

File ID: 2025-01484

8/26/2025

Streamline Sacramento - A Status Update on the City's Development Process Improvements Program

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Location: Citywide

Recommendation: Review, discuss and provide direction to staff on Streamline Sacramento - the City's Development Process Improvements Program.

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Attachments:

1-Description/Analysis

2-Streamline Sacramento Potential Actions Table (August 2025)

Description/Analysis

Issue Detail: Streamline Sacramento is a 2025 initiative spearheaded by Mayor McCarty and Councilmember Pluckebaum to identify improvements to the City's development approval process with the overarching goal of increasing the supply and decreasing the cost of housing. Streamline Sacramento (www.cityofsacramento.gov/streamlinesacramento) is a customer-driven, cross-departmental effort focusing on all aspects of the building permit process, from submittal of building permit application, to issuance of building permit, plan review, inspections, final inspection and certificate of occupancy. The Potential Actions Table (Attachment 2) reflects ideas received to date from the development community. These actions focus on ways to improve consistency, timeliness and to make the development experience as efficient and certain as possible. City staff will provide an update on Streamline Sacramento, highlight notable development process improvement actions that are underway, and receive input from Council.

Policy Considerations: Streamline Sacramento aligns with the Mayor's and City Council's priority to streamline development and increase housing opportunities. Streamline Sacramento furthers the

Council-adopted 8-year housing strategy (2021-2029 Housing Element) policy:

H-1.3 Reduce Time and Expense of Building Permit Process. The City shall continually strive to streamline and simplify the building permit process using best practices from other cities to improve aspects of the process, including coordination with departments, consistency, and timeliness, to make the development experience as efficient and certain as possible.

Economic Impacts: Construction of housing and other development is vital for the local economy by creating construction and professional sector jobs and adding to the local tax base.

Environmental Considerations: This informational update is an administrative activity and is not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), per Guidelines Section 15378(b)(5).

Sustainability: A sustainable community includes housing for current and future households for all income levels.

Commission/Committee Action: Not applicable.

Rationale for Recommendation: Although around 3,000 new housing units are constructed each year, additional housing needs to be built to meet the demand. The City of Sacramento has a Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) target from the State to construct approximately 5,700 new housing units each year. Streamline Sacramento is a cross-departmental effort to identify and implement internal processes that speed up approval times and reduce the cost of housing construction.

Financial Considerations: Not applicable.

Local Business Enterprise (LBE): Not applicable.

Streamline Sacramento – The City’s Development Process Improvements Program

Potential Actions Table (August 2025)

City of Sacramento

Overview: Streamline Sacramento is a 2025 initiative spearheaded by Mayor McCarty and Councilmember Pluckebaum to identify improvements to the City’s development approval process with the overarching goal of increasing the supply and decreasing the cost of housing. Streamline Sacramento is a customer-driven, cross-departmental effort (Community Development (CDD), Public Works (PW), Utilities (DOU), Fire, and Finance) focusing on all aspects of the building permit process from submittal of building permit applications, issuance of building permit, to plan review, inspections and final inspection/certificate of occupancy. This Potential Actions Table reflects the input received to date from the development community. These actions focus on ways to improve consistency, timeliness and to make the development experience as efficient and certain as possible.

This table is intended to be a working document that will be updated regularly to prioritize actions, identify leads, and track progress.

Status Legend: Exploring; Implementing; Instituted; Ongoing.

