

# 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

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### Highlights

To address high application volumes, Development Approvals hired several new staff at the start of the year to support the approvals process.

In 2023, Development Approvals initiated research to identify ways to improve its digital tools and systems which support the integration of urban design principles into its applications process.

Additionally, work commenced in the summer to verify and identify the correlation between quality urban design and equity indicators in the city which will help us to better communicate urban design benefits to developers, customers, and Calgarians.

A new project team was formed to deliver technological enhancements that support development engineering. Improvements planned include cleaning up underground utility inspection data, developing a tiering system for the inspections and approvals process, and building a system workflow for consultant construction completion certificates.

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### Challenges

As of June 2023, there has been a 28 per cent year-over-year increase in the number of Development Approvals Review Team (DART) pre-applications. While pre-applications add to workload volumes, they conversely and ideally contribute to better quality application submissions and thus more efficient reviews and improved timelines for formal applications.

Significant hiring occurred early in 2023 and we anticipate seeing improvements to workload capacity and performance starting in the second half of the year.



# Measuring Our Performance

## Legend

— Actuals

■ Expected Future Performance

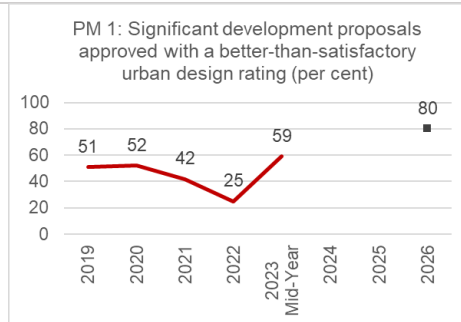
➡ Progressing as planned

⊖ Not progressing as planned

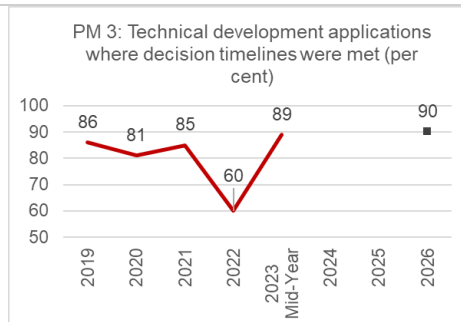
## Performance Measures

## Story behind the numbers

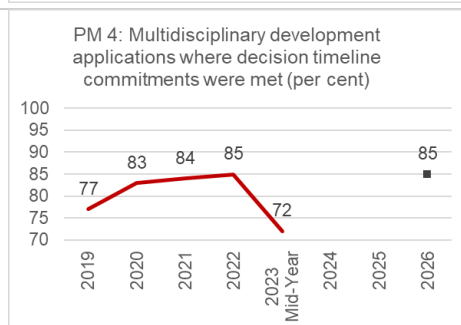
## Status



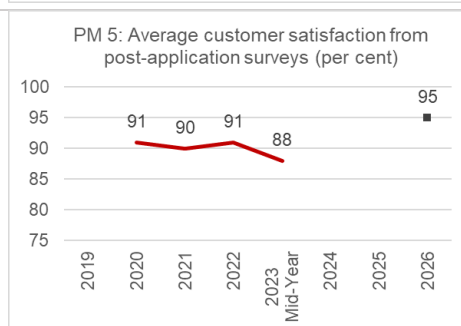
Despite improvements to the quality of submissions amongst repeat applicants, the low volume of significant files means each urban design rating has a sizeable impact on this measure. Technical enhancements and system improvements are currently being explored to support this performance measure. These changes are anticipated to require time upfront to develop, but once fully implemented and adopted, are expected to have a positive impact on this measure.



Performance of this measure has been stable over the first half of 2023, with 88% of files consistently meeting decision timelines in the last quarter. While technical application volumes remain high, they are beginning to return to pre-COVID levels, contributing to improved performance in 2023. Significant hiring at the end of 2022 and in 2023 is anticipated to continue improving performance of this measure, as new planners complete onboarding and familiarize themselves with the applications process.



In 2023, application volumes continue to be approximately 33% higher than they were at the same time in 2020, pre-COVID. This additional volume, including increased pre-applications, has increased the workload for Development Approvals staff. Despite significant hiring early in the year, new staff require time for onboarding and continued support from senior planners to develop the expertise necessary to manage these complex applications. We anticipate continued improvement to this performance measure as staff are onboarded throughout the remainder of the year.



