

Continuous Improvement of the Committee of Adjustment - Status Update

Date: May 28, 2026

To: Planning and Housing Committee

From: Interim Executive Director, Development Review

Wards: All

SUMMARY

In January 2026, operations and oversight of the Committee of Adjustment moved from City Planning to the Development Review division. This organizational re-alignment was designed to maintain the Committee's independent decision-making role while reinforcing the systems that support effective and timely review. Development Review Division will continue to advance the transformation and continuous improvement of the Committee of Adjustment through initiatives that address recommendations from KPMG ([2023](#) and [2025](#)) and align with the Development Review [Strategic Plan](#) (2025-2028).

Further to this organizational re-alignment, in February 2026, the Mayor (through Planning and Housing Committee) requested City staff to "review and report on how the Committee of Adjustment can be most effective, including opportunities to streamline and bring greater consistency to decision-making, improve timelines, and support faster delivery of housing." Development Review Division was directed to consult stakeholders and "report in Q2 2026 with preliminary findings, potential opportunities and a workplan on:

- Improving customer service, streamlining decision-making, improving timelines, leveraging technology, simplifying submission requirements, and supporting faster delivery of housing, while maintaining the integrity of the development review process;
- Attracting and retaining highly qualified panel members for the next round of recruitment and appointments;
- Improving panel training and continuous education, including on changes to City and provincial planning rules;
- Standardizing the practice of Development Review staff reports to the Committee of Adjustment, including comments where applicable, indicating where projects align with Council-approved policy objectives; and
- Opportunities to harmonize and coordinate the application processes for tree injury or removal permits, and minor variances to reduce challenges arising from conflicting outcomes."

This report outlines Development Review's work program, including near-term deliverables, and highlights from stakeholder consultations. It also addresses a previous request from Planning and Housing Committee in June 2025 to report back on the status and results of remaining KPMG recommendations.

Development Review, in coordination with the City Manager's Office and the City Clerk's Office, will report back by early 2027 with any recommended changes to the term limits, qualifications, and remuneration for Committee of Adjustment panel members to be implemented prior to the next term of appointments.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Interim Executive Director, Development Review recommends that:

1. Planning and Housing Committee receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no immediate financial impacts resulting from the recommendations included in this report. The initiatives described in this report are being advanced within the approved operating budget. Future report backs will outline any new financial implications that may arise related to this work program. Any future initiatives with budget implications will be addressed through the City's annual budget process and will be subject to Council approval and the availability of funding.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on February 26, 2026, Planning and Housing Committee adopted item PH28.14 "Updating the Effectiveness of the Committee of Adjustment," and directed the Executive Director of Development Review to review the Committee of Adjustment and report back in Q2 2026 with preliminary findings, potential opportunities and a workplan on its continuous improvement in specific priority areas identified by the Mayor.
<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2026.PH28.14>

At its meeting on July 15, 2025, Planning and Housing Committee adopted item [PH23.7](#), "Committee of Adjustment KPMG Service Delivery Model Review and Recommendation Implementation Update" which provided a status update on the implementation of KPMG recommendations (Report #1) and presented the findings of KPMG's Committee of Adjustment Service Delivery Model review (Report #2). The Planning and Housing Committee directed the Executive Director of Development

Review to report back to the Planning and Housing Committee on the status and results of the remaining KPMG implementation recommendations contained in this report in the second quarter of 2026.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2025.PH23.7>

At its meeting on April 5, 2024, Planning and Housing Committee adopted the item "Committee of Adjustment Third Party Review Recommendations - Implementation Update" which directed the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning to report back to Planning and Housing Committee in Q1 2025 on the status and results of the KPMG Committee of Adjustment implementation plan.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2024.PH11.11>

At its meeting on February 28, 2023, Planning and Housing Committee adopted item [PH2.5](#) "Committee of Adjustment - Consultant Review". The report provided an overview on the KPMG-led review of how to improve participation in Committee of Adjustment public hearings. The report outlined a multi-year work plan to move forward with the improvement opportunities identified by KPMG. The Planning and Housing Committee requested the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning to report back on the status and results of the implementation plan, as well as other items related to Committee of Adjustment operations, in the first quarter of 2024.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2023.PH2.5>

