

Development Approvals

Led by: Director of Community Planning

Service Description

Development Approvals works with Calgarians, communities and customers to enable building a great city through developing land in Calgary. As a regulatory authority, Development Approvals supports customers with advisory services to help them through all regulatory requirements for land development projects, while balancing customer, citizen, and community needs.

Service Updates

Key Service Results

Awards

Mobility Achievement Award

Development Approvals approved 227 Green Building units in 2023; the largest net-zero ready residential project in Calgary's history as of October 2023 was approved in less than 60 days. The priority stream for Green Buildings continues to progress with Climate & Environmental Management (CEM) leading the day-to-day program management until it is transitioned to Community Planning. Multidisciplinary development permit application performance is consistent and trending up. An updated Urban Design website and internal tools have been launched to ensure applicants and internal partners are able to access information to support quality applications. Development Approvals (DA) is continuing relationship building with applicants and customers to improve service delivery; DA is continuing to focus on relationship building and engagement with customers and applicants.

Service Challenges

Development Approvals is examining how to improve the Development Application Review Team's (DART) timelines to achieve the 2026 performance target of 85 per cent; currently, it's at 82 per cent. The Development Approvals Service Committee (DASC) has endorsed the Service Strategy and Analytics team to create a service performance improvement plan to meet the target. By expanding who can review Green Building applications, process efficiency will be improved which is positive as increased volume of this application type are expected. DART is also reviewing boundary lines in the North and South to ensure a balanced workload across geographic teams; assessing boundary lines and redistributing work may have positive impacts on timelines to approval.

Trends & Potential Uncertainties

Development Approvals is focusing on the importance of urban design throughout 2024. The service line wants to help Calgary grow in ways that will meet everyday and lifestyle needs of Calgarians. The service plans a simplification of the online application process this year and will provide increased, quality guidance on what the applicant needs to get their permit approved. The demand for housing, employment and amenities in Calgary is growing. The service monitors projected application volumes to meet the needs of customers while responding to market demands. Development Approvals is continuing its work with industry in 2024 to address challenges while aligning with policy; the service line will also continue to watch interest rates, local population growth and housing affordability.



Measuring Our Performance

Legend

— Actuals

■ Expected Future Performance

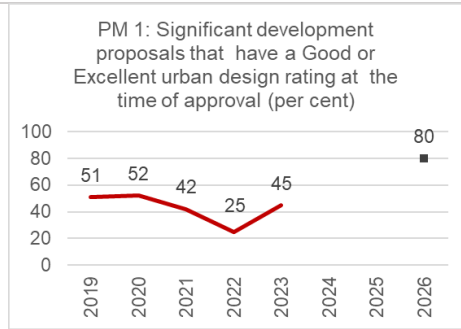
➔ Progressing as planned

⊖ Not progressing as planned

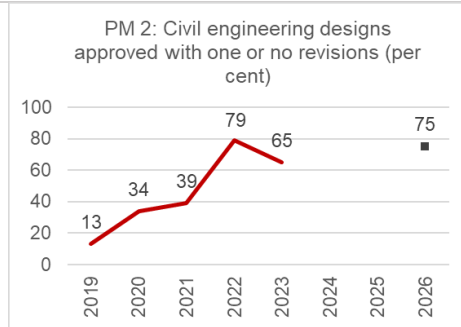
Performance Measures

Story behind the numbers

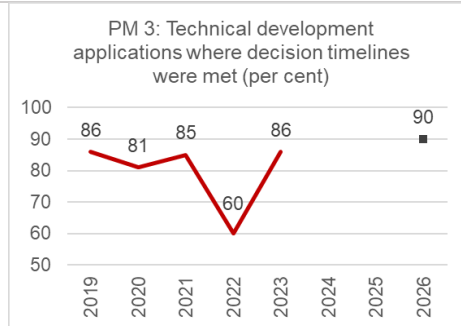
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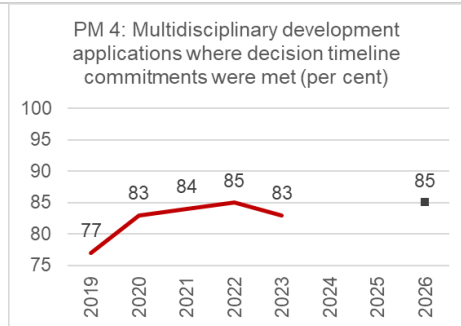
In the face of a surge in complex project approvals applications, our Planning team continues to champion transformation in our city. Notably, commercial, and downtown developments saw increased volumes, paralleled by improved urban design quality. Internally, continuous learning, team engagement, and a new multi-channel onboarding module, elevated the staff's focus on quality outcomes. Anticipating hurdles, we've laid a foundation for sustained improvement and our commitment to excellence and a shared vision positions us for success. Confidently, our urban design ratings will rise, shaping a dynamic, sustainable future.



