

Calgarian Ideation Workshop

Exploring and reimagining how the City shares development project information **online**



Project background

- + This project is related to the citywide rezoning in 2024 and a response to the Council amendment to investigate and report back on development application notification systems
- + Includes the Development Map (DMap), a system that enables Calgarians to learn more about the proposed development applications and provide feedback
- + Project evolved from sole focus on DMap to now encompassing **the entire Calgarian experience when accessing development project information**, including in-person touch points such as notice boards, letters, etc.



Project Goals

- Improve trust and satisfaction of Calgarians with PDS information/notification services
- Better meet the needs of public users at a time of extensive growth and development

How did we approach this project?

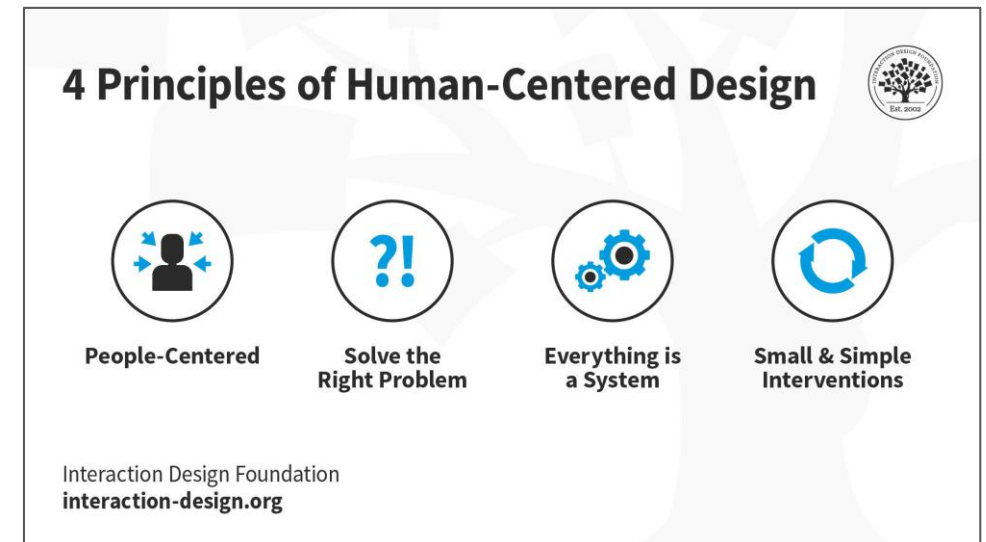
This project involves the City's Innovation Lab team and the User Experience (UX) team in collaboration with Planning and Development (PD).

What makes this project unique?

- + Both the Innovation Lab team and the UX team uses a **Human-Centered Design** approach, one of the first types of approaches used in Planning and Development projects

What does this mean?

- + A Human-Centered Design approach ensures that the "human" **needs and experiences of Calgarians, are at the centre of how we design** solutions.
- + This project focuses on the entire Calgarian journey (human, physical, digital) when accessing development project information



Principles of Human-Centered Design. [Click to read more](#)

What were the objectives of the workshop I attended?

Collect feedback from Calgarians on how we share development application information on City webpages

To reference the City webpages we looked at, [Click here](#)

Share previous research done on DMap from usability testing conducted in 2024 with industry and public Calgarians

Enable Calgarians to brainstorm and generate ideas for potential solutions on how we could improve the way development project information is shared in the future

What we heard

A summary of key themes and insights from Activity 1:

Exploring how we can improve how we share development application and DMap Information on our [City Webpages](#)



