



City of Dallas

Update on the Permitting Issues for Development Services

**Dallas City Council
May 18, 2022**

T.C. Broadnax, City Manager
Majed A. Al-Ghafry, P.E., Assistant City Manager
Andrew Espinoza, Director of Development Services
Will Munding, Executive in Residence of
Development Services

Progress Highlights



1. Hired vacant leadership positions:
 - Director/Chief Building Official
 - Deputy Chief Building Official
2. Permit center fully opened and staffed.
3. Residential permit wait times and processes are down.
4. Improved internal and external communications.
5. Intentional improvements on customer service.



Presentation Overview



- Background
- Current Status
- Comparison with other Cities' Metrics
- What has changed?/What remains to be done?
 1. Human Resources Activities
 2. Customer Service
 3. Communication
 4. Data Metrics and Webpage
 5. Technology Assessment
- Permitting and Third-Party Reviewers
- Implementation of Efficiency Study
- Next Steps



Background



- The Development Services Department (DEV) presented a department update to the Economic Development Committee (EDC) on October 4, 2021.
 - Identified several needed enhancements.
- DEV has been updating the Government Performance and Financial Management Committee relating to residential permits.
- DEV has also been meeting with the Development Advisory Committee on a consistent basis (Except March and April 2022).
- DEV presented permitting updates to the EDC on May 2, 2022.



Background (Cont.)



- Completed enhancements included:
 - Proposed Chapter 52 Amendments (Approved by City Council on May 11, 2022).
 - Leadership recruitment.
- Enhancements in progress/under design include:
 - Permitting software update.
 - Performance metrics.
 - Call center re-organization and training.
 - Self-Certification pilot program.



Current Status



- DEV continues to improve in processing the increased volume of Residential and Commercial permits submitted.
- However, challenges still exist:
 1. Departure of staff members in key technical positions.
 2. Integration of new permitting software that needed comprehensive troubleshooting and training.
 3. Permit overload. Transitioned from 8-hours/5-days a week permit submittal to 24-hours/365-days submittals.
 4. Incomplete submittals are automatically queued in ProjectDox without the ability to control permit intakes.



Human Resources Activities



What has changed?

- Hired vacant leadership positions:
 - Director/Chief Building Official
 - Deputy Chief Building Official
- To date, 80% of DEV critical vacant positions have been filled or are pending the onboarding process. Only 9 out of 41 positions remain on the list.
- Management scheduled weekly hiring status updates with HR to streamline recruitment process.



Human Resources Activities (Cont.)



Current Essential Vacant Positions:

Division Organization	PMO	Job Code	Job Profile Name	Next action item
Building Inspection District Office Northwest	PM018385	31030	Inspector III - Development(Zoning)	Interviewing candidates 5/11-5/13/22 Should fall off this week
Development Services	PM019063	31238	Manager - Development	interviews on 5/31
Development Services	PM001623	00706	Assistant Director - Development Services Engineering	waiting for candidate list
Consultations	PM001605	16404	Senior Plans Examiner-Permit Center	waiting for candidate list
Building, Health	PM001531	31015	Senior Plans Examiner - Building Inspection	waiting for candidate list
Administration	PM018208	32403	Administrative Specialist I	Pending interviews
Residential Team, Multi-Discipline Plan Review Permit Center	PM018168	16404	Senior Plan Examiner	waiting for candidate list
Residential Team, Multi-Discipline Plan Review	PM018162 2 vacancies	36619	Supervisor - Development	waiting for candidate list



Human Resources Activities (Cont.)



What remains to be done?

1. Initiate the compensation study indicative of governmental market pay for skilled staff (June 2022).
2. Reclassify two vacant positions to Zoning Plan Reviewers (Vacant Administrative Specialist and Temporary Hire).
3. Staffing enhancements (Summer 2022):
 - Add a call center supervisor.
 - Add additional call center support staff.
 - Add IT and Project Management support positions.



Customer Service



What has changed?

1. The permit center is currently open and fully staffed.
2. Drop-off of applications has been replaced with in-person handling of plans and documents.
3. Revamped the project requirements checklist. Now available on the department's webpage.
4. Management and team members are increasing engagement with OCMC customers.
 - Schedule internal customer service training to start the week of May 23.
5. Procure a third-party reviewer to continue augment staff for permitting activities (May 2022).



Customer Service (Cont.)



What remains to be done? (Summer 2022)

1. Revamping pre-submittal consultation services.
2. Cross training of front-line staff to handle multiple functions (Permit Clerks, Cashiers, Call Center, and ProjectDox facilitators).
3. Share and publish employee directory and department organization chart.
4. Cross train Building and Zoning Plan Reviewers with Field Inspectors.
5. Create clear paths of escalation points and conflict resolution.



