

Development Review Division - Implementation Status Update and Accomplishments To-Date

Date: July 2, 2025

To: Executive Committee

From: Executive Director, Development Review

Wards: All

SUMMARY

In 2024, the City of Toronto established the Development Review Division to lead a transformational shift in how the City delivers development review services. As part of the Development and Growth Service Area, the Division consolidates over 400 staff from multiple divisions into a single, multidisciplinary team. This integrated model reflects a bold commitment to building a more modern, efficient, and people-centred system that supports good city-building outcomes more effectively.

This foundational shift has already delivered tangible results: enhanced customer service, streamlined review processes, and stronger organizational capacity. The Division is now positioned to better respond to the demands of a growing city and to accelerate the delivery of housing and infrastructure that supports vibrant, complete communities.

In July 2024, City Council adopted Item [EX16.20](#) and directed staff to report back to Executive Committee in July 2025 on implementation, performance, and emerging challenges. This report responds to that request and introduces the Division's first Strategic Plan (2025–2028) - a values-driven roadmap rooted in continuous improvement, people-centred urban growth, and strengthened partnerships.

The need for this transformation is urgent. In 2024 alone, Toronto welcomed over 140,000 new residents, and approved more than 46,000 residential units. Each year, the City receives over 450 new development applications and 1,200 resubmissions—more than any other Canadian municipality. Growth is accelerating, and so must the systems that shape it.

To meet this demand, the Division has taken bold action: improving internal structures, aligning processes, and enhancing interdivisional coordination. This has helped reduce delays and ensure that as development increases in scale and complexity, it is matched by timely delivery of infrastructure and services that reflect complete communities principles.

Since its launch, the Division has improved statutory review timelines for complex applications (including combined Official Plan Amendment and Zoning By-law Amendment, Zoning By-law Amendment and Site Plan Control) by over 80% compared to the previous five-year average. These timelines reflect the part of the process the City is directly accountable for and serve as a key metric of transparency and performance. Feedback from applicants confirms these improvements are being felt on the ground, through faster, more coordinated and predictable service.

To further advance city-building objectives, the Division recently expanded its Priority Development Review Stream (PDRS). The expanded stream now includes a “concierge-style” service to accelerate projects ready to begin construction within 12 to 24 months. This includes student housing, long-term care homes, and manufacturing facilities, in addition to affordable and supportive housing, which remains a key priority.

The Division has also invested in a suite of new and enhanced digital tools to improve workflows, transparency, and the applicant experience. These include:

- Updates to the Application Submission Tool, enabling applicants to submit development applications online through a more intuitive interface; and
- A new File Circulation Tool, allowing staff across teams to track and manage comments as they review applications in a centralized and streamlined system.

These innovations are enabling faster, clearer, and more coordinated review processes and are laying the foundation for a modern approach to development review.

Another key achievement in this first year is the development of the Division’s first Strategic Plan (the “Plan”), included as **Attachment 1**. The Plan was shaped by strong organizational priorities and informed by robust engagement, including consultation with industry partners and input from almost 300 staff across the Division. The Plan defines a shared vision, mission, and values, and sets the direction for implementation through 2028.

The Plan is anchored by four strategic priorities:

- **Investing in people and partnerships** - Focused on fostering a strong, values-based culture; enhancing internal staff capacity and collaboration; and strengthening relationships with applicants and the broader development industry, communities, including Indigenous and equity-deserving communities, elected officials and other orders of government.
- **Streamlining processes** - Simplifying and aligning review processes to improve consistency, efficiency, and create a more transparent and predictable experience for applicants.
- **Modernizing tools and technology** - Leveraging new digital tools and platforms to support more efficient workflows, enhance collaboration, and increase transparency for applicants and the public.
- **Strengthening transparency and accountability** - Enhancing performance measurement, public reporting, and client feedback mechanisms to track progress, strengthen public trust, and support continuous improvement.

Together, these priorities will enable the Division to fulfill its mission:

“We advance world-class city-building by delivering a development review service that is innovative, collaborative, customer-focused, transparent and efficient.”

And they are driven by a bold, forward-looking vision:

“Shaping the future of Toronto - today. We shape development in Toronto so that current and future generations can thrive.”

As Toronto continues to face complex and interconnected challenges - ranging from housing affordability to climate resilience - the need for a modern, accountable, and people-centred development review system has never been greater. This Plan is a direct response to that urgency. It positions the Development Review Division, and City of Toronto as a whole, to lead with purpose, deliver with integrity, and build a more equitable, inclusive and thriving city for all.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Director, Development Review recommends that:

1. The Executive Committee receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial implications resulting from the recommendations included in this report.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the information as presented in the Financial Impact Section.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The Toronto Official Plan recognizes the need to for land-use decisions to advance equity and for outcomes of policies and actions are monitored and measured. Recent amendments to the Official Plan – Chapter One – strengthen and broaden the equity lens applied to all City initiatives and support future projects in delivering positive and meaningful outcomes for all Torontonians. The vision sets out actionable goals for Toronto to become a city of complete communities with equitable access to services and amenities, to be sustainable and climate resilient, and to be the most inclusive city in the world.

The HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan envisions a city in which all residents have equal opportunity to develop to their full potential. It is centred on a human rights-based approach to housing, which recognizes that housing is essential to the inherent dignity and well-being of a person and to building healthy, inclusive and sustainable

communities. The City of Toronto's existing housing strategies and plans seek to improve housing outcomes for a range of residents and to support equity and climate resilience.

Access to good quality, safe, affordable housing within complete communities is an important determinant of health and improves the social and economic status of an individual. Good quality, affordable housing is also the cornerstone of vibrant, healthy neighbourhoods and supports the environmental and economic health of the city, region and country.

DECISION HISTORY

On July 24-25, 2024, City Council adopted EX16.20, requesting the Deputy City Manager, Development and Growth Services to report to the July 2025 meeting of the Executive Committee to provide an update on implementation and performance of, and challenges facing the Development Review Division.

[Agenda Item History - 2024.EX16.20](#)

COMMENTS

Implementation of the Organizational Structure

Background

In September 2019, City Council adopted the End-to-End Review of the Development Review Process final report, which recommended a new operating model for development application review and approval through transformation of the organizational structure and process and technology improvements. Implementation of operating model changes began in March 2020.

In June 2023, to accelerate operating model transformation in response to the housing crisis, and successive changes to provincial legislation (including Bill 109, Bill 23, Bill 97 and Bill 185), the City established a new centralized service area for all growth-related services and functions. As part of this change, the new Development Review Division was established, and an Executive Director was appointed in April 2024.

In July 2024, the Community Planning and Business Performance and Standards teams from City Planning moved to Development Review. The former Development Engineering and Development Planning and Review teams from Engineering and Construction Services, and Transportation Services respectively, were then moved to Development Review in September 2024. To enable these organizational changes, City Council delegated development review-related authorities to the Executive Director, Development Review, further reinforced through partnership agreements signed between the respective divisions.

Organizational Transformation

The formation of the Development Review Division occurred under considerable pressure to maintain business continuity in the review of development applications, while responding to major legislative and policy change, rising construction costs and market volatility. The immediate priority was to ensure uninterrupted delivery of core services, while also addressing stakeholder concerns by urgently implementing streamlined processes and new approaches to issues management and customer service.

Structural Integration

The development review service is delivered by district-based teams of professional planners and engineers working together and with staff from other City Divisions to review each development application and align feedback and recommendations. Affordable housing and other City-building projects are prioritized for review by a centralized team working City-wide and in close collaboration with the City's Housing Secretariat.

Two core teams have recently been restructured to focus on strengthening the Division's operating model and overall performance:

- **The Strategy and Client Relations team** leads quality assurance and strategic partnerships by facilitating communication and collaboration across subject matter expert teams, including partner divisions, elected officials and external clients. The focus is to ensure high-quality customer service and continuous improvement of the City's development review service.
- **The Development Process and Technology team** leads the development, implementation and continuous improvement of standard operating procedures, tools and technology that optimize system capacity while ensuring the development review process conforms to Provincial legislation and City policies and standards. The team's work is guided by a commitment to value-for-money and service excellence.

Further organizational changes may be implemented to ensure continuous improvement of the development review service and in response to dynamic legislative, policy and market environments.

Development Process Improvements To-Date

Achieving expedited development application review timelines relies on a development review process supported by clear standard operating procedures and modern technology. Since April 2024, Development Review has advanced continuous improvement initiatives to:

- Implement changing provincial legislation by streamlining development review processes, delegating approval authority and clarifying requirements.

- Establish District-based review teams to manage pre-application consultation, new applications and issues resolution at the management level.
- Update application support materials to provide clear guidance to both applicants and staff regarding complete application requirements.
- Optimize application circulation processes to ensure review of complete applications and improve commenting timelines.
- Streamline and simplify Plan of Condominium approvals, resulting in reduced review timelines and cost for applicants.

