



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

4 Principles of Human-Centered Design

- People-Centred
- Solve the Right Problem
- Everything is a System
- Small & Simple Interventions

Interaction Design Foundation
interaction-design.org

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](#)

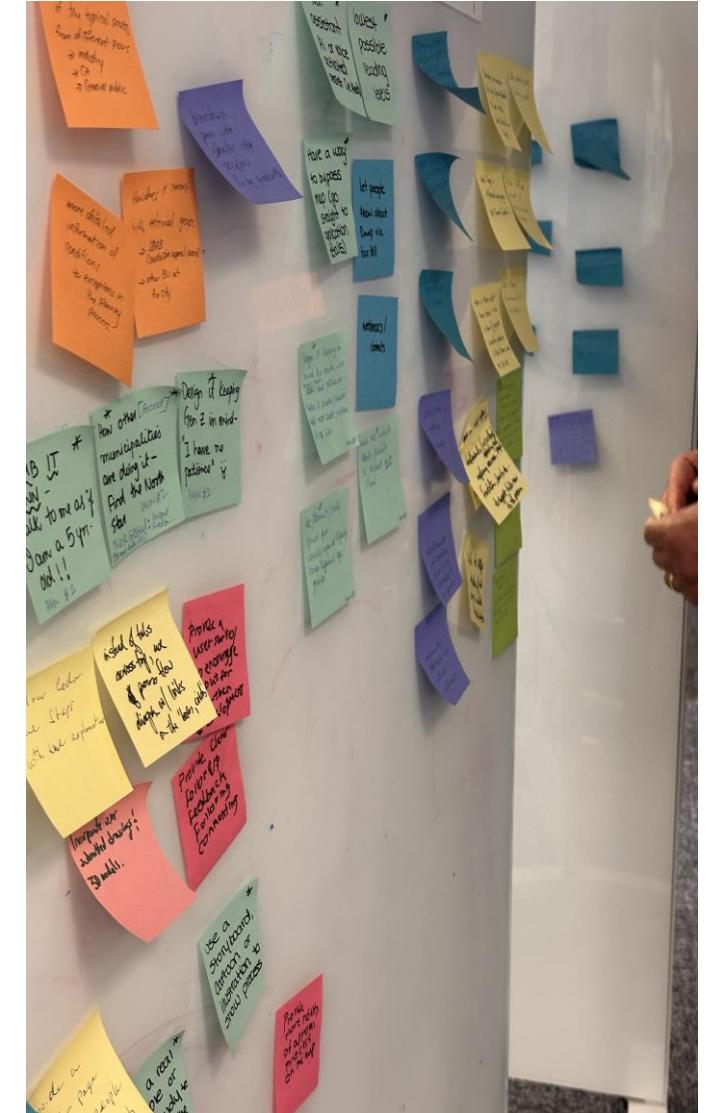
Share previous research done on DMap from usability testing conducted in 2024 with industry and public Calgarians

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](#)*



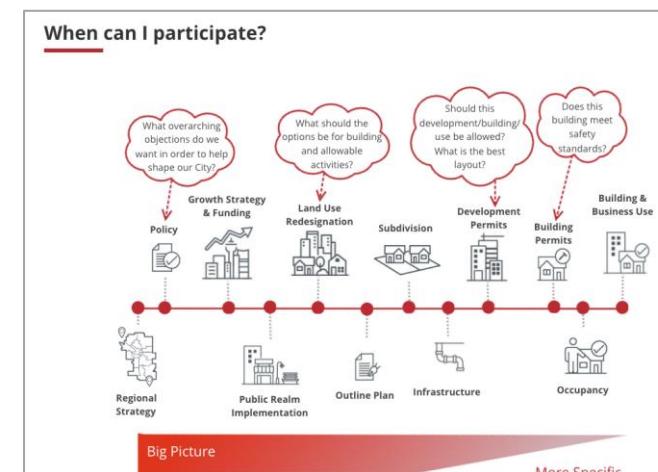


Key takeaway

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.

Land use redesignation - phases information

At the City of Calgary, we are committed to making decisions on all land use redesignation applications within 180 days.



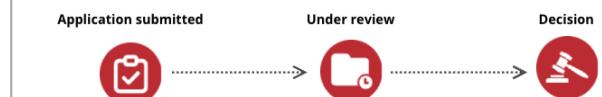
+ Process flow for Land use redesignation on our City webpages "How the process works" [\[Click to open link to page\]](#)

Development permit - phases information

At The City of Calgary, we're committed to making decisions within the following timeframes:

- Houses (includes single, semi-detached, townhouse and rowhouses): 90-120 days
- Change of Use (Permitted Uses): 7-14 days
- Change of Use (Discretionary Uses, Permitted with Relaxation and Signs): 60 days
- All other development permits: 120 days

Note: Some applications may be placed on a customized timeline.



