



AAK | PROMOTING EXCELLENCE
IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

THE NAIROBI PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT
MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (NPDMS)

USER EXPERIENCE 2023 SURVEY FINDINGS



Introduction

The Architectural Association of Kenya (AAK) recently conducted a comprehensive survey on the user experience of the Nairobi Planning & Development Management System (NPDMS). This initiative was prompted by numerous complaints received from our esteemed members regarding the system’s functionality and efficiency. As a vital tool for the construction industry, the NPDMS plays a crucial role in streamlining and facilitating the planning and development processes in Nairobi. Recognizing its significance, AAK aimed to assess and identify key areas for improvement to ensure a seamless user experience, enhance productivity, and contribute to the overall growth and development of the construction sector.



Methodology

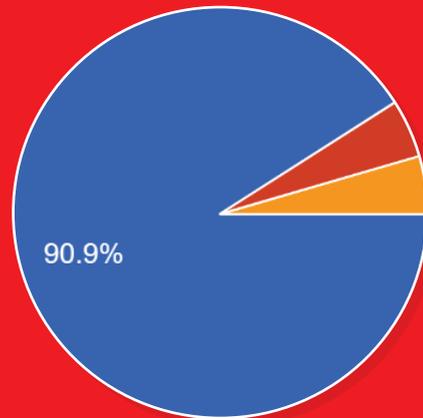
This survey was sent out to all AAK members, specifically targeting registered architects, town planners and engineers who use the NPDMS. The survey garnered a commendable response rate of 44 professionals, representing various professions who interact with the system frequently. Among the respondents, 40 were architects, 2 were engineers and 2 were urban planners, further enriching the diversity of perspectives captured in the survey. This robust response rate ensures that the findings of the survey are representative of the concerns and experiences of the professionals.



1.

What is your professional background?

44 Responses

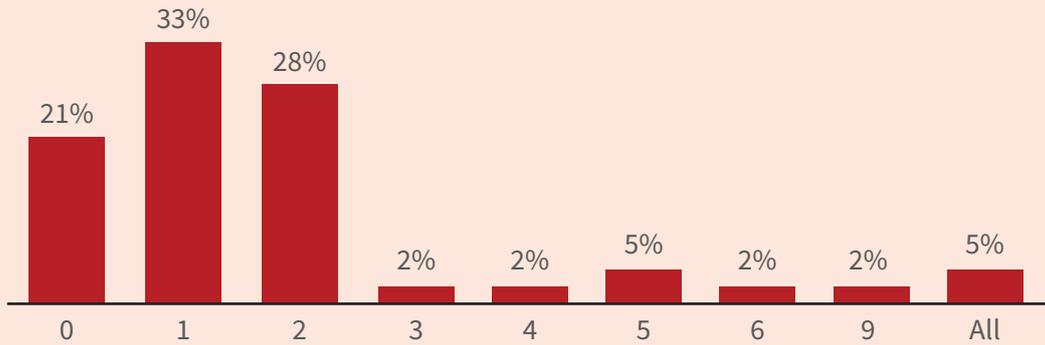


● Architect ● Urban Planner
● Engineer ● Developer

Number of Applications Submitted to the County Government

Notably, 33% of the experts submitted only one application through the NPDMS system over the last six months. 28% of them had submitted two applications, while 21% had submitted no applications in the previous six months. This implies that a significant portion of the experts had minimal engagement with the system, possibly indicating a lower level of utilization of the system and a limited number of development projects during that period.

Number of Applications Submitted to the County



Value of projects Submitted for Approval in the Last 6 months



29.5%

of the projects submitted on the NPDMS system were worth over KES 100 million.

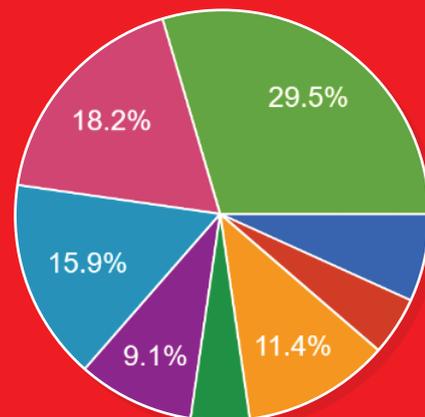
These were followed by those worth KES 50-100 million and KES 30-50 million.



