



The Community Foundation
FOR GREATER ATLANTA



**STRATEGIC BUSINESS PLAN FOR TRANSFORMING THE CITY OF
ATLANTA CONSTRUCTION PERMITTING PROCESSES**

Prepared by:



February 1, 2016

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Commissioner Tim Keane
Department of Planning and Community Development
55 Trinity Avenue, NW
Suite 3900
Atlanta, GA 30303

Dear Commissioner Keane:

On its face, building permitting is not the most glamorous of subjects for which a municipal government is responsible. However, its importance to a city's economy, quality of life, and environment is substantial. Cities like Atlanta must compete for highly mobile citizens and capital, and the City's approach to construction permitting plays a major role in determining how open it is to investment and growth.

The City of Atlanta's permitting processes include employees who are smart, responsive, forward-looking, and committed to providing superior customer service. However, there are significant organizational and process-focused opportunities to improve how the permitting processes work that would benefit permit applicants and City residents generally.

BKD, LLP was engaged by the Atlanta Community Foundation to assess the City's permitting processes and to develop a menu of options for the City's consideration. This Strategic Business Plan (the "Business Plan") results from that effort. The Business Plan was *not* intended to be a "deep dive" with a focus on fixing every process issue, but a strategic document that presents a menu of options designed to address the largest organizational, cultural, regulatory, and technology issues.

The menu of options presented in this Business Plan was developed based on a few guiding principles, including:

- Focusing on the customer experience
- Improving communications
- Developing staff capacity
- Becoming more data driven
- Reducing the regulatory burden

To develop the options the BKD team researched peer communities, conducted extensive interviews with City of Atlanta employees, facilitated focus groups with key customers, distributed and analyzed the results from an extensive customer survey, and researched proven

best practices from around the country. Key options among the 46 which can be found in Section 8 of this Business Plan include:

- Creating a true one-stop shop for permitting
- Establishing a customer service code of conduct
- Creating necessary new positions such as a dedicated HR executive, a Customer Advocate, a Chief Training Office, and a temporary Employee Relations Manager
- Combining and streamlining processes that are now separate, such as fire and building plan review, land development and demolition permitting, and the tree posting process
- Developing useful and accurate performance measures that are customer-focused, not output-based

The options presented in this Business Plan are based on the specifics of Atlanta's permitting processes, as well as best practices from other communities. The options assume that the City is concurrently moving forward to engage a contractor to provide supplemental staffing and leadership personnel to assist the Office of Buildings (the "OOB") and that the City will be revising its permit pricing within the next six months through a related project. This Business Plan should be viewed as a sourcebook of validated ideas that may be further refined over the next twelve months as City permitting operations change, not a "paint by numbers" approach that must be followed step-by-step.

These options warrant further consideration and tailoring before implementation, but should serve as a good starting point to improve the City's permitting processes and to facilitate smart, sustainable, and robust growth within Atlanta.

BKD, LLP

February 1, 2016

2. KEY OPTIONS

In Section 8 of this Business Plan, we present *46 options* for the City to consider as recommendations to improve permitting process performance and overall applicant satisfaction. The recommendations are groups in categories of “Organizational Culture¹ and Staffing”, “Process and Technology”, and “Regulatory Reform”.

In this section, we highlight a few of the most significant proposed options. Each of these, and all of the others, are explained in greater detail in Section 8. Additionally, a draft plan for implementing each option, along with approximately 10-15 key steps for each, can be found in Attachment 1 – Business Plan Task List.

2.1. The Development of the Office of Buildings

Consulting efforts too often are disconnected from the reality of operations and the changes that are already in process on the ground. To avoid this issue in the development of this Business Plan, the BKD team worked closely with the Commissioner and his executive team to ensure that the options developed fit with the leadership’s vision for the future state. *That is, they are designed to enable the achievement of the leadership’s vision for the future Office of Buildings.* Both the interim and future state models envisioned by the Commissioner and his leadership team can be found as Appendix A.

During the course of this project, the Commissioner and his leadership team have worked to determine what that future state model for OOB should look like. This future state model involves a streamlined organizational structure, as well as a partnership with contractor SAFEbuilt, a company that provides supplemental leadership and staffing resources to public sector building departments. SAFEbuilt will provide skilled plan reviewers, inspectors, and front desk personnel to supplement City resources.

Additionally, SAFEbuilt will provide supervisory resources to work with the City to manage the process and to implement key process changes through a joint City-SAFEbuilt Process Redesign Implementation Team (PRIT). The implementation of the new service agreement, organizational structure, and selected options from this Business Plan will be the first order of business for the PRIT.

Finally, the City is also undergoing a cost of services study that will result in a new fee structure that helps ensure that fees charged to OOB customers are more in line with the cost of providing the services. According to a recently completed internal audit, the Office of Buildings accumulated a \$28 million surplus through fiscal year 2014. In addition to making recommendations regarding a more appropriate fee structure, that study will also analyze the

¹ <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/organizational-culture.html> defines “organizational culture” as, “the values and behaviors that contribute to the unique social and psychological environment of an organization.”

impact of any fee changes, as well as gauge the impact that several recommendations included in this document will have on that surplus.

2.2. Implement Immediate Priorities

Drawing from the initial interviews and research and working with Commissioner Keane and his executive team and advisors, the BKD team documented a series of “immediate priority” recommendations that the City could start to implement immediately. The immediate priority recommendations identified in the table below were presented to the City in October and announced by Commissioner Keane on December 1, 2015 for immediate implementation. The target date for implementation is by May 1, 2016. These concepts are used in a number of other communities to provide a customer-centric approach to organizing service.

Immediate Priorities	Description
1 Create concierge position	Designate an individual or individuals (depending on walk-in volume) to provide walk-in customers with knowledgeable guidance as to what documents they need and where they need to go before they actually enter the OOB permitting work stream.
2 Create a two component “express service” capacity	Identify commercial and residential permits that can be handled immediately and create a separate applicant work stream to handle them with a single visit.
3 Organize pre-intake, intake, and permit issuance around three service stream teams – express, residential, and commercial	Achieve greater efficiencies and expertise through specialization by organizing and dedicating resources to one of these three work streams.
4 Eliminate or increase thresholds on at least 10 current permits	As an act of immediate good faith to demonstrate the City’s commitment to reducing the regulatory burden on applicants, identify and seek quick passage of legislation that eliminate or, at a minimum, reduce the threshold above which a permit is required for at least 10 commonly-sought permits.
5 Create a small two to three person team tasked with major projects coordination and public development projects	Complex projects, whether from private developers or public institutions, require sustained project management throughout the process of permitting to achieve timeliness;

the City will identify and designate individuals committed to the task of navigating the applicants for these complex projects through the permitting process to completion.

2.3. Establish a Customer-Oriented One-Stop Shop

A lack of coordination, occasional conflicting opinions, and varying hours of operation across the multiple departments involved in the City’s permitting process have created a significant amount of frustration for customers. Relocating those individuals involved in the permitting process from multiple City departments required for permit issuance into a “one-stop shop” will lead to a more customer-friendly and responsive environment. City representatives from all permit-related agencies will be able to meet easily to discuss, review and approve plans. Additional information on this option can be found beginning on page 41.

2.4. Establish a Permitting Customer Service “Code of Conduct”

*Permit applications **generate growth and economic development** for the City of Atlanta and must be treated as **valued customers** who can take their business elsewhere if not afforded a high level of service.*

Based on feedback from customer interviews and survey responses, City employees must commit to an improved level of customer service throughout the permitting process. Ideas for a code of conduct governing City employee efforts may include:

- Customers should be treated with respect at all times.
- Staff should work with a sense of purpose and calm urgency.
- Counters should be opened timely with staff members that are ready to serve customers.
- Staff should be trained to provide their best job performance the first time they receive plans.
- Staff should be consistent in the treatment of plans – no favoritism or retaliation.
- Review comments should be legible and site the applicable code section.
- Permitting staff are on the same team. Mutual respect should be shown and open communication is required.
- Staff should act as the custodians of customer assets when handling review plans.

- Staff should not accept **personal calls or texts** while working with customers.
- Customer phone calls and e-mails should be returns within one business day.

Additional information on this option can be found on page 43.

2.5. Hire a Permanent Director of Buildings

The Director of Buildings will be a key leader for the City to move forward with the recommendations for improvement included in this Business Plan. Filling the position with a permanent employee who has the necessary skills and experience will be vital for the City to move forward with improving the experience for both internal and external customers.

Additional information on this option can be found on page 42.

2.6. Standardize Documents and Processes

City staff must review and revise the existing documentation that customers are expected to use to ensure that the process is as simple to follow as possible. This effort must encompass a review of the existing processes, documents, as well as the development of an accurate, updated, and widely-used handbook that describes those processes. This handbook must reflect the true business processes and document requirements and be useful for both customers, as well as the City employees involved in the permitting process. Additional information on this option can be found beginning on page 53.

2.7. Assign a Dedicated Human Resources (HR) Manager

Similar to what the City has done for the Department of Aviation in providing dedicated support, a Human Resources (HR) Manager should be assigned to the OOB for at least 12-18 months.

This individual will be responsible for overseeing a hiring committee; exploring opportunities to fill some key positions with non-classified employees; coordinating employment activities; as well as developing and implementing strategies that facilitate employee recognition and morale.

Additional information on this option can be found on page 44.

2.8. Establish a Customer Advocate Position

Customers conveyed the importance and value of having someone with the authority and availability to take action and mediate issues that arise throughout the permitting process. While these responsibilities are already being informally completed by an individual within the OOB, a full-time position is warranted. This employee will also be able to identify areas of additional training needs and work with the dedicated HR executive to increase employee recognition efforts and morale. Additional information on this option can be found on page 46.

2.9. Establish a Chief Training Officer Position

Some of the employees interviewed expressed a lack of confidence in their ability to do their job, while several new hires reported a complete absence in training related to expectations placed

upon them. OOB staff interpretations of zoning and codes were also reported as sometimes being inconsistent, which leads to customers receiving varying answers from staff. In addition to ensuring that OOB staff will receive the professional training necessary to perform their jobs at a satisfactory level, the Chief Training Officer will also be responsible for promoting the Customer Service Code of Conduct, as well as ensure that staff receives ongoing training on the Accela product. Additional information on this option can be found beginning on page 44.

2.10. Establish Dedicated Accela Business Process Expertise

Within the organization, there is currently a shortage of expertise related to the Accela product that the City uses to enable permit related work performed by OOB staff. To address this, the City should establish a position responsible for ensuring that the Accela product is configured to work in conjunction with the OOB's business processes.

In addition to the dedicated Accela administrator position, the City should contract with an organization to provide one to three Accela business process experts to assist with maintaining the application, optimizing processes, and implementing efficiencies. Additional information on this option can be found on page 53.

2.11. Clarify Plan Review Comments and Implement a "One Pass" Plan Review Standard

Customers expressed concern with inconsistent interpretations that different plan reviewers have, as well as an overall lack of information provided during plan review regarding specific code citations. Additionally, they explain that items that raised no issues during the first review process are sometimes later identified in subsequent review processes conducted by the same plan reviewer, leading to additional costs and delays. To address this, the City should establish a "one pass" standard to avoid additional comments from being added to a review, except in the instance of serious health or safety issues. Checklists must be created to ensure that the major areas of the review will not be overlooked. Reviewers will also be expected to clearly explain plan comments to aid the customer. Additional information on this option can be found beginning on page 52.

2.12. Streamline the Water Meter Installation Process

The City's standard of seeking to provide water meter installation within 15 weeks of application is longer than any other community identified through our research. To expedite the time it takes to have water meters installed, the City should consider allowing customers to apply for a water meter at the same time they first apply for a building permit. Bonding and insurance requirements should also be lowered to encourage an increase in the number of approved private contractors to install the meters, and City staff should consider requiring that piping be pre-

emptively set for future development. Additional information on this option can found beginning on page 58.

2.13. Adopt a Formal Regulatory Reform Methodology

The City should create a standing regulatory study commission (RSC) staffed by City employees, business/homeowners, and City Council members. This RSC will serve as the City's on-going voice championing the importance of keeping regulations to the minimum amount required to achieve health and safety goals. The goal of the RSC would be to review existing permitting regulations, initially focusing on the 10 reform recommendations mentioned previously in Section 2.2. The RSC should adopt a "best practices" model of regulatory reform that submits existing and any new proposed regulations to a cost/benefit analysis to determine whether they are needed at all. Additional information on this option can be found on page 61.

2.14. Develop and Pass the Atlanta Homeowner Freedom Act

The RSC should also be tasked with developing legislation that decreases the permitting demands placed on permit applicants and the City. The more efficient way to do this will be to either eliminate or increase the cost threshold required for permits. Special emphasis should be placed on eliminating or reducing the burden faced by the owners and developers of lower- and moderate-income housing in order to promote housing affordability. Additional information on this option can be found beginning on page 61.

2.15. Combine Demolition and Land Development Permit Processes and Fees

Some permit applicants described the issues involved with securing both a demolition and land development permit at the same time as "the single biggest impediment to construction". The City should consider combining these two permits, as previously allowed in the City, as a single construction activity and fee to improve the ease and timeliness of the process. Additional information on this option can be found on page 65.

2.16. Integrate the Separate Fire Plan Review Process and Permit Fees

Paying separate fees and enduring separate Fire Department and OOB plan review processes is a source of great frustration to permit applicants. Therefore, the City has begun to integrate the Fire Department's separate plan review process and fee prior to the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy (COO) and reimburse the Fire Department for the work its personnel perform during the pre-COO plan review process. Additional information on this option can be found on page 66.

3. ENGAGEMENT DETAILS

3.1. Engagement Scope and Approach

City and county construction permitting agencies face challenges of addressing the impact of fluctuations in demand, maintaining a trained workforce in many specialty areas, and incorporating rapidly changing technologies into permitting processes.

*The purpose of this project was to compare the City of Atlanta with other peer cities and to assist the City in **developing a business plan for becoming a top performer** in helping permit applicants secure building permits as quickly as possible, while achieving all important health and safety requirements.*

BKD, LLP was hired to assist the City of Atlanta to identify options for improvements in the operations of the OOB and other City permitting agencies. The effort is intended to facilitate transformative improvements that better position the City of Atlanta to promote quality growth relative to its regional and national competitors. This Business Plan is *not* intended to be a “deep dive” with a focus on fixing every process issue, but a strategic document that presents a menu of options designed to address the largest organizational, cultural, regulatory, and technology issues.

BKD identified basic operating characteristics and performance metrics and gathered appropriate data to evaluate how the City compares to a peer panel of communities. The BKD team also reviewed the City’s permitting operations, gathering data and conducting extensive interviews with managers, employees, and customers.

Phase I (the *diagnostic phase*), as detailed in this report, presents findings and recommendations on the City’s current performance. Phase I is completed with the delivery of these findings and options, focused on the key areas of “Organizational Culture and Staffing”, “Process and Technology”, and “Regulatory Reform”. Phase II (the *implementation phase*), will involve implementation of the options that the City selects.

BKD placed full reliance upon information provided to us for review or through conversations with relevant parties inclusive of City management, employees, and external stakeholders. We are not responsible for the accuracy and completeness of the information and are not responsible to investigate or verify it.

This engagement was not designed to prevent or discover errors, misrepresentations, fraud or illegal acts. We have not been engaged to provide an opinion with respect to the effectiveness of the City's internal controls or the City's compliance with its policies, procedures and applicable laws and regulations.

3.2. Engagement Staffing

Michael Brink and Julia Mast of BKD, LLP served as the primary developers of this deliverable, along with independent contractor Jennessa Berg and Bruce Cowans and Jerry Wolfe of Fiscal Choice Consulting, LLC. Findings and preliminary drafts of this deliverable were reviewed for factual accuracy by City personnel.

3.3. Interviews

The BKD team completed numerous interviews and discussions on-site and by phone. A list of interviews and discussions conducted for this project is included as Appendix B. Over the course of the effort, more than 90 individuals provided input through interviews and the focus groups.

3.4. Focus Groups

To obtain insights from the external stakeholders of the permitting process, some City of Atlanta permitting customers were invited to participate in focus groups. Participating customers were selected by reaching out to the City's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) members and other active firms within the Atlanta construction industry.

The BKD team convened two external stakeholder focus group sessions on September 2, 2015, in Atlanta. The first focus group session consisted of commercial and retail stakeholders. Participants in the second focus group were residential and multifamily stakeholders. Additional discussions with external stakeholders were held outside of the September 2, 2015, focus group sessions, as identified in Appendix B.

Participating external stakeholders were asked to share their thoughts and experiences with the City's permitting process in regards to performance assessment, regulatory reform, and performance improvement. These insights were used in the development of BKD's options (Section 8).

The BKD team reconvened the external stakeholder focus groups on November 11, 2015, to share results of the customer survey and to take more input on the recommendations to be presented to the City. Additional input on recommendations was received from customers at the Council for Quality Growth meeting held on December 2, 2015. A list of attendees can be found in Appendix B.

In addition to the external stakeholder focus groups, the BKD team held a focus group of City employees September 1, 2015. The names of those who participated in the employee focus group

are included in Appendix B. The Commissioner and his executive team selected employees for participation in the focus group.

3.5. Commissioners' Updates

While the primary focus of this assessment is on the permitting operations within the OOB, the City of Atlanta's permitting processes involve multiple different agencies, including the Office of Planning, Public Works, Fire, Watershed, and Parks and Recreation departments. Therefore, the BKD team convened four (4) meetings with the Commissioners from these departments throughout the course of the study, sharing with them the methodology, findings, and recommendations each step of the way.

Representatives of the Mayor's Office also attended these meetings. It was essential to keep the other Commissioners involved, because successful implementation of the options will require active participation and commitment from each department. An improved permitting process requires improved collaboration across all involved agencies.

3.6. Employee and Customer Surveys

In consultation with members of the City's team, the BKD team developed an online survey for both external stakeholders and City employees from the OOB. The survey was conducted online using the Google Forms platform.

Results of the customer and employee surveys and responses to the open-ended questions were used in development of the recommendations presented in this report. Additional detail on these surveys follows.

3.6.1. Customer Survey Overview

The BKD team distributed the external customer survey on September 29, 2015, to members of the TAC, focus group participants, and additional representatives from the community involved in the permitting process, including architects, civil engineers, land development attorneys, expeditors, and other external stakeholders, as identified by the OOB. Customers were encouraged to forward the survey link along to anyone they felt would have input to contribute to the project. Respondents were given until the close of business on October 12, 2015, to fill out the survey; however, the survey link remained open for those who wished to respond at a later date.

The customer survey consisted of 85 questions relating to customers' experience with the permitting process and City agencies such as the OOB, Planning, Public Works, Watershed, Fire, and Parks and Recreation. Customers were asked on a scale from one to five to rate statements in the following categories: overall experience with the permitting process, welcome and intake, project expectations, plan review, duration and feedback on plan review, plan review comments,

inspections, and final permitting. In addition, customers were able to provide responses to a series of open-ended questions about the permitting process.

The customer survey received 128 responses at the time of this report. A breakdown of the positions identified in the customer survey responses is included below:

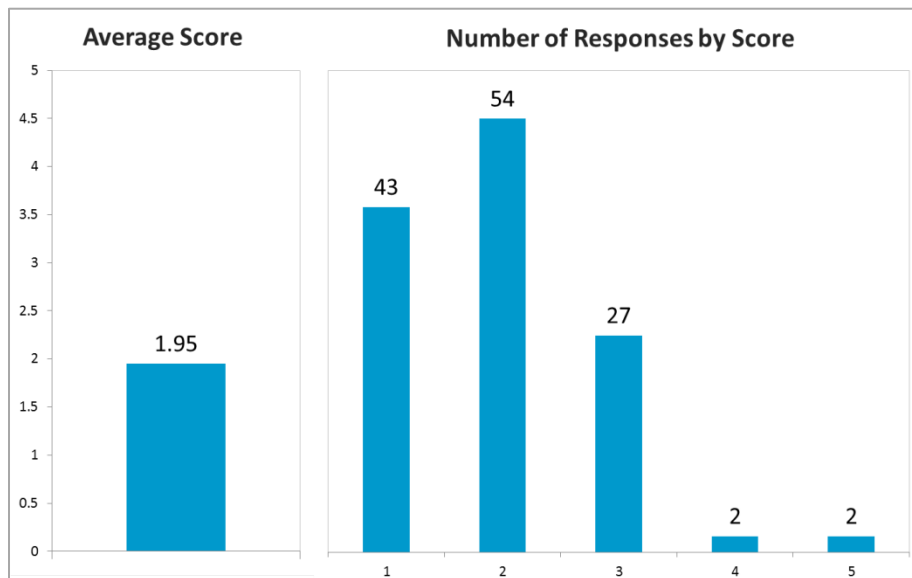
Position	Number of Responses
Architect	34
Contractor	28
Developer	16
Engineer	15
Landscape Architect	9
Developer, Contractor	6
Expeditor	5
Business Owner	3
Project Manager	2
General Public	1
Developer, Contractor, Customer Home Builder	1
Code Consultant	1
Licensed Builder	1
Landscape Architect and Planner	1
Interior Designer	1
Attorney	1
Consultant	1
Contractor, General Public	1
Not Identified	1

3.6.2. Customer Survey Findings

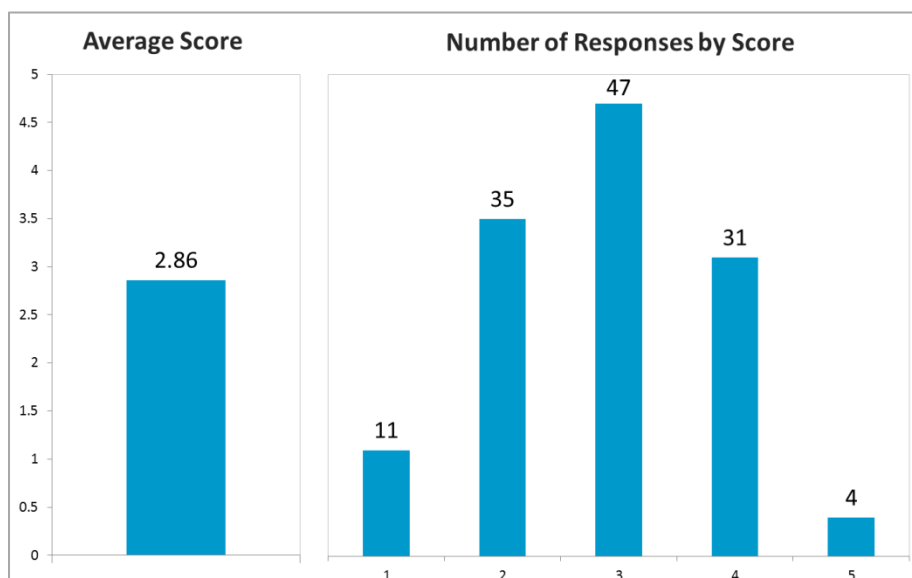
Respondents of the customer survey indicated *substantial dissatisfaction* with the current permitting process in areas such as timeliness, overall experience, and the knowledge and effectiveness of the permitting personnel. Respondents were asked to assess various elements of the City's permitting processes and organizations on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being very dissatisfied and 5 being very satisfied.