Customer Service (Cont.)



6. Reconfigure an intake station to engage customers as they enter the permit service center.
7. Install applicant computer stations allowing staff to provide hands on assistance (October 2022).
8. Train staff to provide permit status related to ProjectDox submittals in the call center.
9. Seek opportunities to engage with customers through community outreach.
10. Re-brand the Permit Center to provide for a friendlier environment with an emphasis on customer service.



Communication



- DEV is committed to sharing regular and meaningful communication with the general public and the development community that promotes transparency and strengthens public trust.
- The Sr. Public Information Officer created a communication plan that includes:
 - Sending weekly and monthly updates, not limited to:
 1. Permit data and metrics including future schedules,
 2. Technology improvements, and
 3. Service issues.



Communication (Cont.)



- DEV will also institute the following:
 1. Weekly internal meetings with designated groups to identify potential issues, share solutions, and examine ways to better share processes with the public.
 2. Bi-weekly memos to the City Manager's Office and the Mayor/City Council regarding permit intake, processing, permitting issues, staffing levels, service interruptions, and other relevant information.
 3. Create an online platform for constant communication with external customers.
- Status: Beginning May 20, 2022.



Communication (Cont.)



- Updates for external users will be distributed utilizing several methods of communication:
 1. Press releases and bulletins,
 2. Monthly newsletters,
 3. Email and/or texts,
 4. Website updates, and
 5. Social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Tik-Tok).



Data Metrics and Webpage



What has changed?

- Survey assessment conducted in comparison with other large Texas cities (8).
- Findings include:
 - Industry standard practice is to report the time of the first review cycle completed.
 - Dallas is the only city that reports pre-screening times, other cities are stricter on intake requirements and do not consider pre-screening as part of their review times.
 - Dallas breaks down their reports for each specific category while other cities lump all permits in one category.
 - Other cities do not report averages but rather goals and they do it in business days.
 - The times that the City of Dallas reports are current average times and reported in calendar days.



Data Metrics and Webpage (Cont.)



The table below shows the following:

- Number of residential new construction and addition permit applications submitted, issued, completed prescreen, building code, and zoning reviews.
- The permits issued each month do not necessarily come from the same pool of permit applications received that month.
- Building code and zoning reviews were reported together until February 2022.

Monthly Intake & Output - Residential (FY 21-22)								
	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	YTD Average
Applications	329	256	332	321	327	311	350	318
Prescreen Reviews	423	461	567	636	673	687	268	531
Building Code Reviews	625	413	542	499	675	488	262	511
Zoning Reviews	-	-	-	-	378	233	100	237
Total Reviews	1,048	874	1,109	1,135	1,784	1,408	648	1,144
Permits Issued	237	174	275	192	146	378	270	239



Data Metrics and Webpage (Cont.)



What remains to be done? (By December 2022)

- DEV is partnering with ITS to develop a user-friendly website to include:
 - Monthly Reporting,
 - Top ten Developer delays/FAQs,
 - Updating all permitting forms,
 - Residential planning update, and
 - Dashboard.
- Establish clear performance goals for all divisions:
 - Plan Review Intake,
 - Building Reviews,
 - Zoning Reviews,
 - Water/Wastewater Reviews, and
 - Inspections.
- Track permit turnaround times.





What has changed?

1. Updating to ProjectDox 9.2 version, which is DEV's plan review software.
 - Expectation is for full roll-out in July 2022 with training for internal and external stakeholders over a three-month period.
 - Outcome is expected to be glitch-free, error-free, and an easy-to-use product.
2. Replacing the current POSSE land use software with a new platform. Contract evaluation is on-going.



Technology Assessment (Cont.)



What remains to be done?

1. Establishing a hands-on team made up of the consultant, DEV, and ITS to address issues and training.
 - Team has been identified within DEV and will initiate this effort by end of May 2022.
2. Ongoing evaluation of the preferred vendor to replace the current POSSE land use system.
3. Create a communication plan to update parties internally and externally (in progress).



Permitting & Third-Party Reviewers



- Continue to conduct weekly meetings with third-party reviewers to gauge and adjust where they are with their capacity of workflow.
- Continue to dedicate additional staff (2 FTE's) to work on zoning reviews (total of 5 FTE's).
- Adding one additional (3 total) third party reviewer (May 2022).



Implementation of Efficiency Study



- Matrix Consulting Group was awarded a Workflow Evaluation for the department and Staffing Study in early 2021.
- The Consultant has completed a draft study and staff is nearing review completion.
- Highlighted findings include:
 1. Create position of Land Management Software System Administrator.
 2. Redesign department webpages to create a one-stop development portal.
 3. Create dashboard to present performance data for department.



Implementation of Efficiency Study (Cont.)