2. (b)

What is the value of the project(s) for which you have submitted a development application(s) in the last 6 months?

44 Responses



- Less than KES 1 million
- KES 1-5 Million
- KES 5-10 Million
- KES 10-20 Million
- KES 20-30 Million
- KES 30-50 Million
- KES 50-100 Million
- Over KES 100 Million

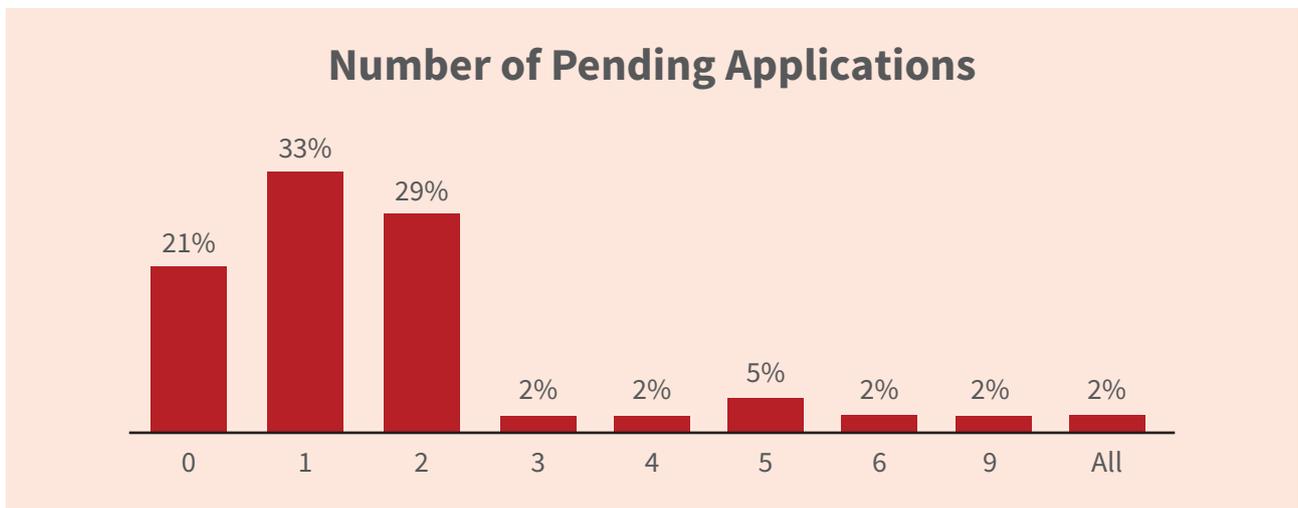
THE NAIROBI PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (NPDMS)

These findings reveal that a significant proportion of projects being processed through the system are high-value development projects. This means that the construction industry is a vital contributor to Nairobi County's GDP as the county gains significant revenue from the industry, and numerous employment opportunities are generated from the projects.

Therefore, Nairobi County can significantly benefit when the development control processes are streamlined and efficient, leading to faster approvals, reduced bureaucracy, and improved overall planning and development management transparency.

Pending Development Applications Submitted in the NRS

33% of the respondents had one pending application, 29% had two pending applications, whereas, 21% had no awaiting applications. Notably, 2% of the respondents reported that all their submitted applications are still pending. This suggests a relatively small but notable portion of individuals who have experienced delays or extended waiting periods processing their applications. It highlights potential areas where the county could improve the system or the development control process to ensure timely and efficient application processing.



How Long it took to Process Approvals for Development Applications Submitted in the Last Six Months

Alarmingly, 34.1% of the respondents have been awaiting approvals for over three months. This was followed by 29.5% and 18.2%, who had a waiting time of 8-12 weeks and 5-8 weeks, respectively. It is noteworthy that there was 2.4% of experts who received applications after a year.



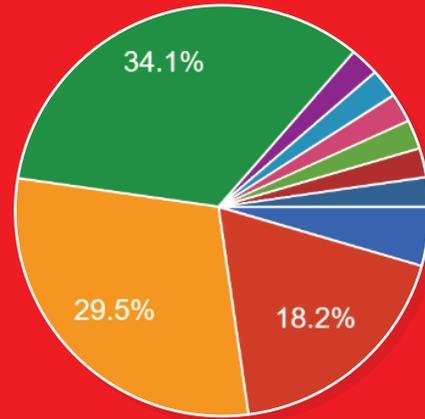
34.1%

of the respondents have been awaiting approvals for over three months.



