From: "van Dyk, Donny"
To: "Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"
Date: 6/8/2026 2:29:16 PM
Subject: EMBARGOED UNTIL June 9: Upcoming news release: Permitting is getting easier in Vancouver with multiplex approvals now 50% faster
Attachments: Fact Sheet - DBL - June 09, 2026 - Permitting in Vancouver is Ge tting Easier.pdf
Memo to Mayor and Council - 3331 Progress Update - 2026-06-02.pd f

---

EMBARGOED UNTIL TUESDAY, JUNE 9 AT 11AM

Dear Mayor and Council,

The City will be issuing the below news release and attached fact sheet tomorrow, Tuesday, June 9, regarding the latest permitting and licensing improvements and processing times. The release highlights updated processing times which were shared with you through a memo on Tuesday, June 2 (attached for reference).

Please keep this news release and accompanying fact sheet embargoed until it goes live from the City's media email account on Tuesday, June 9 at 11AM.

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

Thanks,

Donny

Donny van Dyk (he/him)

City Manager

City of Vancouver

The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

News Release
City of Vancouver
June 9, 2026

Permitting is getting easier in Vancouver with multiplex approvals now 50% faster

New data shows it's getting easier to build housing, start a business or grow an existing one in Vancouver with faster, simpler and more predictable permitting and licensing.

"At a time when housing affordability remains one of the biggest challenges facing our city, we're taking action to remove barriers and speed up approvals," said Mayor Ken Sim. "Every day saved in the approval process helps deliver homes, jobs and community benefits sooner."

As Vancouver continues to grow, permitting plays an important role in supporting housing delivery, economic growth and complete neighbourhoods. Faster, simpler and more predictable approvals help housing projects and businesses move forward sooner, bringing homes, jobs and services to communities across Vancouver.

Highlights

- Home renovations: 92% of simple renovation permits are being issued within three days.
- Laneways: 50% faster from 200 days in 2022 to 100 days in 2025.
- Single detached : 36% faster permit processing times from 250 days in 2022 to 160 days in 2025.
- Multi-family and mid-rise homes : 46% faster processing time for development permits, from 18.1 months in 2023 to 9.8 months in 2025.
- Business licenses: 98% faster from 16 weeks in 2022 to 2 days in 2026.

Since 2022, the City has simplified regulations, removed unnecessary requirements, introduced new digital tools and streamlined internal review processes to reduce delays and improve customer experience. Key changes include:

- Streamlined Development Building Permit process for certain multiplexes, reducing processing times by 50%, making it faster to build new homes.
- Introduced a new low-density housing portal , allowing applicants to explore project requirements for their site, track the progress of their application and communicate with City staff all in one place, making the process simpler.

- Approximately 70% of potential development permit conditions were eliminated, simplified or shifted to risk-based reviews, reducing processing times and creating a more predictable process for applicants.

While permitting times have improved across many application types, the City recognizes that more work is needed to support housing delivery and economic growth. The City will continue making permitting easier so more housing projects and businesses can move forward, supporting complete neighbourhoods where people can live, work and access the services they need.

For more information on permitting improvements, visit vancouver.ca/permitting.

-30-

Additional information:

- Factsheet (attached)

Media contact:
City of Vancouver
Media@vancouver.ca

June 9, 2026

Permitting is Getting Easier
Fact Sheet

Overview

Since 2022, the City has been making permitting and licensing in Vancouver easier. Improvements are making it faster, simpler and more predictable to build new homes, create jobs and build complete neighbourhoods across Vancouver.

Below are highlights of key results and improvements.

It's getting faster

To renovate:

- 92% of simple renovation permits were processed within 3 days so far this year.
- 45% faster processing time for all home renovation permits in 2025 compared to 2022.

To build a home:

- 50% reduction in permit approval wait times for laneway homes, from 200 days in 2022 to 100 days in 2025.
- 36% faster permit processing times for new single detached homes, from 250 days in 2022 to 160 days in 2025.
- 46% faster processing time for development permits for multi-family and mid-rise homes (including multiplex homes) in 2025 (9.8 months) compared to 2023 (18.1 months).
- 50% decrease in permit processing time for multiplex projects as a result of the streamlined multiplex application stream.

