Our work is contributing to building Edmonton and continuously improving our service. We're changing the way we work; changing the way we provide planning and development services and improving customer service. We're listening and learning to find and implement creative solutions to the challenges experienced today. We're focused on speed to market with the ultimate goal of building a vibrant Edmonton.

Regulation Changes	Description	This helps Edmonton businesses by:
Open Option Parking	<b>Complete</b> (June 2020) - Minimum parking requirements were removed from the Zoning Bylaw (Charter Bylaw 19275). This means that developers, homeowners and businesses are able to decide how much on-site parking to provide on their properties based on their particular operations, activities or lifestyle.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Removing a potential economic barrier, making it easier for small businesses to open or for developers to provide a greater range of market and non-market housing options</li> <li>Making it easier to obtain a business licence and associated development permit</li> <li>Reducing the need for expensive parking studies during development permit review</li> </ul>
Development Permits not required	<b>Complete</b> (November 2018) - The requirement for a development permit was removed for 20 use classes in the Zoning Bylaw (Charter Bylaw 18613).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Removing an application (one of the three that may be required)</li> <li>Reducing the cost required for City approvals</li> </ul>
Zoning Bylaw Omnibus for service improvements	<b>In progress</b> (to be completed in 2020) - Proposed amendments to the Zoning Bylaw that support immediate needs to reduce cost, improve service timelines and reduce regulation and process barriers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providing flexibility to make impactful service improvements that can help improve timelines and reduce costs</li> <li>Providing clarity in the regulations</li> </ul>
Business Licence Bylaw Renewal	<b>In progress</b> (to be completed in 2021) - Create a new Business Licence Bylaw that supports local and regional prosperity and service efficiency as outlined in ConnectEdmonton.  Draft bylaw planned to be available for public comment in 2021.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Removing unnecessary barriers for businesses and improving service efficiency</li> <li>Supporting faster licensing decisions when new types of businesses emerge</li> <li>Improving alignment with regulatory partners to ensure a more timely and effective response to compliance issues</li> </ul>
Zoning Bylaw Renewal Initiative <a href="http://edmonton.ca/zoningbylawrenewal">edmonton.ca/zoningbylawrenewal</a>	<b>In progress</b> (to be completed in 2022) - A comprehensive overhaul of the current Zoning Bylaw that involves rethinking how, what and why the City regulates in terms of zoning and land development, and to ensure alignment with The City Plan and other City policies and initiatives.  Discussion papers being shared throughout 2020.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creating a modern regulatory environment that focuses on simplifying and streamlining requirements to support efficient service delivery.</li> <li>Removing unnecessary barriers for residents, businesses and developers who want to invest in our community.</li> </ul>
Service Improvements	Description	This helps Edmonton businesses by:
Setting service levels (timeline targets)	<b>In progress</b> (to be completed in 2020) - Establish service levels (timeline targets) for planning, permitting and licensing services. This will incorporate service levels that exist for some of the services.  Service levels are important to operating reliable service and focusing improvement work. The service levels will reflect the financial realities faced by the City and strategic direction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Setting clear expectations on how long a service will take thus enabling customers to plan ahead</li> <li>Moving the City towards predictable service</li> <li>Aligning operations with strategic direction such as The CityPlan</li> </ul>
Online Permit Services <a href="http://selfserve.edmonton.ca">selfserve.edmonton.ca</a>	<b>On-going</b> - Providing service digitally continues with 50 services moved or improved online since 2015. Digital services typically include the ability to apply, pay fees and view the status of the application. Some services include digital plan review.  Commercial development and building permit applications became available online in Fall 2019. Over 90% of commercial applications are now received online. This rose from 70% prior to COVID-19. Online business licence applications were modernized in December 2019.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allowing an accessible and convenient online application channel</li> <li>Improving the application process with guidance on requirements</li> <li>Supporting online payments</li> <li>Showing the application status to provide transparency in the service</li> </ul>