The specific responses to certain key questions follow:

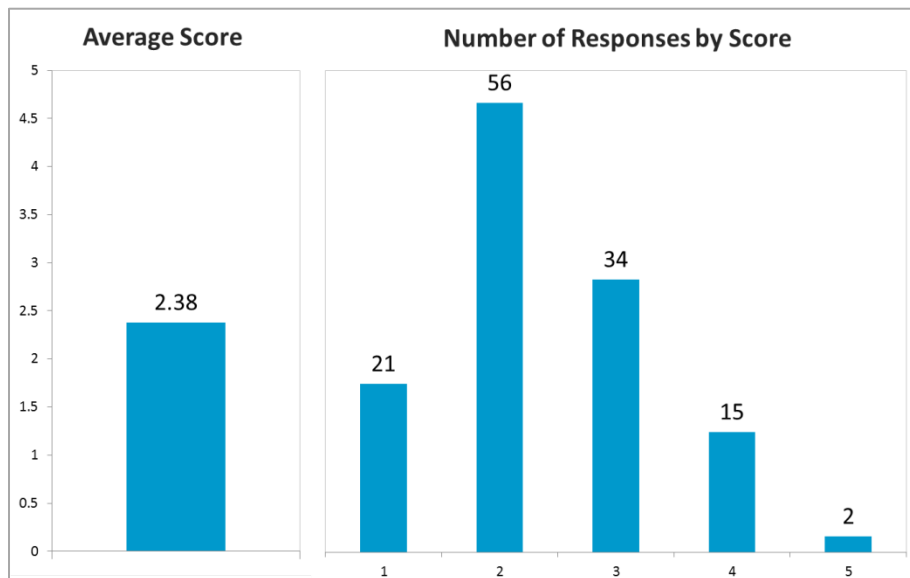
Overall Experience: Considering your overall interaction with the City of Atlanta's permitting process, how would you rate your overall experience?



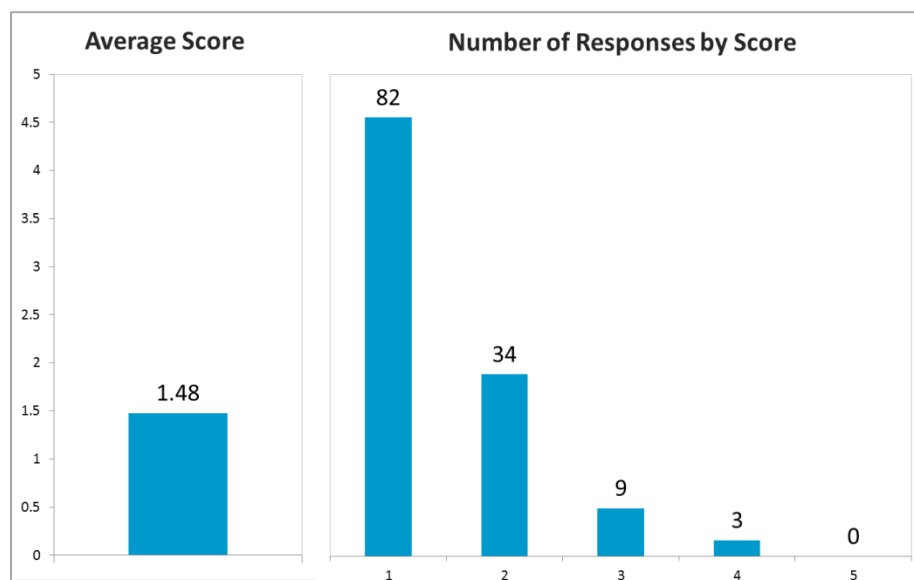
Courtesy and Professionalism: Considering your overall interactions with the City of Atlanta permitting, how would you rate the courtesy and professionalism of the permitting personnel with whom you have interacted?



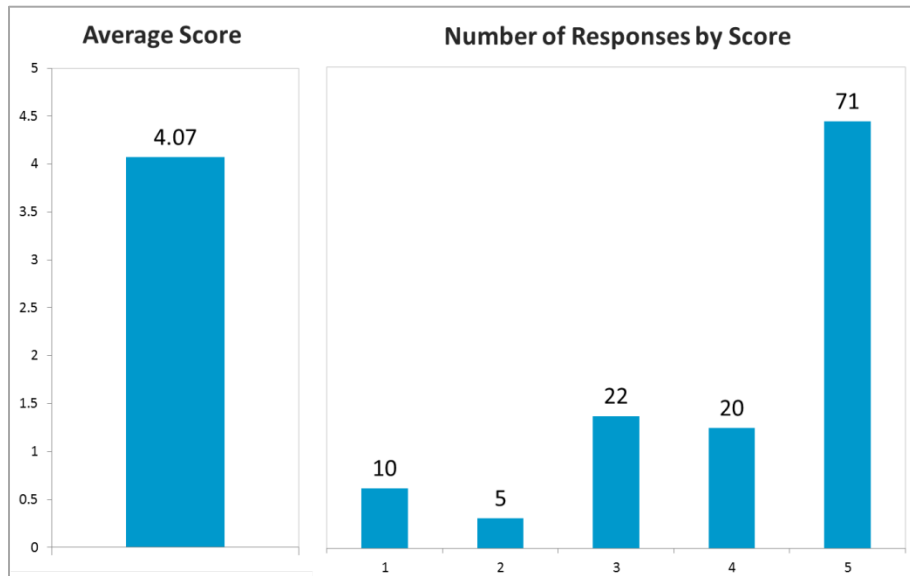
Knowledge and Effectiveness: Considering your overall interactions with the City of Atlanta permitting, how would you rate the knowledge and effectiveness of the permitting personnel?



Overall Timeliness: Considering your interactions with the City of Atlanta permitting, how would you rate your satisfaction with the overall timeliness of the permitting process?



Ability to submit plan electronically: The ability to submit my plans electronically is important to me.

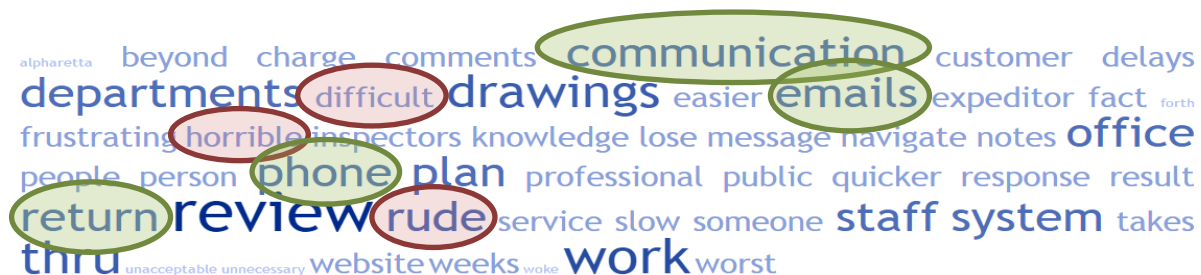


Additional information taken from the customer survey can be found in Appendix C.

3.6.2.1. Customer Survey Findings Key Takeaways

In general, the perception of permitting process performance among permit applicants is very low. Timeliness is certainly the area of greatest concern; respondents rated the overall timeliness of the permitting process at a **1.48**. The overall experience with the City's permitting process was rated at **1.95**.

Using textual analytics tools to assess approximately 40 pages of free text customer responses, comments showed that respondents were particularly upset about the lack of accurate communication from the City's permitting agencies. Specific communications-related words frequently appearing in the free form responses include:



Customers also emphasized in their survey responses, as well as in the focus groups, that while process automation is essential and important, doing so without first fixing the current processes and behaviors will not solve the problem. The root causes must first be addressed.

Additional information from the customer survey is available in Appendix C.

3.6.3. Employee Survey Overview

The employee survey was distributed September 29, 2015, to 133 employees in the OOB. Respondents were given until close of business on October 9, 2015, to fill out the survey; however the link remained open for those who wished to respond at a later date. Despite multiple reminders being sent out to employees encouraging them to finish the survey, BKD received only 32 responses on the employee survey at the time of this report.

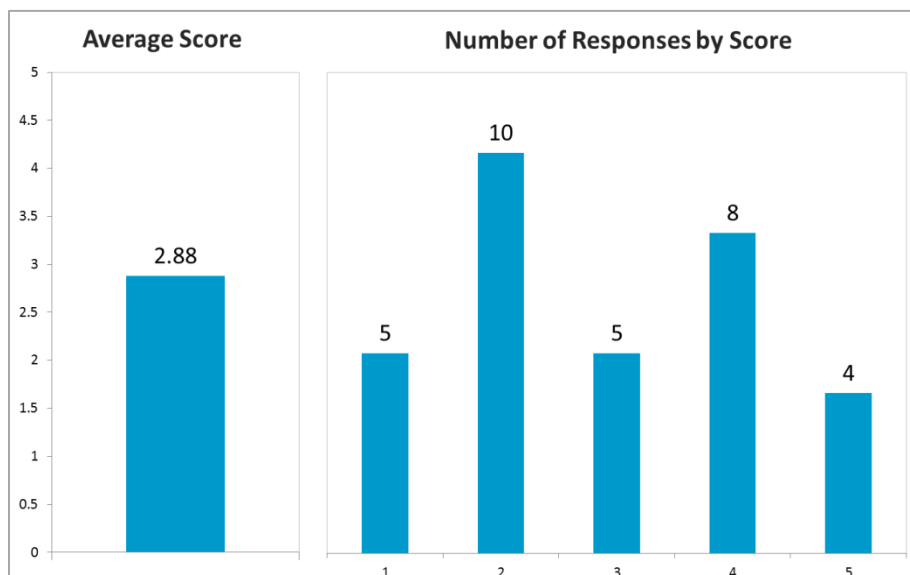
The employee survey consisted of 33 questions relating to their experience with the permitting process. Employees were asked on a scale from one to five to rate statements in the following categories: operation efficiency and consistency, operation coordination and effectiveness, customer service and accessibility, employee empowerment, employee attitude, management, and technology and equipment. In addition, employees were able to provide responses to a series of open-ended questions about the permitting process.

3.6.4. Employee Survey Findings

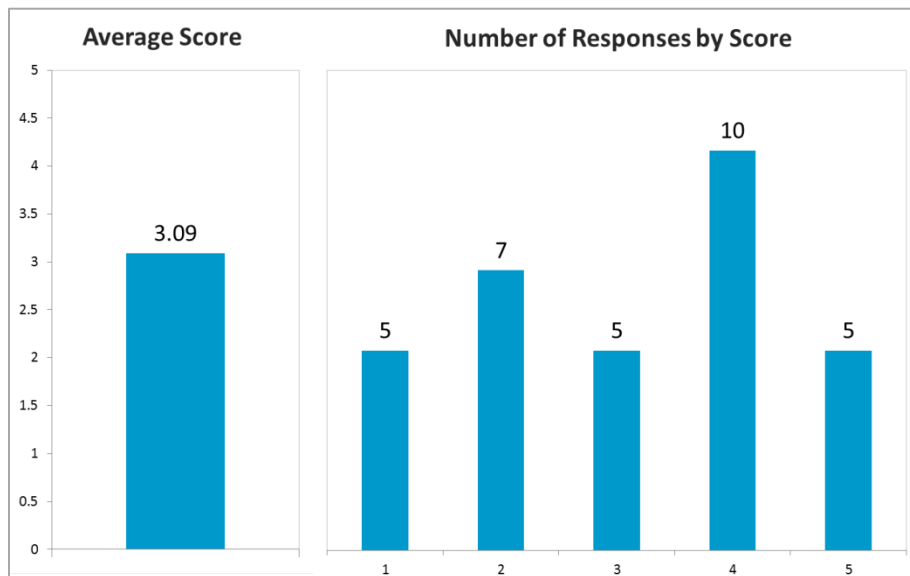
OOB employees who responded to the survey provided mostly neutral responses in the areas of policies and procedures, overall efficiency of the permitting process, and communication between departments.

Results of the customer survey were analyzed by BKD and presented to the City. Detailed survey findings are provided below.

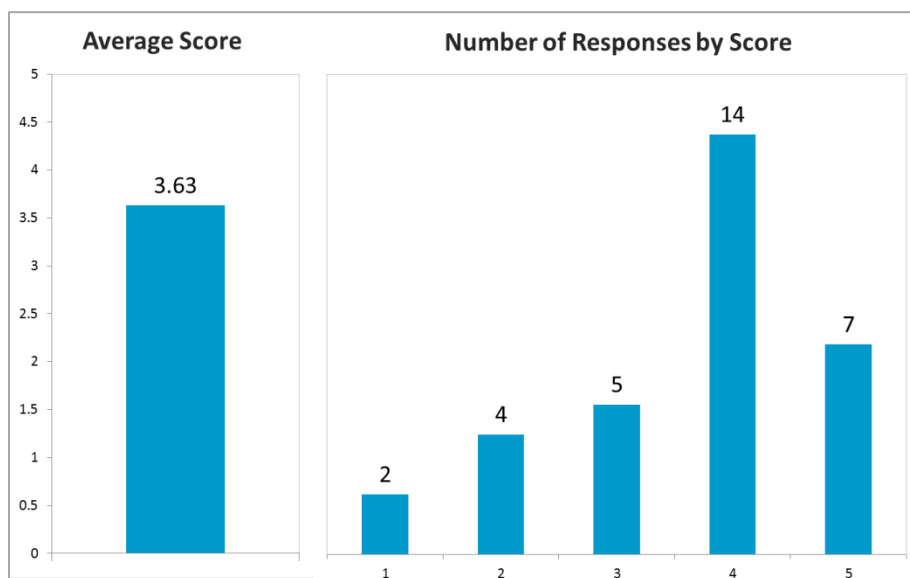
Policies and Procedures: My department/division has clear, well documented policies and procedures to guide my role in the permitting process.



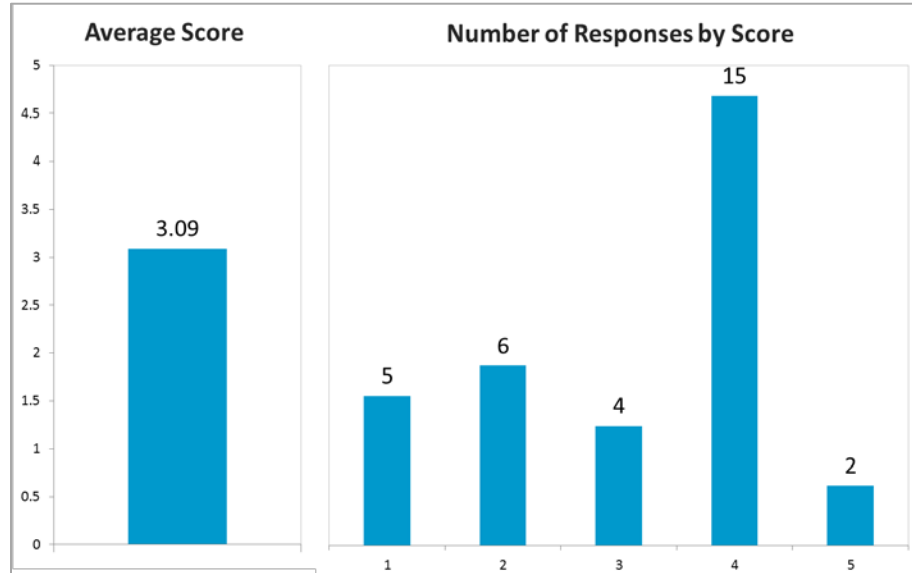
Interpretation: Decisions regarding interpretation are generally made consistently in my department/division, with little variance from applicant to applicant.



Timeliness Goals: I am able to consistently meet the department/division's goal for plan review and permitting timeliness.



Department management: My department/division is effectively managed as it relates to the permitting process.



Additional detail from the employee survey can be found in Appendix D.

3.6.4.1. Employee Survey Findings Key Takeaways

The low response rate (24 percent) may indicate a morale issue, perhaps due to the flux in leadership and process and organizational changes in the preceding years. The fact that employee responses trended from somewhat negative to neutral on key questions regarding the City's permitting processes further indicates a lack of confidence in the effectiveness of the processes.

Employees felt, on average, that they did not have adequate policies and procedures in place to guide their role in the permitting process. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 representing that they strongly disagreed, the average was **2.88**. Fifteen out of 32 employees felt the policies and procedures provide insufficient direction to guide their efforts in the permitting process.

OOB employees generally disagreed or remained neutral on the statement that the City's permitting process is efficient and well run. The average rating on this statement was **2.69**.

Teamwork and communication between different City departments/divisions is an area cited for needing improvement. On average, employees responded neutrally (**2.97** average) to the statement that there is good teamwork and communication between the different departments.

3.7. Selected Documents Reviewed

We received and reviewed numerous documents relating to the City's operating procedures. A list of the selected documents reviewed is included as Appendix E.

4. CURRENT PERMITTING PROCESS PERFORMANCE DATA

4.1. Permit Data Used for Analysis

While the OOB and other City permitting agencies are staffed with a number of hard-working and knowledgeable employees, the OOB has long been criticized for how long it takes to issue various types of building permits. As noted in Section 3.6.2, the average score of customers of the OOB ranking the City's permitting timeliness is 1.48 on a scale of 1 to 5.

Our team analyzed a file of permitting data that was provided by OOB and reviewed the time needed to issue permits by type of construction. The initial file provided by the OOB included approximately 39,530 records versus the file we ended using (~7200 records). The differences were a result of duplicate records, 19 months of permits versus the 12 months sought, and the large number of MEP (mechanical, electrical and plumbing) permits that were not viewed as "building permits" for the purposes of this assessment.

The MEP permits are same-day permits. In terms of sheer volume, MEP permits are the bulk of what OOB processes, but including them in the aggregate would misstate the overall speed of the operation. Also, MEP permits are same-day permits for the peer communities, and are also excluded by those communities for purposes of comparison.

The revised file contained data on 7,236 permits in 25 categories that represented various building types (commercial, residential, and land development) classified into various construction activities (e.g. additions, alterations, demolitions, etc.). The data consisted of applications submitted from July of 2014 through June of 2015.

4.2. Defining Timely Service

There is always tension between applicants who want permits as soon as possible and permitting officials who want to make sure plans comply with building and zoning codes. There is no consistent standard for how application processing times are tracked, as some jurisdictions monitor by building type, while others track it for all permits combined.

As part of our survey of peer communities, we sought information on approval times for residential and commercial plans. The data reported by each entity are presented below:

Average Days to Approve Permit Applications			
Entity	Commercial Plans	Residential - New	Residential - Addition
Mecklenburg County, NC	N/A ²	8.5	8.5
Tampa, FL	45	35	35
Montgomery County, MD	30	18	8
Houston, TX	30	15	15
Cobb County, GA		1	1
Atlanta, GA ³	47 [66]	51 [71]	35 [49]

Based on these data, Atlanta takes a significantly longer time to approve permit applications, especially when the impact of weekends and holidays, which is currently excluded from the Atlanta calculations, is considered.

From the numerous studies of the OOB that have been conducted over the past decade, timeliness of plan review has received prominent mention. We believe this criticism is a result of several factors that we highlight in this analysis:

- **OOB publicizes the standard that most types of plan review will be complete within 10 business days.**⁴ While realizing that “plan review” is but one part of the overall permit issuance process, this sets the expectation for a much faster process than is generally occurring. A few types of permits meet this target, but many other types do not. While the average review time for all of OOB’s permits is about 34 calendar days, some permit types take considerably longer.
- **Within permit types, there is a significant range in the time it takes.** For example, commercial alterations comprise the largest number of permits, 1702. The average working days to permit issuance were 23, but one permit took 160 working days - more than seven calendar months. See Section 4.3 below for a further discussion of the range.
- **There is a lack of effective communication with the customer.** While customers prefer faster versus slower, consistency and communication are key. The issues with Atlanta’s communications with its permitting customers prominently figure into the customer survey responses (see Section 3.6.2.1). Elements of communities in which applicants have better assessments of the permitting function include these common features:
 - Customers are notified of expected completion dates;
 - Customers can easily check the status of applications on-line; and

² Mecklenburg County categorizes Commercial Plans based on the size of the project. 62% of projects less than 10,000 sq. ft. are reviewed within 7-8 calendar days. 73% of “small” plans are completed within 5 calendar days after the work was scheduled and 73% of medium and large projects are completed 17 calendar days. “Mega” projects require a dedicated team and average 112 calendars days from the start of their first review.

³ Atlanta reports using workdays only while other entities report on the basis of elapsed calendar days. The days for Atlanta should be increased by 40 percent for comparison purposes and are shown in brackets [].

⁴ <http://www.atlantaga.gov/index.aspx?page=1046>

- Customers interact with a “one-stop shop” so that almost all permitting activities take place in one physical location.

In summary, customers prefer faster, but accept slower times if they can plan accordingly based on process consistency. Anecdotal discussions with the customers indicate that, while timeliness is important, transparency and predictability are even more valued.

4.3. OOB’s Use of Data and Actual Process Timeliness

We also reviewed the OOB’s FY 2015 dashboard report that is used to present the organization’s performance. This 30-page report focuses on the number of permit applications, permits issued, construction value, as well as OOB revenue. The report contains two graphs for FY 2015 (also two for FY 2014) that present data on the percentage of plans reviewed and inspections achieved with SLA (Service Level Agreement) goals.

The SLA goal for inspections is two business days from the date an inspection is scheduled. The SLA goal for plan review is 10, 15, 30, and 45 days, depending on the type of plan review.

