



Audit of Compliance with City Code Section 51A-8.601 (b)

November 15, 2024

Mark S. Swann, City Auditor

Mayor

Eric L. Johnson

Mayor Pro Tem

Tennell Atkins

Deputy Mayor Pro Tem

Adam Bazaldua

Council Members

Carolyn King Arnold

Paula Blackmon

Zarin D. Gracey

Cara Mendelsohn

Jesse Moreno

Omar Narvaez

Jaime Resendez

Paul E. Ridley

Jaynie Schultz

Kathy Stewart

Chad West

Gay Donnell Willis



Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Objectives and Conclusions	2
Audit Results	3
Observation A: Documentation of Compliance with City Code Section 51A-8.601 (b)	3
Observation B: The Origin of City Code Section 51A-8.601 (b).....	5
Appendix A: Background and Methodology	7
Background.....	7
Methodology	9
Major Contributors to the Report.....	9
Appendix B: Management’s Response	10

Executive Summary

Objective and Scope

The audit objective was to determine if internal controls are in place to ensure infrastructure designs conform with City Code Section 51A-8.601(b), *General Standards*. The scope of this audit included approved infrastructure design plans from January 1, 2023, through December 31, 2023.

Observed Conditions

The Planning and Development Department preserves evidence of the reviewed projects' conformance with the City Code in project comments and in inter-departmental emails but does not have a concise record showing each infrastructure design and construction project was reviewed specifically for conformance with each of the thirteen documents listed in City Code Section 51A-8.601 (b), *General Standards* even if some of them are not applicable. In addition, it is not clear if the list of the thirteen documents in City Code Section 51A-8.601(b) is complete, up-to-date, adequate, and applicable to the reviews done by Planning and Development. There is no single location for the thirteen documents where the public, developers, and professional engineers can locate and review the listed standards and requirements.

Recommendations

- Implement a written one-page checklist to document conformance with the thirteen documents listed in City Code Section 51A-8.601(b), *General Standards*.
- Update the requirements listed in City Code Section 51A-8.601(b), *General Standards* and communicate to the public and developers.

Background

City Code Section 51A-8.601 (b), *General Standards* states that all street paving, storm drainage, bridge, and culvert design and construction submitted by developers for review by the City of Dallas Planning and Development Department must conform to a list of thirteen specific documents (see [Exhibit 1](#)).

The Planning and Development Department uses a web-based database (ProjectDox) to review and track projects submitted by developers.

Exhibit 1:

City Code Section 51A-8.601 (b), <i>General Standards</i>	
1	The Thoroughfare Plan for the City of Dallas
2	The Central Business District Streets and Vehicular Circulation Plan
3	The Long Range Physical Plan for Parks and Recreational Facilities
4	The Street Design Manual of the City of Dallas
5	The Storm Drainage Policy of the City of Dallas
6	The Drainage Design Manual of the City of Dallas
7	The Plan Development Checklist of the department
8	The Standard Construction Details of the Department of Public Works
9	The Texas Uniform Traffic Control Device Manual
10	The Dallas Central Business District Pedestrian Facilities Plan
11	The most recently adopted Dallas Bike Plan
12	The City of Dallas Planning Policies
13	All other codes and ordinances of the City of Dallas

Objectives and Conclusions

1. Are there internal controls in place to ensure that infrastructure design and construction projects conform with City Code Section 51A-8.601(b), *General Standards*?

Generally, yes. Interviews with the Planning and Development Department's management and a review of a sample of projects in the department's electronic database, ProjectDox, showed that while the department does preserve evidence of the projects' conformance with the City Code in project comments and in inter-departmental emails, there is not a concise record showing each infrastructure design and construction project was reviewed specifically for conformance with each of the thirteen documents listed in City Code Section 51A-8.601 (b), *General Standards* even if some of them are not applicable. (See [Observation A](#)).

In addition, it is not clear if the list of thirteen items is complete, up-to-date, adequate, and applicable to reviews done by the Planning and Development Department. There is no single location for the thirteen documents where the public, developers, and professional engineers can locate and review the standards and requirements they are asked to conform with. (See [Observation B](#)).

