



City of Vancouver Permitting and Licensing Update

Presented to Vancouver City Council
June 13, 2023



Purpose of today's conversation is to share with Council the status of improvements to the City's permitting and licensing process, including key achievements and work underway.

To discuss today



1. Key improvements, last six months
2. Simplifying the City's land development regulatory framework
3. Focus on customer service
4. Improvements to specific building and development permit streams
5. Improving applicant experience via digital technology
6. Key next steps

1.

Key improvements,
last six months

Key improvement highlights, last six months



1. Eliminated or simplified approximately half of 682 Engineering Services and DBL Development Permit conditions, reducing review times by 30%



2. Signed contract with Archistar to automate permit application reviews, a first step towards fully automated plan checking



3. Simplified business licensing by streamlining licensing types from ~ 600 to 88



4. Implemented online business licensing pilot for home-based businesses so applicants can apply, pay and track online



5. Conducted industry engagement and customer info sessions across a broad range of applicants



6. Completed customer service training for all DBL staff

2.

Simplifying the City's land
development regulatory framework

Regulations, how the City is addressing complexity



What we've observed/heard from customers:

1. City has too many regulations governing development and land use
2. These regulations are slowing development and adding cost
3. Many regulations are decades old and less relevant today
4. When adding new policy, the City has historically layered onto existing policy



How we're addressing these concerns:

1. Reviewing/streamlining all of the City's land use regulations
2. Creating more consistent regulations
3. Simplifying low density zoning and guidelines concurrent with enabling multiplex zoning regulations
4. Requested revisions to the Vancouver Charter required to simplify of our regulatory processes

Key policy simplification work underway and planned

	WORKSTREAM	TARGET DELIVERY	RESULTING IMPROVEMENTS
Underway	1. Simplifying RS Zones and Enabling Multiplex Zoning	Q3, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduce 9 single family zones to 1 - Eliminate 9 guidelines and 8 bulletins
	2. Rewrite Protection of Trees Bylaw	Q4, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Faster review times - Ability to collect payment in lieu for removed trees
	3. High Density Housing for Families with Children Guidelines	Q2, 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create consistency in our zoning regulations (bedroom mix & size) - Remove discretion and simplify reviews
	4. Harmonization of City of Vancouver and Province of BC Childcare Guidelines	Q2, 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Simplified and consistent regulations - Streamline approvals process
	5. Below-Market Rental Housing Optimization	Q4, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved clarity and viability for below-market rental projects
Planned	6. Simplify FSR Exclusions	Scoping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduced complexity and added flexibility for applicants
	7. Modernize Transportation Assessment and Management Study requirements	Q1, 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Simplified requirements for applicants - Faster review times

3.

Focus on customer service

Customer service, how the City is addressing applicant concerns



What we've heard from customers:

1. Staff and customers are undergoing a culture shift with technology
2. Customers want the ability to speak with staff when they have questions
3. City processes and requirements can be difficult to understand
4. Digitization has created some inequities between tech savvy applicants and those who prefer traditional methods



How we're addressing those concerns:

1. Applicants now able to seek staff advice prior to application
2. Applicants now able to schedule in-person meetings with staff at the Services Centre
3. Conducted information and education sessions for applicants
4. Completed customer service training for all DBL staff

Educating and engaging applicants through information sessions

April 22nd

Recruitment session



May 11th

Residential renovations



May 16th

Commercial renovations



4.

Improvements to specific building
and development permit streams



A.

Low-density housing

Low density housing, how the City is addressing applicant concerns



What we've heard from customers:

1. Permitting is a shared responsibility between the City and applicants
2. The City's requirements and regulations can be difficult to understand
3. Reviews take too long / are too detailed
4. To speed up permit times, City should support applicants through the process



How we are addressing those concerns:

1. Developing tools to help applicants understand requirements and the application process
2. Implemented risk-based reviews, reducing the number of items City checks, speeding up reviews
3. Implementing technology to provide customers with self-serve options to submit and manage permits
4. Consolidating nine RS residential zones into one

Risk-based reviews have reduced plan review times by 80%

Before		▶	After	
# of items reviewed			# of items reviewed	% Reduction
	99		36	64%

