

From: **"Mochrie, Paul"**

To: **"Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"**

Date: 2024-07-09 12:14:31 PM

Subject: Upcoming news release: Permitting Improvement Program and 3-3-3-1 progress (July 9, 2024)

Attachments: **PIP Progress Backgrounder July 2024.pdf**

Dear Mayor and Council,

Following this morning's presentation to Council, I am writing to inform you that the City will be issuing the below news release and attached backgrounder regarding progress made towards the 3-3-3-1 Permit Approval Framework through the Permitting Improvement Program. Please keep this news release embargoed until it shortly goes live from the City media email.

Maria will reply to this email with the relevant Vancouver.ca link and social media links, once these are live.

Best,
Paul

Paul Mochrie (he/him)
City Manager
City of Vancouver



The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the x̱məθḵʷəy̱əm (Musqueam), S̱kw̱w̱ú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

City of Vancouver
News Release
July 9, 2024

Residents and Businesses now obtaining permits faster and easier

Permits for home renovations issued 50% faster compared to 2023

Innovative digital solutions and streamlined regulations have significantly improved permitting times in Vancouver, particularly for renovations and new low-density housing, significantly advancing progress toward the City's 3-3-3-1 permit processing time targets.

"We're excited to see the real impact our efforts are having on Vancouver's permitting process," said Mayor Ken Sim. "These changes show our dedication to making things easier for our residents and businesses. By cutting red tape and speeding up approvals, we're creating an environment where everyone in Vancouver can grow and thrive."

Notable progress

In [a report](#) presented to Council today, City staff provided an update on progress made to [improve](#)

[permitting](#) timelines. This includes*:

- **Home renovations:** 50 percent faster median processing time, currently 23 days compared to 44 days in 2023.
- 63 percent of all home renovation permits are processed in 3 days, through the [Residential Renovation Fast Track](#) permit stream.
- **New detached and duplex homes:** 25 percent faster median processing time, currently 33 weeks compared to 43 weeks in 2023.
- **Laneway Homes:** 60 percent faster, currently 13 weeks compared to 32 weeks in 2023.

*based on medians

Supporting businesses

The City also made significant improvements to support businesses, including:

- Issuing [commercial renovation](#) permits 45 percent faster. Median processing time is currently 32 days compared to 56 days in 2022.
- Decreasing wait times for business license applications to be assigned for staff review by 50 percent. Despite high application volumes, the median wait period is three weeks compared to six weeks in 2023.
- Reducing business licensing categories by 83 per cent, from more than 500 to fewer than 100, minimizing the need for businesses to obtain multiple similar licenses.

“Guided by our commitment to transparency, predictability, accuracy, consistency and timeliness, we are transforming the permitting process to better serve our community,” said Corrie Okell, General Manager of Development, Building and Licensing. “Our goal is to ensure that the permitting process is not a barrier but facilitates development in Vancouver.”

New digital innovations and simplified processes

These significant improvements are driven by the implementation of new, advanced technologies and consistent actions to modernize processes. Key actions include:

- Introducing **PRET** (Project Requirements Exploration Tool) for laneway homes, an advanced online platform allowing applicants to explore and understand all project requirements for their property before starting their project.
- Expanding the scope of the **Fast Track Home Renovation** stream to include 63 percent of applications, so more projects are eligible for a permit, faster.
- Eliminating **sprinkler permit** requirements for simple repairs and replacements and providing a 24-hour fast track for 90 per cent of sprinkler permits. Since this program launched in January 2024, 730 sprinkler permits have been issued via the 24-hour fast track.

Next steps

Building on these successes, the City is committed continuing to make all permitting streams simpler and more efficient, and to extend permit application improvements to mid-rise and high-rise projects. Next steps include:

- Piloting **eComply**, a new digital tool that enables applicants to upload digital plans and review instantly for compliance with regulations.
- Expanding **PRET** for multiplexes permit applications to support better understanding of regulations and delivery of missing middle housing.
- Proposed updates to mechanical equipment space on rooftops, acoustic reports, and angle of daylight requirements to make it easier for larger-scale projects and enable faster delivery of more diverse housing types. Council will be considering these changes in the coming

- months.