Audit Results

Both *City Council Resolution 88-3428* and Administrative Directive 4-09, *Internal Control* prescribe policy for the City to establish and maintain an internal control system. The audit observations listed are offered to assist management in fulfilling their internal control responsibilities.

Observation A: Documentation of Compliance with City Code Section 51A-8.601 (b)

City Code Section 51A.8-601 (b), *General Standards* states that all infrastructure design and construction projects submitted by developers for review by the City of Dallas Planning and Development Department must conform to the standards, criteria, and requirements listed in the thirteen documents referenced in [Exhibit 1](#) on page one of this report.

The Planning and Development Department's engineers review the designs' conformance with City Code, ask for corrections, refer the designs for review to other city departments (for example, to Dallas Water Utilities for drainage related reviews), and ultimately approve or reject the submitted designs. In practice, not all infrastructure design and construction projects involve elements from each of the thirteen documents listed in [Exhibit 1](#). For example, infrastructure design and construction projects that are not located in the Central Business District do not have to conform to the Central Business District Pedestrian Facilities Plan. Therefore, the Planning and Development Department's review of infrastructure design and construction projects is guided by current infrastructure design and construction code and staff's professional experience.

Interviews with the Planning and Development Department's management and a review of a sample of projects in the department's electronic database, ProjectDox, showed that while the department does preserve evidence of the projects' conformance with the City Code in project comments and in inter-departmental emails, there is not a concise record showing each infrastructure design and construction project was reviewed specifically for conformance with each of the thirteen documents listed in City Code Section 51A-8.601 (b), *General Standards* even if some of them are not applicable.

As a result, to demonstrate that each infrastructure design and construction project was reviewed for conformance with each of the thirteen documents listed City Code Section 51A-8.601 (b) even if some of them are not applicable, the Planning and Development Department has to review numerous project notes and inter-departmental emails.

Criteria

- ❖ City Code Section 51A-8.601 (b), *General Standards*
- ❖ Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government, *Principle 10 – Design Control Activities*

Assessed Risk Rating:

Low

We recommend the **Director of Planning and Development Department:**

A.1: Implement a written one-page checklist and use it to document that each infrastructure design and construction project submitted by developers has been reviewed for conformance with each of the thirteen documents listed in City Code Section 51A-8.601 (b), *General Standards*.

Observation B: The Origin of City Code Section 51A-8.601 (b)

The origin of the City Code Section 51A-8.601 (b), *General Standards* list of documents and the purpose of the list is not clear. It is also not clear if the list of thirteen items is complete, up-to-date, adequate, and applicable to reviews done by the Planning and Development Department.

There is no single location for the thirteen documents where the public, developers and professional engineers can locate and review the standards and requirements they are asked to conform with. The Planning and Development Department's personnel were unable to locate some of the items mentioned in City Code Section 51A-8.601 (b), *General Standards*. In addition, the list includes several vaguely titled items that the Planning and Development Department's staff were unable to identify at all. (See [Exhibit 2](#) below).

Exhibit 2:

Ambiguous Items in Section 51A-8.601 (b)

Section 51A-8.601 (b)	Comment
(Item 7) The Plan Development Checklist of the department.	It is not clear what "checklist" and what "department" is meant by the Code.
(Item 12) The City of Dallas Planning Policies.	Planning and Development is not aware of a document entitled "The City of Dallas Planning Policies".
(Item 13) All other codes and ordinances of the City of Dallas.	It is not clear what is meant by "all" codes and ordinances.

Sources: City Code Section 51A-8.601 (b), *General Standards* and interviews with Planning and Development staff.

As a result, the Planning and Development Department is unable to ensure that each infrastructure design and construction project reviewed by the department conforms to the latest standards, criteria, and requirements applicable to each submitted construction design project. The department has not reviewed or updated the requirements listed in City Code Section 51A-8.601 and has not communicated these requirements to the public and developers.

