

Making business easier

Engagement Summary Report

participate.rmwb.ca/permits

About this Project

Purpose

Understand, enhance and streamline Planning and Development's (P&D) permitting and licensing processes to provide exceptional customer service and support economic growth. Permits and licenses can include:

- Development permits (e.g. sheds, decks, homes businesses);
- Building permits;
- Business licenses; and,
- Leases

Approach

The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (RMWB) engaged a third-party to conduct an objective, impartial review of services delivered by each of P&D's three branches:

1. Community Development Planning
2. Safety Codes
3. Land Administration

A wide range of stakeholders, internal and external, were engaged through individual and group workshops, on what processes are working well, where there are challenges and opportunities for improvement.

To respect stakeholders' confidentiality, results provided in this Report are specifically from the public survey.

The Survey

The public survey was launched on November 3, 2021 and closed on November 17, 2021.

A total of 118 surveys were completed, of which 37 respondents requested and received follow up from the project team.

Online Statistics

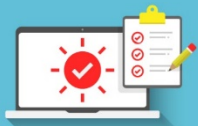
○ Online Poll	118
○ Online visits	294
○ Social media impressions	26,123
○ Social Media likes, Shares, Comments	37

Communications Tactics

- News Release;
- Participate Wood Buffalo;
- RWMB website;
- Online Survey;
- Social Media likes, Shares, Comments;
- Local Radio;
- McMurray Matters interview; and
- Indigenous and Rural Relations (IRR) community meeting updates.



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Survey Highlights

Perceived Barriers



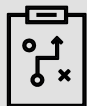
Variations in how *codes* and *standards* appear to be applied across applications and inspections processes.



Lengthy processing times impacted by the tendency for requests to be re-routed or circulated for review.



High upfront costs resulting in applicants taking a risk to begin development or in applying for a permit or license.



Lack of clear guidance or supporting resources to assist applicants in completing an application.



Limited flexibility across processes to accommodate unique circumstances or exceptions.



Excessive requirements for permits and licensing, potentially restricting new development, residential improvement and small to medium sized business ventures.

Potential Opportunities

01 Improve Tools & Resources

Organize and simplify existing online materials and improve E-Permitting. Examples may include:

- Updated checklists;
- Website and E-Permitting system upgrades;
- Interactive “how to” guides; and,
- Introduction and improvement of communications channels.

02 Establish Process Standards

Development of baseline metrics to track processing time and application status across branches and staff per file. This may encompass:

- Inspections;
- Application intake;
- Request escalation; and,
- Staff assignment to specific files.

03 Streamline Permit & License Requirements

Clarify existing requirements by identifying barriers for local development and licensing. A prominent example being reducing the threshold for change of use development permits.

Next Steps

01

Conclude stakeholder engagement

02

Review findings and prioritize potential solutions

03

Educate stakeholders on resulting changes to process



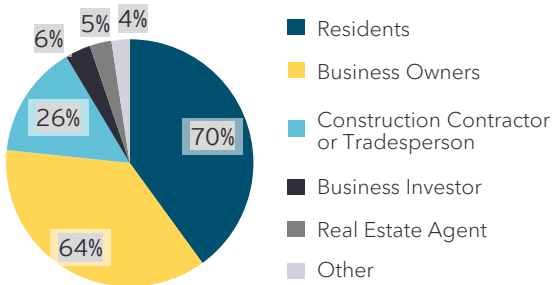


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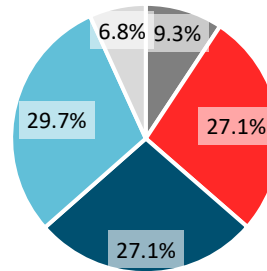
Engagement Summary Report