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Risk-based approach to reduce Permit Clearances (Building Permits)	<b>Complete</b> (June 2020) - To reduce the time required for this step in the Business Licence service a risk-based approach was applied. Businesses that have a low likelihood to need a building permit are removed from the building permit clearance step in the process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improving speed of service for business licences applications by removing a week of processing time</li> <li>Focusing staff on permit review for those businesses that require a permit</li> </ul>
Temporary Patio Extension (COVID-19 Economic Recovery)	<b>Complete</b> (May 2020) - In response to public health protocols, the City quickly developed new guidelines for temporary outdoor patios, sidewalk cafes and retail expansions to help business recover and relaunch. The expansion of physical space allows for more customers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offering businesses a way to open and mitigate the impact of public health protocols on business through creating additional customer capacity.</li> <li>Collaborating with the Business Improvement Areas</li> </ul>
Remote Video Inspections	<b>Complete</b> (piloted April 2020, launched June 2020) - To allow for virtual inspections of occupied spaces within residential and commercial locations through the use of cellular mobiles devices. The RVI apply to Safety Codes (Building, HVAC, Plumbing, Gas and Electrical) inspections.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adapting the City service to support the needs of businesses</li> <li>Ensuring safety for both customers and staff</li> </ul>
Sign permit digital service	<b>In Progress</b> (to be completed October 2020) - Move the sign permit service online in collaboration with the Alberta Sign Association (ASA). Improvements include integrating ASA engineering compliance program to support safety, the removal of process steps and enabling online application and payments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improving service speed by moving online and improving the process</li> <li>Removing building permit requirements</li> <li>Collaborating with industry organizations</li> </ul>
Improve Commercial Permitting / Business Licensing Service Delivery and Experience	<p><b>In Progress</b> (completion throughout 2020/21) - Complete a range of improvements that improve how we deliver services to be reliable for our customers that apply for business licences and change of use/interior alterations permits. Improvements take into account looking at risk differently, focusing technical reviews and stopping low value tasks.</p> <p>Quick wins underway and to be completed within 2020 include: remove email submission channel for Business Licence applications; reduce processing where not required by regulation (Commercial Development Permits); allow partial construction permission for interior alterations (Commercial Building Permits) and review fire safety plan requirements for interior alterations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improving the service to better meet the needs of the customers.</li> <li>Understanding their needs and journey as customers (typically small business owners or contractors and industry professionals) in making the improvements</li> <li>Focusing on the outcomes of applications and their contribution to Edmonton's wellbeing</li> <li>Continuing to provide the safety benefits of regulation</li> </ul>
Inspector Mobility - Route Optimization and Mobility App	<b>In Progress</b> (completion throughout 2020) - Implement digital tools that enable inspectors to more efficiently complete on-site tasks and reduce total driving time across inspectors to allow more time for inspections.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increasing the ability to meet requested inspection dates for customers</li> </ul>
Communication	Description	This helps Edmonton businesses by:
Building Permits and Inspections Dashboard <a href="https://edmonton.ca/permitprocessingtimes">edmonton.ca/permitprocessingtimes</a>	<b>Complete</b> (March 2020) - an online dashboard that provides information on when building permit applications will be assigned for review and when requests for building and trade discipline inspections will be scheduled.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providing transparency to applicants on wait times</li> <li>Allowing customers to have more information in planning around permits or inspections</li> </ul>
Website Improvements <a href="https://edmonton.ca/SmallBusiness">edmonton.ca/SmallBusiness</a>	<b>Complete</b> (December 2019) - A range of online resources exist to help businesses. These pages continue to evolve as the services the support are improved. Customers can start at the Small Business Support hub that walks through the City's permits and licence processes and provide essential information for small business owners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improving layout and content to focus on their customer experience</li> <li>Explaining the City support for small business in a simple, easy to navigate way, and providing linkages to relevant information on zoning, renovating and permits</li> </ul>
Focused Services	Description	This helps Edmonton businesses by:
Client Liaison Unit	<b>Ongoing</b> - Enhanced Service, formalized in October 2019, provides a single point of contact to the city building industry on major commercial, industrial, and large-site mixed-use infill projects through all stages of the approval process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providing additional support to select customers whose business development projects have significant impacts on Edmonton's prosperity and growth objectives</li> <li>Enhancing Edmonton's reputation as a place to build and invest</li> </ul>

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COVID-19 Economic Recovery	<p><b>Ongoing</b> (March 2020 onward) - The City has launched many recovery initiatives to support businesses through COVID-19 including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Centralized email support and website (edmonton.ca/BusinessInfo) for important information for businesses</li> <li>• Edmonton Economic Recovery Grant helps businesses recover and pivot</li> <li>• Business licence fee reduction of 50% until December 31, 2020</li> <li>• BIA Tax Levy Payment Deferral for businesses located in BIAs</li> <li>• Property Tax Relief for property owners</li> <li>• City-owned Property Rent Forbearance for tenants of City-owned buildings and facilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helping business recover, relaunch, and pivot due to the impacts of COVID-19</li> </ul>
One on One Program	<p><b>Ongoing</b> - The City has supported more than 2,300 small business owners with navigating the processes and requirements associated with starting a business.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing information and support to enable them to establish a business in Edmonton</li> </ul>
Small Business Workshops	<p><b>Ongoing</b> - City hosted workshops, held annually, that address commonly asked business questions and key themes heard from businesses. More than 160 people participated in these workshops in 2019. The City also presents regular workshops to new entrepreneur cohorts at local institutions including Anderson Career Institute, the NAITMawji Centre, and Action for Healthy Communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing information to enable them to establish a business in Edmonton</li> </ul>
Commercial Building Grants	<p><b>Ongoing</b> - The City delivers 2 small business grants including the Storefront Improvement Grant (matching grant to help small businesses improve the exterior of their storefront) and the Development Incentive Grant (grant that helps incentivize interior renovation and new development at targeted areas).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing focused funds to support businesses to invest</li> </ul>
Pre-Application Meetings	<p><b>Ongoing</b> - The City provides services that allow applicants proposing a commercial / industrial development, rezoning or subdivision to meet with City staff prior to an application to proactively identify issues and clarify application requirements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing information that enables businesses to refine their proposals and investment in Edmonton</li> <li>• Enabling timely service through complete applications</li> </ul>
Cannabis Legalization	<p><b>Ongoing</b> - Created a team of dedicated staff to ensure that cannabis retail stores could be open on day 1 of legalization in 2018. Six businesses were open door ready on legalization day, the most in the country.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proactively responding to an emerging business opportunity. Businesses were able to apply for permits prior to legalization day</li> </ul>
Outreach	<p><b>Ongoing</b> - The City collaborates with industry and business groups to share information and/or gather input on pending regulation and process changes. This ensures businesses are providing input and that services work better for the City and customers. Groups can include: Edmonton Chamber of Commerce, Business Improvement Areas, Building Operators and Managers Association (BOMA), the Commercial Real Estate Development Association (NAIOP), the Urban Development Institute (UDI), the Canadian Home Builders' Association (CHBA), Infill Development Edmonton Association (IDEA) and the Realtors Association of Edmonton, Edmonton Construction Association (ECA), Alberta Sign Association (ASA) and Alberta Association of Architects (AAA).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring the professionals and technical experts engaged by businesses are informed about current regulations and processes</li> </ul>

The efforts to improve planning, permitting and licensing services is not limited to supporting small businesses. Residential permits were the first to move online and many of the regulatory and service/process improvements listed provide value to residential customers. There is parallel work underway to improve the service delivery and experience of homeowners and renovation contractors related to home improvements. For example in 2020 the application requirements for decks and garages will be reduced and refined, plus electrical and mechanical permits will be available online for homeowners.