

Building Permits & Inspections

Includes:

- Residential Building Permits
- Non-Residential Building Permits
- Residential Building Inspections
- Non-Residential Building Inspections
- Property By-law Enforcement

Service Overview

DESCRIPTION

Ensure compliance with by-laws and standards through consultation, education, administration, inspections and the regulatory enforcement of property standards, construction, renovation, and demolition of buildings. This service includes:

- receiving and processing permit applications
- zoning approvals
- plan examinations
- compliance and by-law based inspections

KEY GOALS

1. Ensure safe, healthy, accessible buildings through the administration and enforcement of building by-laws and property standards.
2. Continue to streamline the building permit application and approval process for industry professionals and non-professional customers.
3. Enhance our customers' awareness of necessary, safety-related building project requirements.
4. Improve our ability to provide timely site inspection services and proactive by-law enforcement.
5. Pursue financial self-sufficiency.

SERVICE LEVEL STATISTICS:

Description	2003	2004	2005	2006	4 Year Average
Single-Family Housing Starts	1,641	1,882	1,756	1,737	1,754
Multiple-Family Housing Starts	789	607	830	1,040	817
Total Housing Starts	2,430	2,489	2,586	2,777	1,877
Permit Volume (Number issued):					
Electrical – Residential	5,697	5,980	6,382	6,394	6,113
Sign / Mobile Sign	5,921	5,494	5,529	6,061	5,751
Housing	3,609	4,126	4,081	4,070	3,972
Electrical – Commercial	2,731	2,961	3,282	3,521	3,124
Plumbing – Residential	1,870	2,153	2,197	2,478	2,175
Accessory Structures	1,700	1,866	2,051	1,991	1,902
Plumbing – Commercial	839	813	773	903	832
All Other	2,725	2,956	2,925	3,140	2,937
TOTAL	25,092	26,349	27,220	28,55	26,805

Description	2003	2004	2005	2006	4 Year Average
Plan Examination Volume (Number of plans reviewed)					
Housing Structural Plan	2,322	2,470	2,415	2,317	2,381
Fire Protection	1,959	2,096	1,894	2,109	2,015
Non-residential Mechanical Extended	1,347	1,398	1,121	1,260	1,282
Non-residential Electrical Extended	1,204	1,365	1,098	1,254	1,230
Commercial Electrical Permit	517	1,057	837	709	780
Fire Department Review	580	632	597	677	622
Non-residential Structural Plan	543	577	454	522	524
Sign Permit Plan	455	373	387	371	397
Accessory Structures	617	334	250	303	376
All Other	474	519	485	746	556
TOTAL	10,018	10,821	9,538	10,268	10,161
Inspection Volume (Number conducted):					
RESIDENTIAL					
Electrical – Residential	10,590	14,119	14,694	13,140	13,136
Housing	10,315	15,738	15,559	10,872	13,121
Plumbing Residential	4,896	7,132	7,672	7,822	6,881
Accessory Structures	2,807	3,828	3,187	2,249	3,018
Fire Reports	0	194	293	356	n/a
Complaint-Based	1,727	2,363	3,107	3,809	2,752
TOTAL RESIDENTIAL	30,335	43,374	44,512	38,148	39,092
COMMERCIAL					
Building Inspections	n/a	n/a	11,833	13,085	n/a
Electrical Inspections	n/a	n/a	11,472	11,829	n/a
Plumbing / Mechanical Inspections	n/a	n/a	11,748	17,962	n/a
TOTAL COMMERCIAL	n/a	n/a	35,053	42,876	n/a

Strategic Direction

LINK TO PLAN WINNIPEG

- 1A-02 Encourage Downtown Living
- 1A-03 Promote a Safe Downtown
- 4B-02 Promote Safety in Buildings
- 4B-01 Integrate Safety into Overall Planning and Urban Development

SYNOPSIS OF POLICY DIRECTION

Building Permits and Inspections is a statutory public service as outlined in the City of Winnipeg Charter Part 5 Sections 150 – 152. The service is provided primarily for the purposes of reviewing and approving proposed design, construction, demolition and occupancy of new buildings and existing buildings in order to meet minimum acceptable

health, life safety, zoning, accessibility and community standards as established by building, plumbing and electrical codes and related by-laws. The service also provides inspection and enforcement offered to complainants, property owners and neighbourhood residents relative to the provisions of the City property-related by-laws to maintain minimum prescribed standards. Activities associated with this service include review and development of City By-laws and the provision of information on procedures and interpretation of regulations during construction. Activities associated with this service surround the requirement to achieve compliance with City by-laws and Provincial and National Building Codes.