Technology and Innovation To-Date

Recognizing the importance of technology in delivering efficient and accessible services, the Division has continued to invest in digital tools. These initiatives are helping to modernize service delivery and integration, and support more informed decision-making across the development review process. Key technology improvements include:

- Implemented approximately **50 enhancement projects** per year to the City's backend workflow management software (i.e., IBMS), to support improved file management practices.
- **The Application Submission Tool (AST)** has been deployed and allows applicants to submit their development applications online using an intuitive interface with clear instructions and steps to assist with their application. The AST replaces previous outdated submission methods where applicants sent their applications via email or file transfer. Further enhancement to the AST, to support re-submissions, will roll-out in Q3 2025.
- **The Application Information Centre (AIC)** is a public-facing online tool that allows the public to view development applications in the city via a map-based website. The AIC was upgraded with a new interface and additional features enhancing the user experience for applicants and the public.
- **The File Circulation Tool (FCT)** is being piloted and integrated with the City's IBMS backend system. It launched in March 2025 and is being used by City staff to manage the pre-application consultation process. The FCT incorporates markup, commenting and collaboration features in one system providing staff with new technology and increased efficiencies to conduct their reviews.

Operational Performance Improvements To-date

In 2024 and early 2025, Development Review reported quarterly to the Planning and Housing Committee (PHC) on development review timelines metrics. Quarterly reports include the following:

- Average timeline to complete the Pre-Application Consultation Process;
- Average timeline to reach a decision on a Zoning By-law Application;
- Average timeline to reach a decision on a combined Official Plan Amendment/Zoning By-law Application; and
- Average timeline to approve a Site Plan Application.

In addition to a description of the metrics listed above, the quarterly reports provide context on how ongoing improvements to the development review process impact application review timelines in the medium and long term. All quarterly reports have shown improved statutory review timelines for development applications by over 80% for all major development application types (including combined Official Plan Amendment and Zoning By-law Amendment, Zoning By-law Amendment and Site Plan Control applications) compared to the previous five-year average.

Statutory timelines most accurately reflect the part of the process for which the City is accountable. Reporting on statutory timelines supports transparent performance measurement for the development review service. In addition to performance metrics, the Division continues to receive positive feedback from applicants who are actively engaged in the development review process.

Development review timeline metrics are now publicly available on the [Toronto Housing Data Hub](#).

A priority over the next year is the development of a key performance indicator (KPI) framework and implementation plan to harmonize KPIs across Development Review to provide an end-to-end view of performance. The framework will align with the City's ongoing transformation of its development-related services and reflect the mandate of the Division as well as current legislative and Council-directed timelines. Development Review will measure performance in the following ways:

- The contribution of the development application review service to the City's corporate strategic objectives (e.g., maintaining and creating housing that is affordable, keeping Toronto moving).
- The delivery time of a development application review decision to an applicant.
- The steps, activities, and subprocesses that contribute to the delivery of a development application review decision.

Development Review's First Strategic Plan (2025-2028)

The Development Review Division took a measured approach to developing its first Strategic Plan, drawing on a range of internal and external inputs to guide the process. In addition to extensive staff engagement, the plan was shaped by key stakeholder perspectives and broader organizational priorities. This ensured the plan not only reflects the values and insights of those delivering the services, but also aligns with the expectations of the communities we serve and the City's strategic and corporate objectives. The result is a plan grounded in meaningful engagement and informed by a diversity of voices.

This Strategic Plan supports the overall mandate of City's Development and Growth Service Area which brings together Development Review, City Planning, Toronto Building, the Housing Secretariat and a newly created Housing Development Office to improve the end-to-end planning and faster delivery of housing at scale. Additionally, the plan aligns with the City's overall strategic priorities to:

- Maintain and Create Housing That's Affordable
- Keep Toronto Moving
- Invest in People and Neighbourhoods

- Tackle Climate Change and Build Resilience
- Through this system-level lens, the Development Review Division is positioned as a critical enabler of the City's long-term vision for people-centered urban growth.

Staff Engagement

Work began in Fall 2024 with a series of internal staff engagement sessions focused on identifying the Division's core vision, mission, and values. This included a mix of in-person and virtual workshops across the Division's five districts. Staff were also invited to complete surveys to ensure their feedback was heard and incorporated.

The Divisional Leadership Team reviewed the input to refine the draft vision, mission, and values. In total, almost 300 staff, representing 73% of the Division, participated in these engagement activities.

These sessions provided meaningful opportunities for staff to share their insights, surface challenges, and shape key priorities, all of which were reflected in the final strategic plan.

The work culminated in finalizing Development Review's vision, mission and values:

- **Vision:** Shaping the future of Toronto – today! We shape development in Toronto for current and future generations to thrive.
- **Mission:** We advance world class city-building by delivering a development review service that is innovative, collaborative, customer focused, transparent and efficient.
- **Values:**
 - **Collaboration & Partnership:** We bring together diverse perspectives, expertise, and objectives to drive the best possible city-building outcomes.
 - **Continuous Learning & Improvement:** We embrace and encourage career-long learning, mentoring, and knowledge that is responsive to the ever-changing environment.
 - **Customer Service:** We are committed to working with both internal and external clients to deliver a respectful, timely, responsive, transparent, and solution-oriented service.
 - **Diversity, Equity, Reconciliation & Inclusion:** We are committed to fostering a culture of respect that embraces diversity, advances equity and reconciliation, and ensures inclusion and accessibility for all.
 - **Leadership, Innovation & Creativity:** As leaders, we foster innovation, creativity, and professional excellence by empowering our multi-disciplinary team to pursue new practices and technology in order to address complex problems.
 - **Transparency & Accountability:** We inspire trust by carrying out our work with transparency and integrity, using data and evidence, and ensuring clear, consistent, and compelling communication with all internal and external clients.