Process & Potential Action	Lead	Status	Potential Action Summary
Customer Service			
Small Business Liaison Program	CDD/Building	Implementing & Exploring	<p>In Fall 2024, the Building Division established a building permit liaison for new restaurants and Downtown Partnership’s Calling All Dreamers Program. The Small Business Liaison Program is in the process of being expanded and a second small business liaison is being assigned to provide additional support to small businesses navigating the building permit and tenant improvement process.</p> <p>Creating a Small Business Building Permit webpage with all resources in one place, including checklists for restaurants and tenant improvements. New webpage will go live in September 2025. Once complete, will send information to business associations and Property and Business Improvement Districts (PBIDs).</p> <p>Staff are also exploring establishing a quarterly permitting 101 class for new or expanding small businesses that will require tenant improvements.</p>
Minor Alterations & Improvements Processes	CDD/Building	Implementing	<p>Review the City’s current Electronic Over-the-Counter (E-OTC), Facility Permit Program (FPP) and online minor permit programs for opportunities to improve or expand services. The E-OTC program will be replaced by the Small Project Rapid Review program (SPRR) by the end of 2025. SPRR will complete project reviews within 72 hours and customers will be able to submit SPRR application 24 hours a day. The E-OTC has limited hours (10am-3pm, Monday-Friday). Additionally, increase customer awareness of FPP.</p>

Process & Potential Action	Lead	Status	Potential Action Summary
Customer Service Satisfaction Surveys	CDD/Building	Ongoing & Instituted (July 2025)	Continue to administer and incorporate feedback from Building Division Customer Satisfaction Surveys for counter services, inspections, plan review and project management. In July 2025, QR codes for the survey were placed at the public counter and added to email signatures.
Staff Contact Information & Responsiveness	All Development-Related Departments	Instituted (March 2025)	Staff communicating with the development community should have phone and email address in signature block of each email and be available by phone. Additionally, all correction notices list the phone and email address of the plan reviewer in the letterhead. In May 2025, CDD instituted standard email signatures.
Application Forms (Consolidate & Simplify)	CDD/Building	Ongoing & Instituted (July 2025)	Consolidate and simplify applications, forms and checklists and remove duplicative fields. The Building Division constantly updates and revises forms strategically so as not to disrupt normal business operations. In conjunction with Streamline Sacramento efforts and the upcoming triennial code update to the 2025 California Building Standards Codes, the Building Division will aim to consolidate and make it easier for customers to identify the appropriate forms/applications. In July 2025, Minor Permit Application Form Bundles were added to the webpage to make it easier for contractors and homeowners to find all the forms required for each common minor permit type.
Information Bulletins & Reference Materials	CDD/Building	Exploring & Implementing	Consider instituting Information Bulletins that are published on the City's webpage to update the development community on the latest building codes, construction practices, safety standards and regulatory changes. As an example, see City of San Diego's webpage and sample bulletin . The City currently has informational guides and forms that are updated every triennial code cycle. Once the 2025 Building Code goes into effect in January 2026, the Building Division will reformat and reorganize these documents to make them easier to locate. How-to videos to assist customers with the electronic building permit application submittals are available and will be promoted via the webpage and email updates. Consider creating an FAQ for the building permit process.

Process & Potential Action	Lead	Status	Potential Action Summary
300 Richards Blvd. Public Counter Operation & Virtual Appointments	Multiple Departments	Instituted (May 2025) & Exploring	<p>Current public counter hours of operation: Tues-Thurs, 9am-3:30pm; cashier services also available by appointment Mondays and Fridays. A review of customer trends and appointment utilization indicated that only 8% of customers use the public counter and appointments are readily available. Customers can currently utilize the online portal 24/7. Effective May 1, 2025, expanded services for walk-in customers were implemented, while still prioritizing those with appointments.</p> <p>In October 2025, staff will initiate a 6-month pilot program to expand public counter services on Mondays and Fridays. At the conclusion of the pilot, staff will assess customer usage trends and costs of delivering the enhanced service and make revisions accordingly.</p>
Increased Coordination and Communication between City Departments and Agencies (e.g., utility providers, sanitation district, county health department)	CDD/Building & Multiple Departments	Implementing	Explore options for the Building Division's Project Management Section to facilitate enhanced coordination and communication processes throughout lifecycle of development process between departments and agencies. Coordination meetings being established with the Sacramento County Health Department to improve city/county coordination and support restaurants navigating the permitting process.
Fill & Retain Development Related Vacant Positions	Multiple Departments	Ongoing & Exploring	<p>Identify barriers and develop solutions for development related vacancies. As an example, CDD's Building Division has a vacancy rate of 26% and Public Works' Engineering Services Division has a 24% vacancy rate.</p> <p>Exploring Building Division job shadowing and internship program with Capital College & Career Academy to establish an additional job readiness pipeline for students.</p>
AI-Powered Tools for Increased Efficiency & Customer Service	CDD/Building	Exploring & Implementing	City Staff is exploring "Ichi"—AI Co-Pilot for Building Code Compliance and initiated a 30-day pilot at the end of July, focusing on Plan Review and Building Inspections. Staff will also continue to monitor the capabilities of other AI-powered tools that could answer applicant's pre-application questions, simplify the customer portal, ensure applicants submit complete application packages and reduce plan review cycles. SacGPT, the City's AI-powered chatbot assistant will be rolling out to the public by the end of 2025 and can assist customers with finding information in the City's Code and other resources available on the City's website.
Building Permit Application Submittal & Plan Review			
Avoidance of Plan Review Comments After Cycle 1	CDD/Building	Instituted (January 2025)	Where feasible and not life safety issues, strive to avoid additional plan review comments that were not made during Cycle 1 (unless project is revised between cycles).