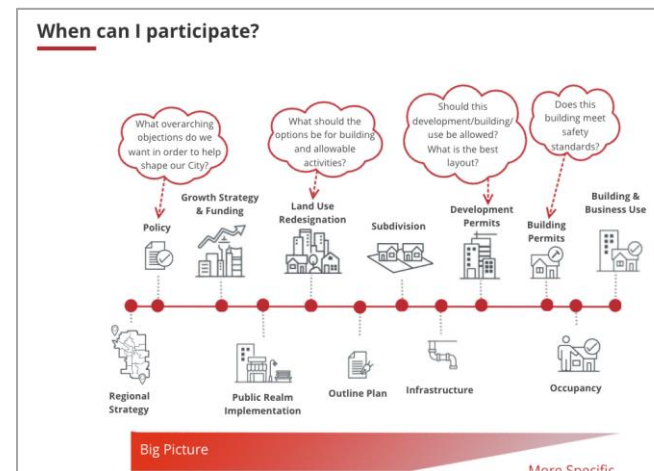
Key takeaway

01

There is still a gap in understanding the development application process, including

how, when, and where Calgarians can be involved in the process

- **Increased clarity on the process is needed, especially for what happens after Calgarians provide their comment on an application**
 - Calgarians may still be unsure on where their feedback fits into the process, and whether their input is meaningful
 - This need for transparency and clarity is emphasized for **Land Use Redesignations**, where the application process is more complex.
- **The current information and visuals on our webpages is confusing, making it unclear how and when your feedback is used**
 - To better serve Calgarians and their communities, the City needs to clearly outline the feedback process using plain language and improved, clearer visual aids.



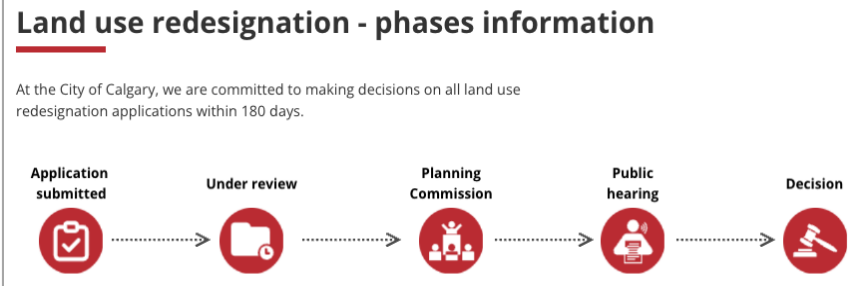
+ The current visual diagram on the webpage "How and when can I be involved?" [\[Click to open link to page\]](#)

Key takeaway

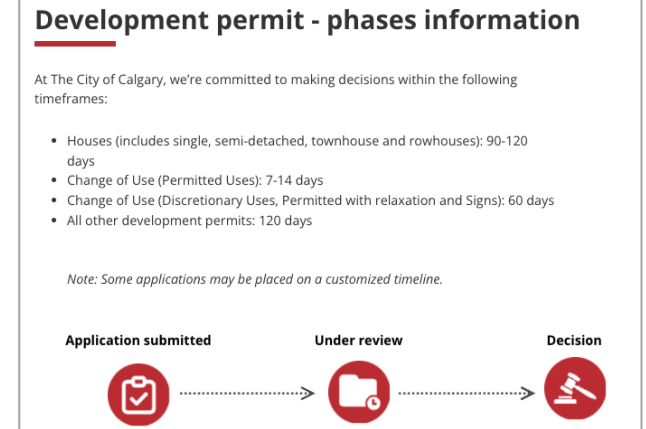
01 Continued

There is still a gap in understanding the development application process, including **how, when, and where Calgarians can be involved** in the process

- **More transparency is needed into what goes on behind the decision process for development applications.**
 - Three participants echoed similar questions regarding how long a decision is online for, the ability to see records, approved drawings and plans, and who to contact.
- **More critical information, including time-sensitive dates, are missing**
 - Participants have noted **time-sensitive dates** such as the commenting window, appeals period, date of application submission, and dates for public hearings should be clearer and visible up front.