For more information on Vancouver's permitting process improvements, please visit:

<https://vancouver.ca/home-property-development/permitting-improvement-program.aspx>

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Additional materials

- Backgrounder: [*Permitting Improvement Program: Key Initiatives from November 2020 to July 2024*](#)

Permitting Improvement Program

Key initiatives: November 2020 to July 2024

November 2020 to February 2021– [ePlan](#), the City’s electronic permit application system, launched for certain permits.

- Includes plumbing, occupant load, electrical and sprinkler permits, and review of design drawings by Certified Professionals.
- Significantly reduces costs related to printing, courier and drop-off wait times.
- Saves 23,000 large paper plans printed per year on trade permits.
- Reduces the need to scan and manually stamp approximately 11,500 large sheets per year.
- Streamlines review and collaboration through digital software.

March 2021 – Established the [City Manager’s Internal Development Application and Permitting Modernization Task Force](#) to address service levels and backlogs, identify opportunities and implement change.

April 2021 – [ePlan](#) expanded to include sewer and water connection permit.

June 9, 2021 – City Council approved first series of actions to reduce permitting and licensing backlogs, and the processing times of in-progress applications. This included:

- Temporarily non-enforcement of design guidelines for one- and two-family dwellings in select zoning district schedule
- Temporarily relaxing the Protection of Trees By-law.

October 14, 2021 – Piloting regulatory changes to support [commercial renovations](#) and small business, including:

- Treating subdividing a suite into two or more suites as a minor rather than a major renovation.
- Relaxing small suite definitions to allow occupant limits up to 100 people (previously 60).
- Exempting low risk changes of use from the requirement to submit a Development Permit as a means of reducing the permitting backlog and expediting the issuance of business licenses.
- Waiving change of occupancy upgrade requirements when changing between low-risk occupancy types as a means of reducing the permitting backlog and expediting the issuance of business licenses.
- Increase the threshold for meeting parking minimums from 200m² to 300m².

November 2021 – Created a [Residential Renovation Fast Track stream](#), resulting in the elimination of internal reviews and reduced processing times by six to eight weeks.

BACKGROUND



January 2022 – Implemented operational initiatives to streamline permitting.

- Combined the intake and plan review process for low density housing.
- Created a stand-alone laneway stream for laneway homes to clear the backlog.

March 2022 – Staff cleared a backlog of more than 500 applications for single detached homes, duplexes and laneway homes.

April 2022 – Implemented risk-based reviews at plan check for low-density housing applications, resulting in reduced number of items checked by 64% from 99 to 36.

August 2022 – Implemented enhanced communications with applications, improving the completeness of applications.

November 2022 – Released an updated, user-friendly Zoning and Development By-law to make it easier to find and use information. This includes:

- Created the [Zoning and Land Use Document Library](#).
- Added a [Digital Zoning Map](#).
- Simplifying land use regulations.
- Improving access to land use documents and information.
- Clarify zoning regulations, including amendments to building height, improved definitions and consistency of regulations, clarifying authorities, and consolidating administrative regulations.

February 2023 – Launched [ePlan](#) for all application types, allowing applicants to apply, submit and pay for a permit all online.

June 2023

- Eliminated more than 150 engineering conditions previously required for many complex development projects and expanded the use of risk-based reviews for remaining conditions.
- Expanded the scope of the [Residential Renovation Fast Track](#) stream to 20% of all renovation applications.
- Staffing levels returned to historical norms following higher than normal vacancies.
- City Council formally [adopted the 3-3-3-1 Permit Approval Framework](#), which sets out the following goals:
 - 3 days to approve home renovation permits (including renovations to accommodate mobility and accessibility-related challenges).
 - 3 weeks to approve single-family home and townhouse permits.
 - 3 months to approve permits for professionally designed multi-family and mid-rise projects where existing zoning is already in place.
 - 1 year to approve permits for a high-rise or large-scale project.