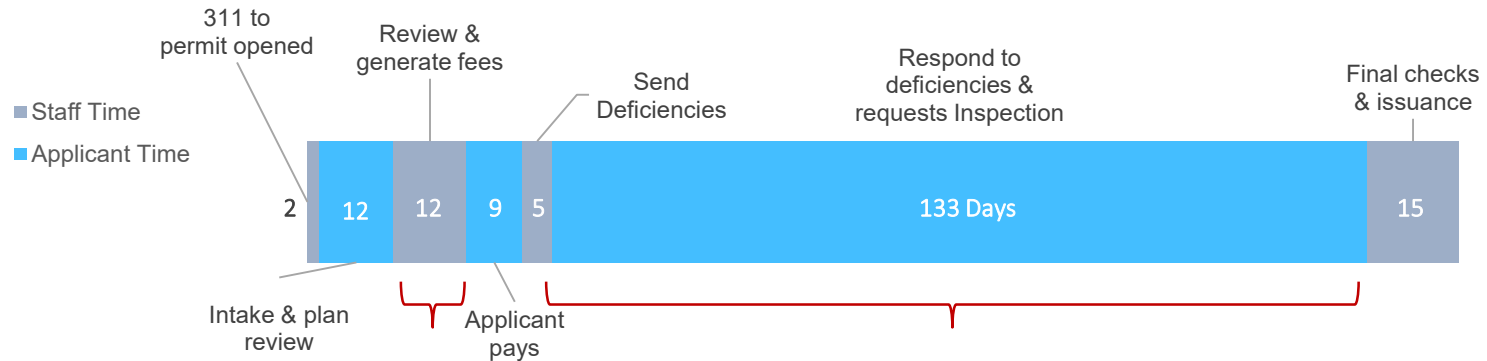
Since December 2022 implementation, average plan review times reduced by 80%, from **12 weeks to 18 days** (80%).

Low density housing, processing times are a shared responsibility



Standalone laneway example in Sunset neighbourhood (typical permit example)

Applicant Time 154 days (82%) vs. staff time 34 days (18%)



Anticipate digitization will reduce to 1-2 days

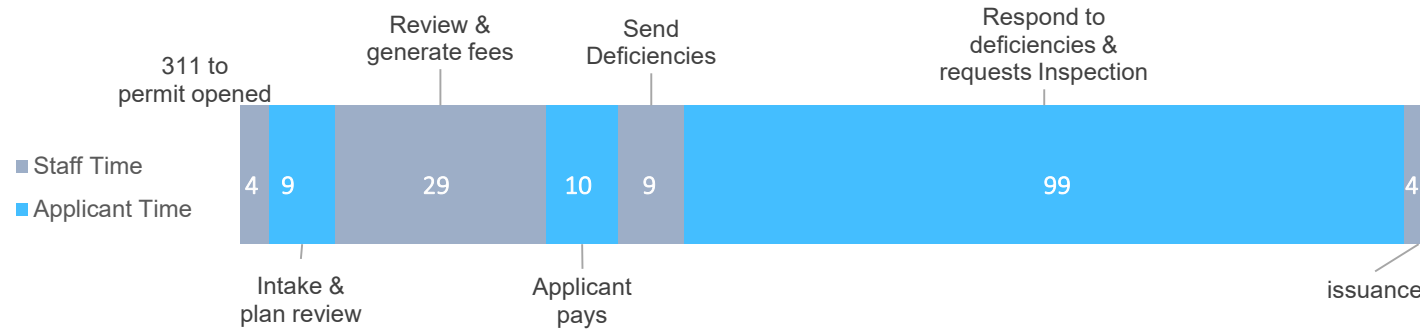
First phase of digitization will significantly reduce deficiencies by allowing applicants to check compliance before submission


Experienced applicants move faster, but still require time for deficiencies




Single family home example in Grandview Woodland neighbourhood (faster example)

Applicant time 118 days (72%) vs. staff time 46 days (28%)





B.
Renovations



Renovations, how the City is addressing applicant concerns



What we've heard from customers:

1. Simple applications processed via the same queue as complex applications
2. Takes too long to get a permit for accessibility upgrades
3. Not clear what needs to be included in an application
4. Reviews take too long and are too detailed

