



Driving Economic Development Through Effective Local Government



Council for Quality Growth

Luz Borrero, Deputy Chief Operating Office for Development

December 3, 2015

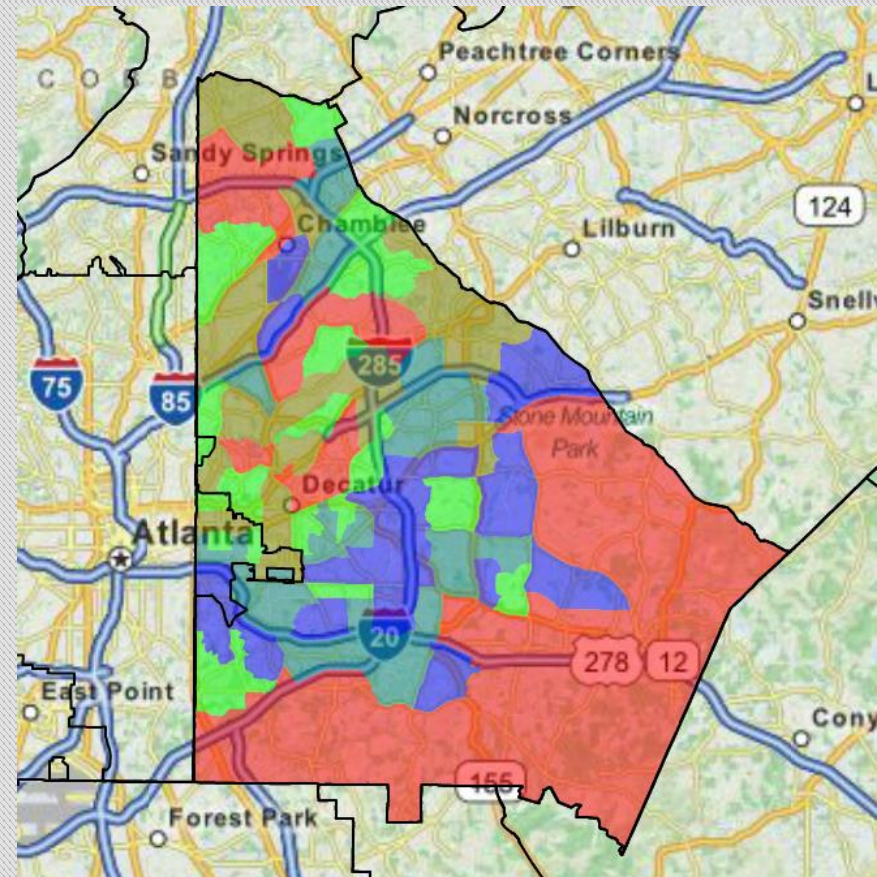
DeKalb County responded to a call to action from the business community

- ▶ A call to Improve our Permitting Operations and create a Strategic Direction for Economic Development

After dozens of meetings with members of the business community to determine the County's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, two consistent weaknesses emerged:

1. The County's permitting and business license operations lack of efficiency were an impediment to growth and needed to be overhauled
2. The County's Economic Development activities lack strategic direction. The county needed a plan.

- ▶ As a response the administration initiated:
 - A Comprehensive overhauls of the Permitting and Business License Operations
 - The Development of an Economic Development Strategic Plan



New zoning code adopted to facilitate development

The updated Zoning Code was approved by the Board of Commissioners on August 25, 2015, and became effective on September 1, 2015

The update centered on three primary goals:

- ▶ Create a more user-friendly code
 - Illustrating concepts that were formerly complex through tables and graphics
 - Reducing the number of districts and consolidating parking into one chapter
- ▶ Establish new design standards to protect neighborhoods
 - Compatibility standards for infill, higher quality building materials, and landscape standards
 - Traffic study thresholds
 - Enhanced open space and recreation requirements
- ▶ New Residential Development Options
- ▶ New district aligned with character areas designated by the Comprehensive Plan (mixed use and multi-family)



Permitting changes were designed to increase efficiency and enhance customer service

The Permitting Improvement Project was launched in 2013 aiming to address the concern that the permitting and business license operations were hindering economic growth.

The project plan was structured in three phases:

- ▶ **Phase 1: Short-Term improvements:** identified and implemented “low hanging fruit” changes; established Major Projects Team, developed permit guides, upgraded Q-Matic and IVR systems and procured consulting support for in-depth business process analysis. **May – November 2013**
- ▶ **Phase 2: Retained Consulting firm** to formulate business process changes and implementation plan. Created a Development Manual, streamlined processes, and implemented the Peer Review Policy. **December 2013 – March 2015**
- ▶ **Phase 3: Software Overhaul:** initiated software overhaul with electronic plan review and document management system, in parallel with Hansen upgrade. **November 2015 – June, 2017**

