

Building Safety

Led by: Director of Development, Business & Building Services

Service Description

Our service is responsible for building safety in Calgary. We serve customers and Calgarians during the building permit process, from issuing the building permit to performing site safety inspections to ensure buildings meet provincial safety code requirements. Our service creates programs and strategies focused on keeping buildings safe. We work with industry and partner agencies (provincial and regulatory) to enable development by identifying, educating and promoting safety best practices with the goal of preventing public safety incidents. We identify required changes to codes to support climate policy, affordable housing, and safety and work on a provincial and national level to update safety codes.

Service Updates

Key Service Results

Issued 19,500 building permits and granted occupancy on over 15,300 new dwelling units. Supported more customers, with a 10% increase in intake of new applications.

Increased the level of collaboration with industry to address construction-related issues, through the launch of a joint Builders Advisory Committee with BILD Calgary.

In 2023, a record 2915 suites were registered through the Secondary Suite Program to increase the current supply of safe affordable suites

Conducted successful ongoing public education that equipped Calgarians with information to provide complete permit applications, which supports streamlining of application reviews and inspections.

Introduced process improvements for Public Protection Site Safety Plans to ensure and timely review and compliance, which keeps Calgarians safe near construction sites.

Introduced energy labelling for residential buildings using the EnerGuide rating system, with over a third of new homes participating in the pilot program.

Service Challenges

Missing information in permit applications resulting in longer timelines to complete reviews and issue permits. Joint committees with industry are providing opportunities for education and information-sharing.

Sustained increases in inspection volumes introduce a challenge in providing a predictable inspection booking window, with a 9% increase in applications and 23% increase in inspection volumes from 2022.

Maintaining staffing volumes in response to high volume and turnover. Leaders invested heavily in hiring additional staff to better support our increased inspection volumes, close open permits, and provide for succession planning, mentoring, and training.

Trends & Potential Uncertainties

Population growth, market conditions and changing housing demographics are impacting the built form, with applications becoming more complex.

Industry interest in adopting artificial intelligence (AI) into the application process.

Ongoing transitioning to a more risk-based approach to approvals and inspections.

A long-term vehicle strategy depends on a charging infrastructure for a largely remote and distributed team of inspectors.

Staff retention and knowledge transfer through succession planning. Resource availability for improvement work.



Measuring Our Performance

Legend

— Actuals

■ Expected Future Performance

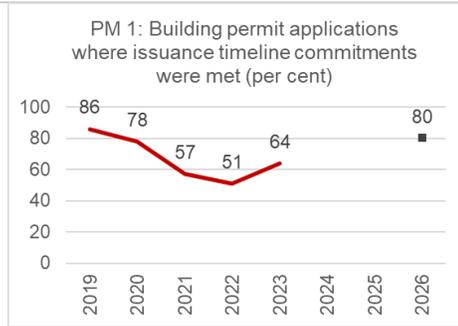
➔ Progressing as planned

⊖ Not progressing as planned

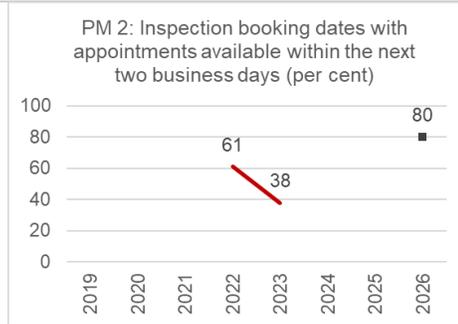
Performance Measures

Story behind the numbers

Status



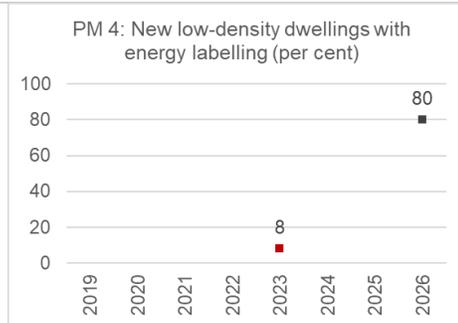
2023 was a record year for the number of building permit applications received. Overall, there was a 9% year-over-year increase in building permit applications from 2022 to 2023. Even with this increase, the City was able to issue building permits within the specified timelines 64% of the time, a 13% improvement over 2022. The City was able to issue over 19,500 building permits in 2023 and saw over 15,600 new dwelling units completed and added to the housing inventory for citizens to call their home.