4. Establish target processing times for permit application reviews.
5. Re-organize structure to create dedicated residential and commercial teams, move subdivision team to engineering, and create a pre-submittal team to Strategic Business Unit.
6. Fill recommended positions as outlined in report.
7. Develop training protocol/ materials for staff with a focus on both technical training required and implementation of overall customer service training for all staff.
8. Conduct market compensation study for key positions in department.



Next Steps



- Review, finalize, and implement selected priority tasks by the Matrix Consulting Group.
- This summer:
 - User friendly technology improvements.
 - Implement training and cross training programs.
 - Improvements to the intake and website.
 - Continue to recruit and fill all vacancies.
 - Establish and publish department performance goals.
- By the end of the year:
 - Determination and recommendation of next land use platform.
 - Explore the option to add one additional Q-Team (express plan review services).
- Refine draft action plan and share with stakeholders.
- Update the EDC in August 2022.





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Appendix: Assigned Project Leads



Identified in the table below are key enhancements identified in the May 2, 2022 EDC meeting and the team members responsible for their delivery (Adjusted here as a result of the new recent organizational changes):

Responsible Project Leads	Key Initiative
Irma Hayes and Javier Ramon with oversight from Will Munding	Technology Assessment (ProjectDox, POSSE, New Land Use Software) and Training
Will Munding and Natasha Wade	Human Resources and Hiring
Andrew Espinoza, Kevin Delgado, and Victor Cadungog	Data Metrics and Webpage
Andrew Espinoza, Will Munding, and Willie Franklin	Permitting and Third-Party Reviewers
Vernon Young, Harim Perez, Carolina Yumet, and Daniel Nigo	Customer Service, Call Center, and Training
Andrew Espinoza and Robyn Gerard	Communication and Outreach



Appendix: Comparison with Other Cities



Dallas Metrics Reporting vs Neighboring & Similar Municipalities										
City		Fort Worth [^]	Arlington	Plano	Irving	Grand Prairie	Houston	Austin	San Antonio	Dallas
Website Links		Fort Worth	Arlington	Plano	Irving	Grand Prairie	Houston	Austin	San Antonio	Dallas
Prescreen Review Times*	Residential New/Addition	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11
	Residential Remodel	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
	Commercial New/Addition	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
	Commercial Remodel	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
Target Processing Times** (1st Review Cycle Completion, Business Days)	Residential (All)	6	12	3	3-5	10	-	-	3	-
	Residential New/Addition	-	-	-	-	-	10	18-20	-	23
	Residential Remodel	-	-	-	-	-	1-15	5	-	7
	Commercial (All)	11	-	10	7	10	15	17-27	3-14	-
	Commercial New/Addition	-	12	-	-	-	-	-	-	18
Commercial Remodel	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	15	
Permit Volume	Avg. RES Intake (Monthly)	-	394	142	552	368	3647	497	469	195
	Avg. COM Intake (Monthly)	-	187	180	265	81	4085	268	195	457
Staffing Levels	# of Plan Review FTEs	-	11	6	4	4	60	38	77	29
NOTES:										
* - Dallas is only city that reports Prescreen Review times, other cities researched are stricter on intake requirements and do not consider prescreen part of their review times.										
** - Times shown for other cities are their stated goals in business days, they do not report averages; Dallas times are current averages in calendar days.										
^ - Data taken from City website; other city data was received directly from Building Official staff.										



Appendix: Survey



A survey was sent out on *May 6, 2022*, to development stakeholders.

- Feedback included:
 - Complicated software (Work is in progress).
 - Permitting process delays.
 - Staff inefficiencies.
 - Performance metrics and improved communication.
 - Mixed feedback on third party reviewers.
 - Customer service needs to be improved.
 - Improve department culture to one of customer advocacy.



Appendix: Draft Action Plan



Action	Timing	Responsibility	Additional Resources	Status/Notes
Return to Office				
Develop & implement return-to-work plan for DS employees, including confirming and documenting work schedule and location for all employees.	4/30/2022	Natasha Wade/Department Heads	None	Developing a program for the proper mix of in office and at home deployment.
Organization/Staffing Needs				
Listing of open positions with timelines for hiring. Continue focus on staffing for open positions and timelines for implementation	List is complete	Natasha Wade	None	Complete
Increase hiring levels - engineering, zoning and planning reviewers.	Summer	Department Heads - Nina Arias, Carmel Fritz	None	In Process
Increase space allocation at OCMC for staff growth	Summer	Robert Perez and Natasha Wade	None	We are generally out of space
Compare staffing levels with consultant recommendations.	Summer	Natasha Wade, Department Heads, Consultant	Matrix	Begin in May
Commence compensation study.	June	Consultant	Matrix	Focus on representative department roles. Elevated salaries for new hires will create pressure on compensation for existing employees.
Progressive employee growth plan	July	Matrix, HR and Department Heads	Matrix	Develop title, responsibility and compensation growth
Skill training, customer service training and management training for leadership positions	Summer	Matrix and in house training (Leif Sandberg)	Matrix	Proposal Stage Involves all departments and operating units.