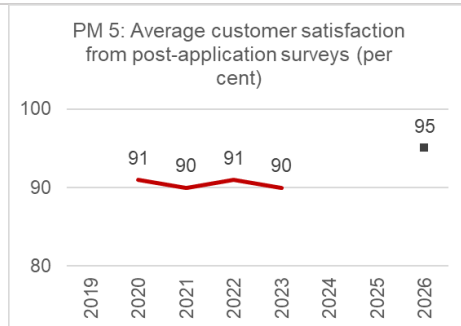
In 2023, an increase in civil engineering submissions prompted us to work with our industry partners on ways to enhance submission quality. This effort led to accelerated approval of infrastructure designs by The City. The positive trend is expected to continue into 2024 and beyond. Collaborating with industry, we proactively identify and address issues early, reducing resubmissions. This streamlining minimizes inefficiencies, ensuring faster approval and more swiftly implementable projects.



2023 saw significant file volume increases. Performance has remained static for 2023 with 83 per cent of files meeting decision timelines in the final quarter. While application volumes are high, they're returning to pre-COVID levels. Hiring of additional staff played a part in improved performance as new planners came onboard. This performance measure demonstrates that the ongoing process improvements and technological enhancements will continue to improve service delivery times for technical development permits, infills, and subdivision by instrument applications



Multidisciplinary development application performance continues is relatively stable. Application volumes exceeded 2023 levels during the same period. This increased volume coupled with an increase in pre-application volumes has increased staff workloads. Hiring efforts in early 2023 enabled growth to address volumes. Planning and Development Services (PDS) continues to pursue improvement initiatives that streamline processes and reduce timelines supporting the needs of our customers.



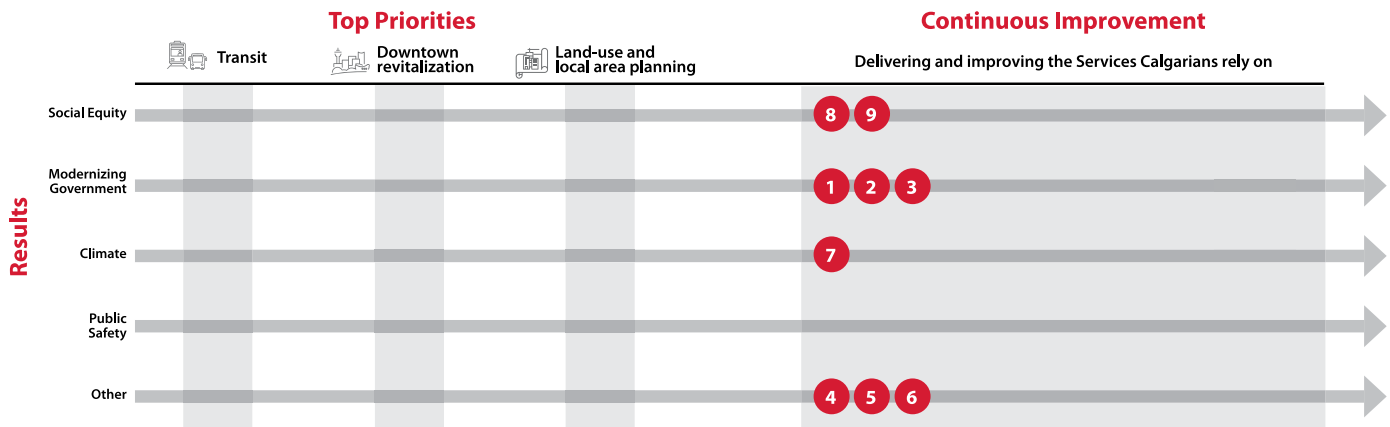
Customer satisfaction reached 90 per cent in 2023. Notable feedback includes 87 per cent of respondents acknowledging time commitments were met and 88 per cent satisfaction with timely outcomes. Positive sentiments indicate satisfaction with online process streamlining, professionalism and prompt response times. Insights guiding strategic focus on enhancing online services, staff efficiency and service excellence shows we're on track to achieve the 95 per cent satisfaction on expected future performance for 2026, which is in keeping with continuous improvement.







