

City of Milwaukee: Leads region with fastest review time for major development projects

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MILWAUKEE – A new report by the Wisconsin Policy Forum highlights that the City of Milwaukee has the fastest median time for reviewing major development projects through the local development review and permitting process among the area municipalities analyzed for the report.

The report, “Cleared for Construction” published March 5, sheds light on how local governments in the Milwaukee area review and approve development projects. The Wisconsin Policy Forum received data on all commercial development projects valued at \$5 million or more that were issued a building permit between January 2017 and mid-2025 from six cities, including Milwaukee, Waukesha, West Allis, Wauwatosa, Oak Creek, and Brookfield. The City of Milwaukee saw the highest number of major developments during that time, with 94 large projects having an estimated construction cost of more than \$1.4 billion.

The report found that Milwaukee’s median time between the first application associated with a project and the final building permit approval was 145 days, the fastest of the six cities in the study. The next fastest municipality had a median time of 222 days.

“This report shows Milwaukee is serious about thoughtful development that produces new housing and job opportunities for our residents,” **Milwaukee Mayor Cavalier Johnson** said. “During this Year of Housing, we will continue to carry out a variety of initiatives from process improvements to new funding programs to remove barriers to housing growth and choice throughout the city.”

The Forum noted that Milwaukee's progressive zoning framework contributed to its shorter median review times, identifying Milwaukee as having the most "streamlined" model of the cities reviewed.

"Milwaukee's forward-thinking approach to zoning and urban design are a big part of our strategy to bring impactful development to neighborhoods across the city," **Department of City Development Commissioner Lafayette L. Crump** said. "The report underscores how our work aligning zoning rules and design standards with community vision and neighborhood planning reduces barriers to new development."

The [Wisconsin Policy Forum](https://www.wispolicyforum.org) is a nonpartisan, independent statewide policy research organization that conducts impartial public policy research and analysis. To view the full report, visit [wispolicyforum.org](https://www.wispolicyforum.org).