Process & Potential Action	Lead	Status	Potential Action Summary
In-Field Revisions & Corrections	CDD/Building	Instituted (January 2025)	Allow in-field revisions or corrections in certain circumstances instead of requiring a full plan revision.
Request for Information (RFI) Process	CDD/Building	Instituted (January 2025)	Revisited RFI procedures and instituted the ability to proceed with inspections for minor RFI clarifications.
Proactively Monitor Project Applications & Implement Triage Plans	CDD/Building	Implementing	Proactively resolve challenges for projects that appear stalled. A new automated internal report is being created in Accela to easily identify the number of days a project has been with the applicant. This report will make it easier for staff to proactively intervene with projects that have stalled and have been in Plan Check Wait status for an extended time. See also "Best Practices & Procedures for Plan Review & Reducing Number of Plan Review Cycles."
Meet or Exceed Plan Review Timelines	CDD, PW (Development Engineering, Transportation & Urban Forestry) Fire, DOU	Ongoing & Implementing	<p>Cycle Times for Plan Review have been established based on valuation and cycle #. Plan review staff is on-time or early 98.6% of the time. The department's target is 90%.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creating guidance documents for consistency & training of plan review staff. - Training staff as back-up reviewers or establishing on-call plan reviewers list for all disciplines to address capacity/vacancies/absences. Urban Forestry is training additional arborists to conduct plan review. DOU is considering contract plan reviewers, and Public Works has contract plan reviewers in place.
Implement Cycle Review Times for Lot Mergers/Adjustments and Parcel Maps	PW/ Development Engineering	Implementing	Overhauling and modernize the PW, Development Engineering module and workflows in the City's development software management system (Accela) and PW customer portal, for the ability to create workflows, automated due dates, automatic email applications status emails, etc., for lot merger/adjustments, parcel maps, final maps, substantial conformance review, easements, etc.

