



Building Standards Customer Experience Survey Engagement Report

April 2022



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Introduction

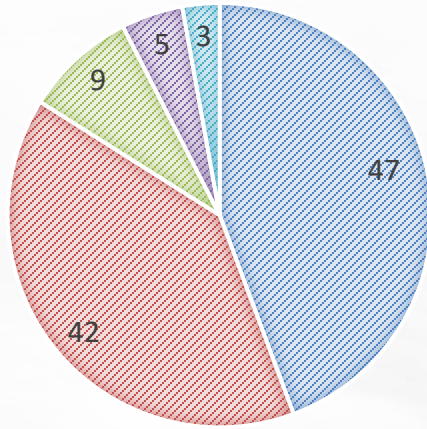
The Building Standards Department conducted a survey asking for feedback about customer experiences with our residential, commercial and plumbing permit services. The survey was open from October 22, 2021, until the end of November 2021 and received 100 responses with a close split between commercial and residential permit users, and a small number of plumbing-permit customers.

The results indicate the greatest customer satisfaction with plumbing permits and the least satisfaction with commercial building and development permits. For residential building and development permits, do-it-yourself customers (DIYs) expressed more satisfaction than professionals.

The data from this survey will provide a baseline of current customer experiences, giving the Building Standards Department a standard, against which issues and improvements with the new ePermitting system can be measured from.

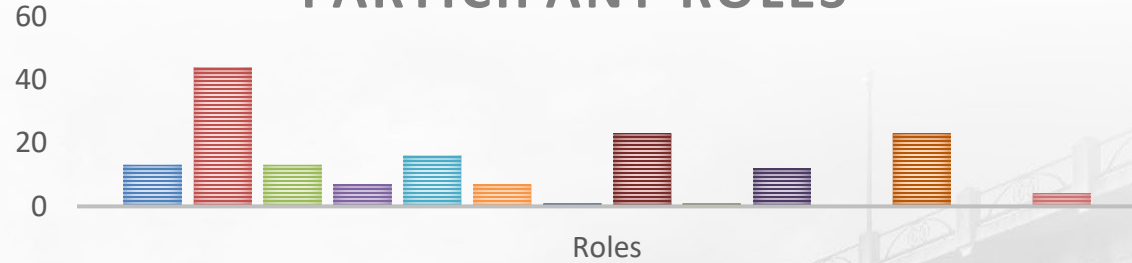
Who We Heard From

PERMIT TYPE



- Residential Building and Development Permit
- Commercial Building and Development Permit
- Plumbing Permits

PARTICIPANT ROLES



- Engineer or Architect (13)
- Contractor (44)
- Manager of a building(s) (13)
- Manager or representative of a business that owns or leases space (7)
- Realtor (16)
- Consultant who is not an engineer or an architect (7)
- Industry partner (1)
- Business owner (23)
- Prospective business owner (1)
- Developer (12)
- Surveyor (0)
- Home owner (23)
- City staff (0)
- Other (4)

Customer Satisfaction

Overall, on a scale from 1-10, how would you rate the customer service you experienced in the permit application process?

1. Commercial Building and Development Permits (meaning ICI permits and multi-storey residential):
 - Median 6/10
 - Average 5.2/10
2. Residential Building and Development Permits:
 - Professionals Median 7/10
 - Professionals Average 6.2/10
 - DIYs Median 8/10
 - DIYs Average 7.9/10
3. Plumbing:
 - Median 9/10
 - Average 7.7/10
4. All of the Above
 - Median 6/10
 - Average 6.2/10

On a scale of 1 to 5, how satisfied are you with each of the following aspects of your permit application experience? A score of 5 means very satisfied, and a score of 1 means very dissatisfied

Area	% Satisfied or Very Satisfied (Scored a 4 or 5)
Staff were courteous, helpful, and professional.	71 %
Online process to apply for your permit was efficient.	64%
Application requirements were clear and easy to understand.	60%
The level of discretion exercised by the plan review staff met your expectations.	59%
The cost of your permit aligned with the scale, complexity, and service received.	56%
The City met the expected response time when responding to your inquiries (24 hours via phone, and 48 hours via web and email).	52%
The City met the expected same day issuance for plumbing permits.	50%
Communication throughout the application process was supportive and helpful.	48%
The City met the expected five-to-seven-day turnaround time for single-lot residential permits and demolition permits.	42%
The City met the expected two to five weeks for multi-residential, commercial, institutional, industrial, and major projects.	35%

As we work to improve our customer service, which of the following would you prioritize (please select your top 3 choices)?