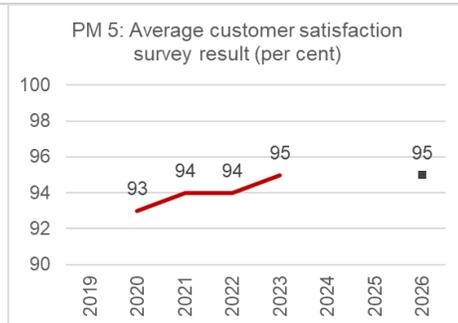
The unprecedented number of building permit applications received in 2023 resulted in a 22% increase in the number of completed inspections. As The City strived to keep up with demand, the sheer number of inspections meant that booking availability was limited. While the target is to have booking options available within the next 2 business days, 2023 saw an average of 4 business days to book a building inspection. The City will be working hard at improving availability by adding additional inspectors and improving routing to quickly get to sites.



Safety remains at the forefront of The City's priorities. Processes have been established to ensure that public protection site safety plans are in place for buildings with five or more stories. Under this new process, applications meeting the criteria will automatically be flagged for requiring an approved safety plan. Since implementing this initiative, performance has increased sharply, rising from 28% in 2022 to 91% in 2023. As the process is continually refined, performance is anticipated to improve further. Citizens can expect that all new buildings with five or more stories will have the site safety plans in place.



In September 2023, the energy labeling program was introduced, with initial participation being voluntary. While initial involvement was low, the results were anticipated as the program comes online. However, this initiative will become mandatory in 2024, requiring all new low-density dwellings to adopt energy labeling. Once the program becomes mandatory, performance will increase significantly, with citizens having the added benefit of now being able to purchase homes based on energy efficiency. The effectiveness of this performance measure will be reviewed in advance of mid-cycle adjustments.



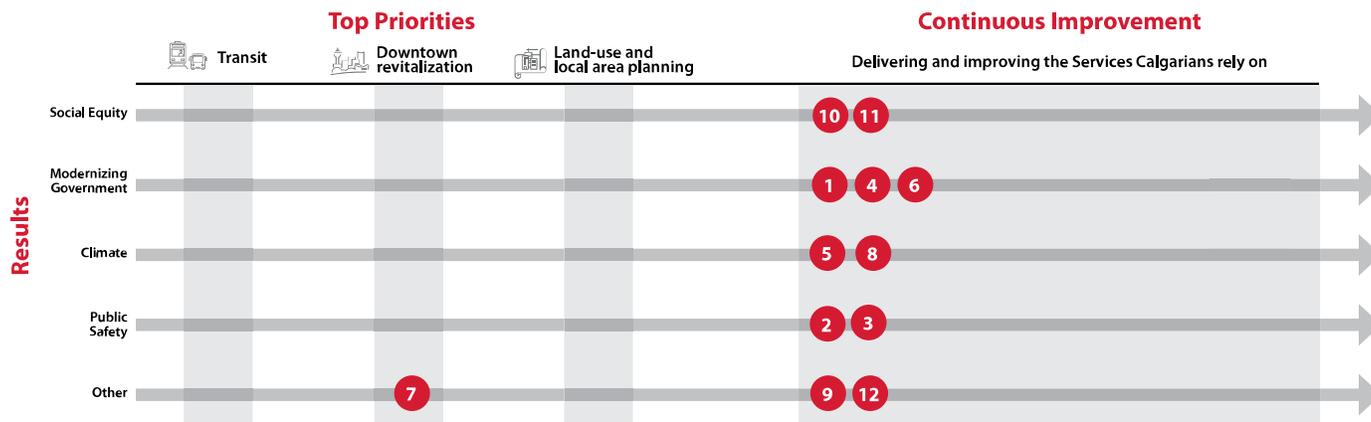
Survey results continue to show a high satisfaction from citizens that are applying for building and trade permits. While results are encouraging, The City is making every effort to improve that satisfaction even further. From adding additional staff to improve timeliness, increasing information to assist with permit applications, and streamlining internal processes, citizens will be sure to benefit from these improvements.