At its meeting on May 5 and 6, 2021, City Council adopted item [PH22.7](#) "Update on Committee of Adjustment Virtual Public Hearings" and directed the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning, in consultation with the City Solicitor, the Chief Building Official and Executive Director, Toronto Building, and the Ombudsman, to report to the Planning and Housing Committee on a consultant review of the Committee of Adjustment.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2021.PH22.7>

COMMENTS

Toronto's Committee of Adjustment is a uniquely high throughput tribunal compared to its equivalents in Ontario and other major cities across North America. In 2025, close to 100 hearings were held (across four districts) and over 2,500 decisions were made.

Significant improvements have been made to Toronto's Committee of Adjustment service in recent years, driven in large part from Council direction to review the Committee of Adjustment and the ongoing implementation of improvement opportunities identified by KPMG, focused on communications, improving public participation, making processes more efficient and improvements to overall service delivery. Notable improvements include:

- More than 90% of applications were approved in 2025, after collaborative efforts from applicants, community participants, and city staff;
- Achieving hearing timelines of less than six weeks for complete applications;

- Clearing the backlog of applications that accumulated during the Covid-19 pandemic; and
- Offering hybrid hearings - making Toronto one of the only municipalities in Ontario to improve convenience for applicants and the public.

On January 27, 2026, oversight and operations of the Committee moved from the City Planning Division to the Development Review Division. This organizational realignment is intended to streamline decision-making processes and improve service timelines by centralizing accountability for development review functions within a single division. It also aims to better leverage technology to support more efficient, transparent, and consistent business practices, while advancing the timely delivery of housing and broader city-building priorities. These improvements are being pursued while maintaining the integrity and rigor of the development review process.

Development Review Approach

The Development Review Division launched its Strategic Plan in July 2025, setting a clear, actionable roadmap to modernize the City's development review function. It outlines a shared vision and four interconnected priorities - Investing in People & Partnerships, Streamlining Processes, Modernizing Tools and Technology, and Strengthening Accountability and Transparency - to guide work from 2025 to 2028. These priorities provide a cohesive framework to improve service delivery, strengthen accountability, and enhance overall effectiveness, while also guiding the Committee's continuous improvement work program and aligning initiatives with broader divisional objectives.

As part of integrating the Committee of Adjustment into the Development Review Division in early 2026, the following strategic objectives for the Committee of Adjustment were defined based on the priorities in the Strategic Plan.

Strategic Objectives for the Committee of Adjustment

Invest in People & Partnerships

- Improve the overall user experience to build public trust and stakeholder confidence.
- Strengthen internal alignment and capacity through clearer roles, better collaboration, and enhanced tools, training, and support.

Streamline Processes

- Apply a Lean Six Sigma approach to modernize operations and improve efficiency across end-to-end processes.
- Simplify application steps, clarify requirements, and reduce delays to deliver more consistent and predictable outcomes.

Modernize Tools & Technology

- Improve digital service delivery through automation and more user-friendly systems to enhance accessibility and efficiency.

- Leverage data and performance metrics to inform decisions, monitor results, and support continuous improvement.

Strengthen Accountability & Transparency

- Strengthen public trust and confidence by ensuring the process is fair, transparent, efficient, and delivered by qualified impartial panels.
- Reinforce overall process integrity and improve acceptance of outcomes through clear and consistent procedures.

Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement has helped shape the Committee work program and will continue to inform its evolution. An Annual Stakeholder Forum was held on April 16, 2026, with participation from members of the building and development community, residents' associations, and staff from the Mayor's and Councillors' offices. Discussions at the forum were structured around the topics outlined in the Mayor's motion, providing a focused opportunity to gather feedback on current operations and proposed priorities. Feedback from stakeholders was broadly supportive, with participants noting that Committee operations have significantly improved and are generally working well. There was overall support for the proposed approach and strategic priorities, along with suggestions for further enhancement.