2. (d)
How long did it take to process or receive approvals for development applications submitted in the last 6 months?

44 Responses



- 2-4 Weeks
- 5-8 Weeks
- 8-12 Weeks
- Submitted prior to the 3 months and y...
- Longer than 5 months, still waiting for..
- 1 Year
- There was breakdown of communicati...
- 4 months on average

This reveals significant delays in the approval process, with a high percentage of respondents experiencing waiting times of over three months. These delays significantly impact development timelines, increase costs, and create frustrations for experts and developers seeking approvals through the system. It raises a need for improvement in the efficiency and timeliness of the approval process to ensure a smoother and more expeditious experience for the professionals.



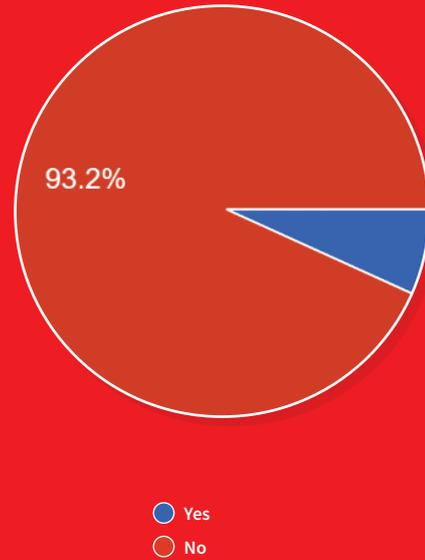
Experiences of Experts Using the System

The experts expressed dissatisfaction with the efficiency, transparency, and effectiveness of the NPDMS. The main issues identified included the prevalence of corruption, lack of response to submissions, the need for physical visits despite the online process, delays in communication, unclear guidelines, and inefficiencies in the system.

Some specific comments mentioned the poor response rate from the authorities unless one makes phone calls or physical visits the office, indicating a breakdown in communication. Notably, 93.2% of the respondents had to visit the county offices after submitting applications, beating the essence of an online system



3. Have you in the past 6 months completed a project development application from submission to approval without having to contact or physically vi... Nairobi City County Development Control offices?



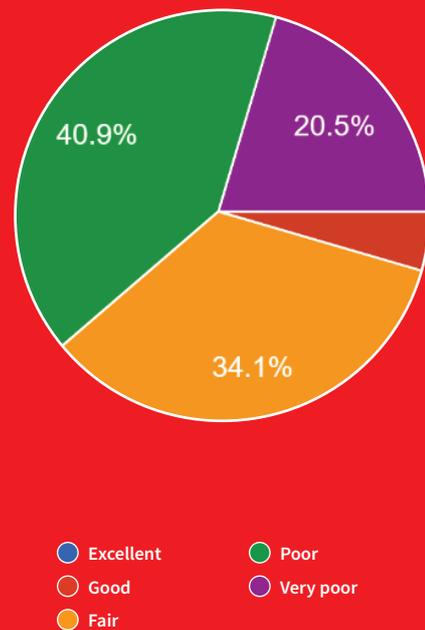
Furthermore, there were comments highlighting issues with the clarity and user-friendliness of the online submission process, with concerns about document attachment, the need for editing capabilities, and reliance on back-office staff for faster progress.

Of all the respondents, 40.9% rated the system as poor, indicating significant dissatisfaction with its performance. Additionally, 20.5% of the experts rated it as very poor, reflecting an even stronger negative perception. On the other hand, 34.1% of the respondents described the system as fair, suggesting a mixed or moderate evaluation.

The reasons given for the poor ratings include professionals ending up making physical visits to the county, there is human interference in the system, the process being frustrating, there is lack of transparency, delays in approvals, poor communication, and feedback, the system is not user friendly, time consumption, lack of information and updates and lack of user manuals and support. On the other hand, a relatively small proportion, 4.5% of the experts, rated the system as good.



**4. (a)
How would you rate the level of service provision on the Nairobi Revenue Services?**



This feedback highlights the need for improvement and addressing the concerns raised by the experts to enhance the performance, user experience, and overall satisfaction with the NPDMS system.