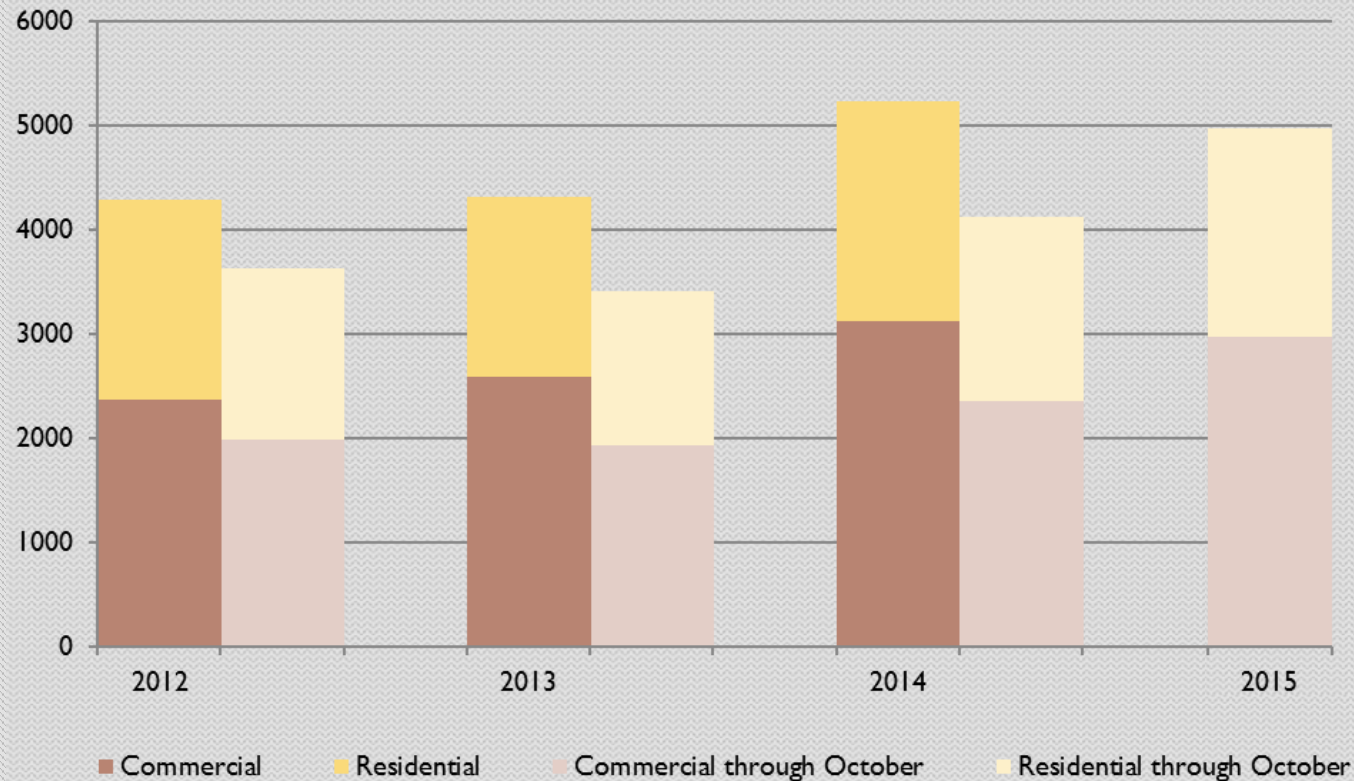
Consolidated permitting functions facilitated accountability and a data driven culture helped to quickly identify and resolve problems

- ▶ Since this project began in May, 2013 we have substantially improved permitting operations by:
 - ▶ Consolidating fragmented areas (Land Development, Environmental Inspections, Fire Review, Water/Sewer Review and Inspections, and Business Licenses) into a single organizational structure to create a one-stop-shop
 - ▶ Adopting streamlined processes for minor permits (Peer Reviews, move in as is, and residential alterations and additions)
 - ▶ Creating permit guides and a Development Manual to assist customers through the entire process
 - ▶ Establishing a solution-oriented culture dedicated to customer service
 - ▶ Upgrading technology (Q-Matic & IVR Systems) to increase staff efficiency
- ▶ The new culture emphasizes data gathering and data analysis to measure our successes and develop corrective measures where improvements are still needed.
- ▶ The customer experience has been enhanced through reduced plan review times and faster inspections for all projects, and guaranteed service levels for Peer Reviewed projects.