The service area has been engaged in a number of customer service improvements through the on-going Permits X-Press initiative. The Permits X-Press improvements have been targeted primarily at improving the speed of permit issuance and providing a system to measure improvements. The focus has been to provide a transparent and accountable system with the following goals:

- To increase productivity and minimize costs wherever possible.
- To refine service-delivery processes and to improve customer service.
- To use the latest technological solutions to deliver new processes improvements.
- To upgrade the skills and enhance the satisfaction of all users of the system -- including staff, customers, other civic departments and external agencies.
- To implement measures that produce accurate and timely information on which to base future service delivery for permit and inspections programs.

The service area has also placed a high focus on implementing Red Tape Recommendations in order to reduce/eliminate unnecessary regulations and facilitate development. The implementation of various improvements has been accomplished through consultation with the customers of the service. The improvements have helped the service area to react to recent increases in business and construction activity in Winnipeg in order to promote economic growth.

Promote Safety in Buildings

The service reviews and approves proposed designs of new and existing buildings as they relate to the Manitoba Building Code and enforcement of property by-laws to promote health and safety related to use of buildings.

Integrate Safety into Overall Planning and Urban Development

The service promotes safety in urban development by coordinating approvals for construction as it relates to access for Fire, Ambulance and Police Services. The service also reviews all development along river-ways in order to address safety related to design that might be impacted by flooding or soil erosion.

Promote a Safe Downtown

The service Implements and manages the Building Code to deal with the safety of buildings in the downtown and appropriate lighting associated with entrances and exits. The service also enforces various property standard by-laws to address safety of public.

Encourage Downtown Living

The service developed Existing and Heritage Buildings Fire Safety Guidelines to provide a building assessment approach for safety issues as opposed to relying on the Building Code and its prescriptive regulations. This has helped in the development of residential uses for heritage buildings in the Downtown.

KEY FACTORS INFLUENCING SERVICE DELIVERY

Succession Planning and Training

New and emerging technologies will require new skills and knowledge. Staff will require training and coaching. The City workforce has a large percentage of senior, very knowledgeable staff that are eligible to retire in the next two years. The challenge will be to make both the funds and staff available to develop, coordinate and implement the necessary training programs. New staff enter the Division with limited skills required for the City's unique government / service environment. There is no ongoing training plan to meet operational requirements or to provide relevant service information.

Customer Service

Significant increase in construction activity in Winnipeg (and the rest of Canada) over the last few years has had a significant impact on service delivery. The inability to predict permit processing workload requirements in advance has made it very difficult to adjust the workforce to meet workload demand. It has also been challenging to meet the legitimate and concurrent needs of two distinct customer types. The permit applicant customer wants prompt, responsive delivery of necessary permit approval, while the general public customer want assurance that proposed development complies with all zoning and building regulations. Customers generally have very little knowledge of regulations and approval processes. Those that do have some knowledge still find regulations and processes overly complicated

and difficult to understand. This situation often results in excessive approval times and avoidable re-work. No single authority is truly in charge of the 'one-stop' permit shop. As a result, there are varying degrees of urgency across multiple departments. This situation causes approval delays and customer confusion about the type of specific project information that is required. Increasing permit volumes combined with static service levels and status quo approval processes has led to a significant backlog of site inspections that are necessary in order to ensure compliance with necessary building code regulations. Construction activity occurring without the required construction permits creates public safety concerns as work is not reviewed and inspected to ensure minimum safety requirements are met. There is an increasing interest in broadening the use of e-permit applications. Endorsement of the Red Tape Commission's report recommendations has enabled the department to more aggressively pursue alternative service delivery and non-tax supported funding options.

SUMMARY OF GOALS AND STRATEGIES

1. Ensure safe, healthy, accessible buildings through the administration and enforcement of building by-laws and property standards.