Additional engagement activities included discussions at the Committee of Adjustment Panel Member quarterly meeting as well as with industry and government partners at the Development Review Stakeholder Reference Group bi-monthly meeting. All stakeholders were invited to provide further written feedback to City staff by April 30, 2026. However, it was also emphasized that ongoing feedback will be welcome and encouraged, and engagement will be ongoing through regular dialogues.

Work Plan Priorities and Stakeholder Feedback

Overall, stakeholder feedback received to date has validated Development Review's priorities and identified more specific ideas for implementation. A summary of key feedback by topic is outlined in the sections that follow.

Continuous Improvement of Service, Process and Technology

Development Review is accelerating service transformation for the Committee of Adjustment by implementing three priority, high-impact initiatives to enhance user experience in alignment with our Strategic Objectives, stakeholder feedback, and KPMG recommendations.

1. Minor Variance Streaming

In its most recent report (2025), KPMG recommended implementing a structured minor variance application streaming model to guide circulation and review, while providing a clear framework for application requirements and fees. This approach will streamline processes by eliminating unnecessary circulation and standardizing commenting

practices, and will align fee categories, review processes, and hearing management with the complexity and type of each application. In doing so, it will improve efficiency, transparency, and predictability, ensuring effort and resources are proportionate to the nature of each application.

City Planning began technical work on this initiative by undertaking analysis of applications and identifying four potential streams: Priority Projects; Residential Renovations and Additions; Residential New Builds; and Complex Applications. This initiative was put on hold pending the transition of the Committee of Adjustment to the Development Review Division. Work is now underway to validate and refine the potential streams through technical focus groups and external consultant support to develop associated fee categories. A report to Council is targeted by the end of 2026, with full implementation of the streamed model, including standard operating procedures, planned for Q1 2027.

2. Rules of Procedure and Staff Manuals

Development Review is advancing a review and update of the Committee of Adjustment Rules of Procedure to address key topics, including inaccurate or incomplete information, late-stage revisions, application deferrals, and the documentation of decisions. An updated Rules of Procedure document will help support more consistent, transparent, and timely decision-making across all districts, and is targeted to be in place by early 2027 for the next term of panel appointments.

In parallel, standard operating procedures are being developed to guide staff administrative processes and harmonize best practices city-wide to support more efficient and coordinated service delivery. A phased implementation approach will begin in the coming months, with improvements being introduced progressively as they are finalized.

3. Enhancements to Application Intake and Realignment of Completeness Checks

Development Review intends to realign application intake responsibilities from Toronto Building, as recommended by KPMG, in Q1 2027 through enhancements to the City's Application Submission Tool (AST). Enabling applicants to submit Committee of Adjustment applications directly through this centralized digital platform will help reduce errors, eliminate duplication, and improve overall process efficiency. The result will be a more structured, user-focused intake experience, including guided application forms that adapt to the type and *complexity* of the application or stream, ensuring that submissions are more aligned with requirements from the outset.

Stakeholder Consultation Feedback

The response to these proposed priorities was generally supportive, particularly of minor variance application streaming and changes to the intake process. More specific recommendations that will be explored as part of these initiatives included: utilizing consent agendas and agenda vetting for simple, uncontested items; establishing service standards for key milestones (particularly staff reports); and more consistent rules for revisions and deferrals. Other more detailed technical feedback focused on improving notices (e.g. explain what is already permitted "as of right"), website enhancements

(e.g. live estimate of time to a hearing) and leveraging emerging technologies such as AI to support zoning analysis and application completeness checks.

Other Near-term Improvements to Implement KPMG Recommendations

An application form refresh is underway (targeted to be available by Q3 2026) to minimize the amount of private information posted online and to address a recommendation from KPMG to support more equitable tenant participation in the public hearing process. Notice of Hearing and Notice of Decision templates will also be updated this year, further implementing a recommendation from KPMG to improve clarity and useability and enhance public participation in the Committee of Adjustment process.