+ Process flow for Land use redesignation on our City webpages "How the process works" [\[Click to open link to page\]](#)



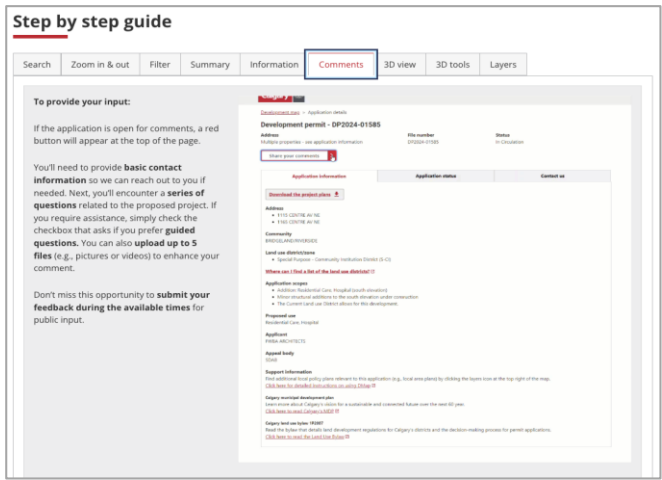
+ Process flow for Development permits on our City webpages "How the process works" [\[Click to open link to page\]](#)

Key takeaway

02

The current information presented on our City webpages may not align with Calgarian needs when looking for development information.

- **Information that you care about should be easily identifiable and accessible**
 - Information on core actions, such as clearly describing **where** Calgarians can use DMap to access application information and **how** to provide a comment, should be more prominent
 - The tabs in the "Step by step guide" to using DMap should focus more on making it clearer to people where they can go on the tool to submit a comment.
- **Some information is outdated**
 - "Discover the new DMap capabilities" on the homepage was relevant when it first came out in July of 2024—not anymore. [\[Click here to see the homepage\]](#)



+ The "Step by step guide" to using DMap with the Commenting tab open. [\[Click to open link to page\]](#)

Discover the new DMap capabilities

Starting in July 2024, we're introducing a new and improved Development Map. This update is the first in a series of enhancements designed to enrich your experience and our city's digital services.

Some of the new features are:

- **Photo uploads:** Enhance your comments with images for more impactful feedback.
- **Policy links and overlays:** Gain easy access to policies and bylaws, enabling clearer understanding and informed decision-making.
- **3D views:** Visualize projects in a dynamic way and see their impact on the cityscape.
- **Mobile optimization:** Use the map on-the-go with a design tailored for your phone.
- **Faster loading:** Access project details quickly, without delay.
- **Dedicated project pages:** Find all the information you need on individual pages for each application.

You can learn how to use the new DMap by visiting our [Guide to using Dmap](#).

+ "Discover the new DMap capabilities" section is currently listed high on the homepage. [\[Click to open link to page\]](#)

Key takeaway

03

Information on development projects should be **perceivable, understandable, and accessible**

- Currently, **information** presented on development applications and the process **is too technical**
 - Some Calgarians feel that the information is "too wordy" and that the City is "hiding" behind technical language.
- **Equity-denied groups** include those who use assistive technologies on their devices or have some form of impairment, English as an additional language learners, and other less-represented groups may **face barriers in how we are currently sharing information.**
- **Information should be more plain language, accessible and presented for diverse Calgarian user groups.**
 - Participants have echoed incorporating more visuals that are clear and directly relevant to the information presented.
 - Many participants have also echoed making options for text translation easier to locate, or introduce read-aloud options

Perceivable	Can everyone see and hear the content?
Understandable	Is the information clear, focused and easy to understand?
Accessible	Can this information be easily accessed by a wide range of Calgarians, including those who are in equity-denied groups?

Envisioning the future

A summary of key themes and ideas you shared with us in Activity 2:

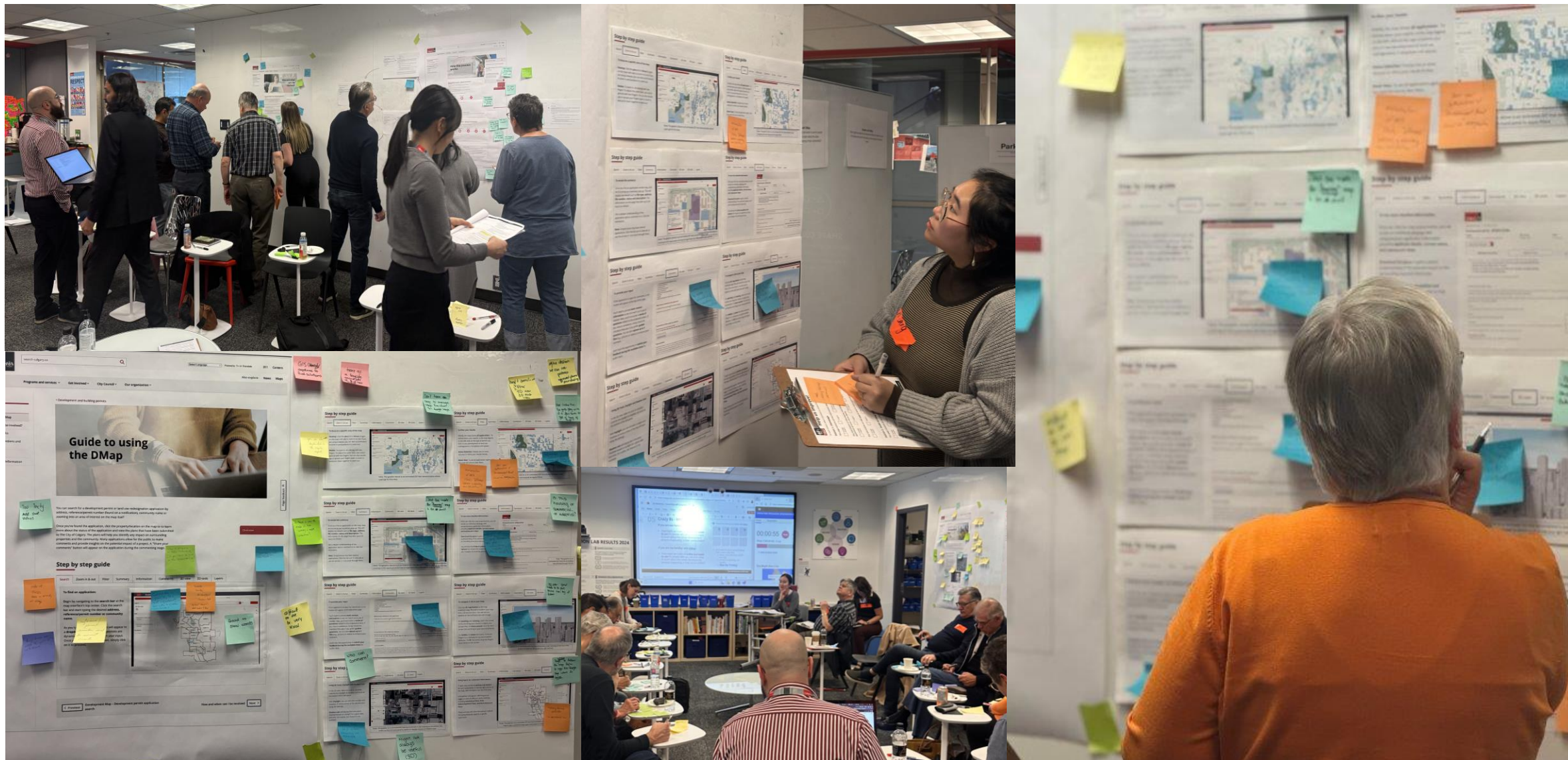
*What the future state could look like for how the City delivers development project information **digitally***



A summary of your ideas

Improving City webpages	Improving the Development Map (DMap)	Expand engagement initiatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase accessibility tools: add "read aloud" options, clearly show translation options.• Diversify formats: explore videos with closed-captions, "experience" selectors for different audience groups (public vs. industry user).• Leverage technology: explore AI assistants (e.g. chatbots), guided searches, and interactive questionnaires to connect users to the information they are looking for.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Add user guidance through incorporating onboarding tutorials, hover tool-tips, other visual hints that shows new users where to go.• Align current map controls to other commonly used maps, such as Google Maps where possible.• Strengthen engagement flow: send clear confirmation emails after writing a comment, include follow-up messages, introduce short surveys after.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue workshop initiatives like this one, host pop-up sessions at Community Associations, or "coffee-chats" with City staff or developers.• Engage younger audience groups: Use social media platforms (e.g., TikTok) to design content that is short, simple and relatable.• Collaborate with post-secondary or other educational institutions to create civic education modules, or host training sessions.

