

Memorandum



DATE June 21, 2024

CITY OF DALLAS

TO Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

SUBJECT **City of Dallas Functional Reimagining and Realigning for Results: Planning and Urban Design and Development Services Departments**

Today I am excited to announce a second departmental reorganization to better serve our community.

We continue to examine our organizational functions to “Build on a **Safe, Vibrant, and Growing** Dallas by transforming our Foundational Structure to become a more **Livable, Sustainable, and Fiscally Sound** city with strong, aligned systems at its **Core**.” As you recall, last week I announced a strategic realignment of the Small Business Center.

Effective June 27, the Planning and Urban Design Department and the Development Services Department will combine into one department, to be known as the Planning and Development Department. This new department will house all land use and permitting functions in one organization, combine zoning implementation and interpretation teams, restructure the permitting function to provide clearer ownership and accountable service delivery, and create a new team focused entirely on customer and team excellence. The goal of this departmental reorganization is to ensure that planning, zoning, and permitting staff are directly aligned in a cohesive workflow to elevate the customer experience for our development community.

Earlier today I communicated this realignment with the impacted departments, and later today I will meet with each group in person at Dallas City Hall and the Oak Cliff Municipal Center.

The goal of the new Planning and Development Department is to achieve positive outcomes that build trust with the Dallas development community and encourage robust investment at the speed of business. The following summarizes the objectives of this departmental reorganization:

- Streamline processes and improve efficiencies in permitting to further reduce the median issuance time for all permitting types
- Enhance coordination, reduce confusion, and ensure consistency, predictability, and faster decision-making
- Provide a single point of contact for developers and the public, making it easier to navigate the regulatory process

- Survey national best practices and implement ongoing technology advancements across all functional areas
- Investigate and implement recommendations to improve the existing zoning and building codes, with the input of stakeholders in the development community and the public
- Guide the adoption and implementation of the Forward Dallas Land Use Plan to guide future development and infrastructure investment in an intentional, equitable, and sustainable manner
- Implement the Historic Preservation Strategy to protect culturally sensitive areas and landmarks and assist communities in protecting their history and culture
- Provide cross-training, enhance team members' skills and knowledge, and increase overall team expertise and flexibility
- Implement Accela and other technology improvements to improve the customer experience and speed staff processing times
- Move from a hybrid of paper and electronic application submissions to fully electronic submissions online
- Continue to expand permitting dashboards to provide greatest transparency and accountability, and investigate ways to use dashboards to provide similar transparency to other departmental functions
- Rethink customer support intervention strategies to prevent multiple, time-consuming turns of permit applications
- In collaboration with the cross-departmental strike teams introduced in the 100-Day Transition Playbook, reimagine the predevelopment meeting process to provide better guidance to customers prior to submission of zoning/permitting applications
- Build a culture of collegiality, professionalism, and results.

Reimagined Services and Staffing Alignment

The new Planning and Development Department will be led by Director Emily Liu. I am introducing a new deputy director title to provide senior, experienced leadership and create clear succession planning. Elevating these deputies will also give the public one clear point of contact for each of the four core functions. The four core functions are:

1. **Planning**, led by Deputy Director Andrea Gilles;
2. **Zoning**, led by Deputy Director Andreea Udrea;
3. **Permitting**, led by Interim Deputy Director and Chief Building Official Sam Eskander; and
4. **Customer/Team Excellence**, led by Deputy Director Vernon Young.