Emerging Priority - Accuracy of Information

City staff work with applicants to verify information where possible; however, the process relies on applicants confirming that all submitted materials are accurate. When third parties raise concerns about the accuracy of materials, the written record will reflect those concerns. Parties can also present those concerns at the hearing and the meeting minutes will record them. The Committee considers both the submitted materials and any objections to those materials when making its decision. Committee Panel members must ensure that the evidence they rely on is deserving of weight, in consideration of the Planning Act tests and the credibility of the materials in question. As part of continuous improvement, staff will review whether any process improvements would be appropriate within the legislative framework governing the Committee of Adjustment. Staff will report back in Q1 2027, as requested by Council on April 22 and 23, 2026 ([MM40.5](#)).

Attracting and Retaining Highly Qualified Panel Members

The current Committee panel members are appointed until November 14, 2026, aligned with the end of the Council term and the members continue to serve until their successors are appointed. The process for appointing the new Committee panel members is planned for early 2027. Eligibility is subject to the City's Public Appointment Policy, and terms are currently limited to two consecutive four-year periods to balance continuity and renewal.

Once appointed, members serve independently of Council under a formal City of Toronto Code of Conduct for Members of Adjudicative Boards and the Integrity Commissioner's oversight. In advance of the next term of appointments, Development Review Division has begun working with the City Clerk's Office to explore opportunities to strengthen recruitment by addressing barriers to attracting a highly qualified and diverse candidate pool.

Stakeholder Consultation Feedback

Overall, stakeholders supported enhancing panel member qualifications, emphasizing key skillsets over specialized technical expertise. Effective members were described as requiring sound judgment, independence, credibility, and clear communication. Key competencies identified include:

- a strong commitment to accountability, neutrality, and public service;
- understanding relevant legislative considerations;

- considering multiple perspectives and remaining neutral to external pressures when making decisions; and
- explaining decisions and reasons in clear, plain language.

Participants also identified structural, procedural and perception-based barriers that limit applications and outcomes. These include:

- daytime, extended hearings that restrict participation for those with standard work schedules and favour individuals with more flexible availability;
- concerns about reputational risk associated with unpopular decisions; and
- screening practices that may exclude qualified planners, architects, lawyers, and real estate professionals based on potential conflicts of interest that may be manageable.

It was suggested that remuneration may not fully reflect the role's responsibilities and time commitment, which may deter potential candidates from applying. Current rates of remuneration were set by Council in 2019 (EX.2.5) and they are currently as follows: full-day per diem of \$460, half-day per-diem of \$275, member stipend of \$1,500 per year, and chair stipend of \$2,500 per year.

As the context that the Committee operates in has significantly changed since these rates were set, it was strongly recommended that the City review the Committee's compensation rate to align with other administrative tribunals and ensure it reflects the time commitment (in particular, preparation time for a high volume of increasingly complex applications) to help attract a wider pool of qualified candidates.

Feedback also highlighted the importance of retaining particularly skilled and experienced panel members and their institutional knowledge by adjusting the current term limits. Panel members face high pressure to immediately interpret and apply new legislation and policies while also supporting and educating the public about these changes. Waiving term limits for certain appointees would enable panel members with strong qualifications and experience in navigating these legislative changes to support new Committee members as the policy landscape continues to evolve at a rapid pace.

Improving Panel Training and Continuous Education

Over the past several years, enhancements have been made to regular training, including quarterly forums, and monthly newsletters to support ongoing learning. Building on this foundation, Development Review will be implementing targeted technical workshops, including an upcoming session on the zoning by-law changes made through the Expanding Housing Options in Neighbourhoods initiative. Stakeholders and panel members also identified that more robust public education on these changes, led by City staff, is needed.