Planning & Development Services (PDS) uses customer satisfaction surveys at various milestones of the application process to report on this performance measure. PDS is developing a proposal to gather additional data for better sampling, data analysis opportunities, and inclusion of customer feedback nuances. Additionally, PDS will be reviewing and revisiting its Customer Service Oversight Committee and identifying opportunities to better integrate customer feedback into service improvements.



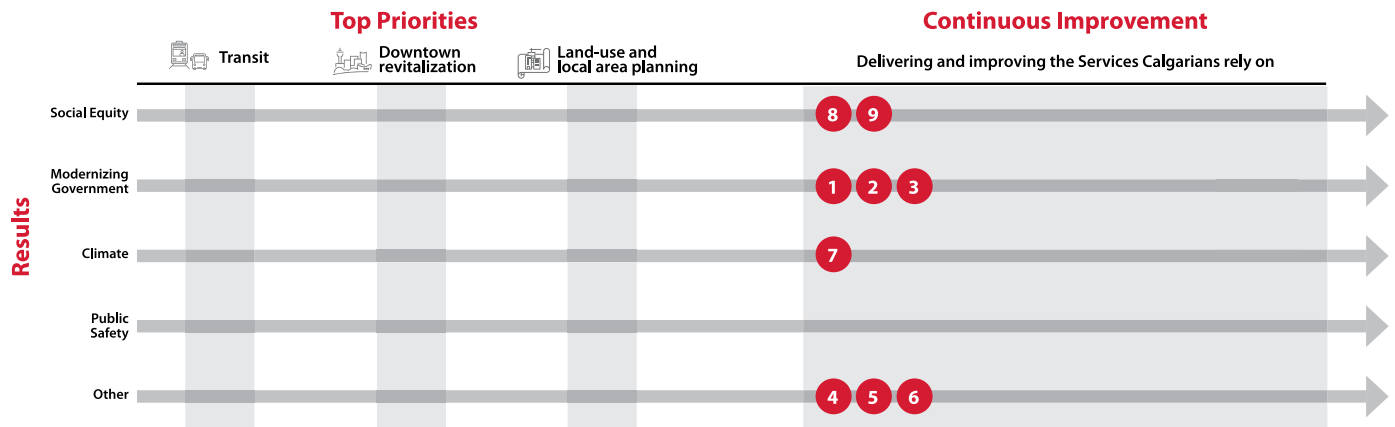
Note: Not all performance measures were reported on for this report. To see the 2022 data for performance measures, please visit [Service plans and budgets \(calgary.ca\)](https://www.calgary.ca/service-plans-and-budgets). Additional measures that will be included in the 2023 year-end performance report include:

PM 2: Civil engineering designs approved with one or no revisions (per cent)



# Progress on Service Delivery

## Alignment with Council Refined Priorities and Result Areas



### Legend



Completed



Progressing as planned








Not progressing as planned



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.	Development Approvals has worked to streamline the Development Permit application process for file managers by removing redundant steps, minimizing the number of clicks needed, and increasing the time savings for staff. Additionally, the Agile teams have also started to transition the erosion sediment control submission from a manual process to a digital process, consistent with other submission types. They are also identifying the internal processes required to enable the use of virtual reality as a planning tool to aid in the visualization of a development.	
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.	Time tracking is an important but burdensome tool for Development Approvals to monitor and make decisions based on staff capacity and work commitments. A new time-tracking pilot was started in June 2023 that minimizes impacts to staff while still gathering valuable data for decision-making. The Performance Analytics team has also started preparing for the service demand forecasting project, which aims to build a robust predictive model that will help inform performance management strategies, monthly metric reviews, and business planning activities based on forecasted application volumes.	
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.	Since the start of the year, Development Approvals has completed many small enhancements and ongoing maintenance and improvements to address bugs and other user interface issues. Additionally, we have added a fee calculator for land use outline plans and updated information for construction drawing submissions, land use redesignations, and outline plan applications on the calgary.ca/buildwithus webpage.	