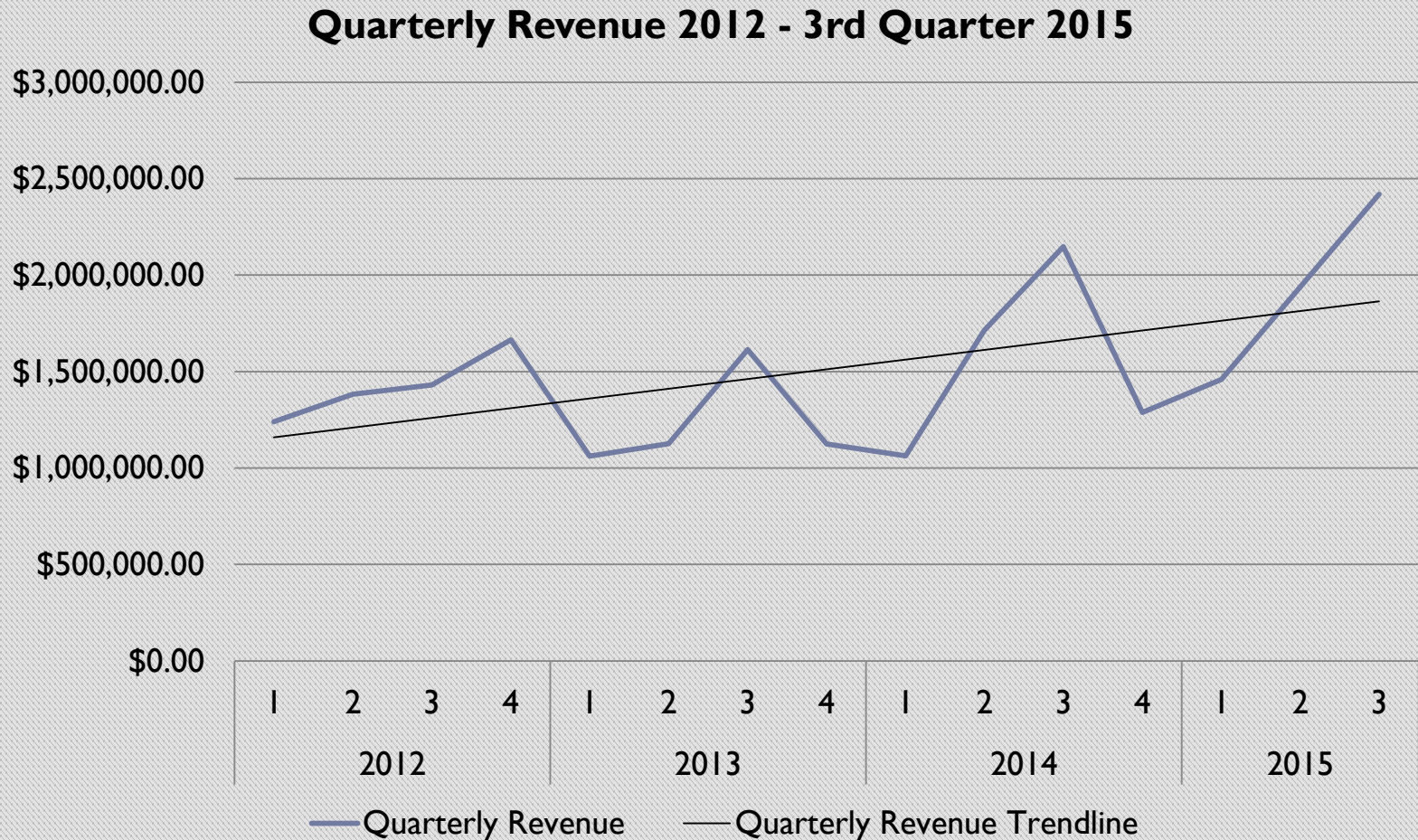
Building permits issued and economic development activity are steadily increasing

Permits Issued



- New construction is 10% of the total number of permits.
- Trade permits (electrical, HVAC, plumbing) are not included.

Revenue Trend in Development Services is Positive with Most Activity Occurring in the Summer



Expedited Commercial Plan Reviews have consistently hit target of 10 days or less