Progress on Service Delivery

Alignment with Council Refined Priorities and Result Areas



Legend Completed Progressing as planned Not progressing as planned Not started Initiative number

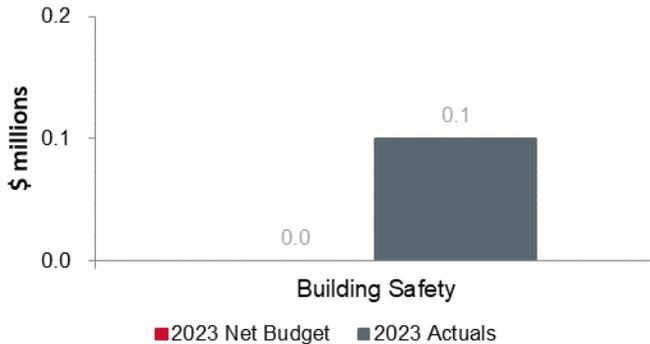
Initiative	Initiative Update	Status
1 Reduce building permit approval timelines by applying capacity, risk, and performance management.	Despite increasing volumes, permit approval timelines for Commercial Multi Family projects improved by 7% year over year, due to process efficiencies and additional staffing. Permit approval timelines for Residential Improvement Permits improved by 11% year over year and for Single Construction Permits by 20% year over year. This was due to increased consistency through mentoring and the implementation of quality standards.	
2 Protect the public during construction through the revision of the Public Protection Site Safety Plan and monitoring of key safety indicators.	Additional Public Protection Site Safety Plans (PPSSP) processing improvements have enabled visibility of PPSSP performance. From application review to occupancy, constructor performance for safe construction practices can be easily monitored to enable engagement and education, mitigating safety risks to sustain public safety proactively. The initiative is complete/ implemented, this will be an ongoing focus for the service line.	
3 Increase the supply of safe and affordable housing options by improving the regulatory environment for secondary suites.	The suites program saw a significant increase in applications and registrations in 2023. Most notably we registered 800 more than in 2022 and reached over 12 thousand on the registry, coming just shy of the 13 thousand registered goal. We expect to hit that in Q2 of 2024. Budget approval for a suite's incentive program was received, with a launch date for the incentive planned for early 2024.	
4 Provide time-saving, easy and convenient options through education for builders and developers, and investment in customer self-serve capabilities.	Webinars were conducted emphasizing the importance of a complete application and how to achieve a complete application. The quality Standards project delivered an improved guide to a complete application with a more comprehensive description of requirements and a plain language approach.	
5 Improve building energy performance by delivering on the Climate Action Plan through education, and incentives.	Enabled the launch of the Home Energy Labelling Program (HELP) pilot in 2023. HELP is a 24-month pilot aligned with the Calgary Climate Strategy Pathways to 2050, approved by council in the summer of 2022 HELP is designed to provide knowledge to homeowners of their building's energy performance that will help inform home improvement decisions.	
6 Manage inspections by providing industry leadership in risk management techniques that follow the Alberta Safety Codes Council's directive.	Staff engagement and development enhancements have been implemented to support our influx of new inspectors. Peer-to-peer and scenario-based virtual training has improved inspection consistency and inspector confidence, resulting in increased risk tolerance and an improved customer experience.	
7 Support the Greater Downtown Plan by dedicating resources to the reviewing, approvals and inspections process.	All Downtown plan applications were assigned a File manager as soon as we were made aware of the application, Pre-app meetings and DP comments were offered and expedited plans reviews were conducted to ensure files moved through the process as smoothly as possible.	