To start a business:

- 40% faster processing time for commercial renovations permits in 2025 compared to 2022.
- 98% faster processing time for business licence applications, from 16 weeks in 2022 to 2 days in 2026.

- Removed development and building permit requirements for straightforward commercial changes of use for five common business types, saving businesses 8–12 weeks in processing time.

It's getting simpler

- Approximately 70% of potential development permit conditions were eliminated, simplified, or shifted to risk-based reviews.
- Removed outdated submission requirements, such as acoustical reports, traffic demand management (TDM) plans and traffic impact studies, resulting in reduced costs for applicants and quicker processing times.
- 95% reduction in review time (from 56 weeks down to 3 weeks) for complex rainwater management plans by shifting the process from the development permit stage to the Vancouver Building By-law building permit stage.
- 75% of Engineering Services sewer reviews eliminated by streamlining sewer capacity reviews.
- 64% of compliance items removed from plan reviews by adopting a risk-based approach.
- Expanded use of City-initiated rezonings is reducing reliance on site-specific rezonings, cutting up to 12 months from overall project timelines.

It's getting more predictable

- Digital application portal: Allows applicants to explore their projects, save their work and apply when they are ready, communicate with City staff directly and track their application progress all in one place.
- Digital permit exploration tool: Allows applicants to research and understand all regulations and requirements associated with their site, providing clarity and guidance to applicants before they get started with the permit application process.

For more information about how the City is working to make permitting and licensing in Vancouver easier, please visit: www.vancouver.ca/permitting.

CITY OF VANCOUVER

OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER
Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager

MEMORANDUM

June 2, 2026

TO: Mayor and Council

CC: City Leadership Team
Donny van Dyk, City Manager
Jason Twa, City Clerk
Mellisa Morphy, Acting Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office

FROM: Karen Levitt
Deputy City Manager

SUBJECT: 3331 Update: Permitting and Licensing Process Improvements, 2022 to 2026

RTS #: N/A

Purpose

This memo provides an update to Council concerning achievements since 2022 and work underway to improve the City's permitting and licensing processes and customer experience. The last update on this topic was delivered to Council in December 2025.

Background

Staff initiated work to improve the City's permitting and licencing processes and customer experience in 2021, and in June 2023 Council adopted the "3331 Permit Approval Framework," which established the following targets:

- **Target A. Home renovations.** Three days to approve home renovation permits
- **Target B. Detached homes.** Three weeks to approve single-family home and townhouse permits
- **Target C. Multi-family and mid-rise homes.** Three months to approve permits for professionally designed multi-family and mid-rise projects where existing zoning is already in place
- **Target D. Highrise and largescale projects.** One year to approve permits for a high-rise or large-scale project

2026 BC's Top Employers

Progress to date

Since this work started, substantial progress has been to address the City's various permitting backlogs, and to make permitting simpler, easier and faster. Across all time-to-issue metrics pertaining to the City's permitting issuance are significantly faster now than they were in 2022.

A substantial reduction in the number of required regulations, studies, and reports have made permitting processes simpler, and a wide range of digital and operational improvements have made the application process easier.

While important gains have been achieved there is still much more work to be done, and focused cross-departmental permitting improvement efforts are continuing.

Customer feedback

The City has received substantial positive feedback from permitting and licensing applicants concerning improved processing times and customer experience, with a couple of examples shared below.

- *"Thank you for giving me the opportunity to recognize several members of the City's team that have been exceptionally helpful and responsive over the past couple of years. My Company just completed a multi-family infill under the West End Community Plan. My consultants did most of the work, but I did step in from time to time and engaged City staff to deal with some narrow permitting and development services issues. Corrie Okell was my initial point of contact and on one occasion she referred my matter to [City staff members].*

  On each occasion those team members were unfailingly responsive, helpful, knowledgeable, and resolved several of my time- sensitive permitting and covenant issues. I am very grateful to those team members for their help and guidance and the professional manner with which my concerns were resolved."