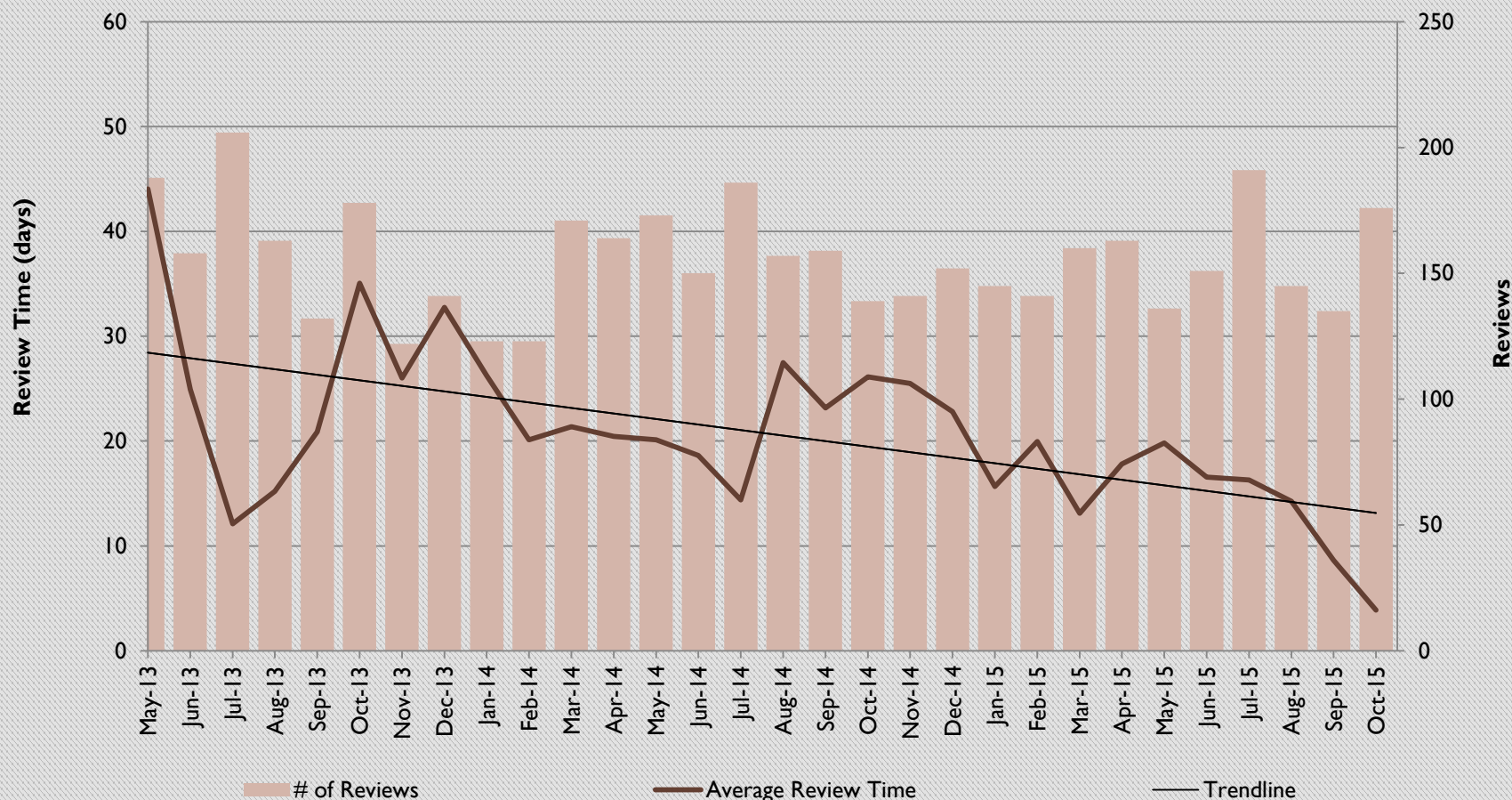
1. Architectural and Engineering Firms become registered within the county as Peer Reviewers.
2. A public database is maintained by the county of all registered Peer Reviewers.
3. Applicants select a Peer Reviewer from the database to review structural, life safety, fire systems and accessibility aspects of plan before submitting plans to the County.
4. Once review is completed, the customer submits signed plans to the County.
5. The County performs an expedited plan review. Plans that submitted through the Expedited Commercial Plan Review Program are guaranteed to be reviewed within 10 days.
6. The County's review also covers zoning, building, fire and watershed management requirements.

- 95% of Expedited Commercial Plan Reviews have met their target of 10 days or less.
- Average performance time since the beginning of the program is 8 days.
- **Participation in the program has diminished in recent months as plan review times for regular submittals have improved**



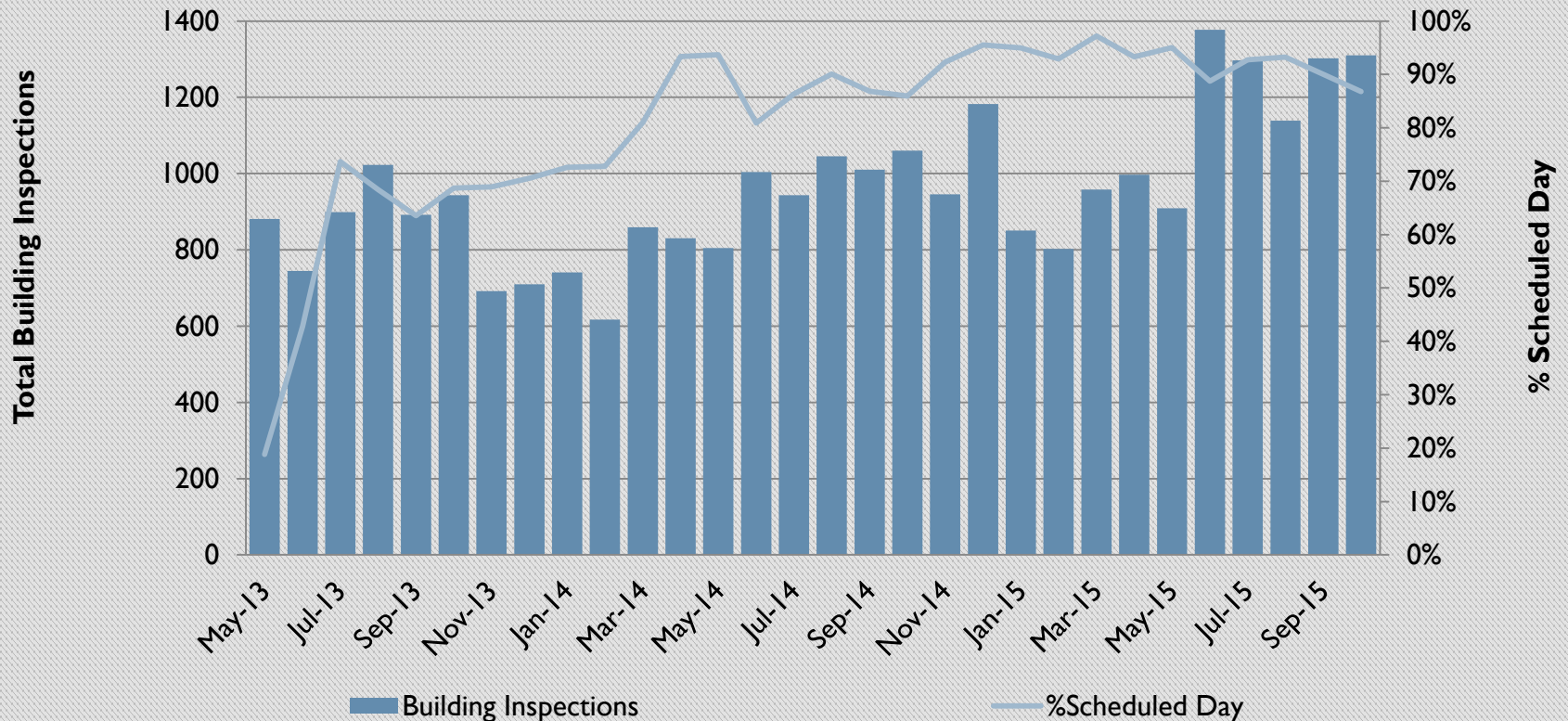
While the number of plan reviews have remained steady, the average number of days per review has dropped steadily since this project began in May 2013