BACKGROUND



September 2023

- Launched the [Project Requirements Exploration Tool \(PRET\)](#) for laneway homes. Applicants can now use the digital tool to explore and understand regulations and requirements for locations throughout Vancouver. Eliminated the requirement for [rainwater management](#) plans and subsequent development permit conditions for mid to large scale (Part 3) buildings, speeding up a process that averaged 56 weeks of processing time.

November 2023

- City Council voted to [eliminate parking minimum requirements](#) for new developments from West End and Broadway, effective January 1, 2024.
- Consolidated nine residential zones into a single [Residential Inclusive zone \(R1-1\)](#), streamlining the process. Sites within the R1-1 zone can develop up to six strata units or eight secured rental units, on a standard lot.
- Created a dedicated multiplex team to process over 170 applications that have been received since Council approved the multiplex zoning. Under this system, the first multiplex permit was issued in less than six months – faster than the current average for single detached and duplex permits.
- Removed 86 (30%) of 287 land use policies and documents.

January 2024

- Launched a [Fast Track Sprinkler Permit stream](#), over 90% of sprinkler permits can now be issued within 24 hours. Permits no longer required for simple sprinkler repairs and simpler head or valve replacements.
- Eliminated the requirement for [rainwater management](#) plans and subsequent development permit conditions for mid to large scale (Part 3) buildings, speeding up a process that averaged 56 weeks of processing time.

February 2024 – Reducing requirements to submit traffic impact studies saving approximately 100 multi-family applications \$10,000 per year and saving significant staff review time

March 2024 – Eliminated, simplified or shifted to risk-based review, 70% (over 800) of 1,192 initial conditions required of applicants for all development types.

April 2024 – Began industry pilots for [eComply](#), an online design compliance check tool developed in partnership with Archistar that allows applicants to upload their designs and drawings and check if they meet the City's regulations.

May 2024 – Consolidated over 500 different [business licensing](#) categories to under 100. Reducing the need for similar business licenses and making it easier and faster to apply and get a license.

June 2024 – [Removed parking minimum requirements citywide](#), going beyond requirements under the Province's Transit-Oriented Areas and Small-Scale Multi-Unit Housing legislations.

Where are we now:

On July 9, 2024, City staff presented an update on current permitting timelines. This includes*:

- **Home renovations:** 50 per cent faster in year-to-date 2024 vs 2023, currently three to 23 days compared to 44 days in 2023
 - Three days for [Residential Renovation Fast Track](#) permits, which accounted for 63 per cent of home renovation permits in May 2024.
 - 23 days for all lower complexity home renovation permits.
- **New detached and duplex homes:** 25 per cent faster in year-to-date 2024 vs 2023, currently 33 weeks compared to 43 weeks in 2023.
- **Laneway Homes:** 60 per cent faster in year-to-date 2024 vs 2023, currently 13 weeks compared to 32 weeks in 2023.
- **Commercial Renovation Permits:** Issued permits 45 per cent faster. Currently 32 days compared to 56 days in 2022.
- **Business Licenses:** Decreasing wait times for business license applications to be assigned for staff review by 50 per cent. Despite high application volumes, the current assignment period is three weeks compared to six weeks in 2023.

*based on medians

Upcoming Actions:

Building on these successes, the City is committed continuing to make all permitting streams simpler and more efficient, and to extend permit application improvements to mid-rise and high-rise projects. Next steps include:

- Piloting new technologies to accelerate compliance, improve applicant understanding of regulations and reduce the need for revisions. This includes launching eComply, which is currently in industry piloting phase, for public use.
- Expanding PRET for multiplexes to support better understanding of regulations and delivery of missing middle housing.
- Proposing relaxation or removal of requirements related to mechanical equipment space on rooftops, acoustic reports, and angle of daylight. These changes will make the permitting process easier and more predictable for larger-scale projects and enable the faster delivery of more diverse housing. Staff are recommending these proposed changes be referred to public hearing.
- Continuing to simplify zoning regulations and development guidelines to provide more transparency and predictability for industry.

For more information about the City's Permitting Improvement Program, please visit:

<https://vancouver.ca/home-property-development/permitting-improvement-program.aspx>