

Memorandum



CITY OF DALLAS

DATE September 11, 2020

TO Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

SUBJECT **Response to “Sustainable Development Directives to Staff” Memo**

The City Manager received a memo signed by five (5) City Councilmembers dated September 2, 2020 with the subject “Sustainable Development Directives to Staff.” The memo directed staff to put together a plan to enact the following five actions. A response is provided for each of these actions below.

1. Designate one or more positions tasked to pull ministerial permits out of the processing cue, such as trade validation and fences.

Staff Response:

It is not necessary to designate positions for these permits. Single trade permits (mechanical, electrical, plumbing, etc.) are applied for through the Develop Dallas contractor’s site directly through the Posse permitting system (i.e., they do not go through ProjectDox, which is intended for plan submittal/review). Fence permits do not fit into the trade permit category, as they require multiple code related items to be reviewed, but they are currently being issued in 2-3 days if there are no issues with the plans.

2. Server/IT issues: Ensure necessary internet bandwidth is available to staff and applicants, including and especially for staff working from home.

Staff Response:

The Information and Technology Services (ITS) department began implementing several changes to improve system performance in mid-August. Actions taken to date have reduced the number of errors received, but system performance remains slow. There are several mid-term improvements expected to significantly address speed issues, including:

- Additional upgrades/improvements to ProjectDox servers to include increased memory (September-October),
- Implementing several fixes to the ProjectDox application to address failed connection condition resulting in disconnects or delays in system (September-October),
- Redesign and rehost the current E-Plan environment for better performance and scalability (December).

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3. Designate a “surge team” to rapidly process permits when applications exceed staff capacity, either via staff resources or a third-party provider. Ensure that prescreens are processed in three (3) days or less, and overall turnaround time should be two (2) weeks or less. If prescreens exceed five (5) days and overall turnaround exceeds three (3) weeks, cue the surge team.

Staff Response:

The current backlog is in the “pre-screen” function that ensures the application is complete, the plans are formatted correctly, all required documentation is uploaded, etc. Four additional staff members from Sustainable Development and Construction were assigned to the pre-screen function for residential permits on 9/8/20 to help work through the backlog. Resources from an existing contract with Dal-Tech, primarily used for engineering, are also being brought in to augment existing staff. These are the fastest ways to address the current backlog. Longer term solutions such as contracting for additional services or hiring additional staff members will be explored, if needed.

4. Double the number of reviewers working on residential projects.

Staff Response:

See response in #3 above. Pulling Senior Plans Examiners from other teams (Commercial, Q-Team Express Review) is not recommended.

5. Develop an end-to-end technology solution integrating multiple City departments to improve the management of building permitting, plan review, land use planning, and other land management activities. The solution should include a description of how it will allow direct line of sight into the various process steps and provide performance metrics for each step in the process to promote accountability and efficiency.

Staff Response:

A Request for Competitive Sealed Proposals (RFCSP) was advertised on 8/20/20 for a “Building Permit and Land Use Planning/Management System.” This will be a very large IT and process project to replace Posse, the backbone permitting system. This project is critical for reviewing the end-to-end processes and determine the long-term technology to support these processes. Vendor responses are due September 24th and the contract is planned for Council consideration later this year.

A briefing will be presented to the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee on September 21, 2020 covering these and other topics regarding building permits.

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Please let me know if you need additional information.



Majed Al-Ghafry, P.E.
Assistant City Manager

c: T.C. Broadnax, City Manager
Chris Caso, City Attorney
Mark Swann, City Auditor
Biliera Johnson, City Secretary
Preston Robinson, Administrative Judge
Kimberly Bizer Tolbert, Chief of Staff to the City Manager
Jon Fortune, Assistant City Manager

Joey Zapata, Assistant City Manager
Nadia Chandler Hardy, Assistant City Manager
Dr. Eric A. Johnson, Chief of Economic Development and Neighborhood Services
M. Elizabeth Reich, Chief Financial Officer
Laila Aleqresh, Chief Innovation Officer
M. Elizabeth (Liz) Cedillo-Pereira, Chief of Equity and Inclusion
Directors and Assistant Directors