Highlights



What's next?

A high-level summary on next steps for this project, and summary tables on the next enhancements to tackle for implementation



Next steps

We learned that many Calgarians find it challenging to easily access the information they need for understanding urban development projects. You want clear, straightforward details, including how to share your feedback.

Common ideas that you have shared with us include leveraging AI technologies to help you find answers more quickly, or adding helpful tips and tutorials to DMap as a new user.

Most importantly, you emphasized the need for a clearer process that shows you where you can provide your feedback and how your comments are being used in the process.

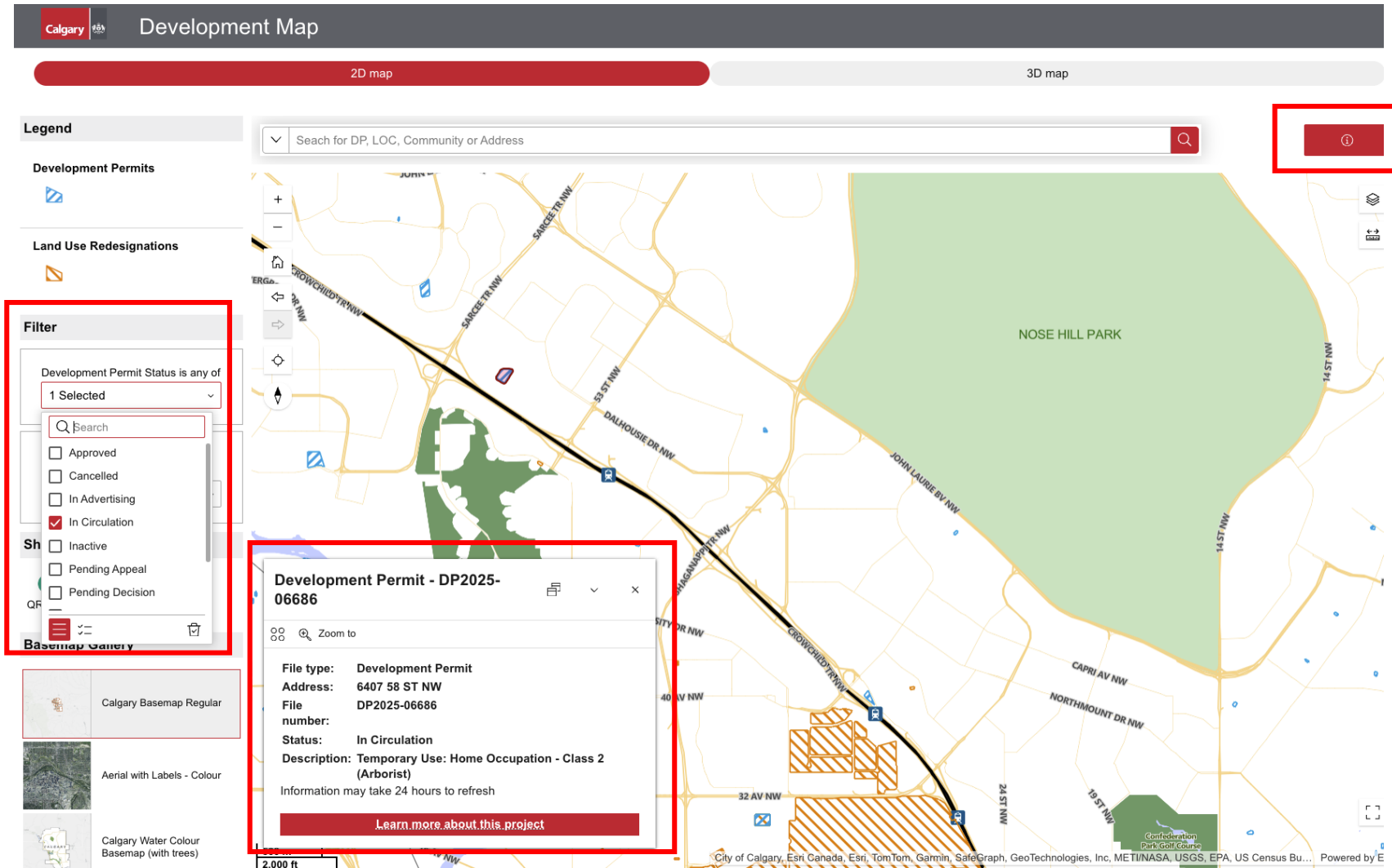
Moving forward

- We are in the process of presenting the findings of this workshop and other research to leadership
- We aim to create new designs for the webpages and test them in 2026
- We also aim to implement DMap enhancements in 2026