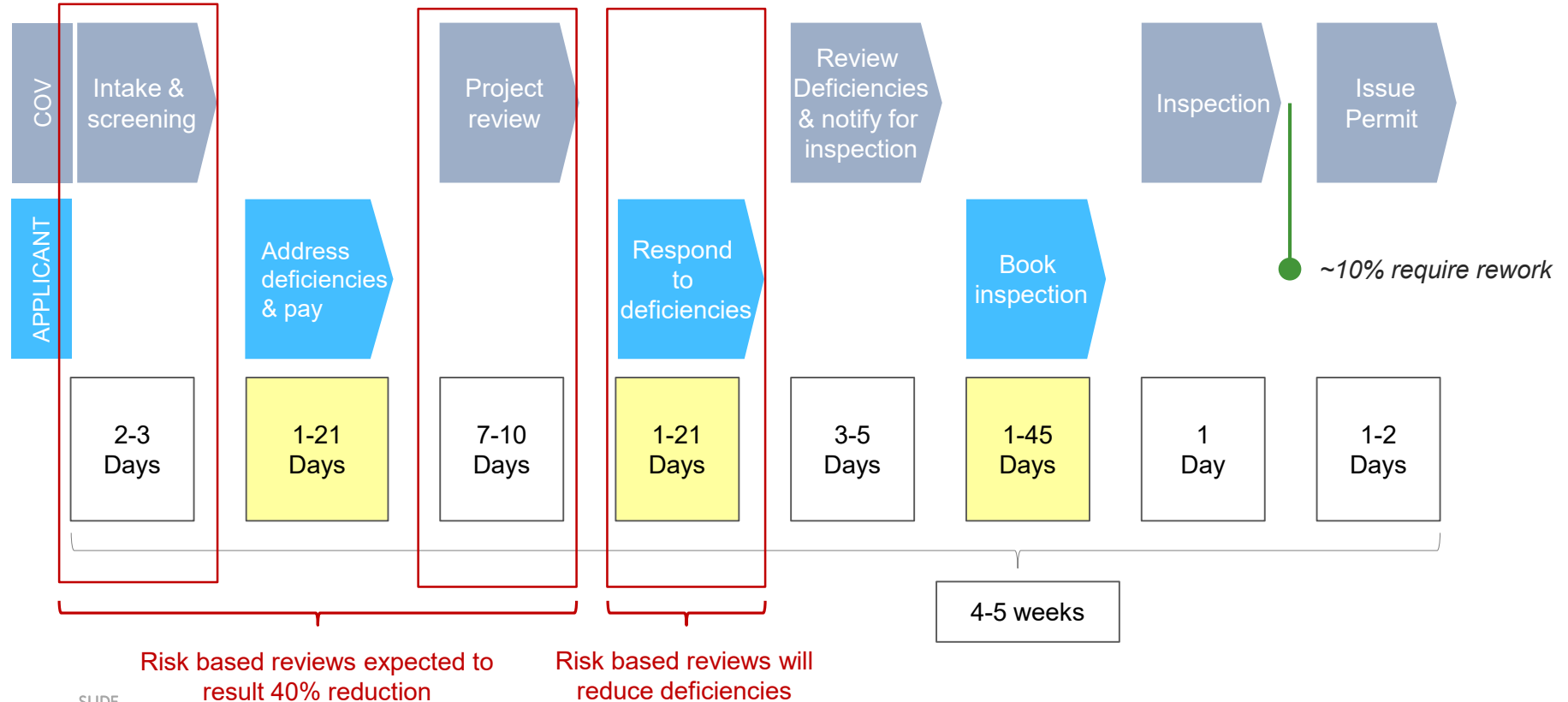


How we are addressing those concerns:

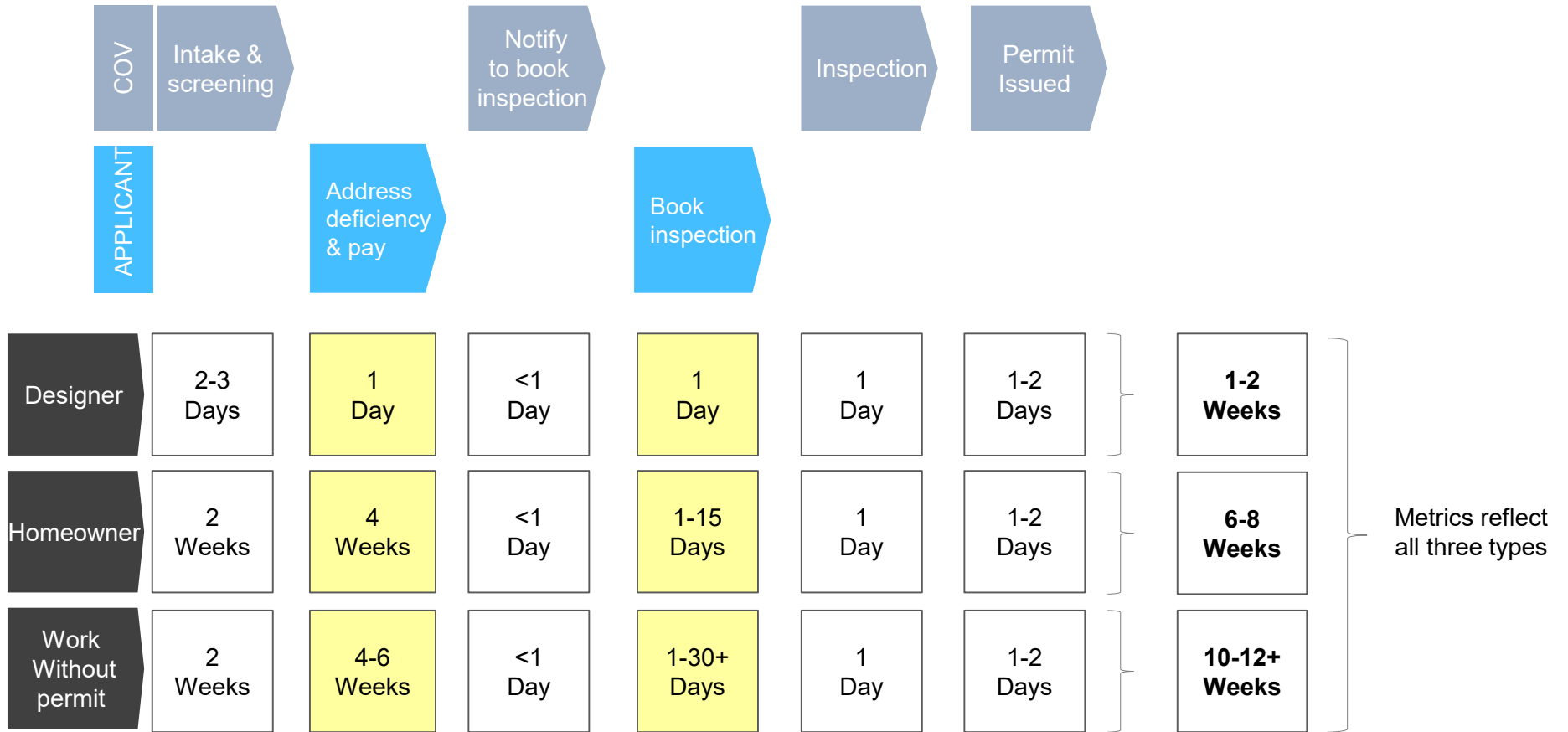
1. Created a fast track permit (“Direct to Inspections”) that can be **issued in less than a week**
2. Identifying accessibility upgrades at submittal and prioritizing them
3. Developing tools for applicant to identify requirements, including requirements from City departments and other regulators
4. The City will shift to risk-based reviews, **targeting 40% reduction in review times**


Substantially reducing renovation permit times through risk reviews

Lower complexity renovation stream



Renovation processing timelines vary greatly, depending upon applicant





C.
Large buildings

The diagram consists of two horizontal lines, one on the left and one on the right, each ending in a small grey dot. The text 'C. Large buildings' is centered between these two lines.

Large buildings, how the City is addressing applicant concerns



What we've heard from customers:

1. Development Permits (DP) have too many conditions
2. The conditions are too detailed for DPs
3. Those conditions are impacting viability and timelines of projects
4. The City is asking for things at the DP stage that should be required later in the process or via other tools



How we are addressing those concerns:

1. Standardizing and simplifying DP conditions
2. Removing conditions where appropriate
3. Committing to more predictable and faster review times, **reducing review times by 30%**
4. Better aligning the City's requirements at the DP stage with applicants design process
5. Redesigning the "prior-to" and streamlining the process for applicants to clear conditions

Substantial progress, streamlining development permit conditions

	Engineering Services	Development, Buildings and Licensing	Total
Total number of conditions at outset	489	193	682
Conditions eliminated	89	69	158 (23% of total)
Conditions simplified	35	40	75 (11% of total)
Shifts to risk-based reviews	128	-	128 (19% of total)

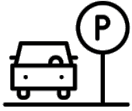
Anticipated outcomes

- Initial review anticipated to decrease by 2-4 weeks, 30%
- Fewer conditions will result in faster applicant response times
- Reduction in number of subsequent review iterations by 50%

Streamlining large building DP conditions, some examples



1. **Rainwater management:** All DP conditions to be shifted to the Vancouver Building Bylaw, reducing review times **from 56 weeks to 3 weeks**, pending Council decision