The chart below shows the new department’s organization and functions by team. I would like to draw particular attention to the Permitting function, which has been structured in conformance with the recommendations of the Matrix Consulting Group. In its 2022 Development Services study, the Matrix team called for the creation of dedicated residential and commercial permitting teams. This recommendation is long overdue for implementation and will create clear lines of accountability for each permit type.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT Director (Emily Liu)						
Deputy Director - Planning and Chief Planning Officer (Andrea Gilles)	Deputy Director - Zoning (Andreea Udrea)	Interim Deputy Director - Permitting and Chief Building Official ¹ (Sam Eskander)			Deputy Director - Customer and Team Excellence (Vernon Young)	
AD - Planning (Arturo Castillo)	AD - Zoning Code (TBD)	AD - Residential Permitting (TBD)	AD - Commercial Permitting (TBD)	AD - Inspections (TBD)	AD - Team Excellence (TBD)	AD - Customer Experience (TBD)
Long Range Planning, Forward Dallas, Area Plans, Neighborhood Planning, Authorized Hearings, CLUP, Historic Preservation, Conservation Districts, Urban Design, UDPRP, Landmark Commission	Zoning requests, special zoning projects, Subdivision and Platting, Public Hearings, CPC, ZOAC, Annexes, Street Name Changes, Code Amendments, Land Use Termination Cases, Board of Adjustment, Landscaping Review/Arborist, Signs, Zoning Interpretation	Residential Permitting, including RSVP program. This division will also oversee all minor permit reviews.	Commercial Permitting, including Q Team and the new pre-development process to be implemented through the cross departmental review process.	Inspections, including all inspectors for zoning, electrical, mechanical, plumbing, water/waste water, building inspection, health, etc.	Budget, HR, IT, Fee Collection, staff training, procurement, fleet and equipment, GIS and data, process and policy, innovation	Records management, open records, call center, external training, marketing and outreach, VIP/ Escalation/ Concierge services

This departmental reorganization results in no immediate budget impact. However, future year budget savings are anticipated to be created by rethinking the quantity and quality of staff positions across all functions and increasing the efficiency of departmental processes. As an example, the new department has an overpopulation of senior positions and a lack of entry-level positions. As natural attrition occurs, positions will be reclassified down to allow for hiring at an entry level of experience, and to ensure that team members have a career path for growth. Similarly, as the department transitions to 100 percent online submissions, departmental leadership will rethink how to best utilize intake, records

¹ Chief Building Official assignment is effective today, with all required testing to be complete within 6 months in conformance with City Code.

management, and administrative staff currently deployed to deal with the large volume of paper submissions.

Development Services Department Director Andrew Espinoza will stay with the City through August 5. He has been reassigned to Assistant City Manager (I) Donzell Gipson and will assist with critical projects related to the Core portfolio.

Path Forward

- Two items will be placed on the June 26 City Council agenda: (1) to reallocate the Planning and Urban Development and Development Services departmental budgets to the new Planning and Development Department, and (2) to make appropriate updates to the department names and references to the department officials in the Dallas City Code.
- Each of the vacant Assistant Director positions listed in the chart above will be posted no later than July 31. Interim assistant directors will be named to ensure continuity of work, and a national search will be done to fill the positions permanently.
- During July, the Director and Deputy Directors will collaborate with the City Manager's Office, Human Resources, and Civil Service to develop a final organizational chart and to update social media, websites, etc. with new branding, contact information, and relevant content.

For your ease of convenience, the attached Frequently Asked Questions summarizes the aforementioned information.

Please feel free to reach out to me directly with questions or concerns, or for additional information please contact Assistant City Manager (I) Robin Bentley at 214.671.9942 or robin.bentley@dallas.gov.

Service First, Now!



Kimberly Bizzor Tolbert
City Manager (I)

[Attachment]

c: Tammy Palomino, City Attorney
Mark Swann, City Auditor
Biliera Johnson, City Secretary
Preston Robinson, Administrative Judge
Dominique Artis, Chief of Public Safety (I)
Majed A. Al-Ghafry, Assistant City Manager
M. Elizabeth (Liz) Cedillo-Pereira, Assistant City Manager
Alina Ciocan, Assistant City Manager
Donzell Gipson, Assistant City Manager (I)
Robin Bentley, Assistant City Manager (I)
Jack Ireland, Chief Financial Officer
Elizabeth Saab, Chief of Strategy, Engagement, and Alignment (I)
Directors and Assistant Directors