- Implement a risk-based approach to establishing site inspection priorities.
- Implement an audit-based inspection approach for projects involving professional engineers and architects.
- Implement an audit-based inspection approach for projects involving licensed trades professionals.
- Implement an audit-based approach to inspections for new single family construction for correction of non-life safety inspections.
- Continue to work with the building industry to remedy frequently recurring deficiencies found during the building inspection process.

2. Continue to streamline the building permit application and approval process for industry professionals and non-professional customers.

- Implement mandatory use of the Building Design Summary for Industry professionals.
- Establish a process to reduce turn time for Foundation Permits for commercial projects involving new construction and additions.
- Enhance the information and features available to industry professionals through the "View my Status" online function.
- Increase the use of automated emails to advise professionals, applicants and owners of deficiencies and missing information in plans submitted.

- Improve the functionality of building related information available to professionals on the web.
- Automate Land Development Applications in order to better provide service related to construction approval.
- Expand the availability of on-line permitting to non-professional customers.
- Enable submission of e-plans in cases where building plan examination is required as part of the permit approval process.

3. Enhance our customers' awareness of necessary, safety-related building project requirements.

- Establish a City of Winnipeg presence in retail building material supply outlets to proactively inform customers of project specific permitting requirements.
- Enhance the building permits web-site to provide detailed project specific permit information.
- Develop and promote messages about the value of building permits from the perspective of the permit customer.
- Be more transparent about the breadth of service provided in exchange for the building permit fee.

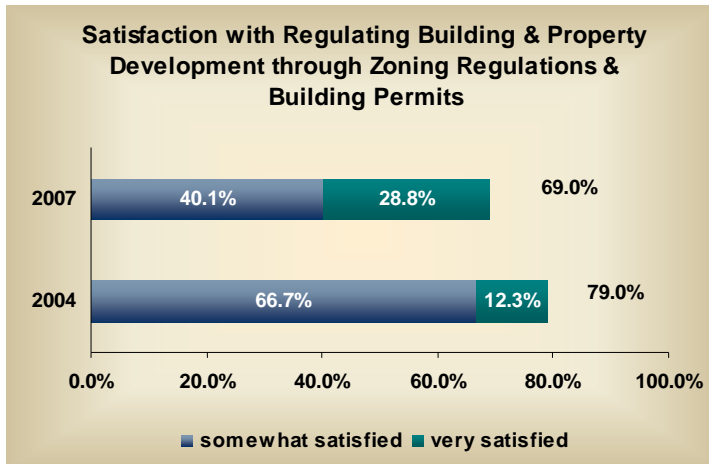
4. Manage and prioritize permit application / inspection workloads.

- Develop measures to determine the current capacity to perform permit approvals and building inspections.
- Incorporate temporary / seasonal staffing for peak periods when required.
- Establish an appointment system in the Zoning & Permits area.
- Implement a risk analysis model (frequency / risk / liability) to prioritize work.
- Develop a staff pool of trained and qualified staff to create capacity for peak workloads.

5. Pursue financial self-sufficiency for the permit approval and inspection operations.

- Perform a comprehensive review of fees and charges including their relevance, currency and relationship to service cost.
- Increase fines for re-work that causes significant additional workload.
- Pursue the merits of a fee-based Residential Compliance Certificate program that provides assurance to existing home buyers that the vendor has complied with all necessary permitting requirements.

Performance Information

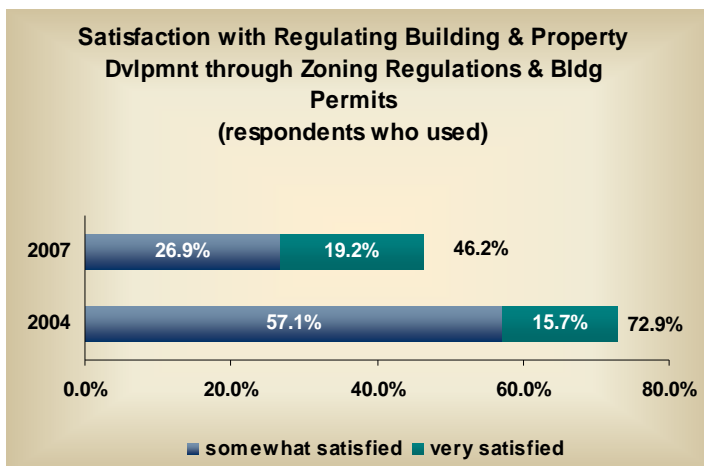


Citizen satisfaction for regulating building & property development through zoning regulations & building permits declined slightly from 79% in 2004 to 69% in 2007.

