



? Why we did this audit

The City of Ottawa is under immense pressure from the federal and provincial governments, industry, and Council to expedite development approvals; specifically in support of increased housing supply across the city. In parallel, there have been significant and ongoing provincial legislative changes as well as strategic priorities directly targeting development.

The City has been navigating these provincial changes while balancing Council's strategic objectives to increase housing with its fundamental role as a regulator and a steward of municipal assets.

Q What we found

Our audit noted that the process of reviewing development applications has experienced substantial changes in recent years. These changes have resulted in positive trends of decreasing net City processing times to decision for many types of applications, while maintaining key controls involving collaboration across several City departments.

However, bottlenecks and inconsistent expectations across City departments remain and have resulted in increasing overall development review timelines for specific types of applications. This is most prominent in the post-approval agreement development stage, where significant delays can result in legal risks as well as increased developer costs which could ultimately impact affordability.

Additionally, our audit noted that as part of the internal review process of development applications, internal decision-making authorities have not been formally established and there is limited evidence to demonstrate that feedback from various subject matter experts have been closed to allow the file to move to the next stage of the application process. Finally, opportunities exist to increase the transparency of process outcomes, including publishing key metrics that are most relevant to Council, the development industry, and other stakeholders.

💡 We made seven recommendations to ensure that:

- There are sufficient subject matter expert resources and clearly defined decision authorities for reviewing and approving applications.
- There are sufficient resources and clearly defined expectations for preparing and developing post-approval development agreements for site plans and plans of subdivision.
- Consistent tracking of files is in place across departments of the City including maintenance of evidence of clearance of subject matter feedback.
- The most relevant key performance indicators are published to enhance transparency and decision-making.