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

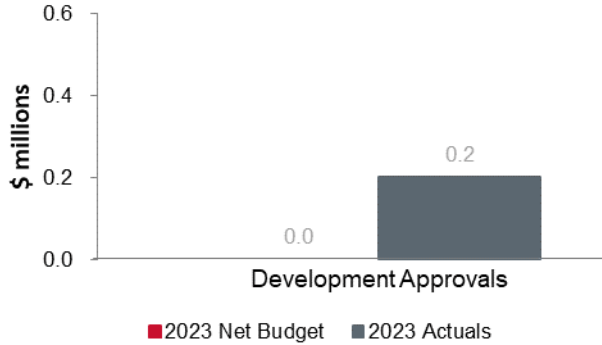
Initiative	Initiative Update	Status
1 Support the realization of development in Calgary, enhance the consistency of application reviews, and encourage greater certainty and predictability for customers by increasing the responsiveness and timely review of development applications. Continuous improvement towards a streamlined applications process, including better ways to track and measure effort along the approvals continuum, and improvements and updates to systems and tools.	2023 performance is similar to 2022. Currently application reviews are at about 70 per cent and trending up along with application volumes for development. Staffing has experienced some turnover but appropriate backfill has been consistently possible due to a great pool of in-house candidates. Vacancies are being actively recruited for which will help employees continue to manage increase low-density residential development applications.	
2 Support quality service delivery by ensuring we have the right resources at the right time to support the changing customer demands and market conditions. This can be accomplished through resource management, volume forecasting and proactive data analysis.	In 2023, Development Approvals experienced increased application volumes; to ensure the resources are available to handle this increase in service needs, active recruiting efforts are ongoing. With Technical and Subdivision teams now residing in the same division, the group is seeing more efficiency and has noted opportunities for cross-training to be explored in the coming months.	
3 Improve the experience and interaction of customers and Calgarians with the applications process through enhanced online service delivery that leverages technology to modernize, consolidate and streamline the products offered. This includes products on ApplyCentral, transitioning to digital advertisement, and building a “mobile friendly” development map.	Development Approvals (DA) will continue its investment in providing online services through 2024. Key customer experiences will be captured using surveys and one on one interviews with applicants; applicant performance is another part of customer research to be realized via interviews. DA is aware land use applications may trend up due to rezoning and is ready to process these. Working closely with the Calgary Inner-City Builders Association (CICBA) may further inform urban design quality while supporting application review which ensures customers know what they need to do to be approved.	