The graphs for FY 2015 show that:

- 99 percent of inspections met SLA goals
- More than 86 percent of plan reviews met SLA goals

These are the only graphs in the report that indicate a focus on the customer’s experience with OOB. The rest of the data presented describe the level of work accomplished. Given the dramatic difference between how the OOB presents its performance data and the level of dissatisfaction among customers with the service received, it appears that the OOB is not using data as a way of identifying and correcting issues related to improving performance on processes that impact customers. Issues with measurement include:

- The OOB’s dashboard aggregates all permits. This masks variations and issues with specific permit types. These overall averages benefit from OOB’s prompt review of single family-type permits. Single family-type permits are a significant percentage of all permits and are issued at an average below the OOB-wide average. The OOB should monitor permits by type and set SLA goals by permit type.
- When it comes to requests for inspection, measurement accuracy is suspect. There have been periods of time in which the City’s IVR cannot be used to request inspections. Some requests for inspection are made by phone and may or may not be recorded immediately upon receipt. See Section 8.2, option 12 for a full discussion of the problems with requesting an inspection.
- There are large differences between the average working days, compared to the maximum days required to issue permits in some categories. For example, the average

days for a commercial alteration permit (23.5 percent of all permits issued) were 23 days versus the maximum days of 160 days. This comparison for all permit types is presented in the following table:

Permit Type	Number of Permits	Average Working Days	Maximum Working Days
Commercial Addition	60	37	197
Commercial Alteration	1702	23	160
Commercial Conversion	84	45	217
Commercial Demolition	76	32	188
Commercial Land Development	44	90	199
Commercial Miscellaneous Non-Structural	216	22	203
Commercial Miscellaneous Structural	240	25	144
Commercial New	76	47	123
Commercial Pool	13	32	68
Commercial Repair	29	6	170
Multi Family Addition	9	26	52
Multi Family Alteration	385	23	145
Multi Family Conversion	5	64	114
Multi Family Land Development	35	78	144
Multi Family New	293	58	251
Multi Family Repair	45	1	25
Single Family/Duplex Addition	710	35	257
Single Family/Duplex Alteration	569	9	203
Single Family/Duplex Conversion	14	28	81
Single Family/Duplex Demolition	538	22	155
Single Family/Duplex Miscellaneous Non-Structural	321	16	112
Single Family/Duplex Miscellaneous Structural	181	33	261
Single Family/Duplex New	542	51	232
Single Family/Duplex Pool	95	37	188
Single Family/Duplex Repair	954	2	130
Total	7,236		

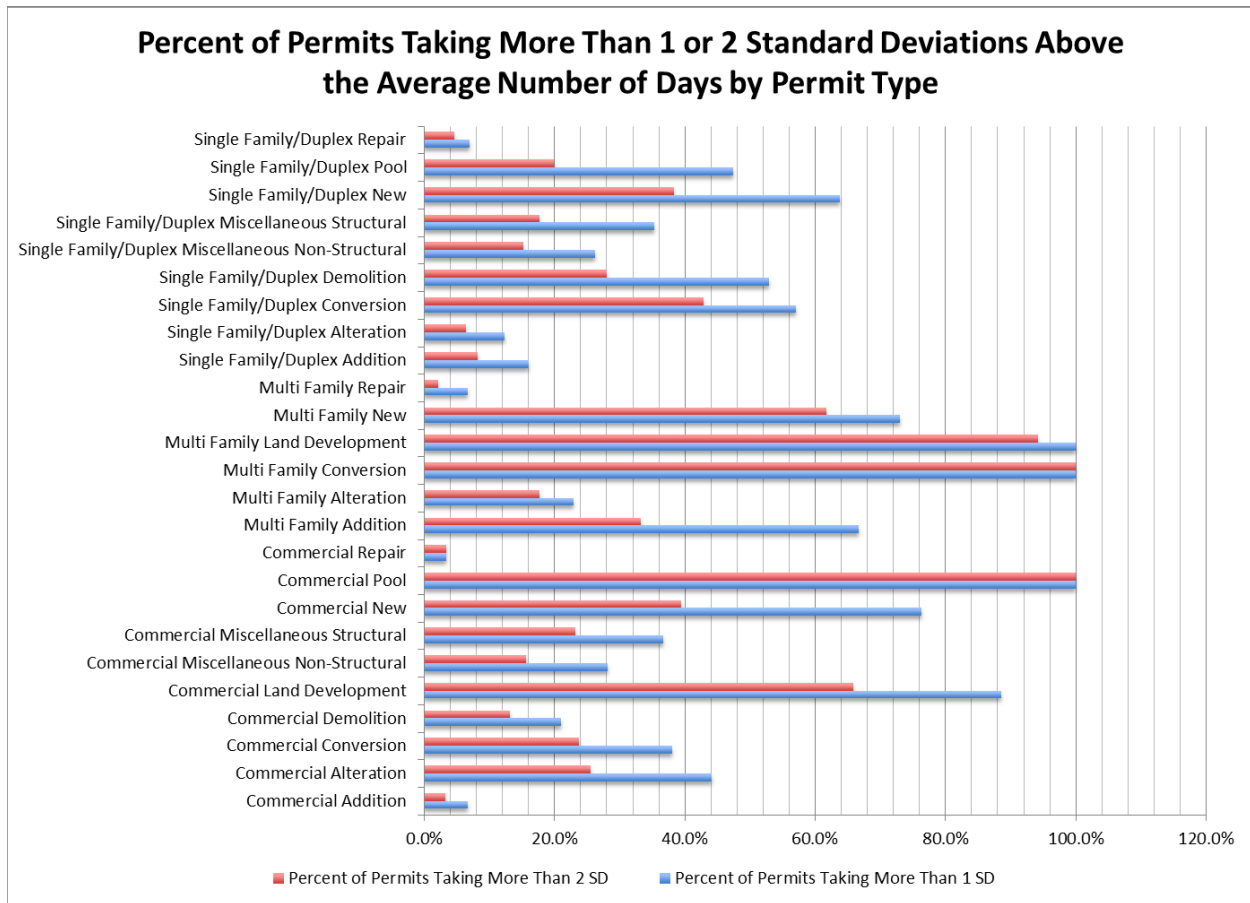
- While we understand that each permit is unique and some have significant complications, we would have expected most permits to be closer to the average number of days for processing. However, there is significant variation by type of permit. This range from the averages is highlighted in the percentage of permits more than one or two standard deviations from the average. Of the 7,236 permits, nearly 80 percent (5,721 permits) fall within the top eight permit types (out of 25 permit types total):

Permit Type	Permits	% > 1 SD	% > 2 SDs
Commercial Alteration	1702	44.2	25.6
Single Family/Duplex Repair	954	7.0	4.6
Single Family/Duplex Addition	710	16.1	8.2
Single Family/Duplex Alteration	569	12.3	6.5
Single Family/Duplex New	542	63.8	38.4
Single Family/Duplex Demolition	538	53.0	28.1
Multi Family Alteration	385	22.9	17.7
Single Family/Duplex Miscellaneous Non-Structural	321	26.2	15.3

In a normal distribution, only about 32 percent (100-68%) or 5 percent (100-95%) of permits should be one or two (plus or minus), respectively, or more standard deviations from the average.

We would expect less than 2.5 percent of permits would fall more than two standard deviation above the average. However, all of the above eight most frequent permit types have more than 2.5 percent falling beyond two standards deviations. In the case of single family/duplex new, almost 40 percent take more than two standard deviations from the average for that permit type.

The following graph highlights the variations by permit type:



In conclusion, when it comes to the City's current approach to performance measurement and management, there are significant issues that must be addressed. These include:

- The OOB should focus on metrics that show performance from the perspective of the OOB's customers versus those showing the total amount of work performed.
- The OOB should provide greater insight into performance on specific types of permits.
- Providing data on averages provides an incomplete picture of how reliably a permitting process is performing.
- Where data issues compromise the accuracy of a metric (such as the inspections issue referenced above), that should be noted.

5. FUTURE PERFORMANCE METRICS

Performance metrics can be used to monitor an organization's behavior and performance. Metrics should support a range of stakeholder needs, including customers. Metrics can help capture internal performance and can include productivity measurements and progress in achieving internal performance goals and milestones.

Developing performance metrics usually follows a process of:

- Establishing critical processes/customer requirements
- Identifying specific, quantifiable outputs of work
- Establishing targets or goals against which results can be scored

In its Dashboard Report, the OOB has established Service Level Agreements (SLAs) around plan review and inspections timeliness. While they represent a start, much more is needed to provide an accurate assessment of organizational performance, especially from the perspective of the OOB's customers. The Commissioner has set a May 1, 2016 deadline to have new SLAs in place that include input from SAFEbuilt and are based on the data available from the Accela system.

Well-crafted SLAs that focus on should be monitored and reported on a monthly basis. Senior managers should be able to depend on them to present an accurate picture of the organization's performance, including from the perspective of its customers. They should be used for regular communication with the Mayor, City Council, and other interested stakeholders. SLA goals should be adjusted periodically, as new goals could be added and specific goals could be adjusted as resources are added and technology is improved. Effective SLAs should drive the OOB's efforts to improve its performance.

5.1. Suggested Metrics

The OOB has endured years of negative customer feedback regarding service delivery. Many of these issues have surfaced in the various reports prepared since 2007, meaning that the challenges identified have yet to be addressed successfully. The fact that customers do not rate the OOB's services well, that timeliness has been the subject of several reports, and that the OOB's own dashboard report does not include sufficient customer-facing performance metrics leads us to conclude that the OOB needs to track and report on key performance indicators.

We recommend that future performance measures address the following three areas:

1. **Milestones** that identify whether the OOB achieved key goals that contribute to the achievement of strategic priorities and improve customer communications? These are "yes/no" type goals and should include implementation of some of the key options (from Section 8) that the City seeks to implement, such as:

- a. Has the OOB redesigned and implemented a new customer-facing website so that customers can easily find:
 - i. Downloadable forms
 - ii. Examples of approvable/model plans
 - iii. Frequently Asked Questions
 - iv. Phone and email contacts
 - v. Standard Operating Procedures
 - b. Has the OOB implemented a new “one-stop shop”?
 - c. Has the OOB completed its review of permit rates in accordance with the recommendation of the City’s Internal Auditor?
2. **Internal metrics** that address OOB resources and capabilities: These will address staff vacancies, turnover, and training, and should present internal goals compared to actual results. Examples of internal metrics are presented in the following section.
3. **Customer-facing metrics** that will demonstrate how well the OOB is performing from the perspective of the permit applicant. These will address timeliness and customer perceptions of service quality.

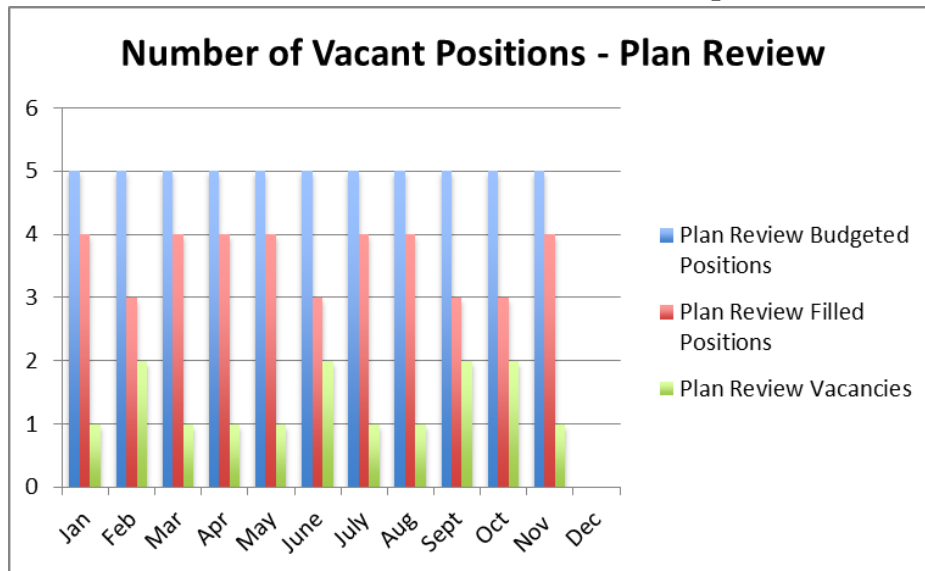
All three of the above types of metrics are linked. For example, without adequate staff and without adequate training of these staff, timeliness and quality issues will be difficult to address. We recommend that OOB management develop specific goals for both the internal and customer-facing metrics. Monthly reports should report on actual results/activity against appropriate goals.

To the extent that the development of these metrics can be accomplished within Accela or using Accela-compatible tools in order to automate the process, the City should do so.

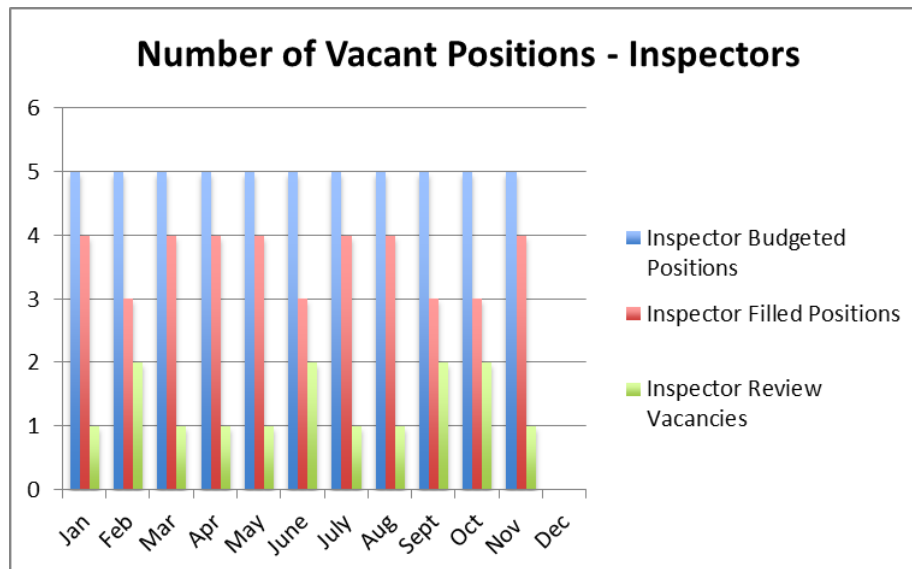
5.2. Example Internal Metrics

Assume all data is for example purposes only. Additional sample internal metrics can be found in Appendix F.

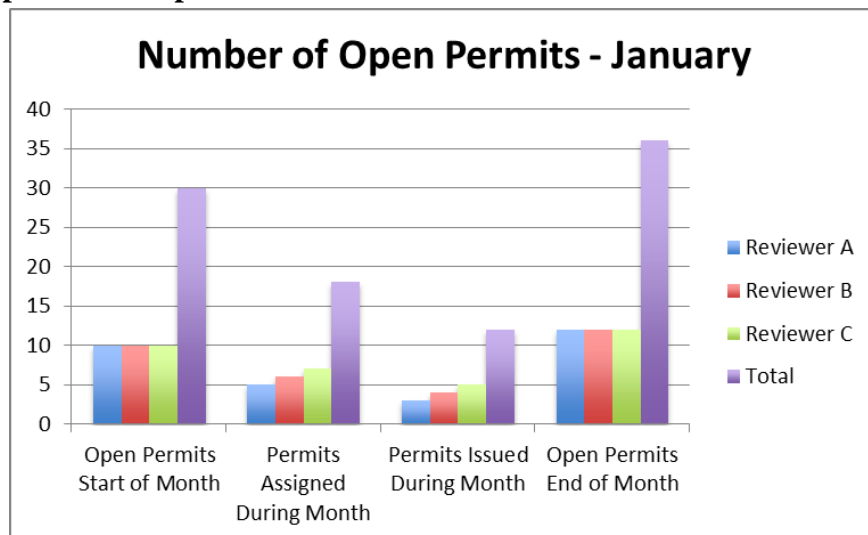
Filled Positions: To measure the level of vacancies over time in plan review



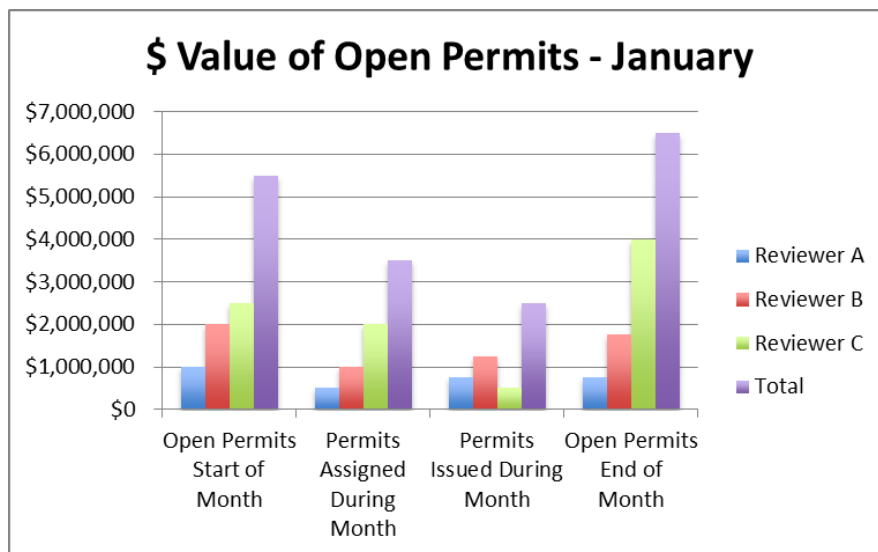
Filled Positions: To measure the level of vacancies over time in inspections



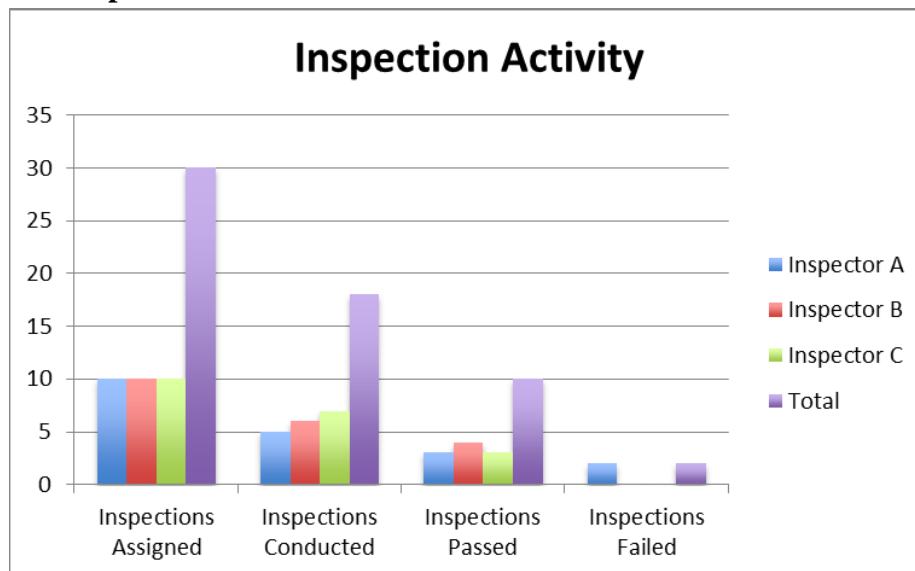
Number of Open Permits per Plan Reviewer: To monitor workload levels



Number of Open Permits Per Plan Reviewer: To monitor value of permits per plan reviewer



Inspections Per Inspector: To monitor workload levels

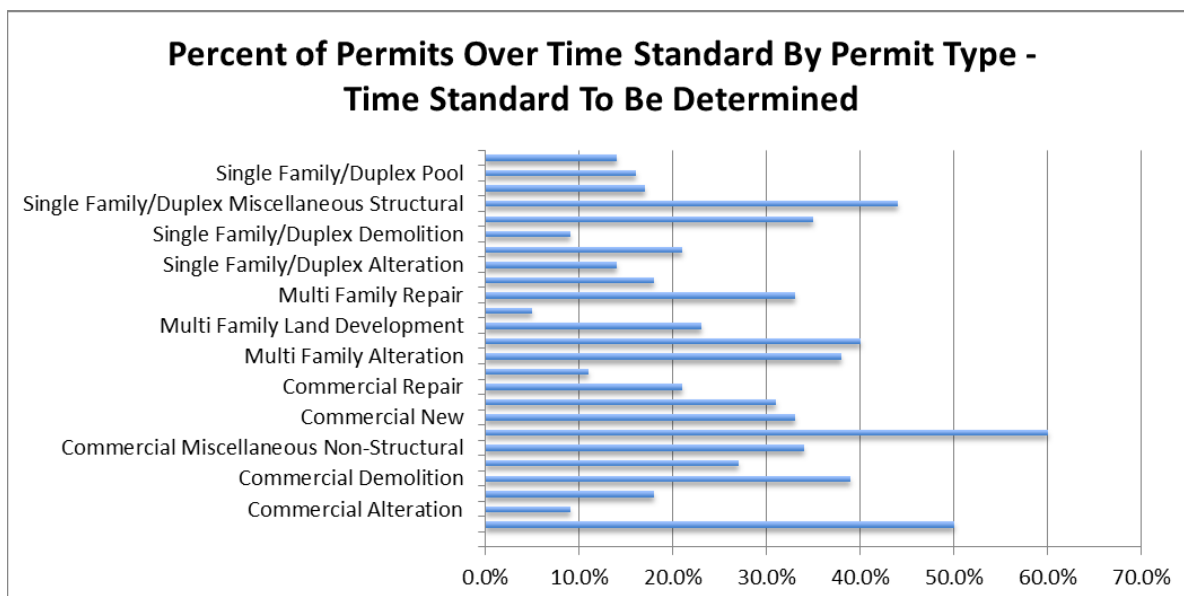


5.3. Example Customer-Facing Metrics

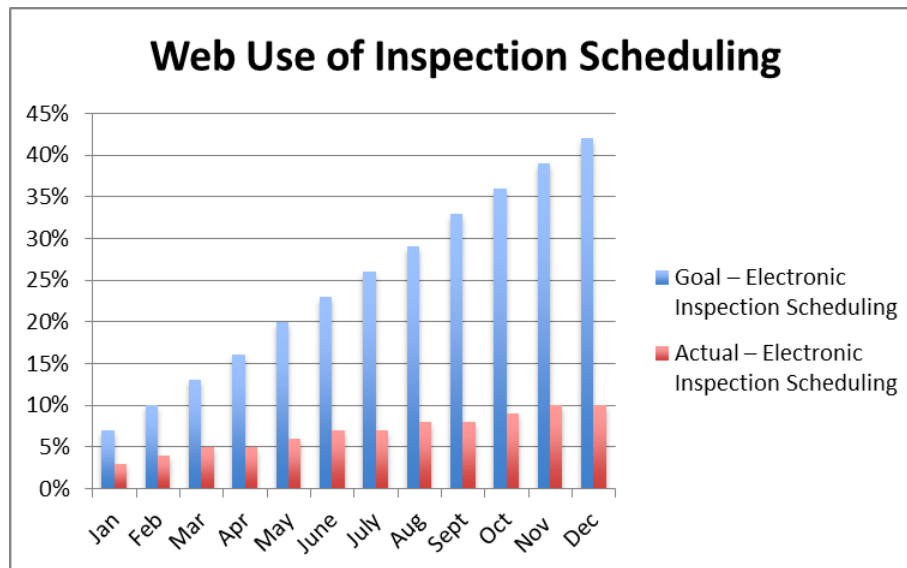
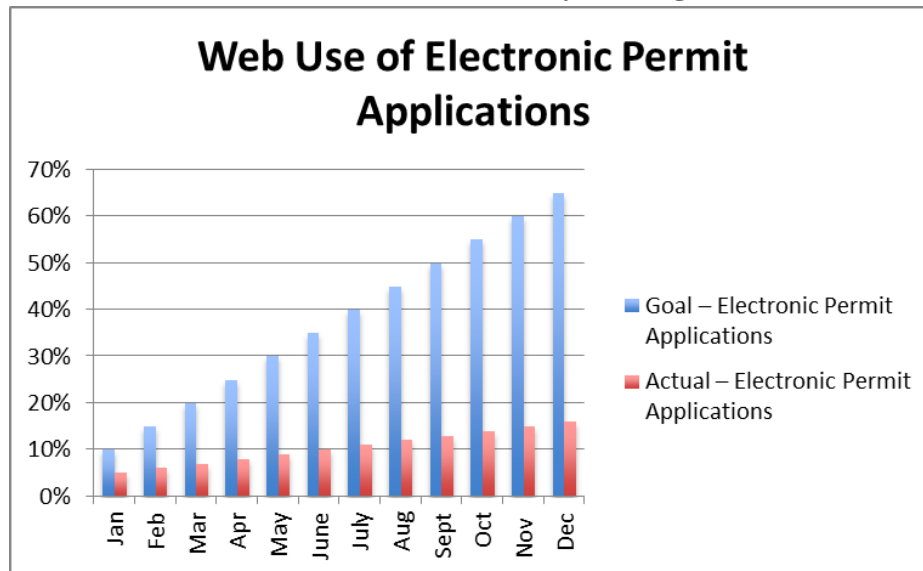
Assume all data is for example purposes only. Additional sample customer-facing metrics can be found in Appendix F.