Criteria

- ❖ City Code Section 51A.8-601 (b), *General Standards*
- ❖ Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government, *Principle 10 – Design Control Activities*

Assessed Risk Rating:

Low

We recommend the **Director of Planning and Development Department:**

B.1: Review and update the requirements listed in City Code Section 51A.8-601 (b), *General Standards*.

B.2: Communicate to the public and developers the list of the requirements they are asked to conform with, their applicability, location, and how to access the location of the requirements.

B.3: Implement a written procedure with work instructions on how to periodically review and update the requirements listed in City Code Section 51A.8-601 (b), *General Standards*, and update their applicability, location, and how to access the location of the requirements.

Appendix A: Background and Methodology

Background

The Planning and Development Department reviews commercial and residential development and redevelopment projects, issues construction and trade permits, and processes Certificates of Occupancy applications for new and existing businesses. During the audit period from January 1, 2023, to December 31, 2023, the department performed 11,318 of Commercial and Residential Plan Reviews.

The department's fiscal year 2024 budget is \$53,952,347, a decrease from Fiscal Year 2023 budget of \$54,659,486. The regular Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) budget in Fiscal Year 2024 is 344.72, which is an increase from fiscal year 2023 when the Full-Time Equivalent budget was 318.77.

The Planning and Development Department uses ProjectDox (a web-based database) to review plans submitted by developers and to document the results of the review.

[Exhibit 3](#) below describes the documents mentioned in City Code Section 51A-8.601 (b), *General Standards*.

Exhibit 3:

City Code Section 51A-8.601 (b), *General Standards*

No.	Source	Description
1	The Thoroughfare Plan for the city of Dallas June 1993	The Thoroughfare Plan is a blueprint that establishes terminology, standards, and general principles, and guides decision-making for all aspects of roadway planning, funding, construction, reconstruction, operation, and maintenance. It also serves as a long-range tool to identify 20-year needs in urbanized areas and establishes an appropriate roadway pattern for undeveloped areas.
2	The Central Business District Streets and Vehicular Circulation Plan November 1988	Provides for a more efficient and functional Central District Street System and proposes detailed street improvements and adjustments, a vehicular circulation plan, and a streets and freeway plan with four design standards for roadway widths, sidewalk widths, medians, and building lines, unless specifically noted in the detail guides and tables.
3	The Long Range Physical Plan for Parks and Recreational Facilities August 2002	The document lists goals and recommendations for infrastructure design and construction projects but does not prescribe any standards or requirements for infrastructure design and construction.

No.	Source	Description
4	The Street Design Manual of the City of Dallas September 2019	Provides policies and design guidelines for the improvement of streets and pedestrian areas, which are intended to serve as a comprehensive policy guide for all public or private projects; directs transportation planners and engineers to design roads with safe access for all users, regardless of age, ability, or mode of transportation; and provides the policy framework for the design and use of Dallas' roadway network.
5	The Storm Drainage Policy of the City of Dallas September 2019	Storm Drainage Policies are incorporated into the Drainage Design Manual as Storm Drainage systems and plans.
6	The Drainage Design Manual of the City of Dallas September 2019	Sets forth standards and criteria to be used in the design of drainage facilities.
7	The Plan Development Checklist of the Department	It is not clear what "checklist" and what "department" is meant by the Code.
8	The Standard Construction Details of the Department of Public Works September 2022	Provides minimum requirements for construction within the city right-of-way, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paving • Drainage • Structure • Paving markings • Traffic signals • TxDOT Design Division Standard
9	The Texas Uniform Traffic Control Device Manual (2011) October 2014	Includes minimum standards and guidelines that ensure uniformity of the devices used in the State of Texas. The manual includes standards for signs, signals, and pavement markings.
10	The Dallas Central Business District Pedestrian Facilities Plan November 1988	The plan provides for more efficient and functional Central District streets and proposes detailed street improvements and adjustments, a vehicular circulation plan, and a street and freeway plan to avoid vehicle and pedestrian conflict.
11	The most recently adopted Dallas Bike Plan June 2011	The plan is intended to improve the safety, use, and efficiency of bicyclists in the City, and to better integrate the bicycle mode within the City and regional transportation system.