  — Jeff Hayes, LLM, Lantern Properties Ltd

- *"I am genuinely pleased and impressed with the City of Vancouver's performance in issuing building permits. The well-organized process and swift turnaround have delivered significant financial and personal benefits. Their ability to minimize delays and lower carrying costs enables projects to progress smoothly — allowing builders to provide homes to families in a timely and meaningful way."*

  — Haute Living Homes

3331 permit application processing targets

The following table provides an overview of the City's progress against the 3331 targets since 2022.

TABLE 1. PROGRESS AGAINST 3331 PERMITTING TARGETS, 2022 TO 2026

Target A. Home renovations TARGET = 3 DAYS	· In 2026 YTD, 92% of simple renovation permits are meeting target (109/118 applications)
Target B. Detached homes TARGET = 3 WEEKS	· *Laneway houses*: Processing times cut in half, from ~ 200 days in 2022 to ~ 100 days in 2025, currently 21 out of a total of 258 applications meeting the 3-week target in 2025 · *New detached homes, excluding laneway houses*: Permits issued 36% faster in 2025 vs 2022, from a median 250 days to 160 days
Target C. Multi-family and mid-rise projects TARGET = 3 MONTHS	· *Multi-family and mid-rise (including multiplex)*: Development permits issued 46% faster in 2025 vs 2023, with median time to process a development permit having decreased from 18.1 months to 9.8 months · *Multi-family and mid-rise (excluding multiplex):* Removing multiplexes (which are processing more quickly than others in this category), development permit issued 14% faster in 2025 vs 2023, with median time to process a development permit having decreased from18.1 to 15.6 months · For Target C metrics, the reductions in processing times are attributable primarily to the City processing time (as opposed to applicants' processing time)
Target D. Highrise and largescale projects TARGET = 1 YEAR	· As permit application volumes for high-rise and largescale projects are significantly lower than those for Targets A, B and C, and include a set of projects with a wider range of complexities, comparisons of processing time metrics among various periods of time are less meaningful/reliable than they are for the other three targets · That said, there has been a downward trend in processing times for these projects, with median processing time approximately 10% lower in 2025 vs 2023
Non-3331 metrics	· *Commercial renovations*: Permits issued 40% faster in 2025 vs 2022 · *Business licenses*: Currently processed in 2 days vs 16 weeks in 2022 (98% improvement)

Customer experience, 2022 vs 2026

The following three tables compare the customer's experience applying for a permit today versus a few years ago, demonstrating the substantial progress that has been made across several permitting streams.

TABLE 2. HOME RENOVATION PERMITTING EXPERIENCE (3331 TARGET A)

2022	TODAY
· **No distinction between simple and complex applications.** Simple renovations such as a bathroom remodel and highly complex structural overhauls all went into the same queue · **Long processing times.** Standard home renovation permit took 8 to 9 weeks to process, even for a simple bathroom remodel · **Expensive upgrade triggers.** Applicants frequently apprised of surprise and disproportionate upgrade triggers, e.g., a minor renovation could force a $30,000 sewer and water connection upgrade, mandatory energy upgrades and sprinkler installation · **Expensive ancillary requirements.** Homeowners performing small renovations were required to acquire a street-use permit and associated insurance naming the City as an insured party	· **Simple applications fast-tracked.** Dedicated queue to fast-track simple renovations, skipping internal reviews entirely and evaluated directly by inspectors in the field · **20x faster processing times.** Simple renovation permits issued in under 3 days (City's median processing time, excluding applicants' processing time), versus 60 days in 2022 · **Meaningful cost savings.** Projects valued at under $255,000 are exempt from all upgrade triggers, street use permits and separate insurance requirements

TABLE 3. DETACHED HOMES PERMITTING EXPERIENCE (3331 TARGET B)

