

Streamline Sacramento – The City’s Development Process Improvements Program

Potential Actions Table (March 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, to plan review, inspections, issuance of building permit and 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 | CDD/Building | Ongoing | In Fall 2024, established building permit liaison for new restaurants and Downtown Partnership’s Calling All Dreamers Program. May expand program in future. Development Projects with a valuation of \$1 million or more are already assigned a Development Project Manager. |
| Minor Alterations & Improvements Processes | CDD/Building | Ongoing | 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. |
| Customer Service Satisfaction Surveys | CDD/Building | Ongoing | Continue to administer and incorporate feedback from Building Division Customer Satisfaction Surveys for counter services, inspections, plan review and project management. |
| 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. |
| Application Forms | CDD/Building | Ongoing & Exploring | Consolidate and simplify applications and forms 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. |

| Process & Potential Action | Lead | Status | Potential Action Summary |
|---|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|--|
| Information Bulletins & Reference Materials | CDD/Building | Implementing & Ongoing | 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 . Consider creating step-by-step flow charts of the building permit process for housing projects. The City currently has informational guides and forms that are updated every triennial code cycle. The Building Division will reformat and reorganize these documents to make them easier to locate. |
| 300 Richards Blvd. Public Counter Operation | Multiple Departments | Exploring | 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. Potential changes include allowing additional walk-in customers without appointments and notifying customers of this option. |
| Increased Coordination and Communication between City Departments and Agencies (e.g., utility providers, sanitation district) | CDD/Building & Multiple Departments | Exploring | 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. |
| Fill & Retain Development Related Vacant Positions | Multiple Departments | Ongoing | Identify barriers and develop solutions for development related vacancies. As an example, CDD's Building Division has a vacancy rate of 23% and Public Works' Engineering Services Division has a 29% vacancy rate. |
| Plan Review for Building Permit | | | |
| 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). |
| 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 | Run monthly report of development projects in cycle wait (not active in plan review). Work with applicants to resolve challenges for projects that appear stalled. Plan Review staff currently offers meetings (by email and phone) after cycle 2 review to help resolve outstanding correction items in an effort to avoid additional cycles of review. |

| Process & Potential Action | Lead | Status | Potential Action Summary |
|---|---|---------------------|--|
| Meet or Exceed Plan Review Timelines | CDD, PW (Development Engineering, Transportation & Urban Forestry) Fire, DOU | Ongoing & Exploring | <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"> – Consider creating guidance documents for consistency & training of plan review staff. – Consider training staff as back-up reviewers or establishing on-call plan reviewers list for all disciplines to address capacity/vacancies/absences. |
| Implement Cycle Review Times for Lot Mergers/Adjustments and Parcel Maps | PW/ Development Engineering | Exploring | Explore overhauling and modernizing 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. To accomplish this potential action, it is anticipated that two new FTE positions will be required. |
| Best Practices & Procedures for Plan Review & Reducing Number of Plan Review Cycles | CDD/Building | Exploring | Identify the most common reasons for additional Plan Review Cycles for multi-unit dwelling projects. Establish customer education strategies and new procedures, as necessary. See also "Information Bulletins & Reference Materials." The Building Division currently offers free presubmittal 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. |
| AI-Powered Automation for Building Code Compliance in Electronic Plan Submission | CDD/Building | Exploring | Explore AI tools such as www.archistar.ai/ to potentially reduce plan review cycles and ensure applicants submit complete application packages. |
| Self-Certification Program | CDD/Building | 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. The City currently allows self-certification of contractors for minor permits (e.g. hot water heaters, HVAC). |
| Financing | | | |
| Deferral and Reduction of Development Impact Fees | CDD/Building | Ongoing & Exploring | <p>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.</p> <p>Explore options such as info sheets and early notifications to customers about available programs for deferring or reducing fees.</p> |

| Process & Potential Action | Lead | Status | Potential Action Summary |
|---|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| 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 | Exploring | Soliciting feedback from developers about going to a flat fee which would allow developers to better plan project finances versus the current cost recovery system. As an interim step, staff are considering modifications to the current deposit amount for FY25/26 Fee & Charge Report that would go into effect July 1, 2025. |
| Bond Opportunities for Land Development (BOLD) Program | Infrastructure Finance | Implementing | Request authorization from City Council to participate in the BOLD Program offered by the California Municipal Finance Authority (CMFA) which can be used to finance public infrastructure required for new development within the City. This would allow greater flexibility for the development community in the City and lessen the administrative burden on City staff. |
| Building & Offsite Inspections | | | |
| Virtual Inspections | CDD/Building | Implementing | Entering into contract for virtual inspection software for remote inspections. |
| Onsite & Offsite Inspections | CDD/Building/DOU/PW | Implementing | 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. |
| Building Inspection Process Efficiencies | CDD/Building | Instituted (March 2025) & Exploring | Consider procedures for increasing inspection efficiency such as: 1) (Instituted) 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 & 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) Consider using third-party inspectors, as needed, to keep projects on track. |
| Inspections & Approved Building Plans | CDD/Building | Exploring | Review process for ensuring project in the field matches plans approved during plan review process. |
| Issuance of Inspection Results | CDD/Building | Exploring | Consider policy for building inspectors to upload inspection results to both the portal and through email to contractor and developer. |
| Building Inspection Certificate Trainings & California Building Standards Code, Consistent Interpretation | CDD/Building | Exploring | Explore contracting out the International Code Council 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. |
| Building Permit Issuance | | | |
| Safe to Stock | CDD/Building | Implementing | Safe to Stock (for furniture/equipment installation & staff training) procedures being developed. |

| Process & Potential Action | Lead | Status | Potential Action Summary |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------|---|
| Instant Building Permit Issuance | CDD/Building | Exploring | Consider updating the Building Division's minor permit process and develop a building permit check box form that an applicant self-certifies and instantly receives building permit for minor permits (e.g., hot water heater and residential PV solar with SolarAPP+). Compliance with code is verified through virtual or in-person inspection. |
| Demolition/Wrecking Permit | CDD/Building & Multiple Departments | Exploring | Building Division's Project Management Section exploring expediting demolition/wrecking application approvals required by multiple departments by instituting an automated electronic signature process. |