2. **Off-street parking requirements:** The City will stop detailed reviews of individual parking spaces within private development



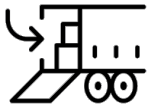
3. **Transportation demand management plans:** The City will Substantially simplify requirements / remove conditions



4. **Utilities key plan:** Will shift timing of this requirement to better align with applicant timing



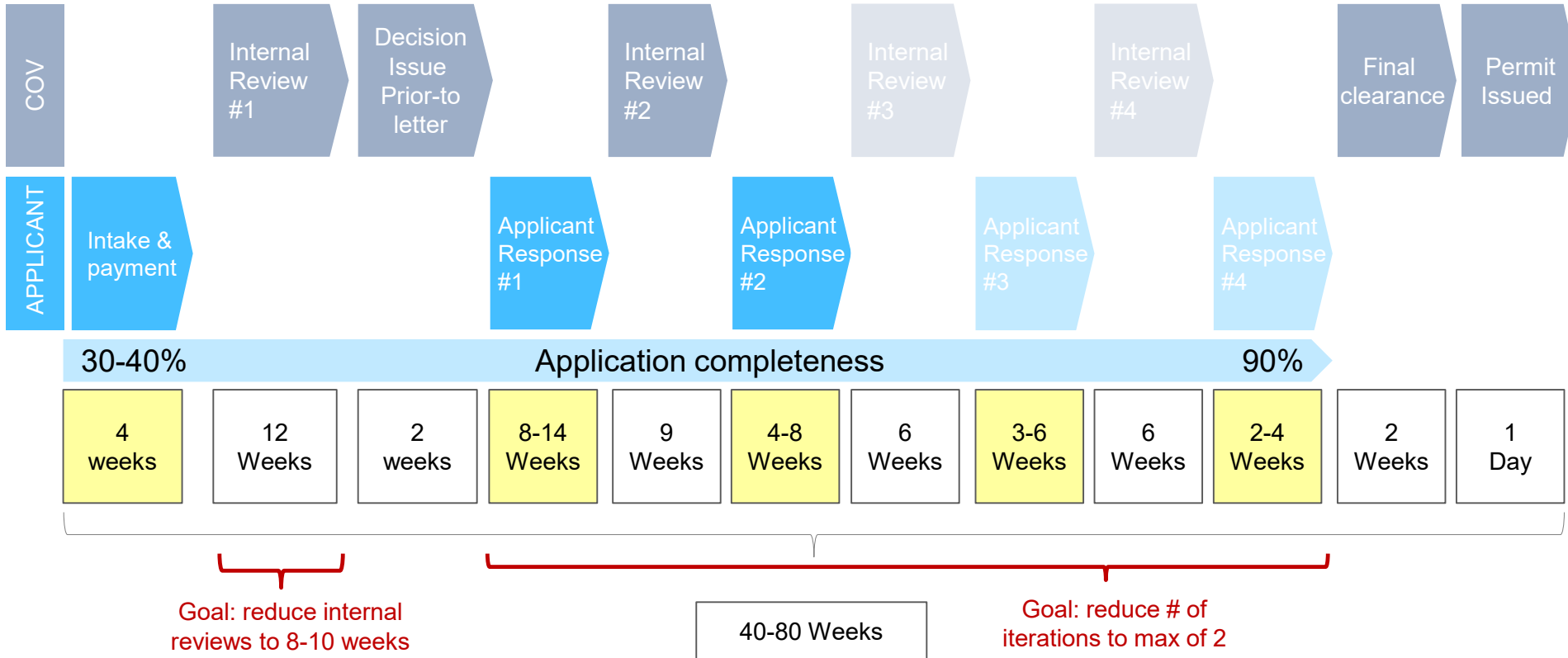
5. **Latecomer agreements:** Shift from Development Permit to Building Permit, will allow more time for applicant design work



6. **Updated parking/loading requirements:** Update parking bylaws to modernize the City's loading space requirements and reduce the need for case-by-case relaxations

Streamlining large building DP conditions → faster processing times

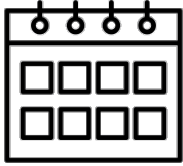
Development Permit review process – current state



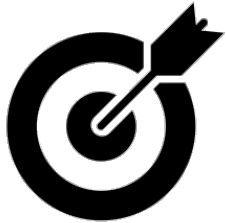
5.