2022	TODAY
· **Self-directed navigation of complex documents.** Applicants required to navigate a complex web of policy documents and checklists to determine which permits and documents were required, upload documents into an outdated pdf-based system, and communicate via disjointed email chains · **High rejection rate.** Over 40% of applications were rejected due to errors in the application or missing information that wasn't clearly requested upfront or errors in the application · **Long processing times**. Took on average 200 days to process a permit application for a laneway home, and 250 days for a detached home	· **Simplified digital concierge process.** Applications are received through a digital portal, in which applicants enter their address, and are instantly provided with verified allowed housing types (e.g., multiplex, laneway) · **Up-front list of permit requirements and fee estimates**. Portal then generates a custom project plan based on a series of questions, that includes exact permit requirements and upfront fee estimates · **Substantially faster processing times**. Laneway applications are processed in 100 days (median combined City and applicant time) and detached homes in 160 days (50% and 36% improvements, respectively)

TABLE 4. MULTI-FAMILY, MID-RISE AND HIGH RISE PERMITTING EXPERIENCE (3331 TARGETS C/D)

2022	TODAY
· **Large number of review groups.** A standard multi-family development permit involved up to 45 different process reviewers across the City organisation · **Enormous number of potential conditions**. Reviewers relied on a list of almost 1,200 possible conditions that, at times, would conflict with each other · **Expensive ancillary requirements.** Applicants required to submit costly studies and reports that in some cases were outdated and/or onerous to complete · **Prior-to letter issued in 16 weeks.** The "prior-to-letter" that is issued to indicate project approval with a set of conditions took an average of 16 weeks to issue, starting at complete application intake (against a target of 12 weeks)	· **Eliminated 1/3 of all conditions.** 35% of all development permit conditions eliminated · **Simplified most of remaining conditions**. Two-thirds of the remaining development permit conditions substantially simplified · **Meaningful cost savings.** Eliminated requirements for several studies and reports without impacting community fit and liveability · **Prior-to letter issued in 12 weeks.** Prior-to-letter issued in under 12 weeks, 26% faster than in 2022

Other notable permitting and licensing improvements

Alongside the specified 3331 target areas addressed above, the City has implemented several other meaningful improvements to permitting and licensing, listed below.

- **Sprinkler permit auto-issuance.** The City shifted sprinkler permit issuance to a risk-based approach that relies on industry professionals to design sprinkler systems, as compared to the previous approach in which City staff reviewed applications and inspected installations. This modernised approach now allows over 90% of sprinkler permits to be auto-issued within 24 hours.
- **Deregulated simple commercial use changes of use.** Abolished the requirement for property owners/tenants to secure development and building permits for straightforward commercial use changes, instantly saving small businesses 8 to 12 weeks of processing time.
    - Initially launched as a pilot, the program processed over 150 applications in its first year – triple the projected volume – revealing significant pent-up demand for this.
    - This model has also been adapted to create the Downtown Eastside Temporary Occupancy Permit Pilot (DTES TOPP), to rapidly activate vacant storefronts in this neighbourhood.
    - This deregulation for all straightforward commercial changes of use and for vacant storefronts in the DTES have now been transitioned from pilot projects to standing City policy.

- **Online booking for in-person development/building consultations.** The City established an online booking system for in-person consultations at the Development and Buildings Service Centre, thereby creating a fourth support channel alongside existing digital, phone, and email access. Allowing residents and professionals to resolve complex zoning and building questions through direct staff contact, has made the customer's permitting journey significantly easier, faster, and user-friendly.
- **Business Licensing.** Consolidated 600 license categories down to 92 and digitised the end-to-end process, cutting wait times from 16 weeks to 2 days.

Staff remain focused on improving the City's land use permitting and regulation processes, and look forward to continuing to update Council on achievements and outcomes as more progress is made.