Area for improvement	Number of Participants that Selected
A knowledgeable point person	54
Improve upfront communications and communication throughout the process	40
Shorter permitting times	39
Make it easier to navigate the different departments at City Hall	38
Need for business friendly and customer focused relationship	31
Increase conditional approvals	28
Consider costs to businesses	23
Fewer up-front requirements	21
Provide more opportunities for customer feedback	14
Other	13
Evaluate the success of initiatives	6

Key Themes

- **Inconsistent experiences with review staff** – significant range of feedback from negative to positive, and some participants noted their experience depends on who they are working with.
- **Inconsistencies in interpretation on National Building Code and City Policies.** Some concerns around City staff interpreting the National Building Code rather than relying on the judgement of sealed professionals who have signed and sealed the documents.
- **Need for business friendly and customer focused relationship.** Participants noted that the City has made improvements but stress the importance of further improvements. A negative experience significantly impacts their business in terms of time and money spent moving through the permitting process. Customers are penalized when the City makes mistakes, as it has an impact on their timelines and expenses.
- **Communication during the permitting process** (upfront and throughout the process) – need for prompt responses and consistency. Concerns about templated responses that are not relevant or are confusing, recommendations to use simpler language in responses.

Key Themes

- **Challenge with online only/need for in-person or same-day service.** Concern with the suspension of in person service during Covid. Flagged problems with the 24-hour standard for a call back.
- **Communications improvements.** For example, needing more info for condo owners; information about permit expenses online not accurate, more pro-active guidance for builders.
- **Interdepartmental requirements** – Problems with coordinating bylaw requirements with other City departments and challenges for customer to connect to other City departments.
- **Professional Involvement** - Need more respect for professional standards/less questioning of professionals, particularly when professionals have signed off on drawings.
- **PIDs** – Problems with the new payment process.

Sample Comments

“The issues we experience with each permit are as unique as the person doing the review”

“There are several amazing staff that have been prompt in responding and answering multiple questions when it comes to commercial permits and business licensing. However, I find that it is the process itself within the City, which is not a result of the staff, that is limiting businesses the opportunity to grow.”

“The individuals are well intentioned, but the process is cumbersome and administered by individuals who lack any real-world experience or comprehension as to the consequences of the delays created or how they interpret certain policies.”

“I always receive prompt responses and knowledgeable advice.”

Themes for Improvement

- Specifics related to a knowledgeable point person and plan reviewers
- Ideas for improving communications
- Ideas for improving the online platform
- Shorter permitting times and clearer communications about actual permitting times
- Make it easier to navigate the different departments, and need for better coordination on City's part

Themes for Improvement

- Need for business-friendly and customer-focused relationships from all levels of staff
- Consider costs and impacts to businesses
- Opportunity to streamline process and better connect to customer's processes
- Change PID payment process
- Ideas for changes to permits
- Requests for enforcement