Development Review is also preparing now for onboarding the next panel in early 2027. A key focus will be on skills-based training in areas such as adjudication, panel administration/chairing, managing unconscious biases, and de-escalating conflicts. Foundational technical training will prioritize core legal principles and application of the

Planning Act tests (using case law and other scenario-based approaches), and evolving zoning and policy frameworks. Finally, the feasibility of tools to support information sharing with and amongst panel members (e.g. repository of guidance, case law and other key resources, etc.) is also being explored in preparation for the next term of appointments.

Stakeholder Consultation Feedback

Stakeholders expressed strong support for strengthening both foundational and ongoing training, recognizing the challenges of doing so in a rapidly transforming policy environment. Stakeholders and panel members also identified a pressing need for the staff who prepare reports to provide technical support at hearings on particularly complex matters.

Standardizing More Consistent Staff Advice

All Committee of Adjustment applications are circulated to Development Review staff, relevant City divisions, and external agencies, with comments and recommendations made publicly available to support transparency. While this process provides a broad range of technical input, variations in timing and consistency of comments can create challenges, particularly where feedback is late, changes over time, or appears conflicting. To address this, a technical staff working group has been established within the Development Review Division to standardize commenting practices and support more consolidated reviews for priority applications. This approach will be expanded through the minor variance streaming initiative, with broader implementation targeted for Q1 2027.

Stakeholder Consultation Feedback

Stakeholders validated the proposed priorities, particularly the move toward more coordinated, consolidated staff input, even if this may modestly extend timelines, as a means of improving clarity and reliability. There was also strong support for standardizing commenting practices through templates, checklists, and clear guidelines as recommended by KPMG. Additional suggestions included ensuring complete circulation prior to public notice and strengthening communication throughout the process, including by clarifying roles, contacts, and expectations.

Harmonizing Process for Tree Permits

Planning approvals and tree permitting operate under distinct legislative frameworks, the Planning Act and the City's tree by-law, which can contribute to perceptions of complexity or misalignment. Urban Forestry plays an important role in the Committee of Adjustment process by providing input on minor variance and consent applications and by reviewing permit applications where tree injury or removal may be authorized. To improve clarity and coordination, Development Review will be working collaboratively with Urban Forestry to better align processes (within existing legislation and Council direction) and more clearly communicate how requirements and approvals intersect. As requested by Planning and Housing Committee on January 22, 2026 ([PH27.1](#)), Development Review and Urban Forestry will jointly report back on this topic in 2027.

Stakeholder Consultation Feedback

Overall, stakeholders validated the proposed focus on improved coordination and greater transparency in Urban Forestry review criteria. Additional suggestions included exploring the introduction of pre-application engagement or screening to identify potential issues earlier.

Status Update on Implementation of KPMG Recommendations

In 2022, City Planning retained KPMG to conduct a comprehensive review of the Committee of Adjustment public hearing process. The resulting Committee of Adjustment Public Hearing Review report, released in January 2023, included 15 recommendations aimed at increasing public confidence and satisfaction with the review and hearing process, while also enabling more effective participation by all users.

Progress on implementing these recommendations has been steady. As of February 2026, six recommendations have been fully implemented, with the remaining nine currently in progress. These ongoing efforts continue to inform and support broader initiatives to improve transparency, consistency, and user experience within the Committee of Adjustment process.

Table 1 - KPMG Report #1: Public Hearing Review (January 2023)

Recommendation	Current Status
Develop and communicate a clear purpose statement to align stakeholders around a shared understanding of the CoA	Complete (Purpose Statement and Service Commitment launched Q4 2025)
Improve existing and develop new public-facing communications and resources to enhance participation	In progress (updates to Notice of Hearing and Notice of Decisions targeted for Q3 2026)
Develop and promote an effective participation guide to empower applicants and members of the public	Complete (Committee of Adjustment Participation Handbook published fall 2025)
Regularly engage with applicants and members of the public outside of the public hearing process	Complete (annual stakeholder forum and other ongoing engagements)
Support equitable tenant participation in the public hearing process	In progress (application form updates targeted for Q3 2026)
Consider refreshing application requirements for minor variance and consent applications	In progress (part of minor variance streaming initiative targeted for Q1 2027)