July 21, 2024
City of Dallas Functional Reimagining and
Realigning for Results:
Planning & Development Department
FAQ's



Background:

- Interim City Manager Kimberly Tolbert continues her commitment to reimagine and realign service delivery for residents to “Build on a **Safe, Vibrant, and Growing** Dallas by transforming our Foundational Structure to become a more **Livable, Sustainable, and Fiscally Sound** city with strong, aligned systems at its **Core,**” contributes to building greater synergy, leading to more effective and efficient service delivery.
- As of June 27, the Planning and Urban Design Department and the Development Services Department will combine into one department, to be known as the *Planning and Development Department*.
- This functional reimagining and realigning for results support ICM Tolbert’s transformational approach to enhance Service first with the urgency of Now!

Why did the City of Dallas combine two departments into one?

The goal of this departmental reorganization is to ensure that planning, zoning, and permitting staff are directly aligned in a cohesive workflow to elevate the customer experience for our development community, achieve positive outcomes that build trust with the Dallas development community, and encourage robust investment at the speed of business.

How will the leadership be structured?

The new Planning and Development Department will be led by Emily Liu (current Director, Planning and Urban Design). Each of the four core functions will be led by Deputy Directors who are senior, experienced leaders. This is designed to create clear succession planning and publicly assigns contact for each of the four core functions:

1. **Planning**, led by Deputy Director Andrea Gilles;
2. **Zoning**, led by Deputy Director Andreea Udrea;
3. **Permitting**, led by Interim Deputy Director and Chief Building Official Sam Eskander (*Interim because he needs to take the Building Official exam. Per City Code he has six months after his appointment*); and
4. **Customer/Team Excellence**, led by Deputy Director Vernon Young.

What kind of financial impact does this reorganization have on the City of Dallas?

This departmental reorganization results in no immediate budget impact. Future year budget savings are anticipated to be created by rethinking the quantity and quality of staff positions across all functions and increasing the efficiency of departmental processes.

Previously, Development Services underwent an assessment that recommended a path for separating the residential and commercial permitting processes. How does this reorganization address that?

The Permitting function has been structured in conformance with the recommendations of the Matrix Consulting Group. In its 2022 Development Services study, the Matrix team called for the creation of dedicated residential and commercial permitting teams. This recommendation is long overdue for implementation and will create clear lines of accountability for each permit type.

How will the Planning and Development department be organized? What are its functions?

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What happens now?

Two items will be placed on the June 26 City Council agenda: (1) to reallocate the Planning and Urban Development and Development Services departmental budgets to

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the new Planning and Development Department, and (2) to make appropriate updates to the department names and references to the department officials in the Dallas City Code.

Each of the vacant Assistant Director positions listed in the chart above will be posted no later than July 31. Interim assistant directors will be named to ensure continuity of work, and a national search will be done to fill the positions permanently.

During July, the Director and Deputy Directors will collaborate with the City Manager's Office, Human Resources, and Civil Service to develop a final organizational chart.

How will you let the public know?

Once the final organization chart is created, the Planning and Development Department team will collaborate with the City's Communications team to update social media, all relevant websites, etc. with new branding, contact information, and relevant content. City leadership will also engage with stakeholders to ensure they are informed of the changes.

What are you doing now to ensure a smooth transition?

A component of ICM Tolbert's 100-day Transition Playbook is to elevate how the City of Dallas Connects, Collaborates, and Communicates internally and externally. We are actively improving our information flow to create a more responsive and aligned organization.

We are dedicating time to cross-departmental workshops to implement necessary process improvement tools, including in the Development Services function. A Strike Team made up of members who are involved in the process is working together – in real time - to identify and de-bottleneck pain points within the customer journey to create ownership and best practices, improve internal collaboration, and the speed and quality of City service delivery.

This hands-on work will continue during and after the departmental transformation.