



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

City of Pittsburgh Permitting Process Reform Initiative: Executive Order 2026-01

On January 6, 2026, Mayor Corey O'Connor issued Executive Order 2026-01, requiring City departments engage in a 60-day comprehensive review of permitting, licensing, design review, and project approval processes to address longstanding concerns regarding inefficiency, unpredictability, and applicant experience. The initiative supports the Mayor's commitment to modernizing municipal operations and improving delivery of core services that enable small business growth, neighborhood investment, economic development and housing production.

Following the 60-day review, the O'Connor Administration released a response to the Executive Order on March 9, 2026, through an Executive Summary that included the methodology used, key findings, and recommended action items to make Pittsburgh's permitting process faster, clearer, and easier to use.

Over the last six months, the Mayor's Office has worked with the Department of Permits, Licenses, and Inspections (PLI), Department of City Planning (DCP), Department of Mobility and Infrastructure (DOMI), Department of Innovation & Performance (I&P), and other City departments to move from recommendations to implementation.

PHASED REFORM STRATEGY

As identified in the first Executive Summary, the City is advancing permitting reform in three phases that follow the life cycle of a project through the permitting system: intake, review, and inspection and completion. Each phase focuses on improving a different stage of that process, while building on reforms implemented in the phases before it.

Phase I: Intake. Focused on how projects enter the permitting system. The City implemented immediate operational improvements to make requirements clearer, improve application quality, create faster pathways for routine work, and identify complex projects earlier so that applicants receive the right level of coordination from the start.

Phase II: Review. Phase II will focus on what happens after an application enters formal review. The City will redesign how applications are routed, reviewed, and coordinated across departments. The goal is to match review to project complexity, thereby reducing unnecessary review cycles and handoffs, establish more predictable timelines, and identify potential conflicts earlier.

Phase III: Inspection and Completion. Phase III will focus on the final stages of the permitting

process: inspections, occupancy, and project completion. The City will build on the first two phases by improving how projects move through inspections, receive their Certificate of Occupancy, and are ultimately completed, while advancing longer-term regulatory, technological, and structural reforms needed to make improvements durable across the permitting system.

These reforms will impact and improve every part of the permitting process and approval cycle and will result in a nationally competitive system. This will make it easier for residents to repair their homes, open small businesses, and build more housing to welcome new neighbors.

WHAT CHANGED IN PHASE I

Over the last six months, the City has implemented its first set of reforms to make it easier to enter the permitting system, simplify routine work, improve coordination across departments and give applicants greater visibility into the process. Key reforms include:

- **Simplified approvals for routine projects.** Launched EZ Permit pilot, creating a faster approval pathway for 15 common, low-risk residential and commercial work scopes, with eligible permits issued in one business day.
- **Faster, more convenient inspections.** Launched virtual inspections pilot for 13 residential work scopes, reducing the advance scheduling requirement from five business days to two. When paired with an EZ Permit, eligible projects can move from issuance to inspection in as little as three business days.
- **Earlier coordination for complex projects.** Redesigned the City's multi-department pre-application process to identify complex projects earlier, coordinate initial review across appropriate departments, and provide applicants with a written project roadmap outlining requirements and next steps before formal review begins.
- **Greater transparency for applicants.** Launched the OneStopPGH Permit Tracker, allowing applicants to follow individual review and inspection steps, see comments and project history, and better understand where their application stands.
- **Clearer and more accessible guidance.** Consolidated permitting information and applicant resources into a shared OneStopPGH Permit Center webpage, with clearer submission guidance and visual workflows to help applicants understand requirements and constraints before they submit.
- **More consistent review across departments.** Established shared Service Level Agreements (SLA), standardized operating procedures, joint staff training, and earlier coordination among PLI, DCP, DOMI and other reviewing departments to create more predictable review timelines and reduce conflicting or late-stage feedback.
- **Targeted regulatory reforms.** Advanced changes to zoning and transportation requirements intended to remove outdated or unnecessary barriers, including the Administration's first package of Zoning Code amendments and changes to Transportation Impact Study requirements.

PHASE I EARLY RESULTS

Phase I established a baseline for measuring performance and began producing measurable improvements in processing times for routine projects. The City analyzed nearly 12,000 Building and Development Applications (BDA) submitted since 2024 and is developing ongoing performance measures to track speed, predictability, and quality as reforms continue.

1. **Simple permits move through the system quickly.** Among the more than 9,000 permits issued since 2024, simple permits, those that require no plan review, have a median processing time of approximately three days.

2. **BDAs are moving faster.** Early Phase I changes have reduced City processing times across all types of BDAs, with the median time it takes the departments to review a BDA falling from 21 days in January 2026 to seven days in August 2026, a decrease of 67%.
3. **Application completeness remains a major opportunity.** Just fewer than 5,4000 applications, or 59%, are complete at intake and proceed through no more than two standard review cycles.