Recommendation	Current Status
Evaluate opportunities to provide more detailed reasons for CoA decisions	In progress (to be explored through review/update of Rules of Procedure and minor variance streaming targeted for Q1 2027)
Consider eliminating substantive revisions to applications following the distribution of the public notice	In progress (to be explored through review/update of Rules of Procedure targeted for Q1 2027)
Address the technical challenges of the virtual public hearing process	Complete and subject to ongoing continuous improvement
Standardize hearing practices to improve transparency and predictability	In progress (phased city-wide staff manuals and review/update of Rules of Procedure targeted for Q1 2027)
Implement quarterly members' meetings for panelist training and professional development	Complete (ongoing; met in February, April and June 2025)
Implement guidance directions to increase consistency within and across panels	In progress (ongoing training program and preparation for onboarding training in early 2027)
Implement commenting guidelines to improve consistency and enable more effective participation	In progress (under development by technical staff working group targeting Q3 2026)
Establish KPIs to enable continuous improvement	In progress (ongoing reporting will continue to be enhanced as more data becomes available)
Conduct a comprehensive review of service delivery model	Complete (KPMG Comprehensive Review of Service Delivery Model final report February 2025, see below)

In December 2023, City Planning retained KPMG to undertake a comprehensive review of the Committee of Adjustment (CoA) service delivery model. The resulting Committee of Adjustment Service Delivery Model Review, released in February 2025, identified eight additional recommendations aimed at improving overall service performance, with a focus on organizational structure, operational processes, and public hearing practices.

On July 25, 2025, the Planning and Housing Committee adopted staff recommendations to take a phased approach to service delivery model changes. In 2026, priority is being given to those recommendations focused on process improvements, which are expected to deliver more immediate gains in efficiency, consistency, and user

experience. The remaining recommendations, primarily related to organizational structure and hearing logistics, will be considered in 2027.

Table 2 - KPMG Report #2: Comprehensive Review of Service Delivery Model (February 2025)

Recommendation	Current Status
Adopt a City-wide administrative structure to improve the flexibility and consistency of service delivery	To be considered in 2027
Integrate application intake into the Committee of Adjustment to reduce duplication and intake error rates	In progress (will take effect through launch of Application Submission Tool for Committee of Adjustment applications targeted for Q1 2027)
Stream applications to reduce costs and improve the applicant, public and panelist experience	In progress (part of minor variance streaming initiative targeted for Q1 2027 and other more incremental initiatives)
Undertake a comprehensive review of application requirements and application forms	
Develop standard operating procedures to improve consistency and predictability	
Cap hearing lengths and increase hearing frequencies to improve participation in public hearings	To be considered in 2027
Develop a business case to evaluate the benefits of a single, centralized hearing room	To be considered in 2027 in conjunction with consideration of a city-wide administrative structure

Next Steps

Development Review will continue to engage Committee of Adjustment stakeholders through regular dialogues, while advancing the key priority initiatives outlined in this work program and making incremental improvements to ongoing operations.

Development Review Division will continue working with the City Manager's Office and City Clerk's Office to further assess term limits, qualifications, recruitment and remuneration for Committee of Adjustment panel members and report back by early 2027 with any recommended changes to be implemented prior to the next term of appointments.

The following key changes are also targeted to be in place before the next panel is appointed in early 2027:

- Updated Rules of Procedure and new city-wide staff manuals;
- Enhanced onboarding curriculum and tools to support better ongoing information sharing with and amongst panel members; and
- Other key process and technology improvements to address KPMG recommendations, including: minor variance streaming, Application Submission Tool enhancement and re-aligned departmental responsibilities for completeness checks.

Development Review will also report back in early 2027 on other priorities requested by council, including:

- potential process improvements to address inaccurate supporting documentation submitted to the Committee; and
- opportunities to better streamline and coordinate the application processes for tree removal permits and minor variances.

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