Commercial Plan Review Time and Volume



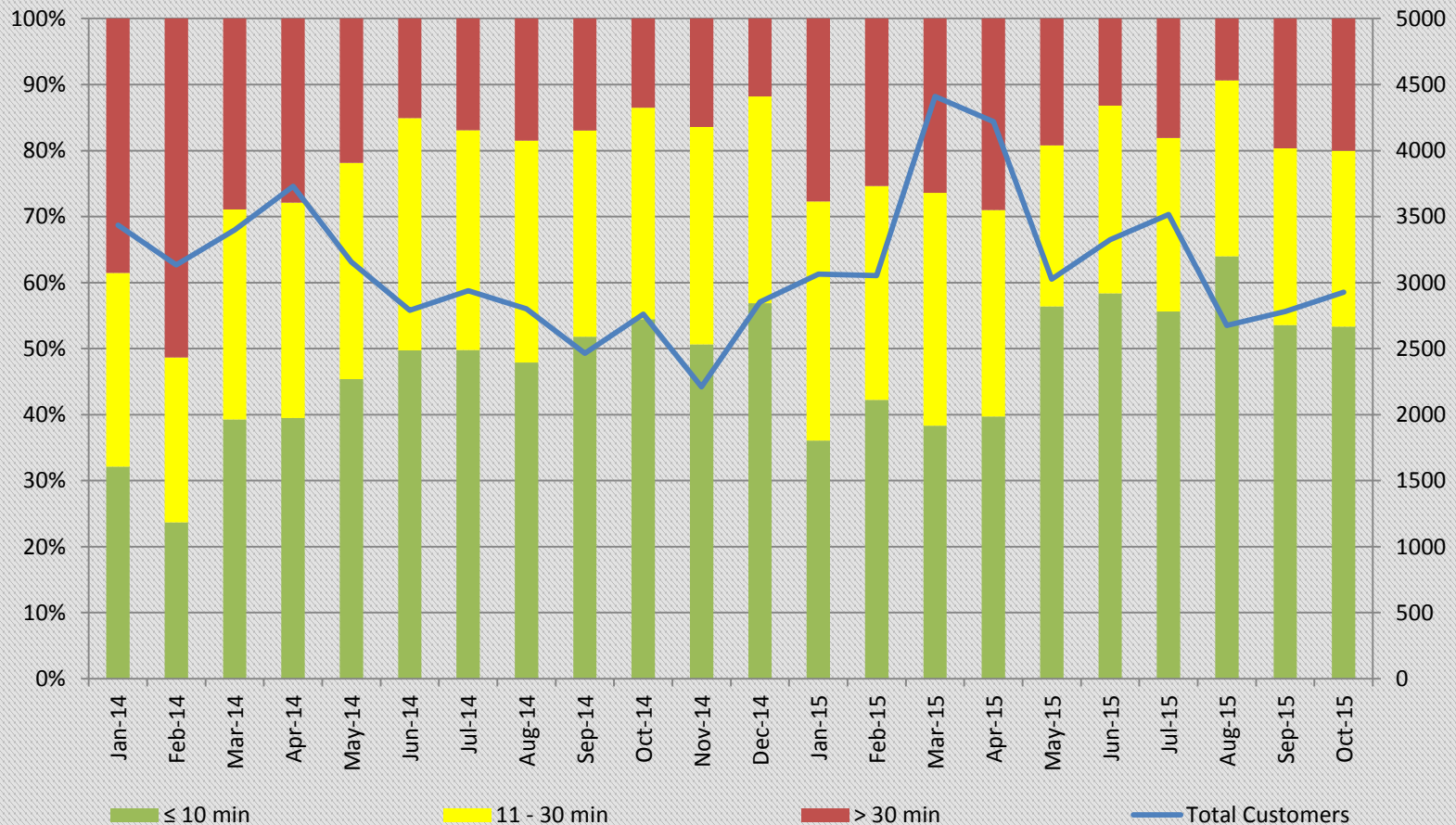
Building inspections completed on the day requested have increased from a low of 19% to 90% since the project began