Timeliness by Permit Type: To identify permits by type that have taken longer than goal

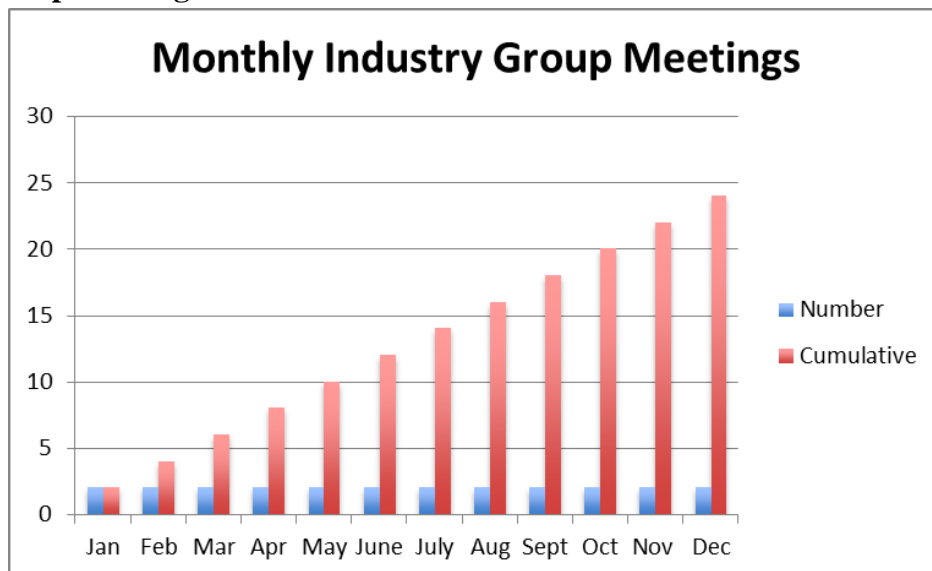
The OOB will need to establish a goal for each type of permit. The goals used in the chart below are for solely the purpose of this report to calculate percentages.



Customer Satisfaction: To monitor volume of activity moving to OOB website



Industry Group Meetings



6. PEER COMPARISON

In this section, we present findings from a comparison of the OOB to a group of other departments. This helps to measure where Atlanta's current performance is competitive with leading peer offices and where further improvement is needed. The detailed findings can be found in Attachment 2 – Peer Group Comparison Data of this Business Plan. Below, we present how we selected the peer group, how we selected the metrics, and what we believe the comparisons mean.

6.1. How We Selected the Peer Group

Our intent was to compare Atlanta to other large (mostly) Sunbelt region local governments. This is a region of the country that has experienced rapid growth and whose builders are more likely to work in other cities in the region. As consultants, we have worked with the cities of New York, Chicago and Los Angeles, but in our opinion, these are not appropriate for this study as they are significantly larger and out of region.

The peer group for this study consists of:

- Mecklenburg County, North Carolina
- Nashville/Davidson, Tennessee
- City of Tampa, Florida
- Montgomery County, Maryland
- City of Houston, Texas
- Cobb County, Georgia

Mecklenburg County, North Carolina was particularly helpful in terms of sharing ideas for improvement with Atlanta. Its population is just under 1 million; nearly twice the size of Atlanta, but with many characteristics in common with Atlanta.

The Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County, Tennessee is a combined city/county unit of government serving a rapidly growing population of 658,000, which is nearly 50 percent greater than Atlanta. Members of the BKD team are familiar with the Codes Department from prior work with that office and feel that is a well-run office with good customer service.

The **City of Tampa, Florida** has a population of 352,957, which is 21 percent smaller than Atlanta, but both in the opinion of members of the BKD team and of Accela (Atlanta and Tampa's permitting software vendor), Tampa is one of the best building departments in the country, with a largely successful relationship with the builder community. This is also a city with a wide variety of construction types that is a magnet for a much larger daytime work population.

The **Montgomery County, Maryland**, Department of Permitting Services addresses the building needs of a suburban Washington, DC county of 1 million people. The consultants have worked with the County and believe it to be a well-run office serving a booming economy.

The **City of Houston, Texas** is one of the largest cities in the Sunbelt. Its permitting center has a reputation for good customer service to its population of 2.2 million residents.

Cobb County, Georgia has a population of 717,190. While it does not have the variety of building types common in the City of Atlanta, its place in the Atlanta metro region means that many developers in Atlanta have customer service expectations influenced to some degree by experience with the county, which inevitably leads to comparisons to Atlanta.

6.2. Metrics for Comparison

We selected the measures for comparison because they relate to issues raised in prior reviews of the OOB. For Atlanta to break the cycle of periodic reports critical of certain aspects of service, these are areas of improvement that the City needs to achieve.

6.2.1. Adequacy of Staff Resources

A comparison simply of raw numbers would only serve to confirm that larger communities are larger than smaller communities. To make the comparison meaningful, we focus on workload per worker, not quantities of work or number of employees. There are some challenges to this, since communities vary in how they record workload. For example, Houston uses three categories – residential, non-residential, and additions and alterations. Atlanta uses commercial, multi-family, and residential. Taking this into account, the figures still provide a view of how Atlanta compares to other departments.

While making the comparisons apples-to-apples will not be possible in some cases, there is still value in considering the variety of experience that builders get from local government to local government. The reader should review the notes that accompany the data in Attachment 2.

Vacancy rates for key positions within the OOB are a concern. Construction activity is robust across most of the country, so keeping positions filled is difficult, particularly for positions where qualified staff may get relatively higher compensation working for private industry.

Percent of Authorized Positions Vacant	Atlanta OOB	Peer Average	Variance to Peer Average
Plan Reviewers	6%	11%	-5%
Inspectors	23%	5%	18%
Supervisors	0%	8%	-8%
Other		20%	
Total	12%	12%	0%

In terms of how Atlanta's employees compare to the peer communities in terms of workload, the following data are illustrative.

Workload Metric	Atlanta OOB	Peer Average	Variance to Peer Average
\$ value of permits per authorized plan reviewer	\$45,345,984	\$217,140,096	-\$171,794,112
\$ value of permits per authorized inspector	\$63,295,436	\$63,970,655	-\$675,219

The peer group has plan reviewers handling a significantly greater value of construction, but inspectors in Atlanta are handling significantly more work than the peer average. The latter is likely not by design; Atlanta has a 23 percent vacancy rate for authorized inspector positions, versus a peer average of 6 percent.

6.2.2. Duration of Plan Review

The findings in Section 4.2 above show that Atlanta lags in comparison to its peers when it comes to plan review timeliness.

Even given that lag however, the level of customer dissatisfaction with Atlanta's processes appears to be greater than the absolute difference in timeliness would lead one to expect. We think that there may be two reasons for this:

- Many of the peer communities communicate extensively with the industry they serve, both formally and informally. It is possible that customer concerns about timeliness are not only how long it will take, but also, how predictable the outcome is; and
- As explained in Section 4.3, the customer experience in Atlanta has substantial variation. Using the statistical measure of "standard deviation," we find that the averages in Atlanta are composed of highly variable results. While the Atlanta average for some permitting types may not be hugely problematic, the variation in customer waiting time is large and that drives substantial customer uncertainty and frustration.

6.2.3. Accessibility of the Permitting System

Atlanta, like other members of the peer group, has a sophisticated permitting software system in Accela. However, Atlanta concedes that training and use of the system has a long way to go in order for Atlanta to get the full benefit of that system.

One feature of the latest generation of permitting systems that would address many of the long-standing concerns in Atlanta is the ability they provide for applicants to submit materials electronically for plan review. The value of electronic filing includes:

- Providing applicants with the ability to submit applications (applications, plans, and payments) even when OOB is closed.
- Eliminating the risk of lost or misplaced plans and relief for OOB's current lack of storage space.
- Reducing customer wait times associated with the physical transmission of documents and comments, along with better status tracking of open permits.

Cobb County is preparing to launch electronic plan review for commercial plans, but as of the time of this report, is not quite ready to implement. Others have embraced it, including Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, where it is the norm for virtually all applicants. In our opinion, it is particularly important for larger builders to be able to do this. Not only will it expedite large projects that have significant economic development impact, but by doing so, it will help smaller builders to get better service as well.

*The data in Attachment 2 shows that **a third** of the peer group's applications are electronic compared to **zero** in Atlanta.*

6.2.4. Implementation of a One-Stop Shop

Few things frustrate a customer as much as being handed from person to person to complete a transaction. Many of the local governments with strong reputations for customer service operate as a "one-stop shop," where all of the reviews needed to address an application are under the control of the same manager and in the same physical location.

One of the most significant complaints the consultants heard in the customer focus groups was that Atlanta has a weak process to resolve disputes when one Atlanta reviewer says "do X" and another says, "do Y." With reviews conducted by staff reporting to different managers, there is no clear mechanism to resolve such an impasse. As a result, customers are stuck in a frustrating position of not even understanding which competing directive must be obeyed.

Another illustration of the lack of coordination between separate departments involved in permitting is the fact that there is neither Fire Marshal nor any Fire Department sign-off for a Certificate of Occupancy. The Fire Department is involved in plan review and inspection, but does not get a final say in whether the project has met all requirements for occupancy. It should

be noted, however, that the City is in the process of clarifying the role of and designating a Fire Marshal.

Our comparison of the integration of the different permitting functions across the peer communities assigns a value of “1” to a department where the type of review is conducted in the same shop and a “2” where it is not. Values between 1 and 2 indicate the peer trend, so that a peer average of 1.33 is more of a one-stop shop than a 1.67. In our opinion, values of 1 or close to 1 are better coordinated. We believe that where Atlanta has a value of 2 and where that value is greatly different than the peer average is documentation of where Atlanta’s customers have complained the most about Atlanta’s additional red tape.

Scope of Responsibilities	Atlanta OOB	Peer Average	Variance to Peer Average
Construction (1=Yes, 2=No)	1	1.0	-
Land Development / Site plans (1=Yes, 2=No)	1	1.3	-0.33
Zoning (1=Yes, 2=No)	1	1.3	-0.33
Watershed / Stormwater (1=Yes, 2=No)	2	1.3	0.67
Arborist (1=Yes, 2=No)	1	1.3	-0.33
Public Works / Traffic, Sanitation (1=Yes, 2=No)	2	1.5	0.50
Plumbing (1=Yes, 2=No)	1	1.2	-0.17
Fire (1=Yes, 2=No)	2	1.3	0.67
Traffic (1=Yes, 2=No)	2	1.5	0.50

In our opinion, progress toward a one-stop shop is necessary and would, particularly for Watershed, Fire and Traffic reviews, do much to coordinate the input of various specialized skill sets by the City of Atlanta.

6.2.5. Training

The training comparison included in Attachment 2 shows that the peer group is hiring individuals with more experience and investing more in their training. This suggests that this should receive discussion in Atlanta, particularly with regard to how to use the accumulated fund balance to improve service.

6.2.6. Rate Structure

Atlanta is aware of the need for permit fees to reflect the cost of service. The City’s internal auditor emphasized this in its recent review of the OOB. The peer comparison data in Attachment 2 suggests that other local governments have been relatively more diligent in attending to this expectation.

However, the City's recently-begun rate assessment should be completed within the next six months and provide the basis for an updated rate structure. Although the cost of service analysis has just started, some initial findings are pertinent to this discussion.

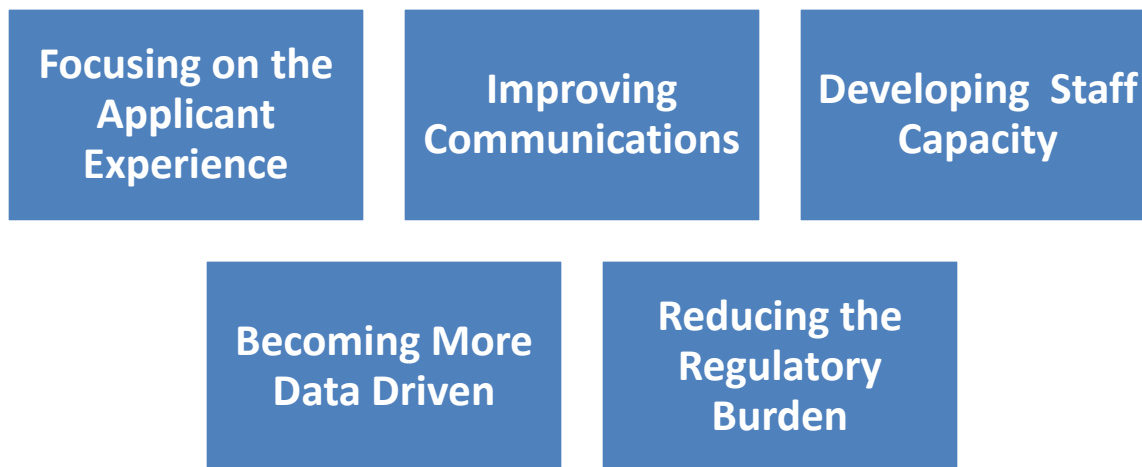
- The fee structure approved by Council in 2011 contains a number of fees that are not currently used, nor have ever been used by OOB staff.
- There are discrepancies between the online municipal code lists of fees and the Council approved version.
- A third fee structure with different fees is actually being used by OOB staff.
- The list of permit prices maintained on the City website also differs from the rates approved by Council.

Although the cost of services analysis has just begun, it will include the following recommendations that the City should consider moving forward with as soon as possible:

1. Establish a single, authorized version of the fees charged to customers;
2. Locate and remove any and all other versions of the fee structure;
3. Ensure that the Accela product is properly configured to produce the correct fee charges;
and
4. Publish the correct fee structure to the City's website.

7. PRINCIPLES OF CHANGE

The options detailed in Section 8 are designed to enable the City to achieve significant improvements in permitting process timeliness, predictability, and transparency. Beyond process improvement, striving toward reducing the regulatory burden experience by Atlanta homeowners, business owners, and developers is a priority. Prior to identifying options and recommendations, however, this effort requires identification of the principles guiding the development of such options. This section outlines five core “building blocks” from which the options were developed.



7.1. Focusing on the Applicant Experience

The City’s permitting agencies exist in order to provide service to permitting applicants (its customers); *therefore, every aspect of the permitting process must be considered from the perspective of the customer.* Consistent with the experience that customers have come to expect from any type of business transaction, they expect consistency, predictability, and timeliness. Permit applicants must be treated as customers who can expect to get the best possible service when applying for a permit. Permits should be issued as simply and quickly as possible, and applicants should be able to get permits at one convenient location, no matter what kind of permits they are. Finally, the reengineering of permitting must be an ongoing process in which improvements are continuously made and effectively communicated, not a one-time revamping of procedure.

7.2 Improving Communications

In order to consistently improve the applicant experience, the City must improve the frequency and quality of communications with its customers, the permit applicants. While the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) is an extremely helpful forum, it is limited in its composition (focusing on the biggest customers) and the range of topics it can consider in any one meeting. The City must employ multiple channels of input in order to provide the type of feedback that can be used to make more precise and regular improvements to processes that are of concern to customers.

7.3 Developing Staff Capacity

Strategic plans, spreadsheets, and process flow diagrams, however helpful, don't perform work and provide top-flight customer service – people do. *In order to achieve sustainable improvements in the permitting processes, City employees require more and better training, tools, and operating standards.* In creating the enterprise fund for the OOB, the City has provided the means for substantially improving the performance of the work force. But there is much to be accomplished when it comes to organizational performance in order to achieve a level of performance characterized by consistency, transparency, and timeliness. This requires patience and determination in recruiting, training, promoting, incentivizing, and retaining over an extended period of time.

7.4 Becoming More Data Driven

With its Accela system and the opportunities provided by data analytics tools, *the City has the opportunity to use and to allow others to use data in ways that result in more effective services and greater convenience for applicants.* First, the City has a substantial amount of data regarding its permitting processes, but does not use it in a way that facilitates continuous process improvement. Rather, it focuses more on aggregate measures of total work accomplished (outputs) versus how well the work was accomplished (outcomes). Much more can be done to use data to benchmark operations (internally and externally) and to improve customer satisfaction. Beyond that, the City could make permitting data available as a part of an open data initiative to allow community groups and retailers to develop useful applications and to formulate policy suggestions.

7.5 Reducing the Regulatory Burden

Atlanta has experienced significant growth in the years since the Great Recession, and continues to thrive. For example, the value of the City's permitted residential construction cost increased by 1148 percent from 2011 to 2015 (from about \$68M to more than \$852M).⁵ However, as capital and people become more mobile each year, Atlanta must continue to improve its attractiveness to construction investment.

⁵ US Census Bureau: <http://www.census.gov/construction/bps>)

To do so, the City should consider finding ways to reduce the regulatory burden, including permitting requirements, it imposes upon homeowners and business owners. *All proposed and existing regulations should be evaluated according to a set of simple, common-sense standards:*

- Regulations must be fair, simple, and enforceable
- The cost of regulations must not be greater than the benefit created for the community
- Regulations must never exceed existing state and federal standards unless there is a compelling and uniquely local reason to do so
- Regulation should only be used as the tool of last resort to achieve a public policy objective
- Regulations should be written to impose the minimum possible constraints upon businesses and individuals

8. MENU OF OPTIONS

Consistent with the principles outlined in Section 7 and all of the data gathered on the City’s current operations, we have developed a menu of policy, program, and process options for consideration by the City. *These will require further due diligence and vetting with stakeholders prior to implementation and are not necessarily intended to be implemented at the same time.* However, these options are focused on enabling the City to become a more active and coordinated actor in the local economy, using permitting processes and policy to further promote a thriving economy for Atlanta residents and visitors.

While most of the options are directed at the Office of Buildings, many of them could be appropriately applied to all of the City agencies involved in permitting. Those adopted by the OOB should be strongly considered by the Commissioners overseeing the other permitting-related departments.

A draft task list incorporating the major steps necessary to implement each option is included as Attachment 1 – Business Plan Task List.

8.1. Organizational Culture and Staffing Options

The following Organizational Culture and Staffing Options are presented for consideration. We present them first because they are the most foundational to improving the operations of the City’s permitting processes. Without significant and sustainable changes to the organizational culture and staffing, the best designed process changes and regulatory reform efforts will fail.

These options assume that the City is contracting with a firm (SAFEbuilt) to provide leadership and supplemental resources in the areas of plan review, inspections, and front desk. It also assumes that specific changes to the existing organization would be managed by the joint City-contractor Process Redesign Implementation Team (PRIT).