Appendix: Draft Action Plan



Technology

ProjectDox

Action	Timing	Responsibility	Additional Resources	Status/Notes
Continue UAT process Increase Avolve engagement	May/June	Avolve, Misty Nelson, ITS	None anticipated	In Process Avolve Representation scheduled for working session with staff - May 23, 2022
Develop and implement training for internal and external users.	Summer	Roderick Palmer, Misty Nelson, Irma Hayes and Avolve	None	In Process Scheduling for late May - Early June
Go Live	Early July	Avolve, Misty Nelson, ITS	None	In Process



Appendix: Draft Action Plan



Technology

Posse Replacement

Action	Timing	Responsibility	Additional Resources	Status/Notes
Retain Gartner Consulting	May 2022	Will Munding, Legal and ITS	Gartner	Documents being drafted Gartner will assist in matching workflow and process with SOW. Assist in negotiation with SOW
Kick off meeting with Gartner Establishment in house team	May 11,2022	Will Munding and Gartner Rep.	Gartner	Follow up including strategy and schedule implementation set for May 19, 2022.
Complete vendor contract and seek City Council approval	Summer	Will Munding, Legal and ITS	Gartner	Developing strategy and path of negotiation.
Process/contract implementation Process mapping, data migration and training	Fall	House team, vendor and IT	Gartner and vendor	Process scheduled to begin August/September of 2022



Appendix: Draft Action Plan



Process Improvement

Action	Timing	Responsibility	Additional Resources	Status/Notes
Test Six Sigma single family process	Summer	Elisa Waltrop, James McKey	None	Must follow DOX rollout
Establish productivity timelines for single family and commercial.	Summer	James McKey, David Sessions and Megan Wimer	None	In Process
Six Sigma review on commercial permits	Fall	Elisa Waltrop, Tony Rader	None	Program provided valuable insight into residential process - hope to duplicate in commercial
Evaluate Q team and pre-development teams for additional resources or structure for enhanced service.	Fall	Jim Shelton, Megan Wimer, Will Munding, Vernon Young, Caroline Yumet.	None	Both of these programs are productive and in high demand. We should review improvements and possible expansion. Professional staffing will be an issue.
General intake improvement strategy - includes process checklists, website instructions, room 118 and call center Part of enhanced customer service.	Summer	Vernon Young, Carolina Yumet, Will Munding and David Sessions	None	This will be an interdepartmental effort to improve the quality of initial submissions. It will involve Room 118, improved checklists, instructions both in person and website, coaching and follow up.
Formalize special services group to focus on responsibility for priority areas such as DISD, affordable housing and high-profile projects. Part of enhanced customer service.	Summer	Andrew Espinoza, Vernon Young, William Munding, Majid Al-Ghafry	None	This initiative will revive and organize the needs and issues of these impactful projects. Focus on accelerated guidance and service

Appendix: Draft Action Plan



Data and Reporting

Action	Timing	Responsibility	Additional Resources	Status/Notes
Review current database to review information for publication and use for process management	Summer	Brita Andercheck and Victor Cadungog	None	Cooperating on a data initiative program with Brita
Website and dashboard development - Create Permit News while website is under development.	TBD	Matrix, Brita Andercheck, Andrew Espinoza, Victor Cadungog, Vernon Young and William Mundinger	Matrix	Waiting for a proposal

Third-Party Plan Review

Review third-party performance and activities with focus on capacity and additional services.	TBD	Andrew Espinoza, William Mundinger, Willie Franklin, James Mckee and Bryant Thompson	None	Current roles include plan and code review with a small experiment on Zoning Review. Onboard an additional firm to replace one of the original 3 firms for unsatisfactory performance. Review expansion into commercial and specialty projects.
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Policy Review

Establish an industry review team to examine codes, ordinances and policies for improving and simplifying the permit process.	TBD	Advisory council	none	Industry participants have had suggestions to eliminate policies which add little value to the permit process.
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Appendix: Self-Certification



Self-Certification:

- The Self-Certification Program allows a registered professional to take responsibility for and certify a project's compliance with building code, standards and ordinances.
- Examples of eligible permits can include multi-story buildings, landscape and parking lot plans by landscape architects, and grading and drainage and parking lot plans by civil engineers.
- Staff will explore this program further as other cities are utilizing this model with success.
- Timeline: Late Fall 2022.