Have you applied for a building permit in the past 12 months?

Response	2004	2007
YES	4.6%	4.9%
NO	95.4%	95.1%

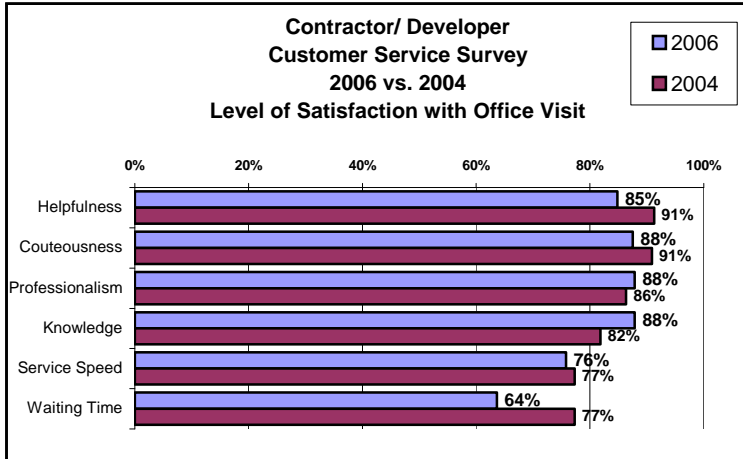
Results for those respondents replying 'YES' above (Service Users):



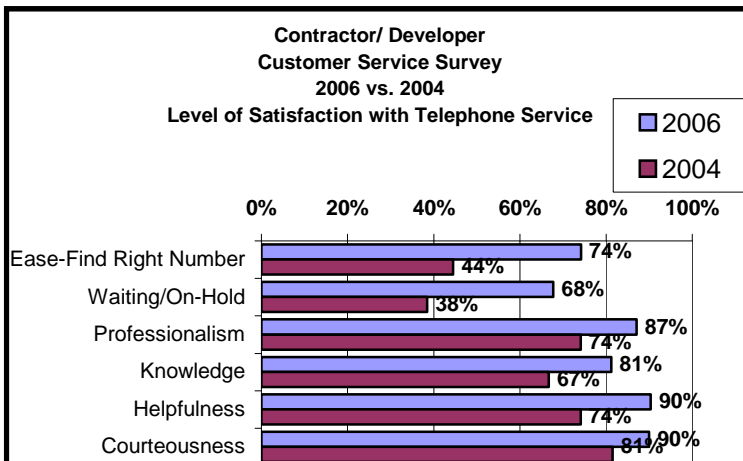
For those respondents who applied for a building permit, only 46% were satisfied.

Note: For the above four tables, the 2007 Survey was conducted in the month of August; the sample size was 614 people and the margin of error is +/- 4% 19 times out of 20.

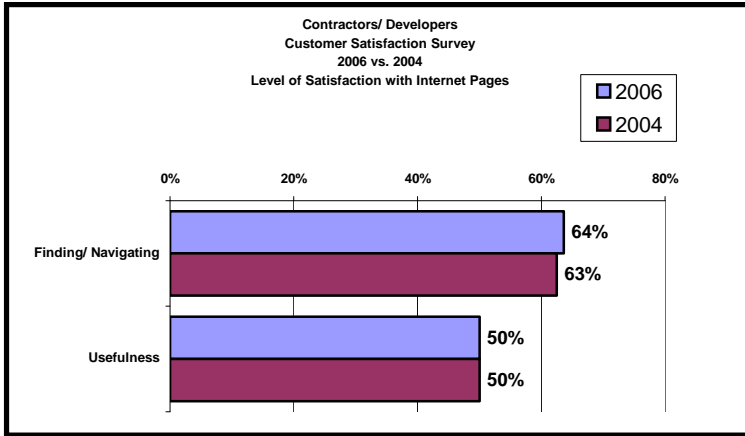
The following charts show the results from a “counter top” customer satisfaction survey of 37 contractors in November 2006 and 28 contractors taken in December of 2004. The results shown are not based on a scientific or statistically valid sampling process. The 37 participants in 2006 and 28 participants in 2004 were self-selected in that they chose to fill out a “counter top” survey that was made available during the month of December 2004 and November 2006. Generalized observations can be made, but they are not statistically valid for each measure.