#	Name	Observation	Detailed Recommendation(s)	Approximate Timing
1	Implement a True “One-Stop Shop”	<p>The various departments involved in permitting largely work within their own “silos”. Customers experience a lack of coordination on key issues and this leads to delays and frustration. Some have expressed that there is sometimes animosity between the departments. When there are conflicting opinions, customers get stuck in between.</p> <p>The various counters within the different Atlanta agencies involved in permitting open at varying times and close at varying times. This creates significant confusion for customers. Additionally,</p>	<p>Relocate all permitting operations into a single comprehensive “one-stop shop”. Ideally this would be located in a separate space outside of City Hall to create a more customer friendly environment and reduce transit times between various departments and floors.</p> <p>Implementation would require:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An organizational culture shift for all City departments involved in the permitting process. All departments will be sharing space and will need to work together. • Designing and constructing a space to 	Start month 1 with goal to be in new building within 18 months

		<p>customers cite that plan review related documents are not infrequently “lost” between City of Atlanta departments.</p> <p>Tampa is an example of a well-functioning one-stop shop. It contains Construction, Land Development /Site Plans, Zoning, Watershed/Stormwater; Arborist, Public Works/Traffic, Sanitation, Plumbing, Fire, and Traffic. Tampa has reviewers physically located in the same office suite. Permitting is known as “Construction Services”.</p>	<p>most efficiently move customers through the process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It should support the “three service stream teams – express, residential, and commercial” discussed in the Immediate Priorities section. ○ It should include meeting spaces where representatives from all permitting-related agencies (including inspections) can meet with customers to discuss, review, and approve plans. • Moving the permitting personnel from Site Development, Office of Buildings, Fire, Watershed, Public Works, Streets and Parks & Recreation to this single location. • Establishing consistent hours of operation, with all the counters opening at the same time and taking their last customer at the same time (i.e. 8:30 am to 3:30 pm daily). • Conducting monthly all-hands meetings to aid in communications of the various departments. Establish this meeting at a consistent time (i.e. on posted hours, “Counters on the first Monday of the month will open at 10:00 am”). • Creating free and easily-accessible parking, including for larger pickups and trailers of the type common within the construction industry. • Implementing the queuing management technology (See Section 8.2 option 9) that would allow the concierge to check-in customers even before their arrival and have a screen showing their name and an estimated wait time until they are seen by at the counter. 	
2	Fill the Director of Buildings Position Permanently	<p>The Director of Buildings will be a key leader for the City to move forward with the options for improvement included in this document. Filling the position with a permanent employee will be vital for the City to move forward with improving the experience for both internal and external customers.</p> <p>The incumbent must be able to successfully manage not only the OOB work force, but also the relationship with the supplementary services contractor for however long that relationship is in place.</p>	<p>Initiate the hiring process for a permanent replacement as soon as possible. The City should conduct a national search for this position, seeking applicants that have deep experience in the industry as well as some experience successfully managing both internal resources as well as contractor resources.</p>	<p>Start month 1 with the goal of having a permanent replacement onboard by month 4</p>

3	<p>Establish a Permitting Customer Service Code of Conduct</p>	<p>Customer interviews and survey responses indicated that some of the foundational aspects of quality customer service are missing from the City's permitting process. Customers indicated that they observed behaviors from taking personal phone calls while customers were waiting to the use of abusive tones and behaviors. Multiple survey respondents indicated that they "take it" as they fear retaliation by employees.</p> <p>An organization's Code of Conduct sets the tone and expectations for employee behavior. The OOB needs a document that serves as clear statement of these expectations given the importance of high-quality customer service.</p> <p>Such a Code should serve as the basis for the OOB to routinely identify and reward superior customer service displayed by its employees.</p>	<p>Develop a Customer Service Code of Conduct to which OOB employees must adhere.</p> <p>Suggestions for the Code of Conduct include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treat customers with respect at all times. Be polite, greet with a smile. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Do not assume customers are trying to get away with something. ○ Customers should never feel like they are a nuisance or are interrupting your day. • Work with a sense of purpose and calm urgency. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Recognize that the customers are working to improve your City and are relying on you to move their permit forward. • Open counter timely and be ready to serve customers. • Provide the best performance of your job the <i>first time</i> you receive plans for permits. • Be consistent in the treatment of plans. No favoritism or retaliation is permitted. • Review comments should be legible and cite the code section from which each comment relates. • All City employees involved in permitting are on the same team. Mutual respect should be shown and open communication should be encouraged. • You are a custodian of the customer's valued assets when handling review plans. Diligent efforts should be made to keep track of this inventory. Plans should not be lost. • Absolutely no personal phone calls or texting are permitted while working with a customer. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Conduct personal business over breaks and out of view of customers. • Absolutely no favoritism shown to expeditors or clients. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The acceptance of gifts or favors to expedite the permit process will result in immediate disciplinary action. • Return phone calls or e-mails within one business day. 	<p>Start month 1 and evaluate results in month 4</p>
4	<p>Develop and Implement an Organizational Vision and Mission Statement</p>	<p>While the Office of Buildings has a vision and mission stated on City of Atlanta's website, they warrant updating.</p> <p>For example, the OOB's current vision is: "To become a modern, dynamic, and efficient</p>	<p>Develop clear, concise and realistic Office of Buildings Vision and Mission statement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These should summarize the strategy in a format that can be communicated and easily understood by stakeholders. 	<p>Start month 1 and evaluate results month 4</p>

		organization with customer friendly structure and practices that rivals the best in the nation.” This vision appears so broad as to be overreaching, and may not be embraced or acknowledged by employees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Vision statement should set out the attainable long-term goals and aspirations clearly and concisely. It’s intended to inspire and motivate employees by picturing where they are headed. • The Mission statement should be a statement of purpose. It guides decisions, helps employees align decisions to the mission, and offers insight into what the leaders view as the primary purpose of the organization. 	
5	Assign a Dedicated Human Resources (HR) Manager	<p>A repeated observation from the customer survey was that the OOB appears understaffed and employees appear overworked. While the comparison data from peer communities do not necessarily demonstrate this, it is the clear perception of customers.</p> <p>There are important positions unfilled in the OOB, such as a permanent Director of Buildings, and a need to upgrade skills in key areas, such as in plan review. While the OOB is allowed to hire at the maximum City salary rate and has had people apply for open positions, a number of positions remain unfilled.</p> <p>The City of Atlanta’s Department of Aviation, similar to the Office of Buildings, is an enterprise funded-organization with its own dedicated HR executives. While the OOB does not require the level of dedicated HR support that the Department of Aviation does, it is appropriate that the OOB have a solely-dedicated HR resource, at least for the next 12-18 months. Whether such an HR executive is needed beyond this period will need to be reviewed by the Commissioners of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) and HR.</p> <p>As of January 29, 2016, HR had assigned a full-time resource to support the DPCD.</p>	<p>At least for the next 12-18 months, dedicate a full-time City HR Manager to the OOB who will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversee a hiring committee, consisting of various levels of employees. This committee will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Meet on a weekly basis ○ Identify staffing needs of the OOB ○ Screen and interview candidates ○ Fill open positions in timely manner ○ Explore establishing a six month “probationary period” for new employees • Consider whether some key positions should be filled with non-classified employees. • Coordinate hiring, disciplinary and termination activities. • Establish and implement a strategy to facilitate employee recognition and raise employee morale. • Meet with the Commissioner regularly to provide an update on staffing and hiring needs within the OOB. 	Start month 1 and have position filled month 3
6	Establish a Chief Training Officer Position	<p>Based on the interviews conducted, various OOB employees do not appear confident in their jobs and this has created an organizational culture where the bulk of the work is shouldered by a few. Additionally, several new hires reported an almost complete absence of training as to what was expected of them in their professional capacity.</p> <p>The interpretation of zoning and codes is reported as being inconsistent throughout the permitting and inspection process, both across separate OOB functions (such as plan review and inspections) as well as even within functions.</p>	<p>Similar to the Department of Aviation’s training and organizational development resources, establish a Chief Training Officer position who will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage a 10 to 15 percent annual training budget, which is dedicated for the training of staff (i.e., 10 percent of the personnel budget to be dedicated to training). • Be responsible for ensuring that employees are well trained for their jobs, including both technical and general customer service training. 	Start month 1 and have position filled month 3

Again, the example of the Department of Aviation is instructive with the assignment of a dedicated training resource.

- Develop a master training schedule encompassing the training needs of each position within the Office of Buildings.
- Maintain and promote the Customer Service Code of Conduct as well as the organization's Vision and Mission (Recommendations 3 and 4).
- Prioritize training so that staff achieves necessary levels of proficiency on Accela.
- Coordinate with Atlanta Information Management (AIM) regarding software needs and other technical training needed by employees (e.g., providing the necessary software and training to allow inspectors to go directly in the field from home to improve productivity).
- Arrange for all necessary internal and external training, as well as retraining when an employee needs a refresher.
- Facilitate staff training sessions to provide updates on zoning issues, code interpretations, and other items that should be communicated department-wide.
- Develop specific training on areas of great confusion, such as between Planning and Zoning in reference to lot lines, consolidations, etc.
- As appropriate, coordinate with private sector customers/groups who would like to provide appropriate training to City employees (e.g., homebuilders providing free training for City inspectors).
- Consider an apprentice level program with coordination with Georgia Tech or other local secondary and post-secondary institutions in order to develop a "pipeline" of proficient candidates for positions with the OOB.
- Develop metrics capturing the efficiency and effectiveness of the OOB's training efforts.
- Meet with the Commissioner regularly to provide update on training within the OOB.

7	<p>Establish a Customer Advocate Position</p>	<p>The interim OOB director is the go-to person for customers who are having great difficulty with certain permitting situations.</p> <p>Based on interviews conducted, customers feel this is an important and valuable position, as circumstances arise that need immediate attention by someone who has the authority to take action.</p>	<p>Establish a Customer Advocate position who will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act as a mediator between customers and City employees involved in the permitting process. • Be the “go-to” person when problems arise which need immediate action. • Simplify complex situations for customers. • Accelerate permits for emergency situations. • Coordinate with the Chief Training Officer regarding additional training needs observed through interactions with customers and employees. • Coordinate with the HR Executive regarding opportunities for employee recognition and to assess overall employee morale. • Refer items to the Employee Relations Manager (option 8) which need more review or investigation. • Monitor the routine customer satisfaction survey (option 12) and address issues that arise. • Meet with the Commissioner monthly to provide an update on current situations within the OOB. • Serve as the host and executive in charge of the proposed monthly customer education session. 	<p>Start month 1 and have position filled month 3</p>
8	<p>Assign a Temporary Employee Relations Resource</p>	<p>Customers feel that they sometimes receive comments or requests for revisions that are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frivolous • Driven by personal preferences of the reviewer • Lacking support in the code • Inappropriate or abusive <p>It takes time to review and investigate the claims made by customers. Customers feel that there needs to be someone who can take these issues seriously, and who has the time to look into them.</p> <p>This is envisioned as a temporary position to be in place while the processes are being improved and overall capabilities of the permitting agencies are upgraded. Evaluation of the need for the position should occur every six months. It would be up to the Commissioner as to whether to maintain the position indefinitely.</p>	<p>Establish or detail an existing resource for an Employee Relations Manager position who will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be empowered by the Council and the Mayor’s office to investigate claims of impropriety among City employees involved in permitting. • Understand from the Department of Law the appropriate bounds of authority and investigatory tools. • Implement and monitor adherence to the Customer Service Code of Conduct. • Provide unbiased third-party view of tough issues. • Investigate permitting complaints (i.e. frivolous or abusive plan review comments). • Use authority to make decisions based on the investigation of complaints (i.e. reverse frivolous, abusive plan review comments). • Use discretion to take appropriate action based on the outcome of a complaint 	<p>Start month 1 and have position filled by month 3</p> <p>Position duration: approximately 18 months</p>

			<p>investigation (e.g., to write-up the plan reviewer who made the review comments).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate with the Chief Training Officer regarding additional training needs observed through interactions with customers and employees. • Meet with the Commissioner monthly to provide an update on current issues within the OOB. 	
9	Define and Clarify Appropriate Use of Professional Discretion	<p>Multiple customers and employees report that inspectors are reluctant or unwilling to approve minor field changes, such as moving a sewer tap a few feet, or changing driveway material from concrete to a porous material. This causes the need for plans to be re-approved by plan review, wasting time and money.</p>	<p>The Customer Advocate, working with the Chief Training Officer and the City's Law Department, should clarify what is an appropriate exercise of professional discretion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Customer Advocate should lead this initiative. • The Chief Training Officer shall be responsible for developing training and case studies on appropriate use of professional discretion for employees in : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Inspections ○ Plan Review ○ Site Development ○ OOB supervisory and management positions. <p>The Customer Advocate can be the failsafe for when customers feel that there has not been proper use of professional discretion.</p> <p>The Customer Advocate can report to the Employee Relations Manager when there is a concern regarding an inappropriate use of professional discretion by employees.</p>	Start month 4 and evaluate results by month 7
10	Define a Tiered Approach to Permitting-Related Decisions	<p>Appeals boards such as the BZA and the Tree Conservation Commission (TCC) are likely overused in the City's permitting processes. Customers express frustration that OOB and other agencies' officials do not have the authority to make more decisions themselves.</p>	<p>Building on the recommendation regarding the appropriate exercise of professional discretion detailed in option 9 immediately above, the City should specify the role of appropriate types of decisions that can be made by individuals such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agency heads • Multiple agency heads acting together (for example, the Director of Buildings and the Director of the Office of Transportation) <p>Clarifying and enhancing administrative decision-making in such a way would enhance process efficiency.</p>	Start month 9 and evaluate results month 12

11	Institute Vacation Scheduling for Plan Review	<p>Multiple customers report the experience that when a plan reviewer goes on vacation, the plans he or she was reviewing sit untended. When the plan review returns, he or she is overwhelmed with the number of plans that have built up and it can take weeks for him or her to touch a plan again.</p>	<p>The head of OOB Plan Review will begin keeping a department “vacation schedule” for time-off extending beyond two to three days. The employee and head of Plan Review will meet at least one week prior to vacation, with a listing of each plan currently under assignment and decide plan by plan which plans the plan review will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed prior to vacation, or • Re-assigned to another plan review <p>Plan reviewers can typically expect that 10 to 20 percentage of the work load will be reassigned from other plan reviewers and will be trained to handle this situation.</p> <p>Accela will be programed to inform customers that their plans have been reassigned.</p> <p>Any significant delay caused by the reassignment can be brought to the Customer Advocate.</p>	Start month 1 and evaluate results month 4
12	Develop and Institute Routine Customer Satisfaction Surveying	<p>Customers indicate that they are overall displeased with the permitting process. The survey respondents commented on how their frustration, as they don’t feel “heard” even when they respond to surveys.</p> <p>By instituting a routine customer satisfaction surveying process, the City will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benchmark current levels of customer satisfaction • Assess key areas of concern for customers • Measure progress (or regress) over time in improving customer satisfaction 	<p>Develop and institute a routine customer satisfaction survey. The survey needs to be short enough that customers are willing to take it, but detailed enough to gain insight.</p> <p>The outcomes of the survey must be noted and improvement tracked.</p> <p>Summary results are to be distributed electronically to customers interacting with the City’s permitting process on a quarterly basis.</p> <p>Example customer survey questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you rate your overall permitting experience? • How would you rate the courtesy and professionalism of permitting personnel? • How would you rate the overall timeliness of the permitting process? • Did you understand what was needed and expected for your project? If not, in what area? (List Plan review, Zoning, Arborist, Site Development, Planning, Plan intake, Permit Issuance, Inspections, Fire, Watershed, Signs, Public Works, Streets, and Parks & Recreation. • Was the City staff knowledgeable and consistent with their treatment/review of your plans? (If no, allow to comment) • Was your inspection performed in a timely and professional manner? (If no, allow to comment) • What can be improved for your overall permitting experience? 	Start month 5 and evaluate results month 12

			<p>A formal marketing campaign should be developed to encourage customers to complete surveys. Some examples of the approaches available to the City to encourage participation in the survey process include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City's website; • Traditional media, such as television and newspaper outlets; • Non-traditional media, such as social media (Twitter, Facebook, etc.); • For all walk-in customers, staff distribution of pre-printed cards containing a link to the survey website; and • Distribution at the monthly customer education sessions and forum (below). 	
13	Institute Monthly Customer Education Sessions and Forum	Customers indicate that a chance to learn from and interact with City permitting staff on a routine basis would improve their understanding of the various elements of the process and allow them to provide feedback.	<p>Establish a monthly meeting at a regular time – something like “Fourth Friday” – during which City employees involved in the permitting process would present on a topic of interest to customers.</p> <p>The goal of these sessions will be to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide City staff with the opportunity to both educate and openly discuss specific topics that are impacting customers; • Provide customers with a forum to communicate any issues they may be facing; • Develop relationships between City staff and customers; and • Promote improved communications with City staff. <p>A formal marketing campaign should be developed to encourage participation in the education sessions. Invitations should be sent directly to customers such as homeowners, developers, general contractors, architects, engineers, community development organizations and neighborhood associations. Some examples of the tools available to the City to promote the sessions are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City's website; • Traditional media, such as television and newspaper outlets; • Non-traditional media such as social media (Twitter, Facebook, etc.); and • Staff distribution of pre-printed cards containing a link to the City's website with information about upcoming sessions. 	Start month 7 and evaluate results month 11

			<p>Take suggestions for the first few topics from the feedback from the BKD customer survey completed as a part of this engagement. Most of the earlier topics of the meetings will likely involve explanation of all of the changes being implemented.</p> <p>Allow for a period of open discussion after the formal presentation, to discuss the topic presented and other issues.</p>	
14	<p>Develop Employee Gainsharing Policy</p>	<p>Developing an organizational culture that rewards achievement and high performance in key to improving organizations and the processes they manage. In addition to providing better operational standards, tools, and training, the highest performing organizations find ways to assess and reward outstanding performance by employees.</p> <p>Developing and allowing employees to make proposals for “gain sharing” plans has been an element of public sector organizations that have successfully improved performance. These gain sharing plans can reward on individual performance, team performance, or a mix of both.</p>	<p>A gain sharing policy appropriate for the OOB may include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees’ participation in developing process improvements and documented commitments to measurably higher levels of efficiency and effectiveness • Development of a gain sharing proposal whereby if employees performance <i>exceeds</i> the improvement in efficiency/effectiveness that has been committed to (while maintaining appropriate levels of service quality), a portion of the City’s efficiency savings that is attributable that exceedance of the committed improvements would be shared with employees according to a pre-specified methodology. • <i>For example</i>, a gain sharing policy may include a plan that an award pool for employee bonuses is created from up to one quarter of the City’s savings that is realized from the employees’ exceedance of the committed to savings, not to exceed 7.5 percent of the employee’s annual salary, to be paid out annually. • After each year, the efficiency/effectiveness performance targets must be increased if a gain sharing plan is to be renewed so as to encourage continuous performance improvement among the participating employees. <p>Such a gain sharing policy must be thoroughly reviewed with HR, the Law Department, and the Mayor’s Office to confirm acceptability under City law.</p>	<p>Start month 3 and make first gain sharing awards following month 24</p>

15	<p>Develop a Hybrid Quality Management Structure to Drive Continuous Improvement</p>	<p>As noted throughout this Business Plan, there are quality issues with a number of the OOB's (and other City permitting functions) processes. While the options detailed herein provide direction as to some of the largest quality issues and general strategies to address, an organization like the OOB needs to implement an effort that provides for continuous process improvement from this point on.</p> <p>We believe that it is essential that such an effort be neither completely centralized nor decentralized, but contain components of both given the complexity of the organization and its processes. An overly-centralized quality management approach runs the risk of being disconnected from the real daily issues experienced by customers and how the work is actually completed. An overly-decentralized approach can fail to take into account how particular steps fit into the "big picture" and may ignore the implications that changes to a particular process can have elsewhere throughout the organization.</p>	<p>We would propose a hybrid quality management approach comprised of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership in quality improvement project identification and prioritization should be provided by the Customer Advocate, accountable to the Director of Buildings. This should result in an effort that is customer-facing and not consumed with quality improvement projects that offer little value to the customer. • The Customer Advocate should work with the Chief Training Officer to identify and oversee the delivery of the best quality methodology for the quality process leads. • Working with the Customer Advocate, the leaders of each major function in the permitting process (i.e. plan review, inspections, intake) should identify a "quality process lead" to receive training in a validated quality methodology (i.e. Six Sigma, Lean Six Sigma, Lean Management, Agile Management, Re-engineering, Total Quality Management, Kaizen). • These quality process leads will receive training in the identified quality methodology and will be freed up to spend a portion of their time (perhaps up to 25 percent) working on projects approved by their supervisors and the Customer Advocate that are designed to improve the processes within their function from the perspective of the customer. • Collectively, this "quality management team" comprised of the Customer Advocate and the quality process leads will meet regularly, share project results, discuss challenges, and review and provide input on OOB metrics to confirm a data-driven approach to quality management. 	<p>Start month 6 and continue indefinitely</p>
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8.2. Process and Technology Options

The following Process and Technology Options are presented for consideration. They supplement the previously-discussed recommendations concerning the development of a robust performance measurement program that includes a range of both internal and customer-facing metrics (Section 5). These assume that the City is contracting with a firm (SAFEbuilt) to provide leadership and supplemental resources in the areas of plan review, inspections, and front desk. They also assume that specific changes to existing processes would be managed by the joint

City-contractor Process Redesign Implementation Team (PRIT). A list of all proposed new positions can be found in Appendix G.