Improving applicant experience
via digital technology

Improving permit and licence applicant experience with technology



- The City's Digital Transformation Program focused on improving permits and license customer experience, releasing new features every 8-12 weeks



- Four current focus areas, upcoming releases:
 1. **Business licenses.** Business licence applications through self-serve portal, expand to additional licence categories
 2. **Laneway housing digital plan checks.** Automated online plan checking
 3. **Laneway Project Requirements Exploration Tool (PRET).** Online self-service portal to explore project requirements/feasibility, and submit, track and update their applications
 4. **Data/analytics.** Improved permit and licence data and analytics

Focus area 1. Business licenses

CITY OF VANCOUVER Apply for a business licence

Home > My Request - BL0002521

Payment Pending (Application) Submitted Intake Review Payment Pending (Licence) **Approved**

Created 4d ago Updated 4d ago State Action Needed

BL0002521

Stage	Application date
Approved	2022-11-19

Your application fee was paid on 2022-11-19.

Activity Submitted Form

Type your message here... Post

EL Elaine Lee 4d ago Additional comments
Thank you for your payment

BO BL Tester One 4d ago Additional comments
I have paid the licence fee now. Thank you

- A single, self-serve customer portal that creates a consistent customer experience across all business license applications
- Allows applicants to track their application in real time, and update information
- Increases transparency, predictably and continuity while speeding up end-to-end review times
- Currently available for home-based businesses, adding all business licences by end-2023
- Next release by end of Q2-2023 for commercial and out of town licences

Focus area 2. Laneway housing digital plan checks



- Automated plan checking for compliance vis-à-vis City's regulations, using the Archistar platform
- Supports applicants in submitting complete/compliant applications, eliminating rounds of reviews
- Speeds up staff review times, fewer components reviewed manually
- First step toward fully automated plan checking
- Starting with Laneways with limited zoning review capabilities
- Target launch **Q1-2024**

Focus area 3. Laneway Project Requirements Exploration Tool (PRET)

The screenshot shows the 'Explore Project Feasibility' tool interface. At the top, the City of Vancouver logo and the title 'Explore Project Feasibility' are displayed. Below the header, there is a search bar and a navigation menu. The main content area is titled 'Tell us about your Laneway Project (1/3):' and provides instructions on how the information will be used to estimate various project details. A 'Building and Site Requirements' section contains several questions with input fields and radio buttons. A 'REQUIREMENTS' sidebar on the right lists various permit types with dropdown menus. At the bottom, there are 'Back' and 'Next' buttons.

Tell us about your Laneway Project (1/3):
The information provided here will be used to estimate the following:

- Estimated Fees
- Required Permits (and application sequence)
- Required Documents
- Estimated Timelines

Building and Site Requirements:

How many storeys will the laneway house be?

What is the net floor area of the proposed laneway house?
Not sure? The average square footage for a Laneway house is between [X] and [X].

Estimated cost of building construction?
Not sure? The average building construction cost for a Laneway House is [X] / SQF.

Will this be used for rental?
 Yes No

Are there any site or adjacent tree's?
 Yes No

Are you going to remove any tree's?
 Yes No

How many tree's need to be removed?

Does the property have an underground storage tank?
 Yes No

REQUIREMENTS

- Building Permit
- Sewer & Water Permit
- Electrical Permit
- Plumbing Permit
- Gas Permit
- Mechanical Permit
- Sprinkler Permit
- Temporary Street Use Permit
- Occupancy Permit

Back Next

- An online self-service portal through which applicants will be able to:
 - explore project requirements and feasibility – providing estimated fees, required permits, required documents, estimated timelines
 - submit, track and update their permit application
- Will provide clear requirements up-front, creating greater predictability re: costs and timelines
- Target launch **August, 2023**

Focus area 4. Data/analytics



- Dashboard that breaks data out into key stages of the permit process and provides detailed information on permit elapsed times
- Shows City staff processing time and applicant processing time separately for intake
- Will allow staff and Council to track permitting improvement initiative results in real time
- Will help City staff and Council prioritize timing/phasing of permitting improvement initiatives
- Target launch **Q3-2023**

6.

Key next steps

Permit and licence improvement plans, next tranche of focus areas



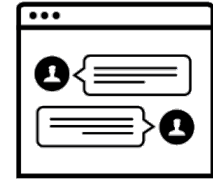
1.
Streamline PDS
Development
Permit conditions



2.
Rationalise
Development
Permit-related
policies



3.
Implement risk-
based reviews for
renovation permits



4.
Implement next
round of Digital
Transformation
Program initiatives

Next progress report to Council in Q3-2023