Process & Potential Action	Lead	Status	Potential Action Summary
Best Practices & Procedures for Plan Review & Reducing Number of Plan Review Cycles	CDD/Building	Instituted (August 2025) & Implementing	<p>After the 2nd Cycle of Plan Review, customers are encouraged to meet with staff to resolve the remaining corrections. Starting in August 2025, the applicant will be required to meet with staff after the 3rd Cycle of Plan Review and prior to accepting the Cycle 4 submission.</p> <p>Establish customer education strategies and new procedures, as necessary. See also “Information Bulletins & Reference Materials.” The Building Division currently offers free pre-submittal meetings to answer project specific questions. Potentially consider enhancements. As an example, the City of San Diego has a Preliminary Review — a flat fee-based service offered before formal submittal, which assists in determining project feasibility by obtaining responses to project-specific questions and documenting staff responses.</p>
Prequalified Architectural Submittal System (PASS)	CDD/Building	Implementing	Applicants enrolled in PASS can bypass the submittal package review step (triage) and are able to go directly to Plan Review. Several Building Division staff are in the process of completing the PASS training and obtaining certification. Once the training series is complete, the PASS program will be advertised to customers.
Self-Certification Program	Multiple Departments	Exploring	Explore implementing a self-certification program which allows registered professionals to bypass the plan review process by taking responsibility for and certifying a project's compliance with building code, standards and ordinances. Staff continue to explore what a self-certification program could look like, but from initial conversations with other jurisdictions and architects, there is hesitation due to the increased liability and insurance costs for architects/engineers. There is also an increased likelihood that work will need to be redone in the field because it may not comply with the building code, thereby increasing construction costs substantially.
Condo Maps	PW/ Development Engineering	Exploring	Staff is reviewing the parcel map waiver process for condominiums, including potentially automatically approving a waiver when a tentative map is approved for 1 lot condos, as long as the applicant is able to meet certain requirements.
Sign Permits	CDD/Building	Instituted (August 2025)	Improved efficiency and tracking of sign permit applications by migrating the process from email to the electronic plan check portal (EPC). The EPC allows real time tracking to ensure approval targets are being met.

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Addressing	CDD/Building	Implementing	To speed up the processing time for assigning new addresses for subdivision maps, staff is exploring revising the current process to update addresses twice monthly in Accela, instead of the current once a month process. A pilot was launched in August 2025 with IT (Geographic Information Systems). In September, staff will evaluate the need for additional resources to make pilot program permanent.
Financing			
Deferral and Reduction of Development Impact Fees	CDD/Building	Ongoing & Exploring	Citywide Impact Fee Reform adopted by Council in 2017 standardized impact fees, reduced certain impact fees (Transportation and Parks) and established the Fee Deferral Program. Fee Deferral Program allows developers to wait to pay impact fees until final inspections from the Building Division. Established in 2018, a \$0 rate is applied to affordable dwelling units for City-controlled impact fees. SB-937, effective January 1, 2025, allows deferral of impact fees for affordable housing and projects with 10 or fewer dwelling units. Explore options such as info sheets and early notifications to customers about available programs for deferring or reducing fees.
Community Facilities District (CFD)	Infrastructure Finance/PW/DOU	Exploring	Consider revisions to CFD reimbursement/public bidding process/funding agreement language to be able to start bidding process before plans are signed. Developers have noted that the current public bidding process can delay ability to order materials. Materials can take 12-16 weeks. Can obtain signed/final plans but can't break ground for another 4-6 months.
Flat Fees for PW, Offsite Plans	PW	Implementing	Soliciting feedback from developers about going to a flat fee for Public Works' Offsite Plans, which would allow developers to better plan project finances versus the current cost recovery system. As an interim step, staff have modified the current deposit amount for FY25/26 Fee & Charge Report, effective July 1, 2025.
Bond Opportunities for Land Development (BOLD) Program	Infrastructure Finance	Instituted (April 2025) & Ongoing	City Council authorized participation in the BOLD Program on April 8, 2025 (Resolution No. 2025-0092). BOLD is offered by the California Municipal Finance Authority (CMFA) which can be used to finance public impact fees and infrastructure required for new development within the City, allowing greater flexibility for the development community and will lessen the administrative burden on City staff. Two Standard-Form Agreements are being developed and those will be brought to Council for approval this fall.