Initiative	Initiative Update	Status
<p>4 Encourage high quality development aligned with the urban design principles identified in the Municipal Development Plan by reviewing, rating, and monitoring the urban design merits of applications. This includes regularly reviewing the evaluation criteria and current processes to ensure customers receive the appropriate feedback to improve quality where and when necessary.</p>	<p>Initiation of design review with the Urban Design and Open Space (UDOS) team is strongly encouraged as early in the application review process as possible. Through the Guide to Urban Design Review, which provides specific detail on the Municipal Development Plan (MDP) Urban Design Elements, applicants are provided with a statement of City urban design expectations. This has resulted in improved quality at submission, timeline improvements in many cases and higher quality design responses from collaborative applicants.</p>	
<p>5 Promote the successful realization of residential, commercial, and industrial development that reflects community and Calgarian interests through execution of a clear, consistent, easy to understand and updated Land Use Bylaw developed in partnership with City and industry partners.</p>	<p>Development Approvals supports the City Building Program by providing implementation insight into policy work. This program provides tools needed to enable housing security and choices, promote economic development, address climate change and strengthen relationships with Indigenous communities. The program has three parts going before Council in 2024: the Calgary Plan which merges with the Municipal Development Plan (MDP), the Calgary Transportation Plan (CTP) zoning bylaw (currently called Land Use Bylaw) to simplify developing and land use and the Street Manual.</p>	
<p>6 Ensure customer and industry expectations around value for service are met and reflected in user fees. This enables The City to continue delivering superior and equitable approvals service.</p>	<p>Planning, Subdivision and Land Use Application fees have remained frozen since 2017 at 2016 rates. Application fees support the delivery of our services without unnecessary financial burden to the applicant as the Canada continues to rebound after multiple challenging financial years due to domestic and global impacts.</p>	
<p>7 Advance the City's building and energy performance objectives through the implementation of the Net Zero Prioritization pilot program, by offering a prioritized development review process to builders that exceed the current minimum code requirements and meet the strict requirements of nationally recognized labelling and certification programs.</p>	<p>In 2022, 87 net-zero ready units were approved in Arbor Lake through the Net Zero Prioritization pilot program. The success of this pilot launched the Green Buildings Priority Stream program in February 2023. The new priority stream improves on the pilot by having a dedicated Enmax resource for applicants, enabling earlier collaboration with safety enforcement, subdivision, and code officers, and improving the coordination of urban design reviews with prioritized green projects. Two projects are currently under review and will result in a minimum of 260 net-zero ready units if approved.</p>	
<p>8 Advance the work of the White Goose Flying Report's Calls-to-Action by identifying and mapping areas of cultural importance to the Nations that were signatories to Treaty 7, Metis and urban Indigenous peoples in and around the Calgary area. This initiative will gather Four stories central to Calgary's downtown, including the creation story for Elbow/The Confluence (Moh-kins-stis in Blackfoot; Wicispa Oyade in Stoney Nakoda; Gut'stis'sti in Tsuu'tina; and Otokwunee in Cree/Michif).</p>	<p>Development Approvals (DA) is working on implementing and amending policies regarding place naming and engagement with Indigenous groups and Traditional Knowledge Keepers. By investigating opportunities for inclusive placemaking and place naming, DA is active in recognizing, celebrating and sustaining Indigenous presence on land undergoing development/redevelopment. Area Structure Plans and Local Area Plans will be using these policies as guidance when they undertake projects; this will also influence other City Business Units' future engagement with Indigenous people.</p>	
<p>9 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 commitment to our employees.</p>	<p>Recruitment and retention practices have an Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB) and Anti-Racism lens to foster a respectful, inclusive and equitable workplace. Development Approvals is preparing plans related to EDIB and Anti-Racism workplans which can be used to support recruitment and retention.</p>	



Service Updates on Financial Performance

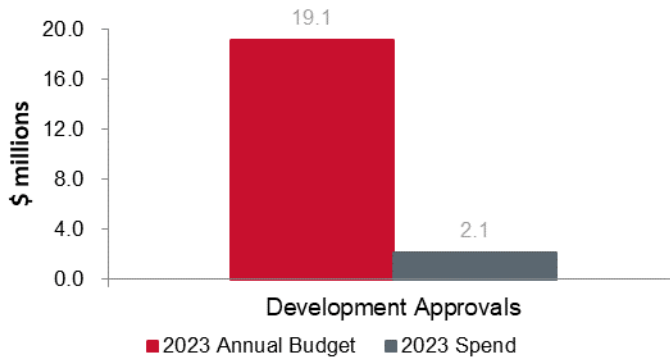
Net Operating Budget and Actuals as of December 31, 2023



Operating Budget Updates - 2023 net operating budget vs actuals:

Development Approvals has an unfavourable variance of \$0.2 million due to lower internal recoveries than budgeted in Public Spaces Delivery.

Capital Budget and Spend as of December 31, 2023



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

Development Approvals only spent 11.3 per cent of the 2023 approved capital budget. The Working Space Initiative project that would have used a significant amount of the budget was delayed due to Covid, the realignment, the unknown future of remote work and several workspace challenges. The construction phase of the project is expected to start in Q4 2024. The Service improvement project budget for Development Approvals was overspent as the team was able to accomplish more than expected.