All the best,



Karen Levitt
Deputy City Manager
| karen.levitt@vancouver.ca

APPENDIX A
KEY PERMITTING IMPROVEMENT ENABLERS

Improvement initiatives specifically related to Target A: Home renovations

1. **Residential renovation fast track.** Creating a dedicated queue for simple projects that skipped all internal reviews enabled 3-day permit processing**.**
2. **Increased upgrade trigger thresholds.** Council raised the construction value threshold that triggers upgrades (sewer, water connection, sprinkler, and energy) from $95,000 to $250,000. This threshold is now indexed to inflation (e.g., $255,000 in 2025) to prevent smaller projects from being forced into higher-complexity queues.
3. **Elimination of street use permits and insurance requirements.** For renovations under $250,000 that do not require placing a temporary dumpster on a City street, the City eliminated the requirement for a street use permit and separate City-named insurance, removing a major administrative bottleneck and lowering applicants' costs.

Improvement initiatives specifically related to Target B. Detached homes

1. **Online low-density housing portal.** Launched the City's low-density online housing portal in Q4-2025, replacing a fragmented, email-based communication application process with a transparent, guided digital workflow. By automating manual steps like document uploads and centralizing status tracking, the portal ensures higher-quality application submissions, reduces back-and-forth clarification cycles, and ultimately accelerates review times.
2. **Service level agreements.** Strict turnaround timelines established for internal review groups (e.g., within Engineering Services), holding teams accountable to turnaround targets and ultimately reducing specific review times by up to 60%.
3. **R1-1 zoning consolidation.** Consolidated nine separate single-family zones into a single R1-1 zone, radically simplifying regulations and reducing the time staff spend confirming height and design compliance.
4. **Risk-based plan checking.** Plan reviews streamlined by moving to a risk-based approach, reducing the number of compliance items staff checked by 64%, from 99 to 36.
5. **Combined salvage/abatement and demolition permits.** The previously sequential and redundant salvage/abatement permit, and demolition permit were combined into one, saving applicants 10-20 days of waiting time.

Improvements initiatives specifically related to Target C. Multi-family and mid-rise homes and Target D. Highrise and largescale projects

1. **Development permit conditions simplification.** Following a comprehensive review of the City's prior-to conditions library, approximately 70% of potential development permit conditions were either eliminated, simplified, or shifted to risk-based reviews.
2. **Elimination of onerous/outdated requirements.** Following a comprehensive review of the development approval process, the City removed several mandatory studies, reports, and

plans that added time and cost without driving value. The most significant eliminations include:

- **Eliminated acoustical reports.** Removed the outdated requirement for acoustical reports at the development permit stage, saving applicants thousands in consulting fees.
- **Eliminated traffic demand management plans.** Eliminated substantial traffic demand management plan requirements, thereby shortening application review times and reducing costs by up to $4,300 per dwelling unit.
- **Removed community benefit agreements.** Removed the community benefits agreement requirement on targeted projects, eliminating a substantial hurdle that in some cases stalled housing delivery and increased costs.
- **Eliminated traffic impact studies.** Eliminated the need for traffic impact studies during the development permit application phase, saving applicants an average of $10,000 per project and weeks of City review time.

3. **Rainwater management shift to the VBBL.** Eliminated the requirement for complex rainwater management plans to be submitted at the development permit stage, and shifted downstream to the Vancouver Building By-law (VBBL) building permit stage. The result of this that a process that averaged 56 weeks to process has been replaced with one that takes roughly 3 weeks.
4. **Streamlined sewer capacity reviews.** A new rules-based policy introduced "no review" and "low impact" thresholds for small/mid-scale projects, eliminating costly off-site upgrades and cutting the number of Engineering Services reviews by roughly 75%.
5. **Pre-zoning to bypass rezoning.** Leveraging new provincial legislation and Vancouver Charter changes, for projects proposing to increase zoning, the City is transitioning away from site-specific, negotiated rezonings, in favour of proactive pre-zoning, which removes the discretionary rezoning phase entirely, and reduces total project timelines by approximately 12 months.