Process & Potential Action	Lead	Status	Potential Action Summary
Building Permit Issuance			
Instant Building Permit Issuance	CDD/Building	Instituted (April 2025) & Implementing	The Building Division's minor permit process now allows a contractor to self-certify and instantly receive a building permit for minor permits (e.g., water heater and residential PV solar with SolarAPP+). Compliance with code is verified through virtual or in-person inspection. Staff are in the process of expanding this program to allow instant building permit issuance for property owners seeking water heater permits and HVAC change outs.
Demolition/Wrecking Permit	CDD/Building & Multiple Departments	Instituted (June 2025)	Building Division's Project Management Section has implemented an automated routing and approval process for demolition/wrecking applications to expedite permit approvals. New process effective June 16, 2025.
Building & Offsite Inspections			
Virtual Inspections	CDD/Building	Implementing	Entered into a contract for virtual inspection software (VuSpex) for remote inspections and launched kick-off in July. Virtual inspections for minor permits will go live in early Fall 2025.
Onsite & Offsite Inspections	CDD/Building/DOU/PW	Instituted (April 2025)	CDD, PW, and DOU will consolidate the same mapping/improvement process for private street small lot Single-Family Housing (SFH) subdivision vs. standard public street SFH subdivision. This will simplify the process for developers who work on infill lot developments and is supporting the Missing Middle Housing (MMH) Interim Ordinance. Effective, April 2025, private streets as part of subdivisions to be shown on offsite plans and to be inspected by Public Works & Utilities/offsite inspectors.
Building Inspection Process Efficiencies	CDD/Building /Fire	Instituted (March 2025), Implementing & Exploring	Consider procedures for increasing inspection efficiency such as: 1) (Instituted, March 2025) conducting entire inspection in one visit, if feasible, instead of multiple 15-minute visits. Especially important for final inspections for multi-unit housing projects; 2) (Instituted, March 2025 & Exploring) Inspectors currently call 30 minutes of arrival. Evaluate whether inspection schedule blocks (e.g., 4 schedule window) would be beneficial and feasible; 3) (Exploring) Consider instituting procedure for when inspector arrives, conduct inspection for items that are ready, instead of delaying in order to perform multiple inspections together. 4) (Instituted, March 2025) Consider using third-party inspectors, as needed, to keep projects on track. 5) (Instituted August 2025) At the conclusion of the inspection, enter results into Accela in real time from the field to avoid any delays in moving to the next step. 6) (Implementing) Working with IT to develop an Inspection Tracker –an internal web-based dashboard for supervisors to track inspections and make schedule or inspector adjustments in real time. Anticipate going live by December 2025.

Process & Potential Action	Lead	Status	Potential Action Summary
Inspections & Approved Building Plans	CDD/Building	Instituted (January 2025) & Implementing	Review process for ensuring project in the field matches plans approved during plan review process. See “Request for Information (RFI) Process” and “AI-Powered Tools for Increased Efficiency & Customer Service.”
Issuance of Inspection Results	CDD/Building	Instituted (July 2025)	Consider policy for building inspectors to upload inspection results to both the portal and through email to contractor and developer. The project applicant currently receives email alerts of inspection results and can add additional email addresses to receive alerts of inspection results and other project milestones by emailing ezpermit@cityofsacramento.org or by contacting their project manager.
Building Inspection Certificate Trainings & California Building Standards Code, Consistent Interpretation	CDD/Building	Implementing & Ongoing	Explore contracting out the International Code Council (ICC) certificate training programs and exam preparation (e.g., plumbing, electrical) instead of conducting them in-house to expedite completion of trainings and exams and free-up more senior staff to be in the field. The Building Division will continue to have staff-led training programs but will have staff instructors receive ICC training certification. Exam preparation will be contracted out. Ongoing weekly code uniformity sessions led in-office in an effort to provide consistency of interpretations of the field inspectors for our customers.
Drone Assisted Building Inspections	CDD/Building	Exploring	Explore using drones to assist building inspectors in conducting inspections of hard-to-reach areas of buildings like rooftops and facades.
Final Inspection and Certificate of Occupancy			
Temporary Certificate of Occupancy & Safe to Stock	CDD/Building	Instituted (August 2025)	Builders are encouraged to first strive for a Certificate of Occupancy (CofO), but the City issues Temporary Certificates of Occupancy (TCOs) as necessary for portions or phases of the development to allow for early occupancy. To allow for greater flexibility, staff is moving forward with an alternative option to a TCO. Safe to Stock will allow installation of equipment and furniture and the opportunity to train staff prior to final inspection sign-off and the space being occupied. To expedite signoffs of TCOs and Safe to Stock, the Chief Building Official has authorized a second approver.