Priorities for Improvement

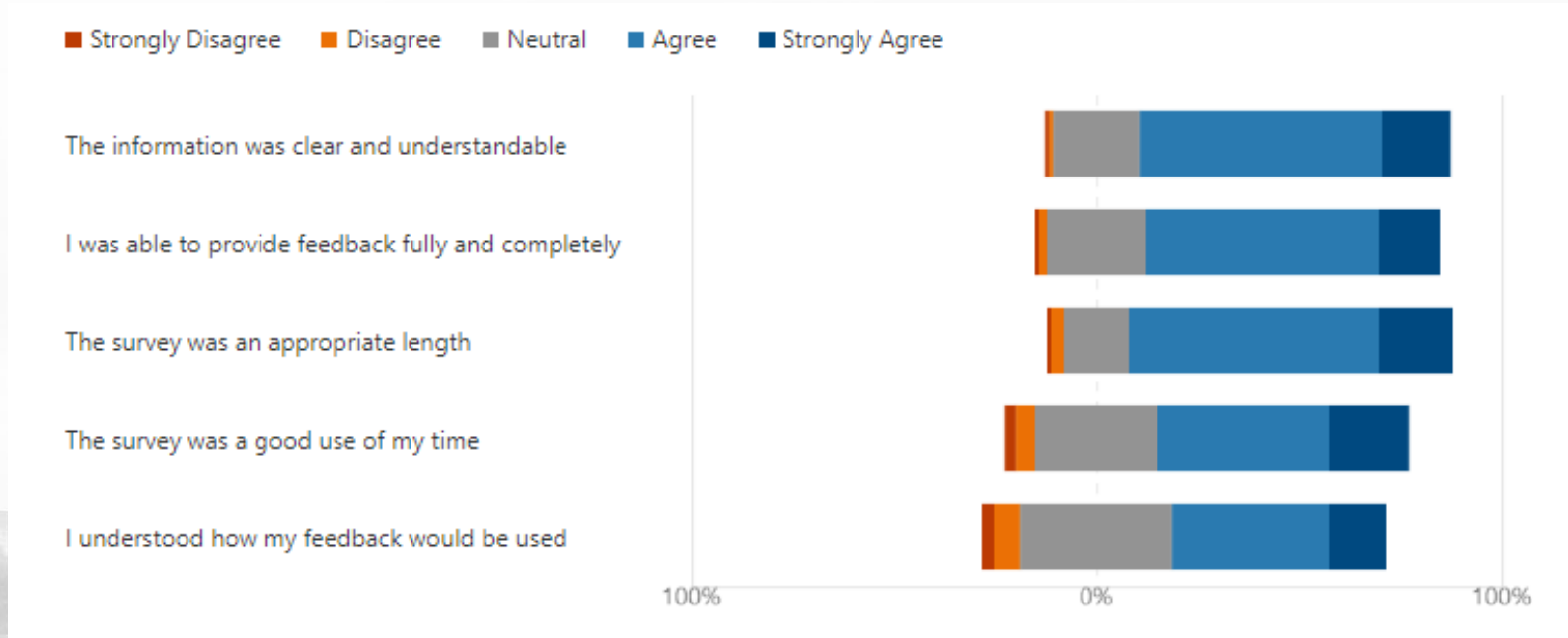
Customers indicated the following areas as the top priorities for improvement:

1. A knowledgeable point person
2. Improve upfront communications and communications throughout the process
3. Shorter permitting times
4. Make it easier to navigate the departments at City Hall

Data Limitations

- Only 100 people participated (the survey was included in our newsletter mailing list that goes to 3,466 customers).
 - The low participation rates means we should not consider the data to be representative. However, it does align with feedback we have heard from Industry and the Cornerstone Advisory Group.
 - Some comments related to a lack of trust and a reluctance to provide feedback in this format if the City would not implement changes.
- We did not ask for the date of the customer's most recent permit. There is a significant range of comments, and we cannot determine how differences relate to current inconsistencies amongst staffing versus changes in service over time.
- We did not include questions or options more specific to some professions that may have different experiences and needs with our permits, for example realtors.
- The survey indicated some potential differences between homeowners and professionals. This will be helpful information to track in future surveys.

Survey Evaluation (96 Respondents)



Next Steps

- Results of the survey will be shared with all staff in Building Standards
- To address the top two priority areas in the survey, the survey feedback has been integrated into the new ePermitting system and improving customer experience with our recently introduced single point of contact.
- With the assistance of the Cornerstone Advisory group, a short customer experience survey following the issuance of each permit in the new ePermitting system will be implemented, providing data to measure issues and improvements. We are planning to launch these surveys this summer.
- In the first year, report updated customer experience findings at Advisory meetings and report out annually as part of the Building Standards Annual Report.