Developing The Plan

Building on the work done to develop the vision, mission, and values, the Division engaged external consultants, Monumental and Dr. Matti Siemiatycki, to support the development of the inaugural Development Review Strategic Plan (**Attachment 1**). This engagement allowed for an objective and expert lens to guide the process, while ensuring continuity with the internally developed vision, mission, and values.

The Strategic Plan provides a clear, actionable roadmap to modernize the City's development review function. It articulates a shared vision for the future and identifies four interconnected strategic priorities that will guide divisional work over the next three years:

- **Investing in people and partnerships** - Focused on fostering a strong, values-based culture; enhancing internal staff capacity and collaboration; and strengthening relationships with applicants and the broader development industry, communities, including Indigenous and equity-deserving communities, elected officials and other orders of government.
- **Streamlining processes** - Simplifying and aligning review processes to improve consistency, efficiency, and create a more transparent and predictable experience for applicants.
- **Modernizing tools and technology** - Leveraging new digital tools and platforms to support more efficient workflows, enhance collaboration, and increase transparency for applicants and the public.
- **Strengthening transparency and accountability** - Enhancing performance measurement, public reporting, and client feedback mechanisms to track progress, strengthen public trust, and support continuous improvement.

A Human Rights-Based Approach to Development Review

A key initiative of the Plan is to develop and implement a human rights-based approach to development review. This means ensuring development decisions are guided not only by technical compliance but also by principles of equity, reconciliation, inclusion, and non-discrimination.

This approach aligns with and supports the City of Toronto's Corporate Strategic Plan and its other policies and strategies including the Official Plan, HousingTO 2020–2030 Action Plan, Reconciliation Action Plan, the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism, Culture Connects: An Action Plan for Culture in Toronto, and the TransformTO Net Zero Strategy. It considers whether proposed developments support people-centred urban growth - prioritizing the creation of complete, inclusive, and resilient communities that meet the needs of current and future residents.

A human rights-based approach also emphasizes meaningful community participation, particularly from Indigenous, Black and other equity-deserving communities. It promotes transparent decision-making and shared accountability for outcomes. It requires consideration of who has access to housing, mobility, services and public spaces, whose voices are heard in shaping the built environment, and whether the built environment is reinforcing or reducing social inequities.

By embedding human rights as a foundation for people-centred, fair and inclusive urban growth, this approach strengthens our existing development review framework and contributes to a more equitable Toronto for all.

Ongoing Challenges and Opportunities

The Development Review Division recognizes that the broader environment in which it operates is dynamic and the Division remains prepared to monitor and adapt to ongoing legislative changes and other external factors that may influence priorities and project timelines.

The Division is actively monitoring workload demands to ensure staff resources are appropriately aligned with current studies and application volumes and a backlog of applications built up over time that need to be addressed by the City and applicants. Market conditions continue to impact revenues collected from development application fees, an essential funding source for maintaining service levels and supporting continuous improvement. As the new operating model for the City's development review service is implemented, the Division remains committed to achieving optimal operational and city-building outcomes while remaining responsive to evolving legislative and policy frameworks.

Next Steps

Through the remainder of 2025, the Development Review Division will focus on building a clear and actionable implementation roadmap for the Strategic Plan that outlines specific initiatives, timelines, and key performance indicators (KPIs).

This work will build on and complement priority initiatives already in progress, including enhancements to the Site Plan review process, updates to the Plan of Condominium process, the adoption of new technologies to improve application management, and the development of customer service standards and a service charter.

Together, these initiatives will position the Division to succeed in its mandate of supporting people-centred urban growth, accelerating housing delivery, and contributing to Toronto's social and economic prosperity.

CONTACT

Alexandra McDonough, Project Director, Business Transformation, Development Review Division

Alexandra.McDonough@toronto.ca, 437-779-1084

Allyson Power, Director, Strategy & Client Relations, Development Review Division

Allyson.Power@toronto.ca, 416-392-3312

Mary Bagnulo, Manager, Program Planning & Strategic Initiatives, Development Review Division

Mary.Bagnulo@toronto.ca, 416-392-1012

Kevin Yee, Program Manager, Development Review Division

Kevin.Yee@toronto.ca, 416-338-2165

SIGNATURE

Valesa Faria

Executive Director, Development Review

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 - Development Review Strategic Plan