#	Name	Observation	Recommendation(s)	Approximate Timing
1	Transition all Necessary Legacy Data	<p>During previous system upgrades and software transitions, existing records and databases were not captured and pulled into Accela, resulting in fragmented records and archives across various platforms.</p> <p>As older software and hardware have been phased out, only select machines and select staff have the capability and institutional knowledge to query for the older data.</p> <p>Additionally, few databases are accessible or shared between departments and some departments involved in plan review do not currently use Accela.</p>	<p>Transitioning all legacy data into the Accela database – for example, that which is still researched by zoning in KIVA – would improve zoning process timeliness. KIVA is no longer supported. Failure to convert the data means either parts of OOB cannot use Accela (the status quo) or all of OOB uses Accela, but the historical zoning data will be inaccessible (which is unacceptable). It is BKD’s understanding that the current TruePoint Solutions project will include this transition and is now underway.</p> <p>Additionally, investigate if other County and City data (such as the Fire Dept.’s GIS data, the County’s Plat, and GIS records, etc.) can be combined or bridged, as this is where record conflicts often occur.</p> <p>Ensure the database is designed to be malleable to prevent technological barriers to retrieving e-plans submitted today.</p>	Start month 1 and evaluate results month 7
2	Temporarily Suspend the 10 Day SLA and Develop New SLAs Tailored to Particular Permit Types	<p>The City’s ten-day plan review standard, while not an official service level agreement (SLA) appears to lead some plan reviewers to complete a partial review to simply 'get it off their desk'. This restarts the time clock for a reviewer to keep within their SLA, but sets the customer back.</p> <p>Upon second review, customers explain that multiple new issues are often identified on the same plan (“You will ALWAYS get a new set of comments the next time that are completely different”).</p>	<p>Temporarily suspend the “10 day standard” until May 1, 2016 or such time that new SLAs can be developed consistent with the OOB’s initial process changes.</p> <p>At that time, re-institute more appropriate SLAs consistent with the “one pass” commitment, benchmarks from other cities, the specific processes required for different types of permits, and the process improvements that are in place by then.</p>	Start month 1 and evaluate results in month 10
3	Clarify Plan Review Comments and Implement “One Pass” Plan Review Standard	<p>Plan reviewers often have inconsistent interpretations and policies on building code requirements.</p> <p>One applicant surveyed comments: "We have had the wrong codes cited, illegible hand written notes, drawings being rejected when the information was overlooked, etc. The list goes on."</p> <p>Another indicates: "Reviewers comments rarely reference the code or zoning section related to their comment. This makes it difficult to respond to comments and also allows reviewers to create comments that do not relate to code."</p>	<p>Establish an “one pass” policy to guide plan review and inspections, meaning that after the initial review, plan reviewers are prohibited from adding more comments upon further review, unless a significant health or life safety issue is identified.</p> <p>To support staff in the transition, develop a review checklist that captures all major areas involved in the review (consistent with the policies laid out in the Handbook option 6). When a reviewer checks that each item has been reviewed, he or she is noting that nothing was skipped or missed in said category.</p> <p>Reviewers must provide clear communications</p>	Start month 3 and evaluate results in month 10

			on comments to plans that have been submitted for permit. All comments must be returned in writing, legibly and understandably, with code references and explanations of what the comment is, not just a reference that leaves the reader to guess the reviewer's intention.	
4	Establish Dedicated Accela Business Process Expertise and Complete "Immediate Priority" Accela Improvements	<p>There is a shortage of essential Accela knowledge within the OOB, and additional help is needed. Current staff members with the capacity to improve Accela functionality are swamped with day-to-day requests to "put out fires," rather than examine the Accela business process as a whole and determine enhancements.</p> <p>Accela recommends a staff of four experts to support the Atlanta system.⁶</p> <p>Customers and staff have cited numerous functionality issues that could be addressed with adequate Accela business process and technical resources, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan reviewers have to enter the same information multiple times. • There is no automatic procedure to let staff know if other permits associated with the application at hand are under review. • There is no SOP for County Health Department reviews. If the project is a food establishment, there is no notice that plans need to be submitted to the County Health Department. 	<p>Establish an Accela Administrator position, responsible for maintaining the City of application functionality and regularly optimize processes to maximize OOB efficiencies and workflow needs.</p> <p>Contract a minimum of two, but ideally four Accela business process experts, to assist with the maintenance of the City of Atlanta's Accela functionality. These external resources specializing in Accela and dedicated to the City of Atlanta account should be top-tier users with backend development understanding. Contracted resources are recommended versus in-house employees given the challenges of identifying, employing and retaining top-flight Accela resources within City government. Therefore, putting this responsibility on a contractor is appropriate.</p> <p>Quick improvements to the process can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing the data input on projects with multiple applications (such as townhome designs that are nearly identical). • Modifying Accela to automatically provide notice to the user (staff) that other permits associated with the application are under review. This would reduce the request for documentation previously provided for another permit and allow for continuity between permits. • Adding automated triggers and/or notices that plans must be submitted to Health Department during intake. 	Start month 1 and evaluate results in month 12
5	Standardize Documents and Processes	<p>The OOB and City permit requirements are characterized by customers as "disorganized, inefficient, and changing daily." It is possible to get different sets of forms, applications, and standards depending on which OOB staff member is assisting the customer or where the customer gets their information.</p> <p>One developer explained, "After nearly twenty years of working on projects in the City of</p>	<p>Consistent with the development of a Handbook (option 6) that is used for internal and external purposes, all required documents and processes must first be identified and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) re-implemented. This may involve the following steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare all OOB SOPs, including permit requirements, checklists, and documentation posted online and in the 	Start month 3 and evaluate results in month 12

⁶ Recommended per the "Accela Inc., City of Atlanta, Georgia, Customer Success Visit, Findings & Recommendations, May 8th 2013," dated 01/03/2014, Version 1.1 under Section title "Dedicated Configuration Resources," pages 11-13.

		<p>Atlanta, I still find this process to be difficult and don't recommend that my clients try to file for permit without an expeditor. It is almost impossible to know what documents will be required for a commercial building permit submission. The staff is typically helpful, but the requirements are unclear and seem to be constantly changing."</p> <p>Another shared that "documents needed and all the 'pre-review' meetings that are impossible to get scheduled are a true barrier to growth for the City!"</p>	<p>permit center.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where there are SOPs, checklist or process requirements that do not add value, eliminate them with the approval of the Director of Buildings. Every effort should be made to eliminate non-value added steps. Verify that only one version of any document is posted and available. Create an inventory with numbers/categories for each document (forms, brochures, samples, checklists, etc.) and annotate each valid document with revision date and number. Ensure staff is using the correct SOPs and ONLY the inventoried documents and processes. Include the final version of the permit requirements, checklists, etc. in the Handbook developed in option 6. Ensure final versions are the ONLY available on the website as well. 	
6	Draft a Handbook Describing Necessary Documents and Process Steps for Each Type of Permit	<p>The common citizen struggles to understand what exactly the City expects permit applicants to bring to City Hall to apply for permits. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no workflow or guide to tell someone how to obtain all types of permits. The website contains incomplete and outdated information. <p>Often, the process is held up because a citizen shows up missing one document or did not know to provide something that would have easily been in hand had he or she known.</p> <p>There is a need for clear business process information and document requirements for <u>applicants and staff</u> to follow when submitting plans for the first time and when submitting revised plans.</p>	<p>Establish a comprehensive handbook that serves as the definitive resource on how to apply for a permit. The process of drafting this handbook will involve coordination and cooperation by all areas of permitting.</p> <p>An outline of the process for determining the processes, checklists, and required documents to be included in the handbook are detailed in Section 8.2 option 5.</p> <p>The handbook will be maintained by the Chief Training Officer. The handbook should be reviewed with the TAC and the TAC should be consulted regarding revisions to the handbook.</p> <p>The <i>handbook</i> should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A preamble containing the mission, vision and the Customer Code of Conduct. A public-friendly/"layman's guide" to help homeowners and first-time applicants understand as to what is needed and where to go (One customer notes: "It would help to have a diagram that shows the different types of projects and what department needs to have their stamp on the drawings first. Knowing the sequence helps with time and effort and it does not feel like an endless circle.") Flow charts showing the departments that will review their application, including contact information. 	Start month 9 and evaluate results month 18

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within the flow charts, include all departments and agencies that can possibly need to review plans. • Inspection requirements. • Answers to commonly asked questions. • Contact information for whom to call with questions or concerns in each major area (Site development, plan review, zoning, etc.). • Contact information for the Employee Relations Manager. <p>After finalized, all employees should have a copy and should refer to it frequently.</p> <p>Upon completion, post the handbook publicly for review as a comprehensive guide, solicit input, and gain acceptance from the building community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule regular review and update periods. No changes should be made following initial community approval until the next review cycle to ensure that requirements are consistent and standard, such as the number of plans needed for a specific review type, etc. • Publish a public quarterly newsletter electronically and in print for customers to keep them informed, such as to highlight new or changing codes or common issues with reviewers. • Post the handbook on the website and make all forms and checklists PDF/Adobe form compatible. 	
7	Complete Website Update	<p>The City of Atlanta’s Office of Building’s web pages are outdated, confusing to locate information and processes, and not useful tools for customers. While periodic efforts have been made to update the web pages, a more comprehensive, focused, and aggressive is required.</p> <p>Customers responding to the survey rated the importance of an updated website as very high – 4.47 on a scale of 1 to 5.</p>	<p>Create a more user-friendly website designed and organized in a dynamic manner, allowing viewers to easily find information. This should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidating and updating existing content to new webpages. • Standardizing language terms. • Designing these pages to be a current and reliable resource for staff and customers. <p>These tasks will include the “clean up” of pages, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streamlining all terminology and page names • Removing redundancies and dated material • Making PDFs cleaner, search-enabled, and clickable 	Start month 3 and evaluate results in month 9

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating graphic flow charts to simplify process, with links to existing pages <p>Content for the website should be closely coordinated with the effort to standardize and document all processes (option 5).</p>	
8	Plan and Implement Electronic Plan Review	<p>Currently, the application process must be completed entirely in person. Not only can paper plans be cumbersome and provide ample room for error, but they cause great frustration amongst staff and customers for reasons including the great cost the City incurs storing and retrieving them from storage, along with the unfortunate issue of losing drawings, which was noted by many customers and employees.</p> <p>Electronic plan review is in place (or actively being implemented) at five of the six peer communities reviewed.</p>	<p>Electronic plan review is achievable with Accela and highly desired by Atlanta's customers (4.07 on a scale of 1-5); however this must not take place UNTIL major process improvements are implemented and confirmed. Simply introducing electronic plan review functionality into an unreformed set of processes will exacerbate confusion and frustration.</p> <p>It is recommended that Atlanta establish a project plan, timeline, and funding plan for the implementation of electronic plan review. BKD understands that this will be completed as part of the TruePoint Solutions scope of work that is underway.</p>	Start month 7 and evaluate results in month 19
9	Implement a Queuing Application to Improve Permit Intake Line Management	<p>Customers often have to wait for long periods of time in the lobby because they need to be physically present to get in line. Additionally, they have no accurate, updated information as to their position in line, leading to uncertainty and frustration.</p>	<p>An electronic queuing system would allow customers to sign-up remotely through the City's website and to "get in line" closer to the time that they will be served to avoid long lobby wait times.</p> <p>This would reduce the number of those waiting in the office for extended periods of time and allow customers to estimate time before they need to arrive. Additionally, this would help OOB management staff forecast scheduling for the day to allow for increased productivity.⁷</p> <p>Implementation of such a software package would need to be coordinated with all of the process changes implemented by the PRIT.</p>	Start month 5 and evaluate results in month 19
10	Implement True Time Tracking for Permit Issuance and Plan Review	<p>There is no true standard for tracking "wait time" within OOB or Planning for the issuance of necessary permits. The OOB has tried to measure more how long it takes before, but interviewees indicate that Planning does not even measure a customer application until they look at it.</p> <p>Additionally, unlike most major cities, Atlanta does not include weekends or holidays in its calculation of elapsed time.</p>	<p>Build in a time measurement tool into the Accela optimization plan to immediately start the clock when plans are submitted. Continue to record separate event times (send back for review, additional item needed, etc.), but once an application is in the system, the clock will run until a permit is issued. Calculations should include weekends and holidays.</p>	Start month 7 and evaluate results in month 9

⁷ <http://www.qless.com/why/easy/> is a great example of a flexible queuing system software

11	Implement Data Request Security	Open records requests are faxed or emailed using a non-secure server, which can pose a liability to the City. Additionally, the lack of procedures and technical capabilities lead staff to often print out information that should be kept securely.	Immediately setup an e-fax or email system into a secure system (most likely the IVR application or file sharing network) and dedicate one staff member to managing requests. Publish requirements for submittal by customers, develop standard wait time expectations, and no longer allow requests to come in another way (on paper, in mail, printouts, etc.). Develop workflow in Accela to handle records requests during the optimization process.	Start month 1 and evaluate results in month 2
12	Improve Inspector Processes and Personnel Accountability	<p>The inspection process can be categorized by three major customer grievances:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scheduling; 2. Contacting/follow-up; and 3. Consistency in approval/requirements. <p>Scheduling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too often inspections are scheduled manually by phone or fax. However, a customer reports, "The phone system won't schedule it half the time, you have to call back. If you email an inspection in it doesn't get on the schedule half the time (fax even less)." • The automated system does not allow for any additional comments or address elements, such as apartment or suite number. • Some departments have different requirements for the method of inspection request. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Arborist inspections and site development inspections are not part of the OOB IVR scheduling system ○ Arborist inspection requests are separate and have a five day window to inspect <p>Contact, Onsite Arrival and Follow-Up</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting in touch with an inspector is very difficult. The City does not give out inspector cell phone numbers, which would greatly help. • Often, the inspector does not arrive at the site on the day the request was made. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ One customer estimates "at least 70 percent of the time the inspector does not show up on the day it was called." 	<p>Streamline the inspection request process. Require that customers submit requests through the IVR or online to allow for consistent tracking and accountability. IVR functionality allows for more accurate data collection and measurement of calls, abandonment, and average handle time, etc.</p> <p>Include improved capabilities in Accela optimization project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a trigger in the application that would insist the customer provide site contact information for the inspectors. • Allow for insertion of a suite/ apartment number, and onsite phone contact. <p>Assign inspectors to a project throughout its construction lifecycle so that the project manager can work with him. As trust is established, time is saved.</p> <p>Increase visible accountability amongst inspectors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share the inspector's cell phone number with the customer or on the day of the inspection, identify a two hour window of time for the appointment, similar to the customer experience for other utility providers. • Establish a consistent inspection timeliness standard against which performance will be measured.⁸ • Develop a reporting mechanism for inspectors to share completed inspections daily and develop a reward system for those inspectors that exceed minimum expectations, such as performing more than the minimum of required inspections per day with quality and efficiency (see the 	Start month 3 and evaluate results in month 12

⁸ Performance targets and experiences of several cities examined in Chapter 20 of "Municipal Benchmarks: Assessing Local Performance and Establishing Community Standards" by David Ammons suggest that it is reasonable to expect building inspections to be performed within one or two workdays from the time requested.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Customers understand that inspectors are only required to do a certain number of inspections a day, and the perception is that most quit after reaching that number • Most inspectors do not use the “Accela Inspector App,” and they do not use standard comments. This leaves no way to accurately track the time the process takes and other data that would be valuable to analyze. <p>Consistency in Approval/Requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers indicate that there are varying requirements/answers/opinions used by inspectors: “I have had three different inspectors tell me three different things I needed for the same thing. Took four weeks to pass a simple disconnect/reconnect for my electrical.” • A project is not assigned to a certain inspector so that they know the project from beginning to end. • There is a perception by customers of no-show behavior and no accountability. Customers cite examples for inspectors claiming no one was onsite to receive the inspector when customers have documented proof. 	<p>gain sharing idea in option 15 in Section 8.1).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require inspectors to call assigned review site contacts (the provided phone number) and verify whether the customer is or is not onsite (verbally or by a non-answer) as a proof of site visitation and attempt. • Require regular team meetings to discuss expectations, standards, processes and interpretation themes. 	
13	Streamline the Water Meter Installation Process	<p>After a customer submits an application to apply for a water meter with the Department of Watershed Management, the water tap installation is expected to take 15+ weeks.</p> <p>The Department of Watershed Management currently does allow some privately contracted installation⁹, but not nearly enough to meet the demand for timely service. However, according to some customers interviewed, the City’s disclosure waiver and bond requirements are so high that the value of the work is not profitable for most private sector businesses.¹⁰</p> <p>Among the requirements to apply for a water meter, a customer must have an issued building permit to move forward. Multiple customers that</p>	<p>The following recommendations can be implemented individually or in combination of one another:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City must benchmark its 15 week water meter installation standard against other communities to confirm that it is excessive and to determine a more competitive benchmark, perhaps 2-3 weeks.¹¹ • Allow customers to apply for a water meter when they first apply for the building permit. This will allow the Department of Watershed Management to register the need for a water meter early on in the customer process, so that it is already in line by the time building permits are approved. • Lower bonding and insurance requirements 	Start month 3 and evaluate results in month 12

⁹ Currently, the Department of Watershed management has 3 private companies contracted to provide meter installations.

¹⁰ <http://www.atlantaga.gov/modules/showdocument.aspx?documentid=16676>

¹¹ In Chapter 33 of “Municipal Benchmarks: Assessing Local Performance and Establishing Community Standards” Ammons explains that City size and organization can always make comparisons difficult, however Table 33.13, “Prompt Water Connections: Selected Cities,” examines a variety of cities, all that have an average turnaround time for meter and service installation of between 4 days and 3 weeks versus Atlanta’s goal of 15 weeks.

		<p>this has led to serious delays as completed buildings simply await the installation of water meters.</p>	<p>to a level that encourages the participation of more private contractors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a meter tap cannot be installed by the City within a reasonably defined period of time (perhaps two weeks) after building permit issuance and water meter application approval, the customer should be able to opt to have an experienced contractor install it, followed by City inspection. The portion of the permit fee associated with the City's work to install the water meter should be returned to the customer. • When new developments are being developed or roads along open lots are resurfaced/dug up, piping needed for future water meter installations should be laid down pre-emptively. This will reduce the need for a road crew to dig up perfectly fine roads in the future to tap pipes and the time and materials needed for installing taps in the future. 	
14	Institute a Permit Liaison Monthly Roundtable	<p>Customers and staff agree that City departments tasked with permit review are quite segmented. There is a feeling of the need to try to mediate between permitting personnel to determine "who is responsible for what, further delaying an already lengthy permitting review process."</p> <p>Some departments which are required to be involved in plan review processes for certain permits do not receive plans at all.</p> <p>Additionally, there is no standard mechanism or procedure to resolve issues that arise between departments without involving the customer directly, often greatly drawing out permit issuance length.</p>	<p>Schedule monthly meeting with all City departments with some involvement in the permit review process. The meeting should be convened by the Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Planning and Community Development. It should include a Deputy Commissioner (or above) from each affected permitting agency who is empowered to make binding decisions for the agency. The appropriate Department of Law personnel should also attend.</p> <p>Agenda items should include current trends, themes, major projects, and new issues that affect multiple departments.</p> <p>Two to three designated department liaisons should attend to review not just upcoming high-profile projects, but also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problematic/ conflicting decisions across departments • Reoccurring issues • Code changes • Personnel issues • Etc. <p>Once the one-stop is implemented and all permitting personnel are co-located (Section 8.1 option 1), the frequency and need for these meetings may be revisited.</p>	<p>Start month 3 and evaluate results in month 5</p>

15	Achieve Zoning Approval Before Permitting Starts	<p>Zoning requires that the City plat book match the survey, but the plat book is infrequently updated and leads to extended delays. A customer reports, “Even if we submit a re-plat, the re-plat is often not filed correctly and the next round yields the same issues.”</p> <p>Another indicates, “I had one project that made it to the meeting for approval for SAP/Beltline, and, even after several independent reviews to preempt issues, the Planning office decided that we were going to have to apply for a variance. During the presentation. That added one month to the process.”</p>	<p>Customers have suggested zoning should be completely approved before permitting is started.</p> <p>Revise permit application requirements so that zoning approval from Planning must be in place, along with a preliminary site development review, before the OOB can issue the permit.</p> <p>As a future consideration, the City should consider the value of merging all zoning functions into Planning. Most cities with which we are familiar do not separate zoning and zoning enforcement tasks into separate organizations as does the City (OOB and Planning).</p>	Start in month 2 and evaluate results in month 11
16	Provide a Fee Estimation Tool	<p>Fees are not predictable and the model for payment is unclear to customers. Customers note that reviewers calculate fees incorrectly at times. The inability to predict a fee can stall payments, as corporate checks take time to prepare. If customers have the ability to accurately calculate the required "up-front" permit fees, they could take time off the backend of permit issuance.</p>	<p>Provide an automated, web-based tool for the estimation of fees (fee calculator). The tool should take into account the factors that create the total fee, such as square footage, project value, etc.</p> <p>Provide access to the tool on City’s website with instructions. Seattle has a great interactive spreadsheet that builders can input information in to estimate their cost¹². Fairfax County, Virginia has a tool that calculates for the user as well¹³.</p>	Start month 7 and evaluate results in month 18
17	Identify More Opportunities to Utilize Permitting Data	<p>Permitting-related data represents a wealth of information that could be used by OOB and other City agencies to tackle a range of issues. Issues like trash removal, crime prevention, code enforcement, rodent elimination, and tree trimming are just a few examples of City activities that could all likely benefit from access to permitting data. At this time, the data in Accela is not being used by other agencies.</p>	<p>Make permitting data available to jump start the development of a City-wide open-source predictive analytics application that will allow all City of Atlanta agencies to query and use data without the aid of a professional data engineer.</p> <p>Additionally, the City could make this permitting data available to the public through its “Transparency Atlanta” open data portal: https://data.atlantaga.gov/login. Given the depth of Atlanta’s technical community, there are likely many helpful applications that could be developed by private parties based on that information.</p>	Start month 18, extending out past 24 months

8.3. Regulatory Reform Options

The following Regulatory Reform Options are presented for the City’s consideration. The City’s role in issuing building permits is essential and necessary to safeguarding the health and welfare of the public. However, not all current permit requirements are necessary. By embarking upon a concerted effort of regulatory reform as it relates to the permitting process, the City can liberate permit applicants – from the individual homeowner to the largest developer - from many

¹² <http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/permits/permitcost/>

¹³ <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpwes/feecalculator/>

hours and dollars spent on activities that add little in the way of appreciable health or safety benefits.

While some of these options call for short-term action, a number of them require a longer time horizon. Once the City's leadership addresses the immediate issues of Organizational Culture and Staffing and Process and Technology, attention can be turned to those measures that will position the City as a competitive location for long-term economic growth.

#	Name	Observation	Recommendation(s)	Approximate Timing
1	Create a Regulatory Study Commission with a Formal Regulatory Reform Methodology	<p>The City has no formal commitment or approach to reducing regulations in the form of permitting requirements or to evaluate proposed new ones. Customers report a significant growth in requirements from the City when it comes to seeking building permits.</p> <p>One example is the growth in the City's requirements around commercial renovations and build-outs.</p> <p>These requirements may not even be required by changes to the code, but rather the desires of particular plan reviewers.</p>	<p>Seek the Mayor's action to create a regulatory study commission (RSC) by executive order.</p> <p>Staff that RSC with a mix of City employees, business and homeowner representatives, and City Council members.</p> <p>Provide the RSC with a mandate to "review existing and proposed codes and regulations which are enforced by the City...and restrict or impose burdens on commercial, industrial, or not-for-profit activities.</p> <p>Have the RSC adopt a formal process for analyzing regulations, perhaps something modeled off of Appendix H.</p> <p>Specifically task the RSC with the two following items (the "Atlanta Homeowner Freedom Act" and the "Atlanta Economic Empowerment Initiative").</p>	Start month 1 and complete initial work by month 15
2	Draft an Atlanta Homeowner Freedom Act	<p>The impact of securing permits for basic home improvement work is substantial to those who comply. The regulatory burden upon individual homeowners and property owners in Atlanta must be reduced to spur greater development.</p> <p>Where regulations are onerous, compliance is limited.</p> <p>The City of Indianapolis' Homeowner Freedom Act (1995) could serve as a model for the City of Atlanta.</p>	<p>Decrease the permitting demand on both City of Atlanta homeowners and the OOB by reviewing permits from the following list and either eliminating permits all together or increasing the cost threshold under which no permit is required.</p> <p>The RSC (option 1 above) should review against current City of Atlanta requirements¹⁴ the following opportunities and identify those for elimination or (at a minimum) threshold increases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Window and door replacement • Replacing kitchen cabinets • Hanging dry wall • Installing flooring • Closet construction • Knocking down interior wall • Erecting interior wall 	Start month 3 and evaluate the results by month 24

¹⁴ <http://www.atlantaga.gov/modules/showdocument.aspx?documentid=17172>

- Fixed bookshelves
- Replacing stairs
- Heating and cooling duct work
- Fence construction
- Fire sprinkler installation
- Installing and repairing siding
- Replacing bathroom, attic, or house fans
- Construction of decks
- Chimney repair
- Window awnings
- Gutter replacement and repair
- Patio covers
- Replacing plumbing fixtures
- Most roofing jobs

Simplify issuance of building permits for major construction projects by allowing general contractors to obtain a “master building permit” for structural, electrical, heating and cooling, plumbing and demolition work.