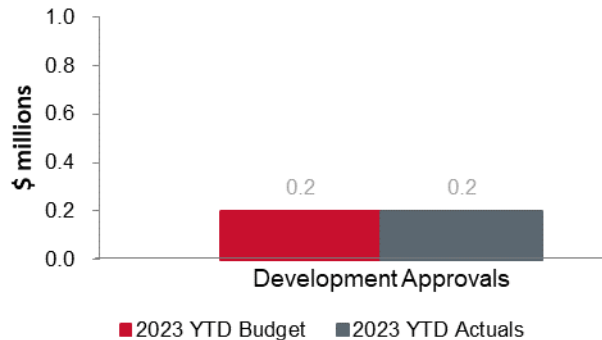
Initiative	Initiative Update	Status
4 Encourage high quality development aligned with the urban design principles identified in the Municipal Development Plan by reviewing, rating, and monitoring the urban design merits of applications. This includes regularly reviewing the evaluation criteria and current processes to ensure customers receive the appropriate feedback to improve quality where and when necessary.	The Urban Design team added two new members to help manage file volumes and explore the correlation between urban design qualities and equity indicators in the city. Additionally, a research spike was initiated with the technological enhancements program to identify opportunities to improve and efficiently integrate urban design feedback into the approvals system. The team has also updated its Urban Design website and internal tools to ensure accuracy and consistency of information is available for both external applicants and internal planners.	
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.	The Land Use Bylaw renewal, along with the Calgary Plan and Complete Streets Policy and Guide have been integrated into the City Building Program. The program charter has been finalized and program team has been largely established and will be onboarding a consultant shortly. The team is currently clarifying scope, timelines, and collaborating with other initiatives. The next steps in this initiative are being reassessed due to the need to address the housing affordability crisis. Council direction in September may alter the timeline and delivery of this work.	
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.	Development Approvals has not increased its 2023 fees from 2022, but will look to review all its fees in alignment with the User Fee and Subsidies Policy in 2024. Additionally, we will look to integrate some of the detailed recommendations generated from a 2022 review of the department's fees schedules by the consulting firm, KPMG. Work to align with the User Fee and Subsidies Policy and implement the recommendations from this review will begin in 2023 and continue into mid-cycle.	
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.	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.	
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).	The Indigenous Heat Mapping project aims to identify, collect, and map important Indigenous areas of significance in Calgary. In 2023, the project has completed its charter, identified its core project team, and has been approved to start building the GIS layer and populating the heat map. This initiative also includes activities spearheaded by the Planning & Development Services department, which includes the formation of the PDS Network for Indigenous Foundations for Truthing and Action and the launch of the Seasons of Reconciliation learning pilot project.	

	Initiative	Initiative Update	Status
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.	Planning & Development Services has formally recognized the importance of supporting its people as a foundational goal in our strategic blueprint document, Making Places for People. This means actively engaging and integrating staff feedback, expanding professional and personal development opportunities, and enabling health, wellness, and safety amongst staff. To support this initiative the People and Culture Oversight Committee has been re-envisioned as the People Experience Committee, with working groups to action focus areas like celebration & recognition and health & wellness.	



## Service Updates on Financial Performance

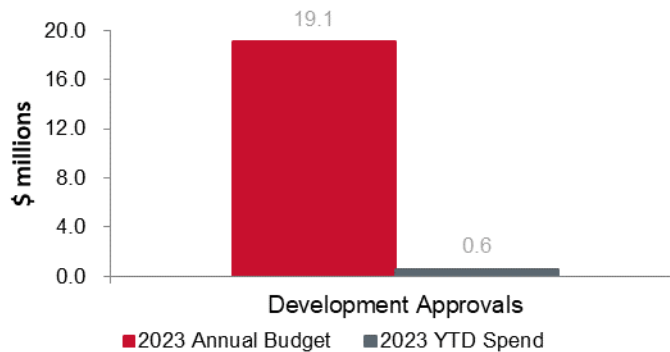
### Net Operating Budget and Actuals as of June 30, 2023



### Operating Budget Updates - 2023 YTD net operating budget vs actuals:

Development Approvals has no year-to-date operating budget variance for the reporting period as it is a self-supported service and any variances are transferred/withdrawn from the Planning & Development Sustainment Reserve.

### Capital Budget and Spend as of June 30, 2023



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

As of June, just over \$680K of the \$19M capital budget for 2023 has been spent. All capital projects are on track, except for the Working Space Initiatives which is on target with its new timeline:

- Most of 2023's budget was allocated to the Working Space Initiative, which has been met with delays due to COVID-19, Realignment, and the gradual return to the office over 2023. Planning is on track for the second half of 2023, with construction planned for 2024. The \$17M budget allocated to this initiative will be recast into future years.
- System process workflows were streamlined to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the application process.
- Development Approvals continued with systems improvements to address bugs, user interface issues and updated customer facing websites and online tools to improve customer experience.
- The Indigenous Cultural Heat Mapping project has identified its core project team, completed its charter, and has started to build out the GIS map layer.