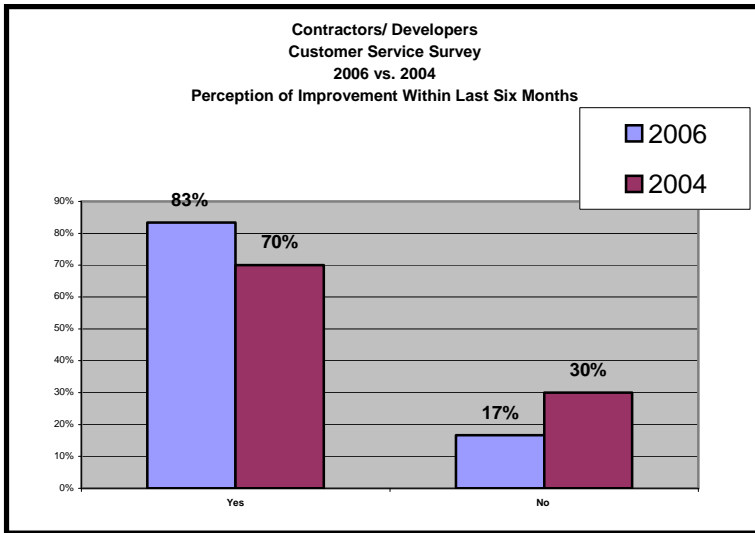
The level of satisfaction for a contractor/developer visit to the office is good for most measures, except for waiting time.



There has been an improvement in contractor/developer satisfaction using telephone service from 2004 to 2006.



Contractor/developer satisfaction with internet pages did not change from 2004 to 2006.



Contractor/developer perception of improvement within the last six months has increased.

Notes:

- The department is planning in the short term to refine its survey methods to include:
 - Capturing customer feedback using a more representative and scientific methodology
 - Distinguishing customer feedback for two primary permit customer types like 'one-time' applicants and 'regular' applicants representing the professional / trades industry.
- The department has also engaged in a comprehensive web-based customer satisfaction survey on a quarterly basis starting in the Spring of 2007. Responses will provide regular and objective customer feedback that will be used to guide service improvement priorities.
- The Permits X-Press initiative has produced significant process changes resulting from consultation with the department's Industry Advisory Group. A Permits X-Press 'Report Card' is used to track the progress of each individual permits process improvement initiative. Fifty-seven of the 66 recommended actions in the 2004 – 2006 Report Card have been completed. The report card can be found on the City of Winnipeg Internet site at www.winnipeg.ca/ppd.

EFFECTIVENESS DATA

PERMIT APPROVAL

A primary activity of the Building Permits & Inspections service area is to receive and initiate processing and approval of permits dealing with building and land use. The data below shows recent trends in average turn-around times by permit category (i.e. from the date of application to the permit issue date).

Average Permit Turn-around Time (in working days)

Permit Type	2003	2004	2005	2006
* Accessory Structures	8.7	9.7	6.6	9.6
Electrical Commercial	6.2	7.2	6.8	6.6
Electrical Residential	1.4	1.4	1.5	1.3
Housing	18.7	18.5	21.3	22.6
5-day Master Plan Program		**	7.2	6.75***
5-day Engineered Plan Program		**	10.6	25.1***
Plumbing Commercial	6.8	7.8	8.3	11.4
Plumbing Residential	1.2	1.3	1.5	1.2
Sign / Mobile Sign	3.3	3.1	2.9	1.0

** In April 2004, these two 'fast-track' programs were introduced under the Permits X-Press initiative. These programs will be trended separately in future years to determine the effectiveness of these and other 'fast-track' programs designed to improve customer service.