Additional opportunities for regulatory reform can be found in the 2015 International Building Code (<http://codes.iccsafe.org/app/book/content/2015-I-Codes/2015%20IBC%20HTML/Chapter%201.html>) Section 105.2.

To balance the effort, the RSC should also look at areas in which City enforcement authority needs to be increased (if any), including:

- Authorizing the City to charge a re-inspection fee where contractors do not cooperate with City inspection policies.
- Enhancing consumer protection by increasing the City’s ability to police illegal contractors and contractors who violate building code provisions.

At a minimum for each permit, increase all thresholds above which a permit is required to the maximum allowed by state law.

To the extent that such can be eliminated or the threshold be increased for most of the City (excepting certain zoning districts), the City should do so.

The RSC should estimate savings attributable to the proposed reforms should be estimated based on a methodology that values the residents’ time and effort securing a permit and should estimate the number of trips avoided and productivity gained by residents in the future.

			<p>The RSC should propose to the Commissioner a series of justifiable permit eliminations and threshold increases for consideration by the Mayor and the City Council.</p> <p>Finally, the City should actively track and report how many permits it has eliminated over the course of each year – showing the value that it places on saving its residents time and money.</p>	
3	Atlanta Economic Empowerment Initiative	<p>The economic impact of securing permits for certain types of commercial work that provide limited public health and safety benefit is substantial. Specific concerns are raised by applicants concerning the growth in MEP (mechanical, electrical, and plumbing) permit requirements, which in some cases now require architects to be engaged for completion of the process.</p> <p>Where regulations are onerous, compliance is limited.</p>	<p>The RSC (option 1 above) should seek to decrease the permitting demand on both City of Atlanta business owners and the OOB by reviewing both construction and MEP permits and either eliminating specific permits all together or increasing the cost threshold under which no permit is required.</p> <p>The RSC should seek to simplify the issuance of permits for major commercial construction projects by allowing general contractors to obtain a “master building permit” for structural, electrical, heating and cooling, plumbing and demolition work.</p> <p>To balance the effort, the RSC should also look at areas in which enforcement authority needs to be increased, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorizing the City to charge a re-inspection fee where contractors do not cooperate with City inspection policies. • Enhancing consumer protection by increasing the City’s ability to police illegal contractors and contractors who violate building code provisions. <p>At a minimum for each permit, increase all thresholds above which a permit is required to the maximum allowed by state law.</p> <p>To the extent that such can be eliminated or the threshold be increased for most of the City (excepting certain zoning districts), the City should do so.</p> <p>The RSC should estimate the savings attributable to the proposed reforms based on a methodology that values the residents’ time and effort securing a permit and should estimate the number of trips avoided and productivity gained by residents in the future.</p> <p>The RSC should propose to the Commissioner a series of justifiable permit eliminations and</p>	Start month 3 and evaluate results by month 24

			<p>threshold increases for consideration by the Mayor and the City Council.</p> <p>Finally, the City should actively track and report how many permits it has eliminated over the course of each year – showing the value that it places on saving its residents time and money.</p>	
4	Eliminate Hard Copy Stamped Plans Requirement	<p>Customers report that the requirement that a set of original, stamped plans be on site at all times creates significant issues for them, including having to make a daily trip to the site to deliver the plans to ensure availability.</p> <p>Plans can be stolen, which then requires a customer to complete the same process to get plans appropriately stamped.</p> <p>The lack of a set of original, stamped plans on site at all times can result in a failed inspection.</p>	<p>Eliminate the requirement of original stamps on each sheet of plans located at job site by providing to the City's inspectors on-line access to the City's electronic image of the plans.</p> <p>Consider also allowing the owner's team to provide an image of the stamped plans in PDF or other accessible electronic format on site.</p>	Start month 1 and evaluate results by month 9
5	Streamline the Tree Posting Process	<p>The City of Atlanta's commitment to the preservation of its trees is laudable and extraordinary¹⁵.</p> <p>However, the posting process currently requires separate postings on behalf of the OOB arborists, the Department of Parks and Recreation arborists, and the OOB arborists again due to the fact that the Parks arborists do not have access to the Accela application.</p>	<p>The Atlanta Information Team (AIM) should equip the Parks arborists with the necessary access to Accela.</p> <p>The arborists from both organizations must work together to develop a single posting period that combines the requirements of both organizations.</p> <p>The City should consider a reduction in the total amount of time for the posting, perhaps to 10 calendar days.</p>	Start month 3 and evaluate results in month 8
6	Implement Residential Building Plan Review "Opt Out"	<p>The number of residential building plan reviews is significant (542 in the period of 7/1/2014-6/30/2015 for single family and duplex). It is estimated that the review of a building residential plan takes about 51 days business days (71 or so calendar days).</p> <p>Numerous communities rely on professional certifications in lieu of reviewing each residential plan. For example, in the Atlanta area, Cobb County requires site plan review for residential construction, but not building plan review; downstream issues of code compliance are addressed by the inspector.</p> <p>A program that may be used as an example is the City of Chicago's self-certification program.¹⁶</p>	<p>For those completing the Residential Automatic Approval Certificate process, institute the policy that the Office of Buildings will allow submitters to opt out of residential building plan review upon certification by the submitter that the plan meets all requirements for the zoning district in which the house is being built. A PDF of the plan would still be submitted for the OOB's records. Given the complexity of the code and the existence of various SPIs (17), historic districts and other overlays, implementation will need to be rolled out incrementally in order to allow for testing and compliance.</p> <p>Identify of the top five zoning districts of the cities in which most houses are being built and/or in which the City seeks to promote construction.</p>	Start month 7 and evaluate results in month 24

¹⁵ <http://www.atlantatreecommission.com/images/stories/ATL-Tree-Ordinance.pdf>

¹⁶ http://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/bldgs/supp_info/an_overview_of_theself-certificationprogram.html

			<p>Incorporate the participation of both plan review and inspection personnel in developing checklists.</p> <p>Develop a checklist for each zoning district that includes all applicable requirements for each of the areas – including SPI and overlay requirements.</p> <p>Create a preregistration for interested customers to verify proper credentials, sufficient prior experience, and the City’s ability to suspend or revoke the privilege at the discretion of the City if, in the City’s opinion, public safety would be served by reviewing that applicant’s plans.</p> <p>Publicize the checklists and determine the level of interest by customers in “opting out” of residential plan review and the impact on volume of review.</p> <p>If successful, broaden the effort to a larger number of zoning districts.</p> <p>If successful, the Office of Buildings can develop a tool that automates the preregistration, checklist and “opt out” processes.</p>	
7	<p>Combine Demolition and Land Development Permit Processes and Fees</p>	<p>In discussions with customers, one of the most contentious issues was the difficulty in securing, when required, both a demolition and a land development permit at the same time. This issue was identified by more than one individual as the “single biggest impediment to construction”.</p> <p>The process and number of parties involved in the issuance of these permits is substantial, sometimes into the double digits. For example, for Commercial and Multi-Family Land Development, plans are routed to 1) Zoning, 2) Building Plan Review, 3) Site Development, 4) Arborist, 5) Water Services, 6) Traffic, 7) Sanitation, 8) Grease Trap (reviews by Site Development staff), 9) Fire and 10) Sewer (no plans to review, only form to be completed for approval). Also, 11) County Solid Waste is also a required approval, but this is obtained by the applicant. Then the approved Solid Waste plans are routed to 12) Sanitation.</p> <p>Eliminating this bottleneck would save thousands of dollars for builders, which could be reflected in more affordable housing costs for those seeking to live in the City.</p>	<p>Combine these into a single permit if the customer is doing both as one construction activity. Every effort should be made, then to further streamline the overall processes. This is a perfect opportunity for the RSC to assist with the scrutinizing of a regulatory process and to apply its regulatory reform methodology to determine the true costs and benefits of each required step (Appendix I).</p> <p>The combination makes sense even if the City continues to maintain separate fees, though it should also be considered as to whether the fees can be combined.</p>	<p>Start month 3 and evaluate results in month 12</p>

8	Eliminate Separate Fire Plan Review Process and Permit Fee	<p>The City has a Fire building plan review process separate from the City's standard building plans review process¹⁷. Enduring a separate plan review process and paying a separate fee for the review of building plans by the Fire Department during the OOB's plan review process is a source of considerable frustration to applicants.</p> <p>As of the writing of this report, the City is integrating building plan review processes within the OOB, including that performed by Fire Department personnel and defining the role of the newly-identified Fire Marshal in the process. We encourage the completion of that fire plan review process into the overall buildings plan review process.</p>	<p>Complete the integration of the fire building plan review process into the overall building plan review process such that the customer does not have to complete separate processes.</p> <p>Eliminate the separate fire plan review process permit fee, which is difficult to interpret. Adjust the overall building plan review permit fee accordingly such that the Fire Department is held revenue neutral.</p> <p>Determine the process whereby the OOB reimburses the Fire Department for Fire resources involved in the building plan review process from general building plan review fees.</p>	Start month 1 and evaluate results in month 10
9	Reduce Volume of Board of Zoning Adjustment Appeals	<p>The volume of appeals handled by the Board of Zoning Adjustment (BZA) is substantial and appeals can be lengthy, adding significant time to the permitting process.</p> <p>The City must look at opportunities to allow for the exercise of administrative discretion referenced in Section 8.1 options 8 and 9 and identify opportunities to reduce the number of BZA appeals.</p>	<p>The City should consider specific instances in which the code could be clarified and/or administrative action be taken to reduce the volume of BZA appeals.</p> <p>First, with the assistance of the Law Department, appropriate professional discretion for the plan reviewer should be defined – what can she or he appropriately determine.</p> <p>Second, where professional discretion cannot be exercised by an individual administrator, a small committee of administrators from the impacted agencies should be empowered to make a decision prior to an issue having to be referred to the BZA.</p> <p>Examples that the City should consider include, where the building remains within the setback:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addition of a another floor • Change to the roof • Adding a dormer • Addition to the garage 	Start month 11 and evaluate results in month 24
10	Streamline Pool Permitting Process	<p>The process is deemed by applicants to be lengthy and difficult to understand. Coordination with the County is difficult. Significant delays are frequently experienced.</p>	<p>Streamline the pool permitting process and improve coordination with the County.</p> <p>The State of Georgia swimming pool code might be adopted and enforced; all of this under the umbrella of the City (prior to and during construction).</p> <p>Fulton County could handle on-going health inspections following construction.</p>	Start month 7 and evaluate results in month 21

¹⁷ <http://www.atlantaga.gov/index.aspx?page=994>

11	Revise the SAP Process	<p>The Special Administrative Permit process is viewed by many applicants as excessive and difficult to understand. The application itself is 18 pages in length, complex, and confusing¹⁸.</p>	<p>The City should commission an employee-citizen team to develop a plan for a complete overhaul of the SAP process. Perhaps the RSC could take on this process follow its initial work on the two major pieces of regulatory reform (options 2 and 3).</p> <p>The effort should begin with an assessment of the necessity of the process and begin with the assumption that revised process created should be as minimal as necessary to accomplish legitimate regulatory objectives.</p> <p>The City should use a regulatory reform methodology as detailed in Appendix H.</p> <p>To the extent that a revised SAP process is maintained, the City should consider any on-going need for the Zoning function within OOB to review plans that have an approved SAP.</p>	Start month 18, with results extending out past 24 months
12	Combine the Water/Sewer and Grease Management Permit Reviews	<p>Applicants report that separate review processes for water and sewer permit and the grease management permit¹⁹ is inconvenient and requires duplicate effort.</p>	<p>The City should seek to combine into a single permit and permitting process during the construction process.</p>	Start month 7 and evaluate results in month 21
13	Reform the Neighborhood Planning Unit (NPU) Process	<p>“The City of Atlanta is divided into twenty-five Neighborhood Planning Units or NPUs, which are citizen advisory councils that make recommendations to the Mayor and City Council on zoning, land use, and other planning issues.”²⁰ The NPUs have a significant impact on development issues.</p> <p>Understanding that the NPUs are a valuable part of Atlanta’s governing fabric and are considered to be a national model by some, it is important to understand the role that NPUs play in the development process.</p> <p>Permit applicants cite that the lack of term limits and overall accountability can lead to NPUs that play a disproportionately substantial role in regulating and restricting the development that can take place within a neighborhood.</p>	<p>The City should convene a group made up of applicants, employees, Council members, and NPU members (the NPU Committee) to consider the impact that NPUs have on development and to develop “best practices” that balance community values, involvement, and preferences along with development imperatives.</p> <p>Specific questions that may be considered include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do the NPUs have appropriately defined roles and responsibilities? • How should the level of City staff representation be defined and is it currently appropriate? • Is the time at which they participate in processes appropriate? • Are the rules regarding how NPUs are created, staffed, and led appropriate? • How could the NPUs be made more inclusive? • Are sufficient mechanisms in place to promote mediation, when warranted? 	Start month 19, with results extending out past 24 months

¹⁸ http://www.midtownatl.com/_files/docs/sap-application.pdf

¹⁹ <http://www.atlantawatershed.org/inside-dwm/offices/watershed-protection/grease-management/>

²⁰ <http://www.atlantaga.gov/index.aspx?page=739>

14	Revise Loading and Parking Requirements	<p>Loading requirements are believed by some applicants and City personnel to be extremely excessive in the City's code. These have not been updated since the 1960s.</p> <p>Similarly, certain parking requirements, such as for industrial zones, have not been touched in many years and may represent requirements that are outdated given process automation and a generally reduced need for parking at industrial facilities relative to earlier eras.</p>	<p>The City should convene a committee of applicants and City employees (from Planning, Buildings, and the Department of Public Works' Office of Transportation) to develop proposed changes to the loading and parking requirements.</p>	<p>Start month 12 and evaluate results in month 24</p>
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9. SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION

The volume and complexity of the work required to implement the options that the City selects, while also on-boarding SAFEbuilt and completing the TruePoint Solutions project is substantial. Therefore, we propose the following structure and process to provide the best chance that the selected options are implemented successfully and in a way that drives sustainable change.

9.1. Finalize Options for Implementation

Not all of the options presented in this Business Plan will be selected for immediate implementation. Some, after further consideration, may be substantially modified or delayed. However, it is important to immediately seek to identify a significant number of options for implementation. A process for doing so will include:

- In light of the other initiatives going on, prioritize/quantify the recommendations in terms of “ease of implementation” and “magnitude of impact”.
- For those options that have the highest aggregate scores, prioritize and develop time lines for their implementation.
- Determine which personnel are to be assigned/held accountable for the implementation of which options.
- Determine what resources the personnel need to achieve successful implementation.
- Revise the Business Plan Task List and timeline based on the recommendations selected for implementation and the resources assigned.

9.2. Create Initiative Governance Structure

It’s essential that a governance board be created to oversee the initiative. This will provide the City with needed project management expertise as well as accountability. This governance board should be made up of individuals who provide an “investor’s perspective” to ensure an appropriate level of focus and urgency on the options that are to be implemented.

Appropriate candidates for the governance board (perhaps five to eight people) include:

- A Mayor’s office representative
- The Commissioner of Planning and Community Development
- One or two more Commissioners
- One or two representatives from the Atlanta Committee for Progress
- One or two representatives from the Technical Advisory Committee

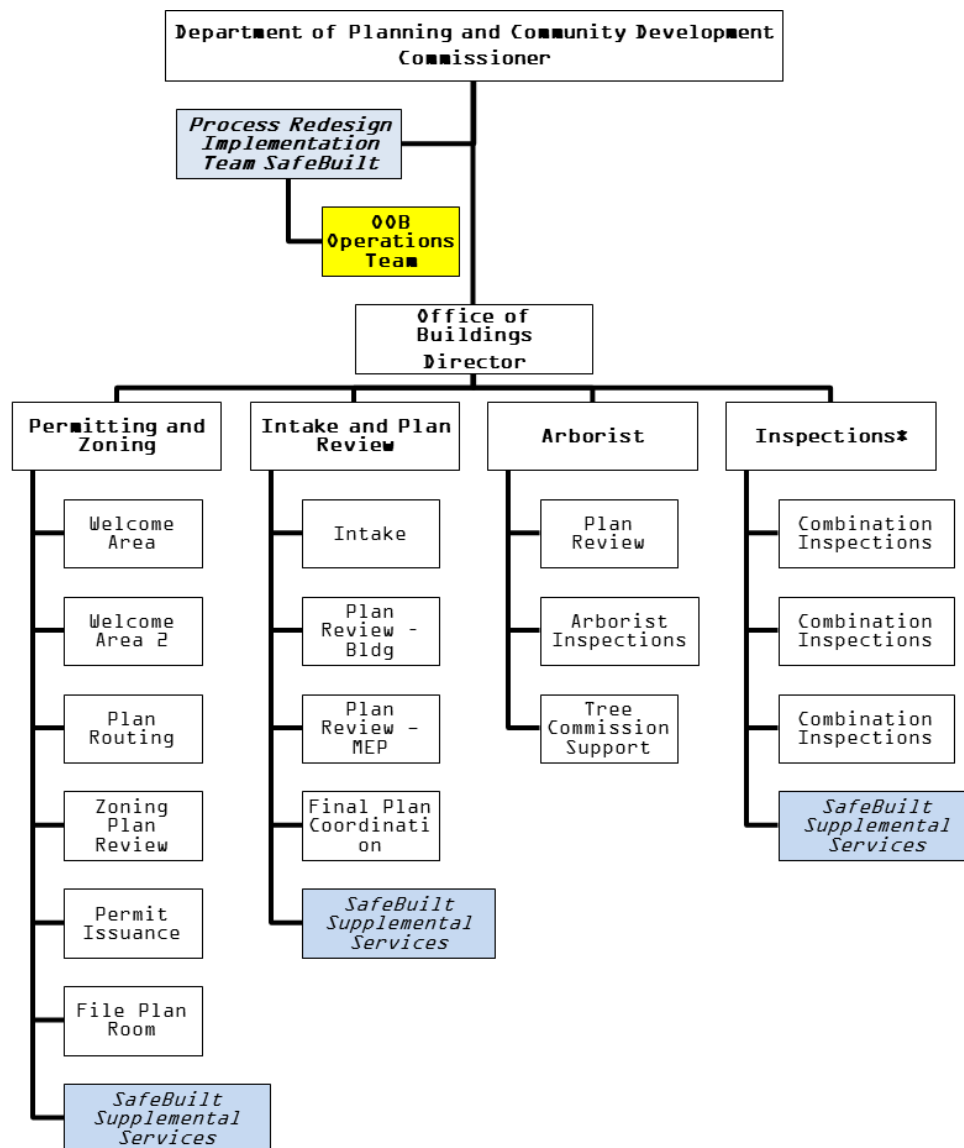
For at least the first nine months of the initiative, the governance board should meet monthly and consider the progress made against milestones and other metrics which measure implementation

success. The governance board can also help solve problems and address issues that will inevitably arise with implementation.

The governance board may also seek to engage a dedicated resource to monitor the success of the implementation and to provide the monthly data in dashboard format for consideration. That resource should be tasked with developing and updating the dashboard, creating the governance board agendas, facilitating the governance board meetings, and recording action items.

10. APPENDIX A – INTERIM AND FUTURE STATE MODELS OF THE OOB

Department of Planning and Community Development Office of Buildings - Current Structure Supplemental Services Provided by SafeBuilt

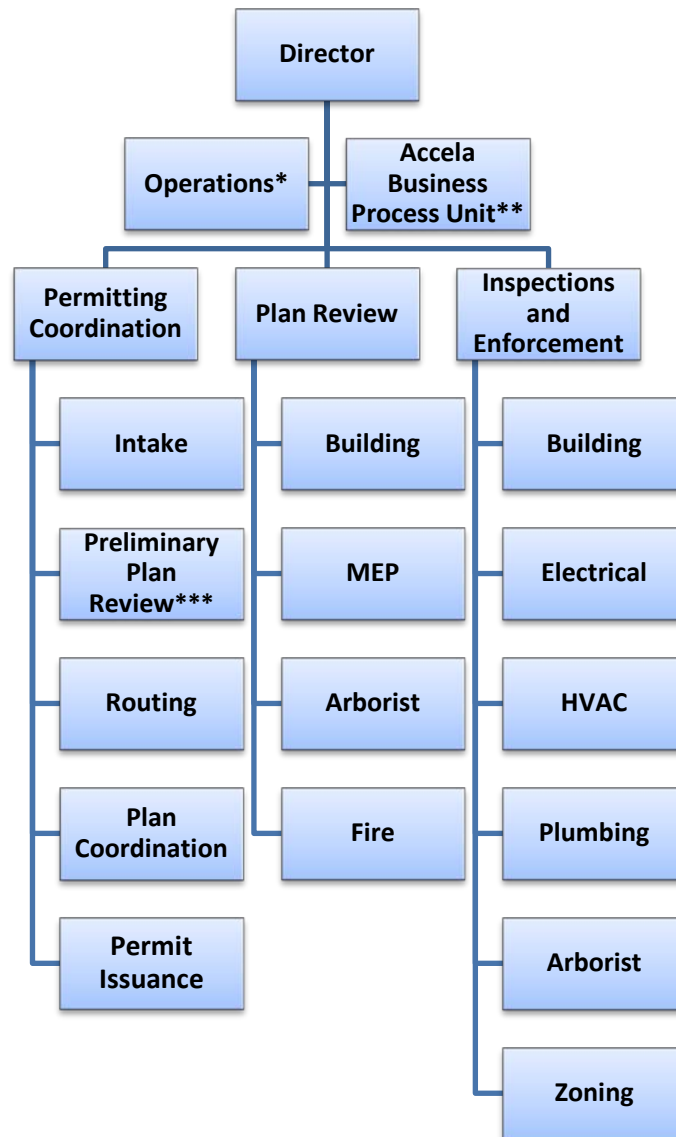


Notes:

*The Inspections Division includes a Combination Inspector Chief and 3 Combination Inspector Principals that are responsible for all trade inspections (HVAC, Mechanical, Plumbing, and Buildings).

**The Operations Division includes budget and financial processes, human resources, performance analysis, technology support.

**Department of Planning and Community Development
Office of Buildings - Future Structure**



Notes:

*Operations will include customer service, budget and financial processes, human resources, and performance analysis.