Building Inspections



The percentage of customers served within ten minutes has more than doubled from a low of 24% to over 50%

Customer Wait Times



Phase 3 of Permitting Overhaul is currently underway

On October 13, 2015 the Board of Commissioners finalized contracts to upgrade to Hansen 8.4 and ProjectDox 8.3

- ▶ Current version of Hansen is obsolete and nearing the end of vendor support
- ▶ This new technology will improve customer service and staff effectiveness
 - ▶ Substantial manual data entry efforts for large subdivisions and apartment complexes will be automated

Digital submissions with ProjectDox will increase staff efficiency while saving applicants time and money

- ▶ Electronic plan routing eliminates the risk of lost plans and the effort involved in plan routing, and consolidating plan sets.
- ▶ Electronic routing enables concurrent reviews the moment plans are submitted into the system.
- ▶ For initial submittals and resubmittals of building permits, land development permits, and sketch plats, applicants will be able to submit their plans through an online portal.

Hansen 8.4 and ProjectDox8.3 - Implementation Timeline																		
	2015						2016						2017					
Project/Phase	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
ProjectDox																		
Project Planning																		
ProjectDox Sprints																		
Final Configuration, Testing, Rollout																		
Hansen																		
Project Planning and Data Cleanup																		
Inception																		
Elaboration Phase																		
Construction Phase / Go Live																		
Transition/ Optimization Phase																		

Development Services Fiscal Oversight Advisory Committee has hit the ground running

On January 13, 2015 the Board of Commissioners approved legislation establishing the Development Services Fiscal Oversight Advisory Committee

The BOC approved all ten recommended committee members representing local business, civic, and development organizations on April 14, 2015

The Advisory Committee has met regularly to provide oversight and guidance on the following:

- ▶ Process Improvements
- ▶ Policy Changes
- ▶ Budget Priorities
- ▶ Communications

The Advisory Committee is especially critical in identifying areas where DeKalb's policies hinder economic development, proposing solutions based on best practices, and championing their approval before the Board of Commissioners





DeKalb County Strategic Recommendations

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategic Plan

August 19, 2014

The County initiated the creation of a strategy to direct its economic development



Historic Downtown Decatur

In the wake of the Great Recession, DeKalb had been plagued by home foreclosures, commercial migration, and low county revenues.

The County identified the need for creating a strategic plan that:

- ▶ Leveraged its strategic location and available assets to enhance and attract new economic development opportunities
- ▶ Identified target industries and specialized niche markets that have the potential to flourish here
- ▶ Recommended a marketing approach to showcase the County as a business friendly and appealing destination for site selection and location
- ▶ Motivated development through incentives and public-private partnerships

To formulate the strategic plan the County retained Angelou Economics and set in place a Stakeholders Group



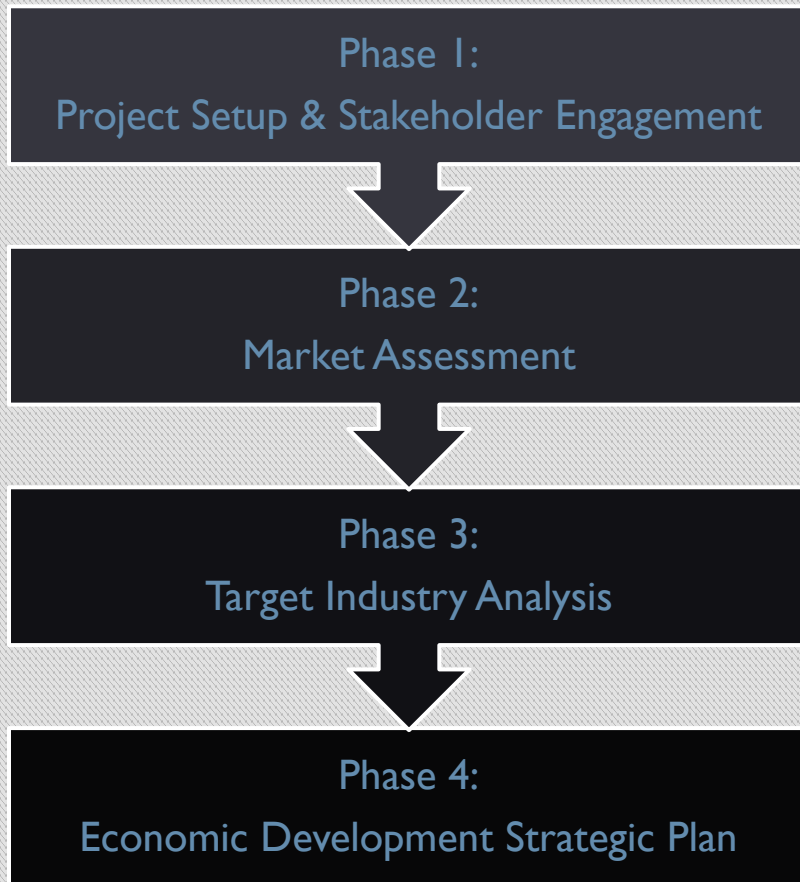
Based in Austin, Texas, this company has decades of economic development and site selection experience. Across the US and Internationally.