Initiative	Initiative Update	Status
8 Contribute to Calgary's environmental sustainability by lowering greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions through the conversion of fleet vehicles to electric vehicles.	Market offerings have been extremely limited with current availability being untenable or unavailable. Remain engaged with corporate teams in identifying viable market entries. Substantial Infrastructure upgrades (multi-year) needed to support large-scale centralized EV fleet adoption. Third-party charging network continues to be assessed for resilience to support field operations.	
9 Improve convenience for customers and save fuel by enhancing inspection services through the use of remote video inspection.	The Remote Video Inspection Service (RVI) is being expanded. The technology that enables inspectors to complete RVIs is being enhanced to streamline the process for inspectors and improve the customer experience. The customer base is being expanded.	
10 Improve employee engagement through a sustained and meaningful coaching and development program.	Increased 1:1 meeting with staff by Dept. ID Started DOT (Do one together) plans examination sessions for staff through Senior Building Safety Codes Officers.	
11 Act on the intent of Truth and Reconciliation by continuing to grow our partnership with Siksika Nation.	After the constructive initial meeting with Siksika Nation in May 2023, despite continuous efforts to establish communication channels, unfortunately, no responses or updates were received from them. Despite monthly attempts to touch base via emails and seeking guidance from the City's Indigenous Affairs office, we encountered challenges in maintaining active engagement. In November, following a thoughtful discussion with our management team, it was decided that we would temporarily suspend our efforts. All parties involved were notified, and we remain optimistic about future collaboration.	
12 Build and maintain a respectful, inclusive and equitable workplace that is representative of the community by ensuring our policies and services support The City's commitments to our employees and Calgarians.	Residential bi-weekly in person meetings are used to promote policy, L&D courses for Respect in the Workplace, Diversity and Inclusion, Cyber Security, personal safety, consistency. Time in meetings is allowed for round table discussions in an open and engaging environment.	



Service Updates on Financial Performance

Net Operating Budget and Actuals as of December 31, 2023



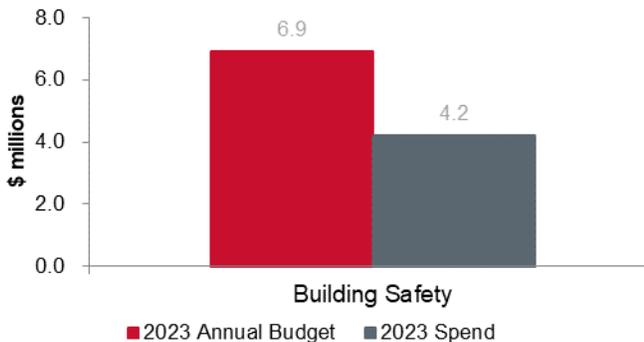
Operating Budget Updates - 2023 net operating budget vs actuals:

Building Safety has a negligible unfavourable operating budget variance of \$0.1 million for the reporting period.

Key results achieved include:

- Issued 19,500 building permits and granted occupancy on 15,600 new dwelling units. Supported more customers, with a 10.0 per cent increase in intake of new applications.
- Sustained increases in inspection volumes, with a 9.0 per cent increase in applications and 23.0 per cent increase in inspection volumes from 2022.
- Launched the Secondary Suite Program to look into legislative changes and incentives to increase the current supply of 12,050 safe affordable suites, with 2,915 registered in 2023.

Capital Budget and Spend as of December 31, 2023



Capital Budget Updates - 2023 total capital budget vs 2023 spend:

Building Safety has spent 60.3 per cent of the 2023 approved capital budget. In 2023, the capital expenditures have been used to deliver:

Technology Enhancements:

- Online services - new and enhancements (new application processes; process improvements; ability to make payments for all permit types)
- System and platform upgrades (compliance - payment process, upgrades and enablers)
- Improvements to processes and systems to improve customer experience and reduce timelines

Service Modernization:

- Historical Digitization Project - A request for proposals (RFP) was initiated to advance the digitization of historic paper documents and plans related to permits and inspections. This will increase ease of access to information for both staff and customers. Support from consultants will complement the efforts of City staff to ensure progress.
- Service Demand Forecasting – Scoping of project to improve forecasting of permits and application volumes, supporting balanced resource allocations to manage demand for services.