<u>General improvements, customer experience</u>

1. **Project Requirements Exploration Tool (PRET).** A digital self-serve portal that allowed applicants to easily explore project feasibility, zoning requirements, and fee estimates upfront, thereby dramatically improving the quality and completeness of incoming applications.
2. **Electronic plans submission (E-plan).** Have now fully transitioned to digital application submissions for all permit types. Among the many benefits of this evolution, it is estimated that the elimination of paper-based applications is saving the building industry over $1 million annually in printing costs.
3. **Development and Building Services Centre pre-application support.** Restructured the Development and Building Services Centre operations to allow/encourage applicants to seek staff advice and review prior to officially submitting their application, resulting in a reduced the rate of incomplete submissions.

4. **Digital conditions library.** Established a centralised, automated digital conditions library to standardize requirements imposed by the City for development permit applications, eliminating hours of manual processing time per application, and preventing the inclusion of conflicting policy requirements imposed by separate City review groups.

5. **Consolidated application deficiency communications:** Applicants now receive a single deficiency letter via a single communication channel that contains consolidated feedback concerning what items must be rectified before a building permit is granted, replacing a series of disjointed deficiency notices delivered individually from various City departments.

6. **Scope-limited reviews.** Stopped penalizing applicants for previously unpermitted work; inspectors now only review the specific scope of the proposed renovation.

General improvements, streamlined processes

1. **Combined multiplex permitting.** Created a concurrent development permit/building permit application stream for multiplex developments, with these permits processed by a dedicated review team. This has resulted in processing times being approximately halved for these applications.

2. **Green demolition streamlining:** By removing the green demolition permit from the permitting workflow, applicants save approximately 2 weeks of processing time, with no impact to the policy objective of diverting waste.

3. **Key plan requirement realignment.** Shifted the requirement for submission of the "key plan" – a detailed schematic of utility connections – from the early stages of the permitting process to the later Building Permit stage, better aligning with when applicants have the appropriate level of architectural detail finalised.

4. **Oakridge Tenant Improvement Pilot (TIPs).** Developed and launched a pilot process to efficiently handle a very concentrated high-volume influx of approximately 100 tenant improvement permits for the Oakridge development.

5. **Streamlined storage space renovations.** Zoning and Development Bylaws have been amended to allow storage spaces in multi-unit buildings to be renovated without requiring applicants to seek lengthy approvals from the City's Board of Variance.

General improvements, policies/regulations

1. **Elimination of redundant design guidelines and policies.** Through a focused policy rationalisation project systematically identified and proposed the repeal of 73 outdated Council-approved design guidelines and policies, plus repealed an incremental ten policies through the "missing middle" initiative. These reductions collectively represent a 28% reduction in the number of policies related to land use permitting, resulting in a significant decrease in time staff spends on reviewing applications.

2. **Elimination horizontal angle of daylight regulations.** Removed the highly complex "horizontal angle of daylight" regulation for multi-family developments across all zoning district schedules that was intended to ensure that all rooms had a minimum specified amount of daily sunlight. This was replaced with a straightforward, universal requirement

that all bedrooms and living rooms simply include a window on an exterior wall. By eliminating the need for intricate daylighting calculations and the subsequent subjective design negotiations, the review process for multi-family developments has been simplified and sped up.

3. **MIRHPP housing simplification.** Deleted outdated and restrictive unit mix conditions for the Moderate Income Rental Housing Pilot Program (MIRHPP) projects in order to expedite affordable housing delivery.

Digital enablement of permit and license processing

1. **eComply pilot project.** Many of the permitting and licensing process improvements the City has delivered over the past four years that are detailed in this appendix have been enabled by digital solutions.
    - Staff described to Council in past updates a pilot project with the software provider Archistar for a public-facing tool called eComply, that provided real-time online automated plan checking for applicants.
    - After an evaluation of this pilot project, a decision has been made to not renew this contract with Archistar, and redirect resources to initiatives that demonstrate a stronger, more immediate return on investment with respect to customer experience and process efficiencies/effectiveness.
    - These include the digital application portal, creating digital rules and the Permit Requirements Exploration Tool (PRET).