The firm has worked with over 600 local and national governments to create customized plans that maximize their resources. They promote national best practices to make localities more appealing to businesses and developers.

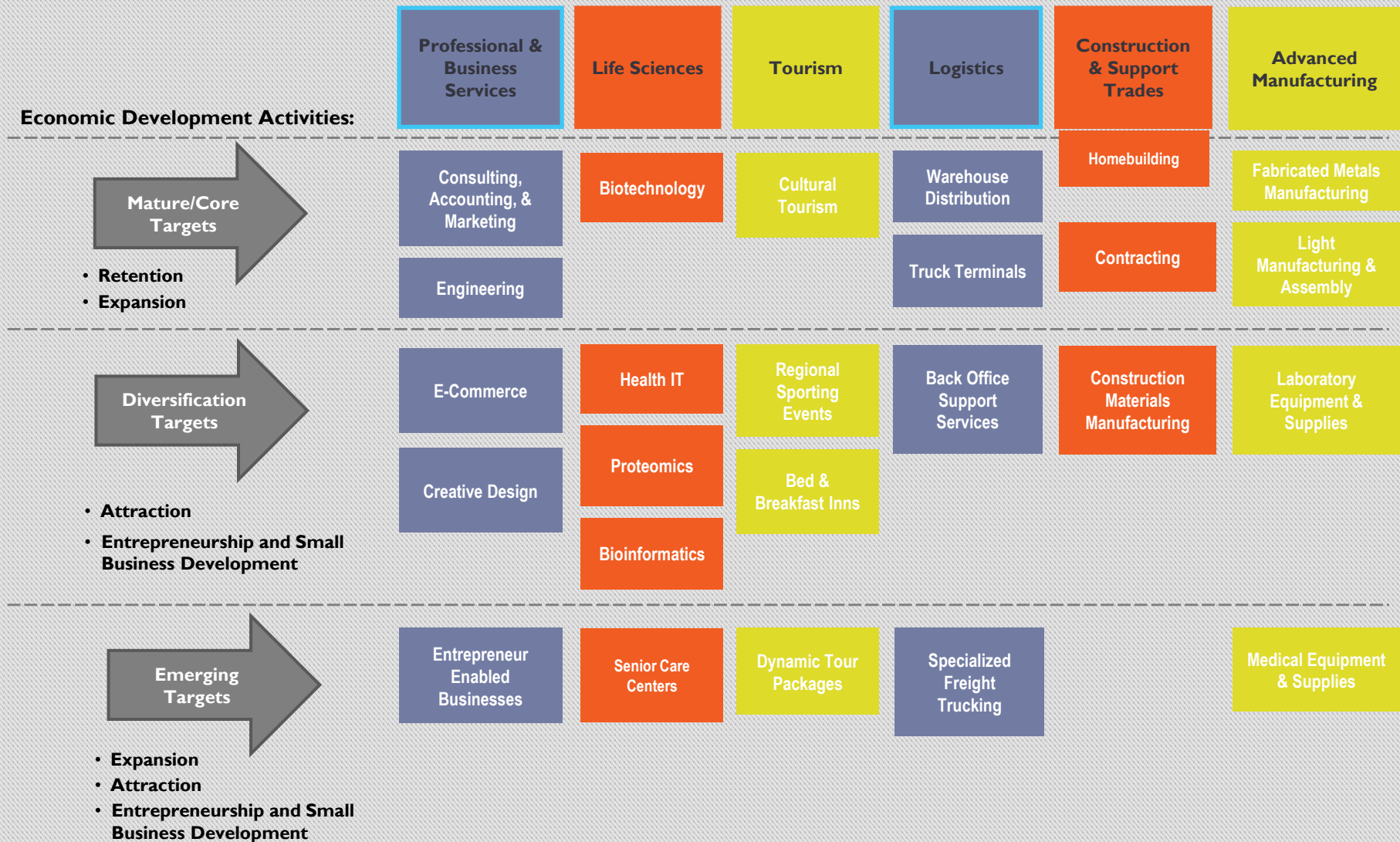
The plan outlined three deliverables:

1. Market Assessment
2. Target Industry Analysis
3. Economic Development Strategic Plan

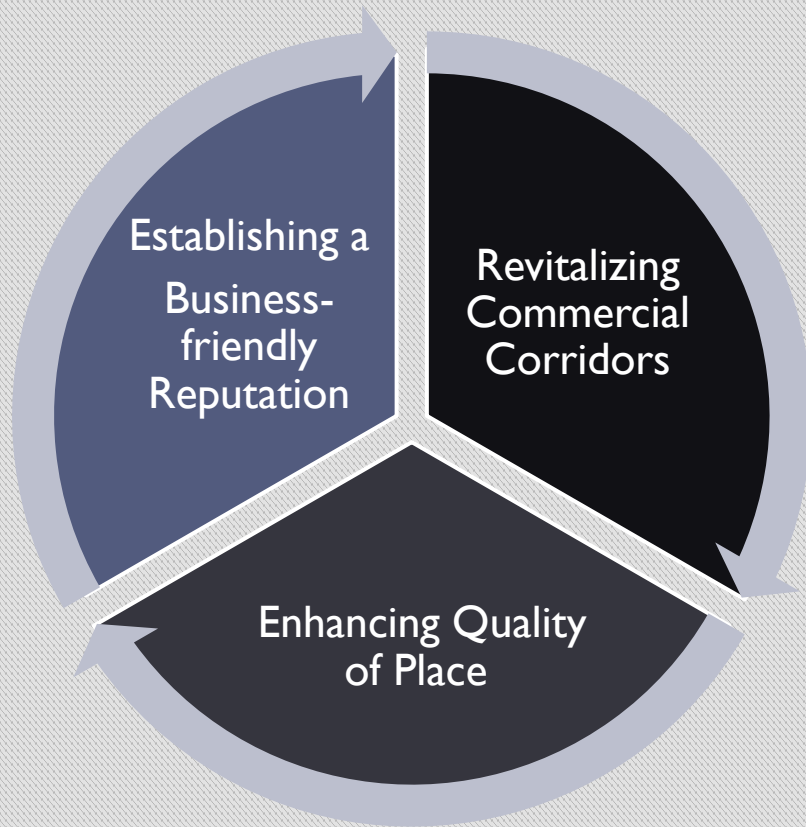
► Each deliverable is available at DeKalbCounty2020.com



Target Industries and niches were selected on the basis of national trends, County assets and growth opportunities



The Strategic Plan established three major goals for DeKalb's future



1. Making DeKalb the most business-friendly county in the state by continuing to improve permitting operations and supporting small businesses
2. Revitalizing the County's commercial corridors –by creating employment centers and protecting zoning at critical interstate and other intersections
3. Enhancing quality of place – by pursuing game-changing projects and making the County safer

The Plan Recommended Implementation of Strategies through Establishment of Task Forces

On September 23, 2014 the Board of Commissioners adopted its first Economic Development Strategic Plan

Implementation of Strategies has been initiated by Decide DeKalb and the County

- Task Forces were created in the areas of:
 - Community Enhancements
 - Existing Business and Entrepreneurship
 - Incentives and Policy Reform
 - Marketing and Branding
 - Real Estate and Product Development
 - Tourism and Culture
 - Transportation and Infrastructure
- The County is responsible for driving the following recommendations:
 - Make DeKalb the most business-friendly county in the region through improved business licensing and permitting operations
 - Adoption of an Incentives Policy
 - Support for one or more Business Incubators
 - Agreement and coordination with MARTA on TOD opportunities
 - Strengthen identified employment centers through projects like the redevelopment of the Kensington/ Memorial Drive corridor



Incentives policy drafted to attract jobs and investment

Incentives Policy Submitted to the Board of Commissioners for consideration and approval in January, 2016

- ▶ Based on local and national best practices, the incentives policy provides a framework for the County to offer the following to eligible businesses:
 - Permit fee waivers and reductions
 - Business License fee waivers and reductions
 - Matching funds for water and sewer infrastructure improvements
 - Expedited Land Development and Building Permit Process
- ▶ Eligibility for incentives is based on the following criteria:
 - Whether the development is associated with one of the County's Target Industries or related niches
 - Projected taxable value of the development
 - Job creation
 - Sustainable building and development practices



Film ordinance drafted to make DeKalb film-ready

- ▶ Currently, Decide DeKalb serves as a liaison between film representatives and the County to ensure the film company has access to all public right-of-way and facilities they need, while all local regulations are upheld
- ▶ Because the County has no ordinance that specifically governs filming, the applicant works with each involved department director to gain administrative approval. Departments involved could include the following:
 - Fire Rescue
 - Police
 - Parks and Recreation
 - Roads and Drainage
 - Transportation

The new ordinance offers the following benefits:

- ▶ A formal framework for permit application submission, review, and approval
- ▶ Predictable requirements
- ▶ Decreased liability through insurance requirements

The ordinance will be submitted to the Board of Commissioners for consideration and approval in January



Planning the Future

A Strong County and Strong Cities

“The brightest future of DeKalb County lies in the smart economic planning of cities and the unincorporated areas.”

Angelos Angelou
Angelou Economics

Thank You!