*** These average turn-around times include permit applications that meet the criteria for the program at present, but present particular approval requirements that prevent processing within the desired time frames. For example, building permit applications are presently accepted in cases where the land for the building is not yet serviced or lot grading has not yet occurred. In 2006, 69% all Master Plans were issued within five days and 67% of all Engineered Plans were issued within five days. The department's goal is to significantly increase these percentages through continuous improvement via the Permits X-Press initiative.

PLAN EXAMINATION

A key step in the building permit approval process involves plan examination. It is here that structural and design components are evaluated on paper to proactively determine compliance with safety related code including structural integrity and fire prevention. The table below shows the trend in average 'turn-around' time in working days for the primary plan examination activities.

Average Plan Examination Turn-around Time (in working days)

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Housing-Structural Plan	6.7	6.7	8.9	11.2
Fire Protection	11.1	9.3	9.6	12.3
Non-residential Mechanical Extended	4.1	4.5	6.9	9.6
Non-residential Electrical Extended	4.5	3.9	5.4	4.8
Commercial Electrical Permit	1.5	2.0	2.8	4.4
Fire Department Review	4.8	5.2	4.1	7.2
Non-residential Structural Plan	10.4	8.5	7.6	20.1
Sign Permit Plan	1.4	1.1	2.0	2.7
Accessory Structures	1.9	1.8	2.6	3.4

EFFECTIVENESS DATA

INSPECTIONS

Permitted work typically results in a physical inspection or a series of inspections in order to determine whether the structure complies with applicable building code regulations. The table below shows the trend in defects found for the primary inspection types.

Total Defects Found

Inspection Type	2003	2004	2005	2006
Accessory Structures	695	1,158	946	484
Electrical Residential	2,264	4,717	8,358	5,536
Housing	11,107	47,417	45,965	15,026
Plumbing Residential	684	1,617	3,536	2,291
Total	14,750	54,909	58,805	23,337

In 2006, there was a significant reduction in the total number of defects.

Note: The number of defects rose dramatically from 2003 to 2004. This variance is due in part to a more regimented approach to defect identification and tracking through automation that was introduced starting in 2004.

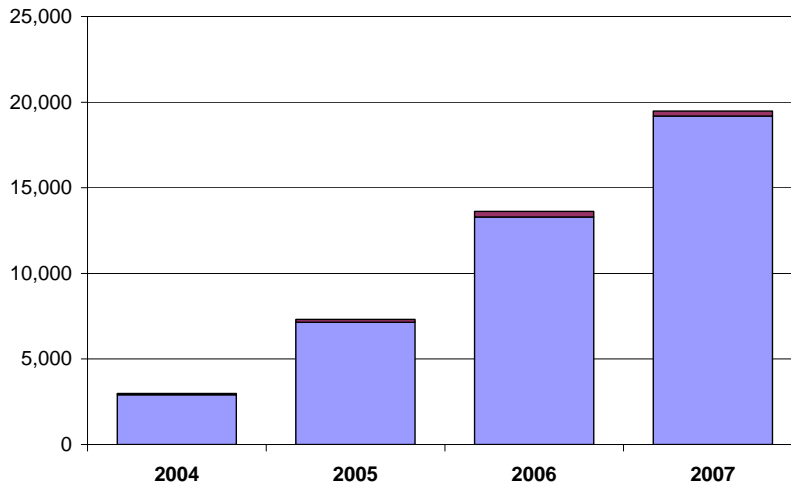
COMMERCIAL INSPECTIONS:

COMMERCIAL INSPECTIONS				
Inspection Type	2005		2006	
	Volume	Defects Found	Volume	Defects Found
Building Inspections	11,833	2,206	13,085	2,206
Electrical Inspections	11,472	1,192	11,829	1,210
Plumbing / Mechanical Inspections	11,748	482	17,962	1,382
Totals	35,053	3,880	42,876	4,798

One of the issues for the Planning, Property and Development Department in this service area is the growing number of outstanding housing inspections. This is due to the fact that housing inspections, whether permit-based or complaint-based, are highly dependent on a call from the permit applicant, requesting a final inspection. In many cases, this does not occur on a timely basis. In addition, the inflowing permit volume is such that there is insufficient time for the existing compliment of inspectors to follow up on these outstanding inspections. The next chart shows the growing number of housing inspection files initiated during the year that remain open at year-end.