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

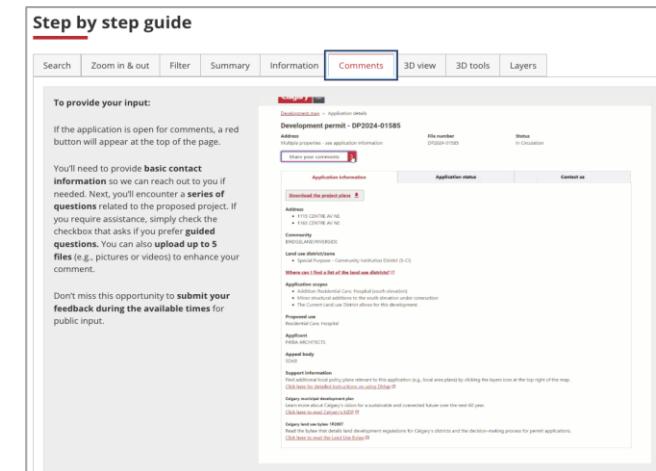


Key takeaway

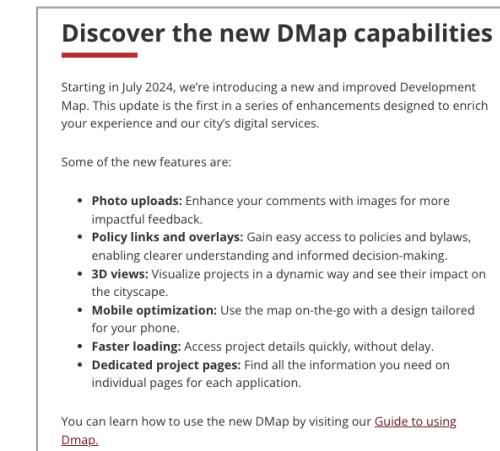
02

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" 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 <u>City webpages</u>	Improving the <u>Development Map (DMap)</u>	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

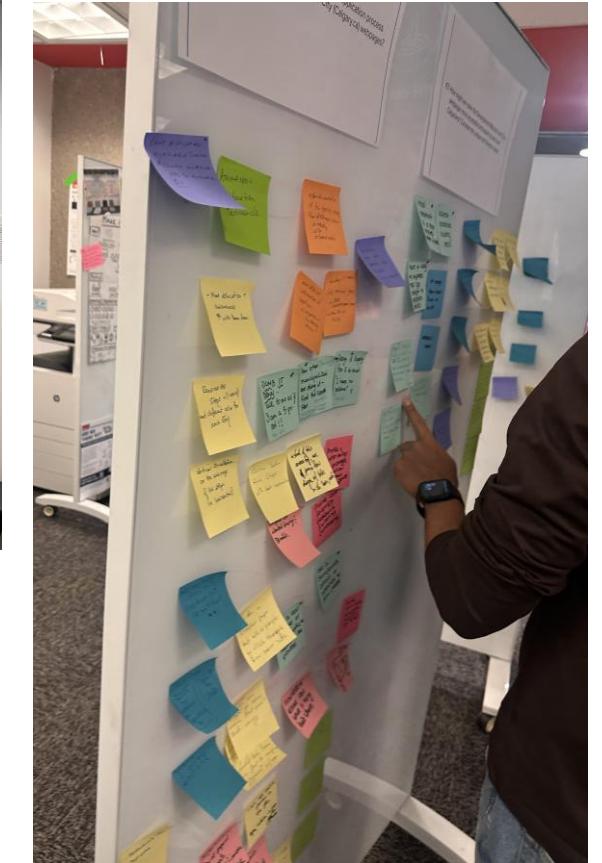


The User Experience (UX) team



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 clearerExplore 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 enhancementsTarget less-represented groups for recruitment (different assistive technology, NE quadrant, etc.)	Calgarians feel included and feel like their feedback is making a meaningful impact to the development of these tools. This testing will also validate whether the service is effectively meeting the needs and is working properly for Calgarians. Improved usability means easier access to City services and information.



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

The screenshot shows the 'Development Map' interface with a map of Nose Hill Park and surrounding areas. The map includes street names like 58 ST NW, DALHOUSIE DR NW, JOHN LAURIE BV NW, and 14 ST NW. A red box highlights the 'Filter' section on the left, which contains a dropdown for 'Development Permit Status is any of' with '1 Selected' selected, and a checkbox for 'In Circulation' which is checked. Another red box highlights the information pop-up for a specific development permit (DP2025-06686), which displays the following details:

Development Permit - DP2025-06686

File type: Development Permit
 Address: 6407 58 ST NW
 File number: DP2025-06686
 Status: In Circulation
 Description: Temporary Use: Home Occupation - Class 2 (Arborist)

Information may take 24 hours to refresh

[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":

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