SIMPLIFY AND ACCELERATE APPROVAL FOR ROUTINE PROJECTS

Routine, low-risk work should not have to move through the same approval processes as larger or more complex projects. The City is creating simpler, faster pathways for common residential and small business projects while maintaining appropriate safety standards.

IMPLEMENTED IN PHASE I

- Launched EZ Permit pilot, creating a one-business-day approval pathway for 15 routine residential and commercial work scopes.

NEXT: PHASE II

- Evaluate the EZ Permit pilot and expand eligibility to additional routine work where appropriate.
- Reduce professional drawing requirements for small residential renovations.
- Triage applications based on project size, type, and complexity.
- Expand accelerated plan review to additional routine projects that meet defined eligibility and safety criteria.

LONGER TERM: PHASE III

- Expand same-day, in-person, over-the-counter permit reviews for eligible work.
- Identify opportunities to expand the use of opt-in standards for common residential work to ease submission requirements and expedite the permit process aligned with a pending Zoning Code rewrite.

IMPROVING APPLICATION QUALITY AND PREDICTABILITY

The application process should be straightforward, easy to understand, and consistent. It should be accessible to everyone who needs a permit whether their project is big or small. The first step toward making that change is to ensure that application requirements and expectations are communicated clearly and effectively. The City is working to reduce delays caused by incomplete submissions and late design changes.

IMPLEMENTED IN PHASE 1

- Revamped multi-department and multi-agency pre-application meetings for large or complex developments, including new eligibility triggers, and introduced a written project roadmap identifying requirements, department feedback, and next steps before formal review begins.
- Strengthened intake review procedures to identify missing materials before formal review begins and improved online submission guidance.
- Explored technology to assess application readiness and began development of an RFI for new intake and readiness tools.
- Standardized SLAs across reviewing departments to establish consistent review timelines.
- Integrated both DOMI transportation and site plan review into the development approval process earlier.

NEXT: PHASE II

- Expand shortened SLAs to additional minor projects, excluding encroachments into the public right-of-way.
- Incorporate Forestry Division reviews into applicable projects and establish design and installation standards.

MODERNIZE ONESTOP AND APPLICANT EXPERIENCE

OneStopPGH is the front door to the City's permitting process. Applicants should be able to understand requirements, submit materials, communicate with reviewers, and track a project through one clear and accessible system. The City is upgrading OneStopPGH and related applicant resources to create a more integrated permitting experience.

IMPLEMENTED IN PHASE I

- Launched the OneStopPGH Permit Tracker, breaking permit review and inspection into individual steps and allowing applicants to track project status, comments, and inspections.
- Added inspection comments and history to the Permit Tracker to provide applicants with a more complete record of the inspection process.
- Centralized multi-department review feedback in OneStopPGH, including reviewer comments, documents, and applicant communications.
- Launched virtual inspections for 13 residential work scopes, allowing eligible inspections to be completed remotely.
- Added guided workflows and visual submission tools, including a new permit process webpage and downloadable permit workflow.
- Created consolidated OneStopPGH permitting webpage and updated departmental web content to provide clearer, more consistent application guidance and contact information.
- Created a formal applicant feedback process through EngagePGH to gather input as reforms are implemented.

NEXT: PHASE II

- Publish simplified and predictable fee guides across reviewing departments.
- Publish public-facing dashboard highlighting relevant permitting statistics.
- Expand OneStopPGH into a more integrated multi-department permitting system, including implementation of Bluebeam electronic plan review for more consistent review functionality, and creating better links between related sub-permits with partner departments.

INCREASE CONSISTENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACROSS DEPARTMENTS

A multi-department permitting process only works predictably when departments use consistent standards, timelines, terminology and review practices. The City is building shared operating procedures and performance measures so that applicants receive more consistent review and departments can identify and address bottlenecks.

IMPLEMENTED IN PHASE I

- Formalized department practices through shared written procedures and review standards, including new standard operating procedures for EZ Permits, virtual inspections, and pre-application meetings.
- Conducted joint trainings between reviewers and inspectors to align interpretations and

support implementation of new processes.

- Began development of common performance metrics across PLI, DCP, and DOMI.
- Implemented consistent inspector assignment throughout a project's lifecycle where feasible.

NEXT: PHASE II

- Build a common operating system across departments, including shared terminology, status definitions, handoffs, operating practices, and methods for tracking the same project across DCP, DOMI, PLI, and partner agencies.
- Conduct joint departmental public education sessions on the development process, changes that the reforms create, and updates on upcoming related amendments.

LONGER TERM: PHASE III

- Evaluate opportunities to expand third-party inspections for qualifying work.
- Automate enforcement of overdue inspections to standardize procedures and improve tracking outcomes.
- Consolidate active departmental policies, bulletins, and procedural guidance into a searchable digital repository aligned with state code.

IMPROVE PLANNING AND DESIGN REVIEW

Pittsburgh needs to grow. We need to make it easier to build new housing, revitalize our business districts, and bring new amenities to our communities. Planning and public review should be clear, coordinated, and timed so that issues are identified early rather than creating avoidable delays later in the process. The City is improving Development Activities Meetings (DAM) and Planning Commission review to make requirements more consistent and the process easier to navigate for applicants, residents, community groups, and reviewers.