Survey Results

Respondent demographics

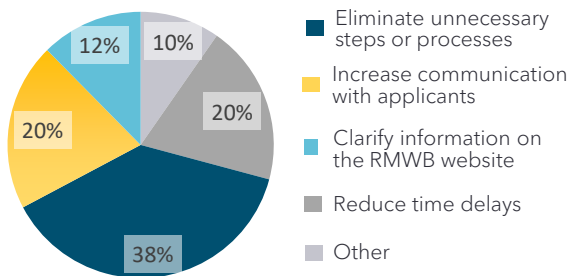


Understanding of application requirements



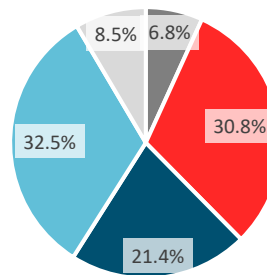
Approximately 54% of respondents indicated that it is difficult to understand P&D application requirements.

Recommended process improvements

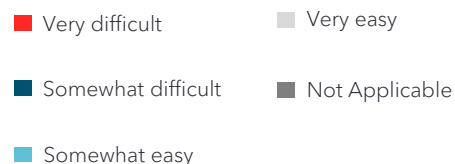


- 38% of respondents cited the **elimination of unnecessary steps or processes** as the most important area for improvement.
- Several respondents commented that **all of the listed improvements** will be **essential to improving customer service**.

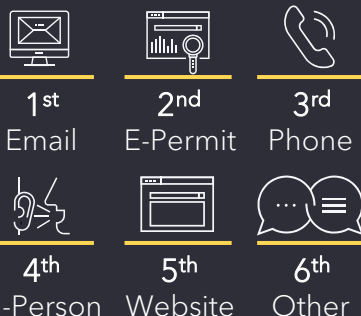
Ease of finding required information



More than half of respondents indicated that it is difficult to find required information from P&D.



Preferred communication channels



Respondents **miss the flexibility of interacting with P&D staff in person**, since the closure of the office due to COVID-19.

Residents have come to **rely primarily on phone calls and E-Permitting** to complete applications.

Applicants find the **website is difficult to navigate**, which limits their ability to access resources and information needed to complete an application.





Survey Results

Experience with Community Development Planning (CDP) Services

Development permits, subdivision applications, business licenses, compliance certificates, variances from the Land Use Bylaw, special events on municipal land, portable signs on municipal land

Permits and Business Licenses

- ▶ Survey respondents most frequently interacted with CDP for development permits and business licensing services
- ▶ Respondents were generally satisfied with business licensing services
- ▶ Satisfaction levels were lowest for development permits compared to other services surveyed
- ▶ Respondents were dissatisfied with both portable signs/non-profit advertisements on municipal land and variance applications

Potential Opportunities

- ▶ **Clarity** on when certain permits and licenses are required; **reminders** to renew business licenses
- ▶ **Consistency** in guidance
- ▶ Shortened timelines, increased **efficiency**, and expedited applications for simple development types

Experience with Safety Codes (SC) Services

Inspection requests, building permits, occupancy permits, trade specific permits (electrical, plumbing, gas/ventilation, underground services, private sewage)

Inspections and Building, Occupancy, & Trade-Specific Permits

- ▶ Satisfaction levels were highest for inspection requests, gas (ventilation) permits, and plumbing permits
- ▶ Satisfaction levels were lowest for building and occupancy permits
- ▶ Of the trade-specific permits, respondents were most dissatisfied with underground service and electrical permits, closely followed by private sewage and plumbing permits

Potential Opportunities

- ▶ **Clarity** on how to satisfy safety requirements
- ▶ **Efficiency** in not having to submit the same information twice
- ▶ **Greater flexibility** on unique or minor builds

Experience with Land Administration (LA) Services

Municipal land transactions, letters of authorization, and various agreements, such as encroachments, road use, licenses of occupation, easements, road closures, crossings, and third-party land consents

Agreements

- ▶ In general, satisfaction levels were highest for land transactions (sales and acquisitions)
- ▶ Satisfaction levels were lowest for road use, easement, and encroachment agreements

Potential Opportunities

- ▶ **Clarity** and a standard procedure on partial road closures