No.	Source	Description
12	The City of Dallas Planning Policies	Planning and Development is not aware of a document entitled "The City of Dallas Planning Policies".
13	All other codes and ordinances of the City of Dallas	It is not clear what is meant by "all" codes and ordinances.

Sources: City Code Section 51A-8.601 (b), *General Standards*, City of Dallas Website, Texas Department of Transportation, and interviews with Planning and Development Department staff

Methodology

The audit methodology included: (1) interviewing personnel from the Planning and Development Department, Transportation and Public Works Department, and other city departments; (2) reviewing policies and procedures, the *Dallas City Code*, applicable Administrative Directives; and (3) reviewing a sample of infrastructure design and construction projects in the ProjectDox database. In addition, all five components of *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government* were considered.

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based upon our audit objective. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective.

Major Contributors to the Report

Nadia Gonzalez – Auditor

Matthew Cheadle, CIA, CFE, CGAP – In-Charge Auditor

Anatoli Douditski, MPA, CIA, CFE, ACDA – Engagement Manager

Appendix B: Management's Response

Memorandum



DATE: October 31, 2024
TO: Mark S. Swann – City Auditor
SUBJECT: Response to Audit of Compliance with City Code Section 51A-8.601 (b)

This letter acknowledges the City Manager's Office received the *Audit of Compliance with City Code Section 51A-8.601 (b)* and submitted responses to the recommendations in consultation with the Planning and Development Department.

The Planning and Development Department has strong internal controls, including a robust electronic database that preserves detailed information related to infrastructure design and construction projects.

The Planning and Development Department appreciates and agrees to implement the auditor's recommendations to enhance the existing process.

Specifically, the Planning and Development Department agrees to:

1. Implement a summary checklist to document the review and conformance of each infrastructure design and construction project with applicable General Standards;
2. Review and update the requirements listed in the General Standards, in collaboration with the City Attorney's Office;
3. Communicate to the public and developers the General Standards requirements, their applicability, location, and how to access the location of the requirements; and
4. Implement a written procedure with work instructions on performing an annual review and updating the requirements listed in the General Standards.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please reach out to JK Brill, Financial Controls and Policy Manager in the City Controller's Office, and he will coordinate on my behalf.

Service First, Now!



Kimberly Bizer Tobert
City Manager (I)

C: Jack Ireland, Chief Financial Officer
Robin Bentley, Assistant City Manager
Emily Liu, Director, Planning and Development Department

"Service First, Now!"
Connect – Collaborate – Communicate

Assessed Risk Rating	Recommendations	Concurrence and Action Plans	Implementation Date	Follow-Up/ Maturity Date	
Low	We recommend the Director of Planning and Development Department:				
	<p>A.1: Implement a written one-page checklist and use it to document that each infrastructure design and construction project submitted by developers has been reviewed for conformance with each of the thirteen documents listed in City Code Section 51A-8.601 (b), <i>General Standards</i>.</p>	Agree	<p>The Planning and Development Department (PDD) will implement a one-page checklist to document each infrastructure design and construction project submitted by developers has been reviewed for conformance with each of the applicable General Standards.</p>	6/30/2025	12/31/2025
	<p>B.1: Review and update the requirements listed in City Code Section 51A-8.601 (b), <i>General Standards</i>.</p>	Agree	<p>PDD, in collaboration with the City Attorney's Office, will review and update the requirements listed in the General Standards.</p>	6/30/2025	12/31/2025
	<p>B.2: Communicate to the public and developers the list of the requirements they are asked to conform with, their applicability, location, and how to access the location of the requirements.</p>	Agree	<p>PDD will communicate to the public and developers the list of the requirements they are asked to conform with, their applicability, location, and how to access the location of the requirements.</p>	6/30/2025	12/31/2025
	<p>B.3: Implement a written procedure with work instructions on how to periodically review and update the requirements listed in City Code Section 51A-8.601 (b), <i>General Standards</i>, and update their applicability, location, and how to access the location of the requirements.</p>	Agree	<p>PDD will implement a written procedure with work instructions on performing an annual review and updating the requirements listed in the General Standards.</p>	6/30/2025	12/31/2025