IMPLEMENTED IN PHASE I

- Began review of administrative and legislative changes to DAMs to improve scheduling, coordination, and requirements.

NEXT: PHASE II

- Amend the City Code governing DAMs to reduce scheduling and hearing delays, integrate DAM reports into OneStopPGH, and reduce unnecessary administrative requirements.
- Standardize Planning Commission submission requirements through audits, implementation of required staff memos, published checklists, and Commissioner training.
- Analyze intake and review-cycles to identify why applications are returned at completeness and why projects exceed the standard review process, then use those findings to improve guidance, procedures, sequencing, and locally controlled requirements.

MODERNIZE TRANSPORTATION AND SITE REVIEW

Continuing on Mayor O'Connor's commitment to Vision Zero, transportation and site review should support safe streets, neighborhood needs, and high-quality development. Requirements should be proportionate to project size and impact, with smaller projects avoiding unnecessary analysis and larger projects subject to clear, predictable standards. The City is continuing to modernize its transportation and site review requirements to reflect best practices.

IMPLEMENTED IN PHASE I

- Reduced unnecessary traffic study requirements for smaller projects by eliminating additional analysis for projects generating fewer than 50 per-hour trips and integrating site access, circulation, loading, and trash review into DOMI site plan review.
- Created an optional Transportation Demand Management (TDM) pathway that recognizes qualifying multimodal investments through a reduction in calculated trips.

NEXT: PHASE II

- Advance implementation of the TDM framework, pending City Council action, including requirements for larger developments.
- Develop an impact-based proportional mitigation framework for larger projects.
- Evaluate possible fee-in-lieu options to streamline mitigation and support neighborhood transportation and infrastructure priorities.

LONGER TERM: PHASE III

- Publish updated guidelines for impact-based proportional mitigation and possible fee-in-lieu options.
- Implement updated transportation analysis requirements for larger projects.
- Re-vamp the Construction Management Plan with better sequencing so applicants can plan the next phase of their project with confidence.
- Adopt updated Transportation Impact Study standards following completion of the broader review.

ADVANCE ZONING AND REGULATORY MODERNIZATION

The City's Zoning Code is outdated and makes it harder to build housing and bring economic opportunities to Pittsburgh. Zoning can be a tool to encourage affordability, growth, and responsible, equitable development in all across Pittsburgh. The City has begun the long-overdue process of modernizing its Zoning Code.

IMPLEMENTED IN PHASE I

- Introduced the first package of targeted Zoning Code reforms, Bill 2026-0834, which includes:
 - Removal of obsolete sections and language;
 - Modernization of dimensional and height standards;
 - Simplified height requirements in districts that can support denser development; and
 - Updates to outdated compatibility standards.
- Continued to advance the City's Comprehensive Plan (PGH2050) so that it may inform an eventual Zoning Code reform package and began reviews of existing Zoning Code deficiencies.

NEXT: PHASE II

- Begin a comprehensive Zoning Code update aligned with the Comprehensive Plan.
- Establish an annual review of Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA) decisions to identify recurring issues and inform further amendments.
- Use recurring ZBA decisions to identify opportunities for more by-right development and reduce unnecessary hearings and administrative approvals.
- Modernize outdated setback and dimensional requirements that constrain infill housing and additions to existing structures.

- Reform compatibility standards to make it easier to support dense, vibrant, and amenity-rich mixed-use neighborhoods
- Update the bonus point system to make requirements clearer and more usable.
- Introduce amendments to stormwater review policies and procedures.

LONGER TERM: PHASE III

- Adopt a modernized Zoning Code.
- Establish a regular Zoning Code maintenance amendment process to ensure that it remains current and easy to use.
- Standardize the Zoning certification closeout process to create a clear pathway for resolution to avoid unnecessary code violations.
- Modernize the temporary certificate of occupancy process, allowing safe projects to open sooner and reducing unnecessary delays in the final stages.



NEXT STEPS

IMMEDIATE IMPLEMENTATION: Phase I changes outlined in this Executive Summary shall go into effect today, September 23, 2026. Departments will monitor all Phase I changes and make adjustments as needed while implementation of Phase II begins. Phase II will focus on changes that improve how applications move through review, expand faster approval pathways, and continue to improve coordination between departments and applicants.

TECHNOLOGY ENHANCEMENTS: The City will continue to advance improvements to the OneStopPGH platform to support electronic plan review, applicant guidance, communication, and performance tracking.

POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS: The Administration will advance legislative proposals where necessary.

STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATION: The City will continue engagement with elected officials, industry groups, community stakeholders, and applicants to communicate new procedures and gather feedback as reforms are implemented.

PERFORMANCE MONITORING: Departments will track implementation progress and performance metrics to evaluate improvements throughout the implementation process.