Regrettably, at the time of the survey, respondents revealed that the system had been closed over the previous five weeks. Inquiries at the county offices yielded no results, as the staff were unaware of the problem.

Rating the different sections of the approval process from the most efficient to the most challenging

Using the Likert scale, experts rated the different sections of the approval process on a scale of 1-5 ie, from the lowest to the highest rating. Table 1 below depicts the ratings given.

Section	Rating				
	1	2	3	4	5
Registration	18.2%	15.9%	29.5%	22.7%	13.6%
Submission of applications	9.1%	18.2%	43.2%	22.7%	6.8%
Invoicing and receipting	13.6%	15.9%	43.2%	20.5%	6.8%
Circulation of applications to various departments	36.4%	27.3%	27.3%	6.8%	2.3%
Communication on the progress of the application	43.2%	25%	22.7%	9.1%	-
Communication on receipt of approval	29.5%	34.1%	22.7%	11.4%	2.3%
Release of the approved application	43.2%	22.7%	20.5%	11.4%	2.3%

Notably, registration, submission of applications, and invoicing and receipting received a fair rating of 3, recording 29.5%, 43.2%, and 43.2%, respectively. These sections of the system have room for improvement but are generally perceived as acceptable by the respondents.

On the other hand, majority of experts rated the circulation of applications to various departments, communication on the progress of the application, and release of the approved application very poorly recording 36.4%, 43.2%, and 43.2%, respectively. This indicates a high level of dissatisfaction among the respondents regarding these sections of the system, suggesting significant deficiencies and shortcomings.

Experience during the Migration from eDAMS to NPDMS

The responses regarding the migration from eDAMS to NPDMS indicate a range of experiences and opinions. Some respondents found the transition to be fair, okay, or had no comment. A few respondents mentioned positive experiences, stating that it got better or that the new system was okay.

On the other hand, most experts expressed dissatisfaction, describing the migration as terrible, cumbersome, disastrous, or very poor. Several respondents mentioned difficulties and challenges during the transition, such as the need for human intervention, loss of previous applications, and longer processing times. Some felt that the change was unnecessary or poorly managed.

Comparison of the User Experience between eDAMS and NPDMS

The respondents gave diverse responses regarding the performance comparison between NRS and eDAMS. Some respondents indicated that there was no significant difference or had no comment on the matter. Some respondents found NRS to be an improvement, mentioning better communication with clients, improved revenue collection, and the client’s involvement. Others preferred eDAMS, stating that it was more user-friendly, prompt in providing feedback, and better overall. There were also negative comments about NRS, including its inefficiency, lack of user-friendliness, and poor synchronization with the Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA) and the planning department.

Recommendations to improve the NPDMS

Below are the recommendations professionals gave for the improvement of the system:

Section	Recommendations
Payment and Invoicing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The invoicing process needs to be more efficient and transparent.• Payment confirmation should be instant.
System Interface	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Human interaction should be eliminated• The system should recognize all the plot numbers and link them with Ardhi Sasa• The system needs to be more efficient and user-friendly• The system should be approval process oriented with revenue collection add-ons and not revenue collection oriented with plans approval add-ons.• The system should allow tracking of application progress.• Allow the client to nominate experts to submit applications on the NRS portal to ease the submission process.• User interphase, customer-oriented service would be better than the current adversarial outlook.• Delink architect/client/KRA/Ministry of Lands accounts. We have no technical capacity for such levels of integration at the moment.• The portal's speed and efficiency should be improved.
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The application process needs to be clearer when it comes to selecting new or renewal of projects.• Communication channels should be more efficient. Feedback to consultants needs to be improved. In some cases, the approval is already issued but does not appear on the portal.• Redesign to user's specifications• Comments should be sent by email instead of sms.• The county officials should be more responsive.• Proper communication should be relayed indicating what hinders an application from being approved.
Timelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sequence the progress as was done in the eDAMS. Improve the time taken to review the projects after submission. There should be a time limit to be given for approval otherwise, one gets automatic approval.• Development applications should be given different timelines for the type of development submitted for approvals; small projects, less time.• The county should reduce the time taken to process occupation certificates
Approval Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The internal review by the different departments needs to be more transparent.• A QR code should be generated after the Planning Committee's approval.• Eliminate corruption

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