The key enhancement items

Opportunity	Examples	Calgarian Impact
1. Explore & implement DMap enhancements to onboard first-time users more easily	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrating guided map tours (interactive tutorials, tooltips, contextual help, etc.) Embed information resources for technical terminology on map UI (i.e., legend, info modal) Tackle other low-effort quick wins to improve experience from previous research 	Onboarding enhancements for first-time users will make it easier for Calgarians to access development information that matters to them and feel more included when they can engage in the process more easily, building trust and transparency between the City and Calgarians.
2. Restructure and improve information content on City webpages to reduce existing gap in understanding of the process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update and restructure existing information: review, modify, add or delete content to make accessing and understanding the information easier and clearer Explore other mediums like videos to create an accessible onboarding guide for DMap 	Making information accessible and easily understood can empower Calgarians including those directly impacted by a development and in equity-denied groups, to stay informed about local developments and understand how they can participate. This fosters a stronger, more inclusive relationship between the City and Calgarians.
3. Conduct second round of Usability Testing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct usability testing for new enhancements Target less-represented groups for recruitment (different assistive technology, NE quadrant, etc.) 	<p>Calgarians feel included and feel like their feedback is making a meaningful impact to the development of these tools.</p> <p>This testing will also validate whether the service is effectively meeting the needs and is working properly for Calgarians.</p> <p>Improved usability means easier access to City services and information.</p>

Example areas for DMap 'quick-wins' improvements in 2026



The screenshot shows the Calgary Development Map (DMap) interface. The top navigation bar includes the Calgary logo and the title "Development Map". Below this is a toggle for "2D map" (selected) and "3D map". The left sidebar contains a "Legend" section with "Development Permits" and "Land Use Redesignations". A "Filter" section is highlighted with a red box, showing a dropdown menu for "Development Permit Status is any of" with "1 Selected". Below this is a search bar and a list of status options: "Approved", "Cancelled", "In Advertising", "In Circulation" (checked), "Inactive", "Pending Appeal", and "Pending Decision". At the bottom of the sidebar are "Basemap Gallery" options: "Calgary Basemap Regular", "Aerial with Labels - Colour", and "Calgary Water Colour Basemap (with trees)". The main map area shows a street grid with "NOSE HILL PARK" highlighted in green. A red box highlights a search bar at the top right with the text "Search for DP, LOC, Community or Address". Another red box highlights a "Development Permit - DP2025-06686" pop-up window. The pop-up contains the following information: "File type: Development Permit", "Address: 6407 58 ST NW", "File number: DP2025-06686", "Status: In Circulation", "Description: Temporary Use: Home Occupation - Class 2 (Arborist)", and "Information may take 24 hours to refresh". A red button at the bottom of the pop-up says "Learn more about this project".

Make filter selection easier to navigate and clearer for users that changes have been made based on selection

Make it clearer for users to find information on How to use the map and link to other relevant resources

Improvements to the information pop-up; integrating more plain-language or tool-tips next to technical words so Calgarians can easily understand the application

Thank you!

We want to express our thanks to you again for taking the time to come out, stepping outside of your comfort zone and sharing your thoughts and ideas with us on the workshop day. **Thank you for helping us make life everyday better for Calgarians!**

For more information or questions about the project:

- 1) For inquiries specific to this workshop, or anything "digital":

Vivian Lai-Bui

vivian.lai-bui@calgary.ca

- 2) For all other inquiries related to this project:

Carrie Jewitt

carrie.jewitt@calgary.ca