



MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor and City Council

Through: Dr. Eric A. Johnson, Assistant City Manager *EAG*

From: Keith Mars, Director, Austin Development Services *KM*

Date: June 22, 2026

Subject: **Development Process Updates**

The purpose of this memorandum is to continue keeping the City Council informed about the significant improvements underway in the development process.

In February, City Council received a [memorandum](#) outlining a series of actions aimed at bringing greater clarity to development requirements, expanding review capacity to meet demand, and strengthening the quality of plan submissions. That communication also acknowledged the critical role the development process plays in supporting essential City services and sustaining a strong tax base.

Building on that foundation, this memorandum outlines the key operational, technological, and customer-focused advances made over the past 18 months, along with a snapshot of current initiatives. While not exhaustive, the attached list provides a broader view of completed work and ongoing efforts to modernize and improve the development review system.

The City of Austin has delivered significant improvements to transparency, permitting speed, and the overall development experience. We have worked cross-departmentally to achieve record-fast site plan review times, launch real-time customer tools, expand education programs, streamline permitting paths, increase third-party support, and introduce AI-assisted review. These efforts are already producing faster results, clearer guidance, and better public access to information and support.

In parallel, additional initiatives are underway to simplify the Land Development Code, accelerate permitting, expand AI-enabled reviews, and improve customer experience. Together, these completed and ongoing efforts demonstrate a sustained commitment to more responsive, predictable, and customer-centric development services that support Austin's long-term economic goals.

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Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at (512) 466-4598 or Keith.Mars@austintexas.gov.

cc: T.C. Broadnax, City Manager
Erika Brady, City Clerk
Jason Hadavi, City Auditor
Mary Jane Grubb, Municipal Court Clerk
Judge Sherry Statman, Municipal Court
CMO Executive Team
Department Directors

Attachment: Development Process Improvements (June 2026)

Completed Initiatives/ Action Items	
Site Plan Tracker	Created an interactive web-based Site Plan Process Tracker to provide real-time updates to site plan customers from application submission to case closure, to improve transparency and workflow efficiency. (March 2025)
Real-Time Access to Review Comments	Implemented an automated process for providing rolling draft comments to applicants with active site plan applications to provide applicants with real-time access to reviewer comments. (March 2025)
DSD Info Series	Launched a new educational series designed to connect with the Austin community, offering sessions that explain DSD operations, introduce key staff behind essential city services, and help residents navigate DSD processes. (March 2025)
Land Development Academy	Launched a monthly community-centric educational series based on core Development Services Department programs and services, including launch of an external Land Development Academy and a Land Development Academy On-the-Go. (May 2025)
Customer Survey Series	Developed and launched real-time automated surveys for key development services to gather actionable feedback and improve customer service. (September 2025)
AI-Assisted Building Plan Review (Archistar)	Implemented a new, automated, building permit assessment software, in partnership with Archistar, for residential customers. (September 2025)
Streamlined Change of Use	Streamlined Site Plan Exemption requirements for the Change of Use process, reducing the number of review disciplines from 11 to three and cutting the typical timeline from two months to about two weeks. (October 2025)
General Permit Expansion	Expanded the General Permit process to include qualifying construction within the existing right-of-way, reducing the time to permit and redundant procedural steps for City departments and partner service providers, such as Capital Metro and Austin Transit Partnership. (October 2025)

AUS Expansion	Assembled and deployed a specialized building plan review team to facilitate the development and permitting of the Austin Bergstrom Airport's Expansion projects. (February 2025)
Land Development Academy "On-the-Go"	Launched the 2026 Land Development Academy On-the-Go program to bring free, expert-led, customizable land development classes directly to Austin-area organizations, expanding access and supporting a shared understanding of site plan and land use processes. (January 2026)
Annual Cycle for Rule Adoption and Application Updates	Shifted rulemaking and application updates to an annual cycle, with exceptions, to promote predictability, transparency, and efficiency. (February 2026)
Educational Outreach	Launched a development services marketing and outreach campaign to promote permitting and compliance and increase public understanding of the development process. (February – April 2026)
Third-Party Contracts	Secured third-party review and inspections support to expand capacity when needed and enable staff to focus on high-impact, quality service delivery. (May 2026)
DSD ServiceConnect Phone Line	Established a dedicated permitting and development services phone line with a hybrid interactive voice response-and-agent model, improving access, responsiveness, and customer support. (June 2026)
PDC Service Enhancements	Launched limited walk-in services and streamlined customer service hours to improve accessibility, responsiveness, and convenient in-person support. (June 2026)
Ongoing/ Underway:	
Transforming Site Plan Review	Maintaining the shortest turnaround times on record for site plan review, with initial reviews at *23 days and updates at *11 days in May (77% and 78% faster than when improvement work began). (Ongoing) (*calendar days)
Continuous Improvement Forums	Hosting monthly interdepartmental continuous improvement forums to create a regular, structured space for teams to identify issues, share insights, and implement meaningful improvements to site plan review. (Ongoing)

Directors Roundtable	Hosting monthly executive meetings to facilitate alignment of priorities, timely decision-making, and accountability across the organization. (September 2025 – Ongoing)
Expedited Site Plan Review	Piloting an Expedited Site Plan Review process with the goal of reducing the total time to permit for site plan to six months. (October 2025 – Ongoing)
AI for Site Plan Review	Partnering with a local Austin start-up to pilot an AI tool that helps civil engineers identify and fix compliance issues before submission, reducing rework, improving plan quality, and accelerating the review process. (January 2026 – Ongoing)
Review of Housing-Related Rules	Reviewing housing related rules, in partnership with stakeholders, to identify opportunities to streamline and simplify. (March 2026 – Ongoing)
90-Day Time to Permit for Small Lot Subdivisions	Evaluating the Subdivision Review process to identify opportunities to streamline workflows and achieve a 90-day permitting timeline for small-project subdivisions. (June 2026 launch)
Reduced Residential Review Timelines	Reducing key residential building plan review timelines by a collective total of approximately 59%. (July 2026 launch)
Reduced Commercial Review Timelines	Reducing key commercial building plan review timelines by a collective total of approximately 46%, and introducing new review types to provide improved scale for small projects (July 2026 launch)
Reduced Site Plan Review Timelines	Reducing Site Plan Review timelines from 20 business days for initial reviews and 10 for updates, to 14 and 10. (July 2026 launch)
Customer Service Training	Developing an enhanced customer service training program for all customer-facing development staff to improve consistency, responsiveness, and overall customer experience. (July & September 2026 launch)
PDC Space Enhancements	Collaborating with Austin Facilities Management to establish the PDC as a more “open for business” space by increasing staff presence, co-locating review teams, and reconfiguring workspace to improve collaboration, communication, customer service, and efficiency. (September 2026 launch)

Expansion of AI-Assisted Building Plan Review (Archistar)	Working to expand use of the AI-assisted Building Plan Review tool (Archistar) to include additional residential project types, as well as different elements of residential review. (October 2026 launch)
Code Amendments	Initiating a series of updates to City code aimed at simplifying and streamlining the Land Development Code. (December 2026 launch)