Note that commercial inspection numbers were not considered in this analysis since an inspection is required for occupancy. It is for this reason that inspection 'backlogs' typically do not occur for commercial premises.

Open Inspection Files at Year End



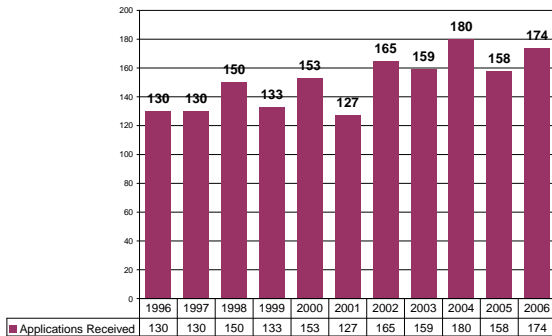
Additional analysis is desired to determine the relative risks associated with these open inspection files. A plan to address the housing inspection 'backlog' is forthcoming in conjunction with a comprehensive strategic planning exercise being undertaken by the department's Development & Inspections Division.

	1-Jan-2004	1-Jan-2005	1-Jan-2006	1-Jan-2007
Complaints Based Inspection	89	178	327	297
Permit Based Inspection	2,903	7,140	13,295	19,185

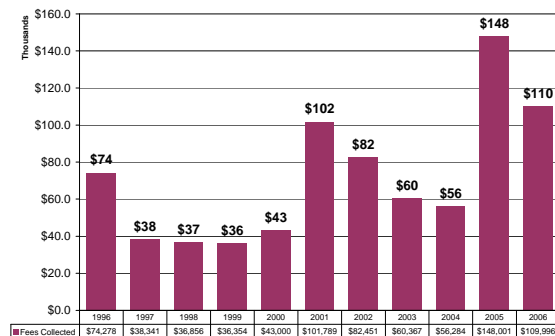
WATERWAYS PERMITS

Waterway Permits were issued for a broad spectrum of projects including residential construction, commercial developments, riverbank stabilization, floodplain developments and City infrastructure works. During the past two years (winter of 2005/06 to winter of 2006/07) stabilization work was undertaken on a total of 1.9 kilometers of riverbank (1.4 km private frontage; .5 km City of Winnipeg frontage) at an approximate total construction value of \$3.9 million. The charts below reflect the trend in number of waterway permits received and fees collected annually.

Waterway Permit Applications Received



Waterway Permit Fees Collected



EFFICIENCY DATA

The Planning, Property and Development Department have undertaken a comprehensive review of the Planning, Development & Building Fees By-law and expect to be complete within the next few months. The comprehensive review will examine the costs for providing services related to specific fees identified in the fees by-law. The intent of the review is to move closer to cost recovery for services provided in relation to the various fees identified in the by-law. This will also have an additional benefit as the costs for providing specific services can be used as a baseline for future efficiency measures of the service. This Service Plan will be updated to include specific baseline efficiency measures once the aforementioned fees analysis is complete.

Proposed efficiency measures:

- Average cost per residential / commercial permit issued
- Average cost per residential / commercial plan examined
- Average cost per residential / commercial building inspection performed

BENCHMARKING INFORMATION

As part of the strategic planning and performance measurement process, this service area will adopt as many benchmark measures as is practical, from the Intercity / County Management Association (ICMA) adopted measures for Code Enforcement. This organization has developed a consortium of over 100 North American cities that for 10 years have been developing and refining measures and data for a number of comparable service areas. Benchmark measures for the code enforcement service area include:

For summary reporting:

- Cases closed as a percentage of cases open at any time during the reporting period
- Cases brought into compliance as a percentage of cases open at any time during the reporting period
- Average number of calendar days from case initiation to compliance

For detailed reporting:

- Average number of calendar days until first inspection of reported code violations
- Ratio of cases carried over from the previous reporting period to total cases on the books
- Expenditures per capita
- Expenditures per case closed
- Building permits issued or development plans reviewed per full-time equivalent employee (FTE)
- Cases open at any time during the reporting period per FTE