**Accela Unit will focus on business and information technology needs.

***Preliminary Plan Review will include Zoning, Arborist, Traffic, Site Development and Fire.

11. APPENDIX B – INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED

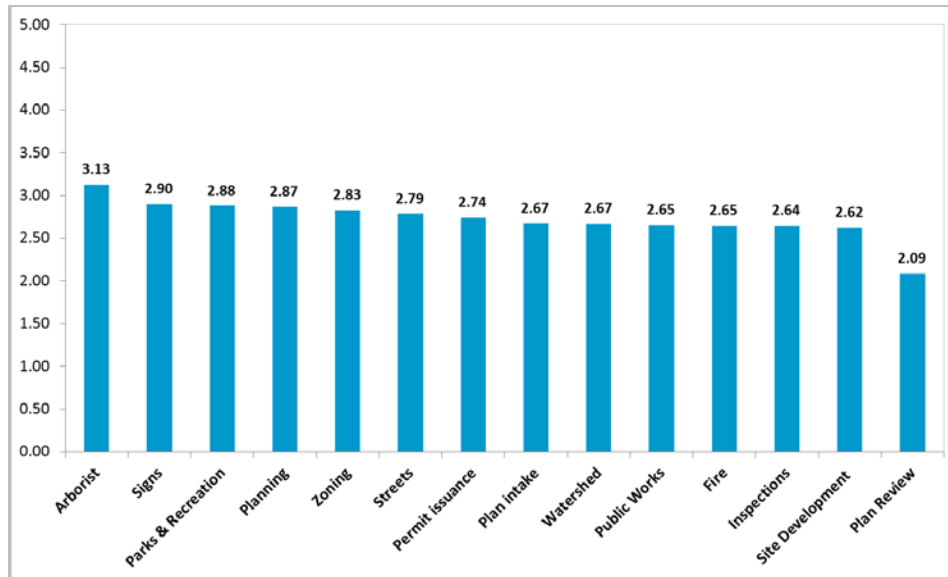
The BKD team completed the following interviews and discussions on site and by phone with City personnel and representatives relating to this project:

Date	Name	Department / Subject
8/14	Project Kick-Off Meeting BKD team, Terri Lee, Chris Colbert, Michael Nagy, Angela Addison, Commissioner Keane	OOB
8/18	TAC Meeting	External Stakeholders
8/26	Alice Wakefield	Roswell, Georgia
9/1	Commissioner Keane and Terri Lee	OOB
	Employee Focus Group Robin Camp, Quinn Hunter, Kathy Evans, Mohammed Kibria, Abdelakder Elassar, Gloria Johnson, Larry Bryant	OOB
	Felleshia McCrary-Blair	Zoning Plan Review
	Robin Camp	Intake Process
	DIT	Department of Information Technology
	Terri Lee	OOB
	Lee McClead	Cobb County, Georgia
9/2	Commercial, External Stakeholder Focus Group	External Stakeholders
	Inspections Walk Through Scott Banks, Steve Johnson, Jerry Wolfe	Inspections
	Residential-Multi Family External Stakeholder Focus Group	External Stakeholders
	Department of Planning & Community Development, Road Map with Critical Path	Department of Planning & Community Development
	Chris Colbert	OOB
	Greg Pace	Permitting
9/3	Robin Camp, Chris Colbert	Accela
	Michael Nagy	OOB
	Lowell Chambers, Barry Amos	Site Development Plan Review
	Scott Banks	Inspections
	David Zaparanick	Arborist Plan Review
	Chris Harris	OOB
9/4	Emmy Montanye	External Stakeholder
9/11	Rosemary Kernahan	External Stakeholder
9/16	Accela Meeting	OOB
	Quinn Hunter	Permitting
	Anthony Carter	Plan Review
9/17	Bentley Electronic Plan Review Solutions	OOB
	Al-Nisa Tinglin	Building Plan Review
	Brandy Crawford	Office of Planning
	Corey Cooper	Accela, AIM/IT
	John Barrios	City of Tampa, Florida
9/18	Commissioners Meeting	Update on project
9/22	Chip Murrah	External Stakeholder

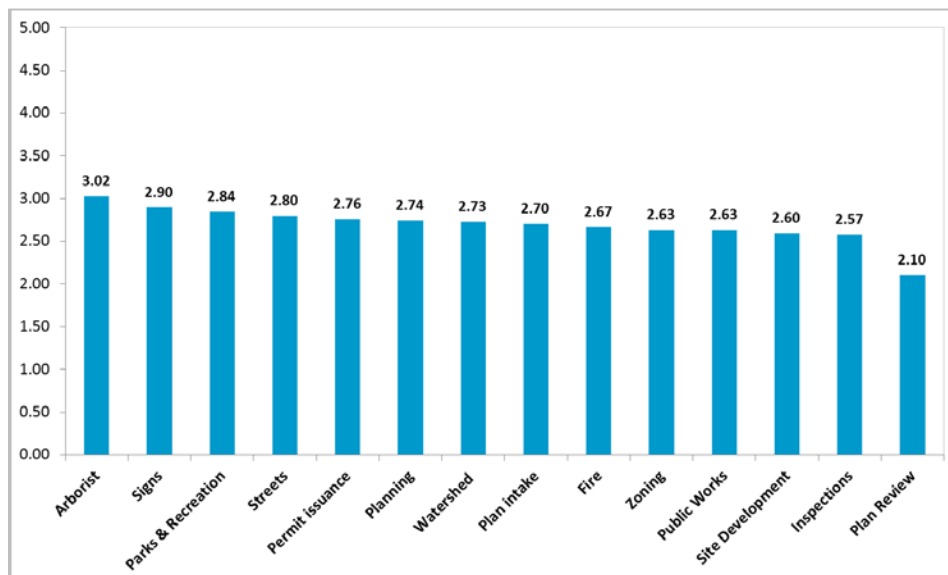
9/25	Commissioner Keane, Terri Lee, Michael Nagy, Jim Bartl Terry Cobb	OOB Metropolitan Government of Nashville & Davidson County, Tennessee
9/29	Keith Hicks (<i>Follow-up written correspondence received from Jasen Johns, Christopher Kallio, Paul Lewkowicz, and Doug Voss</i>)	Parks
9/30	Karl Smith-Davids	Planning
	Jeffrey Haymore, Jeffrey Norman	Legal Department
10/1	Lee McClead (<i>Follow-Up to 9/1 Discussion</i>)	Cobb County, Georgia
10/6	TAC Meeting	External Stakeholders
	Mike Simmons	Fire
	LaRonda Sutton, Cardellia Hunter	Office of Entertainment
	Commissioner Yvonne Yancy	Human Resources
	Captain Shedrick Gardner	Fire
	Neighborhood Planning Unit Meeting	Planning
10/7	Accela Meeting	OOB
	David Ellis	External Stakeholder
	Steve Brock, Stacy Reeves	External Stakeholder
	Chris Colbert, Derek Dawkins	Progress re: Roadmap with Critical Path
	Mohamed Balla, Katherine Dingle	Watershed
10/8	Diane Schwartz-Jones	Montgomery County, Maryland
10/13	Shelley Peart, Dennis Muma	Public Works, Transportation Planning
10/23	Commissioners Meeting	Update on project
	Immediate Priorities Discussion	OOB
	Commissioner Keane, Terri Lee, Mike Brink	
10/29	Karen Dawson-Davis	Human Resources
11/10	Commissioner Keane, Terri Lee, Mike Brink	OOB
	Chris Harris, Kirk Talbot, Amanda Fitzpatrick, Mike Brink	IT/TruePoint Project
	Michael Simmons, Michael Nagy, Terri Lee	Fire Department
11/11	External Stakeholder Focus Group	External Stakeholders
12/2	Atlanta Advisory Committee, Council for Quality Growth Mike Brink, Mark Madlem, Steve Labovitz, Doug Dillard, Scott Selig, Chuck Taylor, Chuck Deeb, Mark McCord, Steve Roos, Angela Fann��y, Lennie Shewmaker, Frank Mann, Jim Saine	External Stakeholders
	Commissioner Keane, Terri Lee, Michael Nagy, Mike Brink	OOB
12/3	Commissioners Meeting	Update on project
12/10	Commissioner Keane, Terri Lee, Michael Nagy, Marc Goncher, Chris Colbert, Robin Camp, Jeff Haymore, Jerry Wolf, Bruce Cowans	Cost of Service kick-off
12/17	Commissioner Keane, Terri Lee, Michael Nagy, Mike Brink	OOB

12. APPENDIX C – CUSTOMER SURVEY FINDINGS

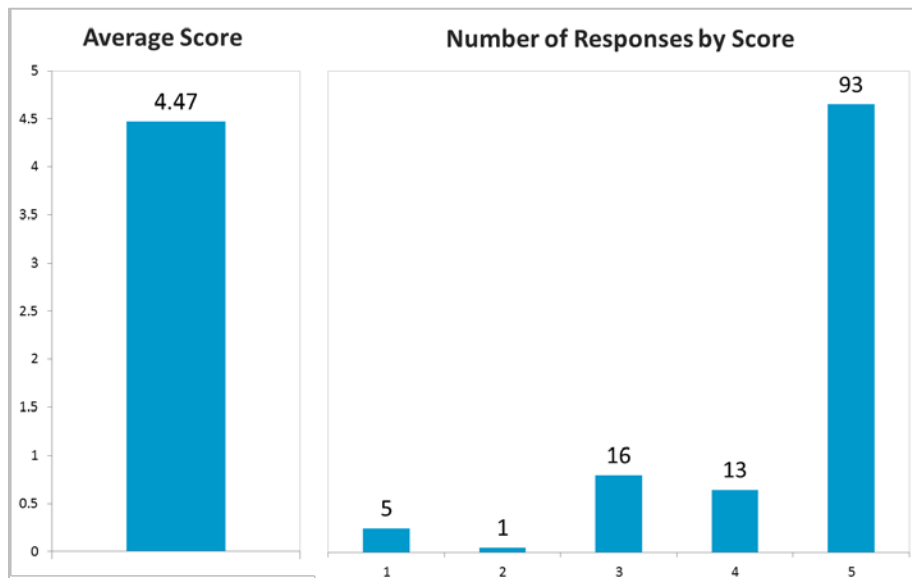
Review Assessment by Function: City staff is knowledgeable and consistent with their treatment/review of my plans.



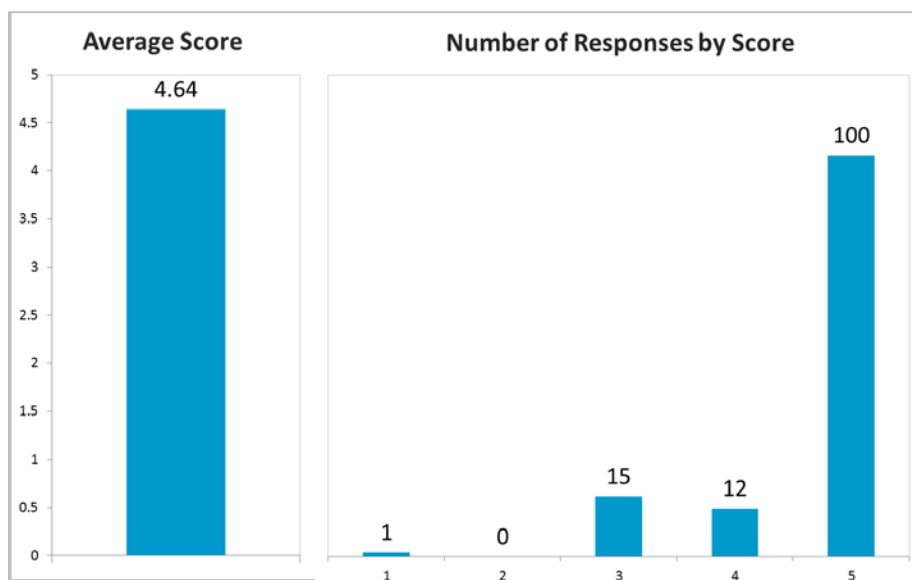
Assessment of Comments by Function: The comments or notes regarding my plans made by the City Staff regarding my plans are informative and consistent.



Improvements to the City’s website: Improvements to the City’s permitting website would be helpful for me.

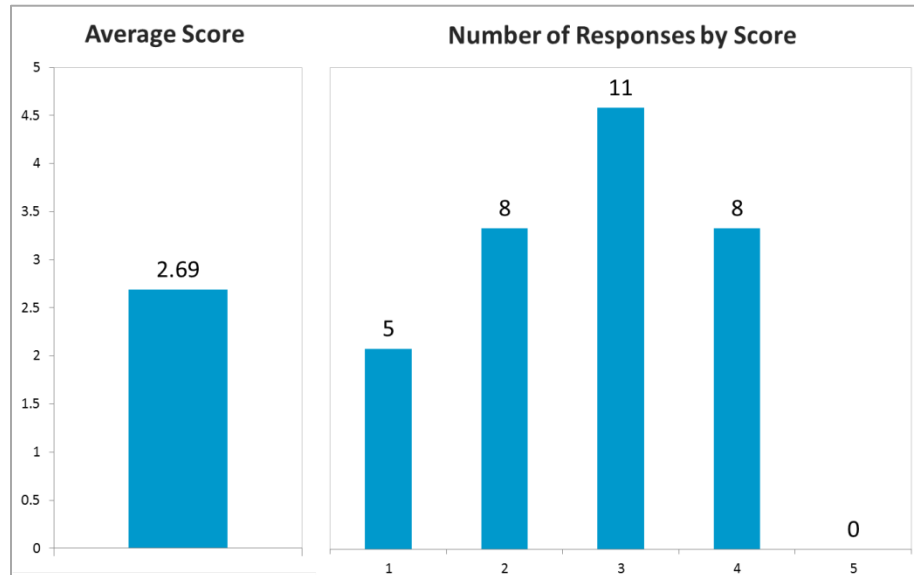


Importance of One-Stop Shop: I believe having a “one-stop shop” for permitting would benefit my experience with the permit process.

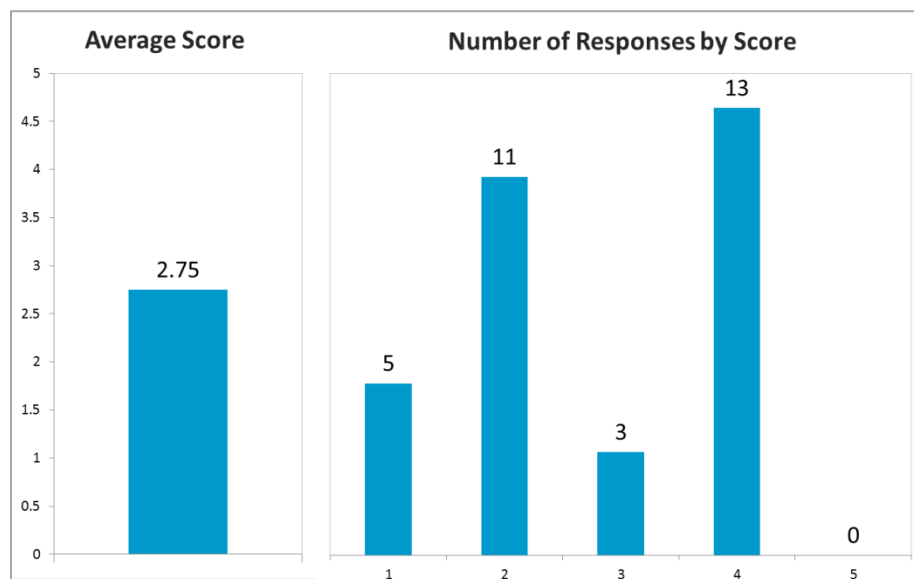


13. APPENDIX D – EMPLOYEE SURVEY FINDINGS

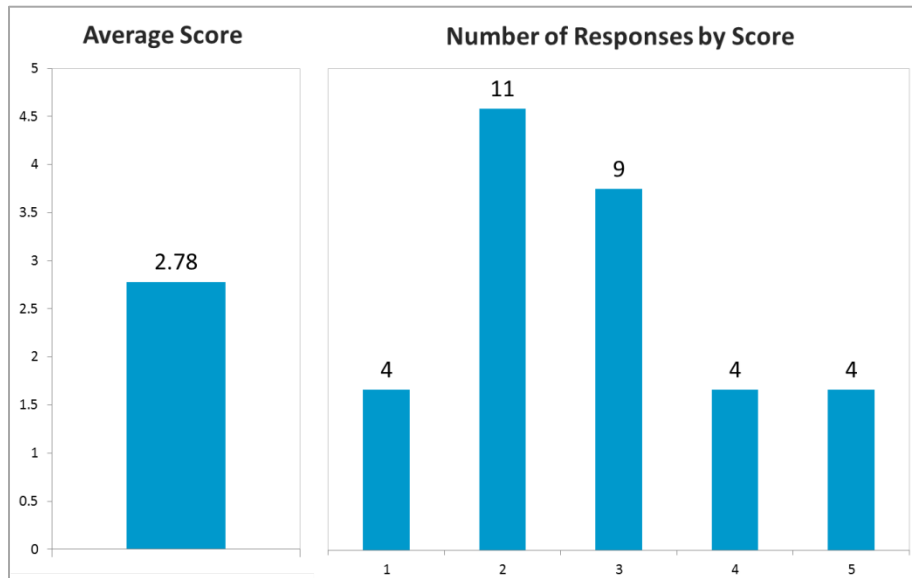
Process Efficiency: The City’s permitting process is efficient and well run overall.



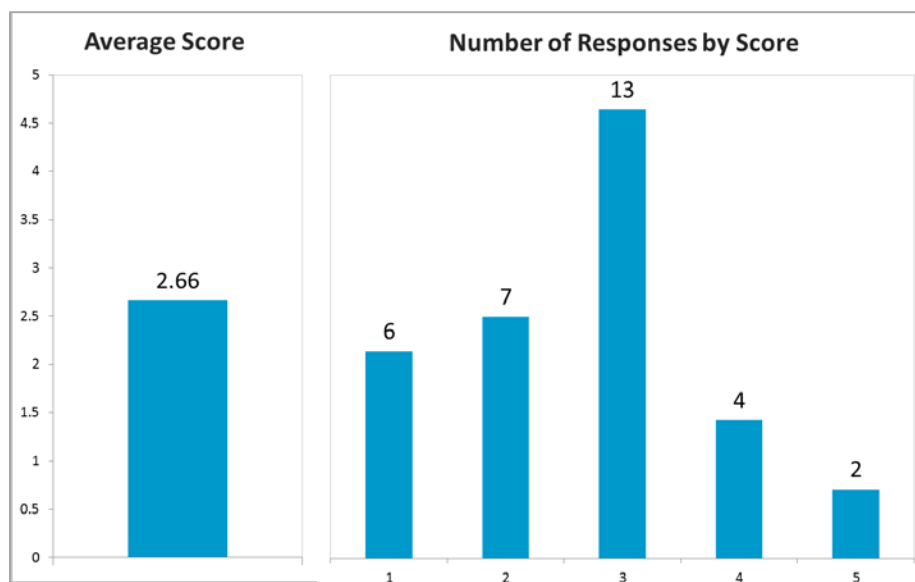
Department Coordination: There is good coordination between my department/division and other departments/divisions that are involved in the permitting process.



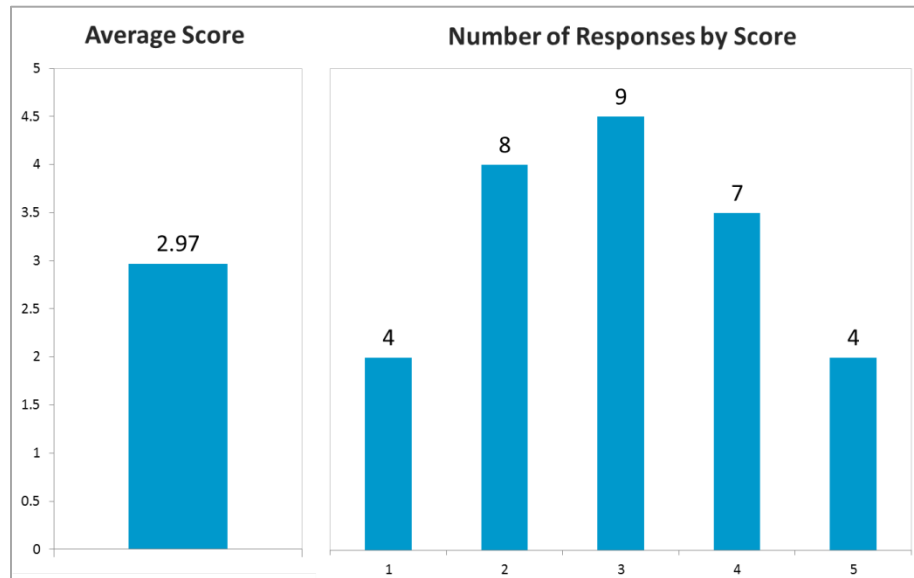
Information Accuracy: The City makes it easy for applicants to obtain complete, accurate information about all aspects of the permitting process.



Time and Resources: I have enough time and resources to complete my daily work with quality and consistency.



Teamwork: There is good teamwork and communication between different City departments/divisions.



14. APPENDIX E – SELECTED DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

- Employee Recommendations Solicited by Commission Keane – Email Correspondences
- Summary Document of Employee Recommendations
- Permits Issued/Closed from 1/1/14 - 7/31/15
- Recommendation pulled from Bain & Company and Blue Ribbon Commission documents
- Average Days for Approval from 7/1/2014 to 6/30/2015
- BKD working document of average days for approval
- Baseline Analysis Outline
- The Office of Buildings Organization Chart as of 4/30/2015
- Missing Records of Commercial Additions
- Data Request for City of Atlanta
- Department of Planning and Community Development, Office of Buildings, Fiscal Year 2015, Annual Dashboard Report
- City of Atlanta, Fiscal Year 2014 Adopted Budget
- City of Atlanta, Fiscal Year 2015 Adopted Budget
- City of Atlanta, Fiscal Year 2016 Proposed Budget
- Letter from Gloria Pennick re: Major Projects Coordination and FAQs
- Major Projects Checklist
- Major Projects Team Summary
- Major Projects Directory
- Major Projects Fact Sheet
- Office of Buildings Accela Data (FY13-Present)
- Office of Buildings Organization Chart as of 8/5/2015
- Office of Buildings, Proposal Organizational Structure: Revised 9/16/2015
- Department of Planning and Community Development, Office of Buildings - Current Organizational Structure with Supplemental Services Provided by SafeBuilt
- Plan Review, Customer Survey Responses
- W.I.G. Program Survey Results
- Sample Reports
- Scope of Service for Office of Buildings, Accela Optimization Assessment
- Cobb County Land Disturbance Permit Process
- Memorandum re: Street Design and Implementation Challenges from Becky Katz to Commissioner Keane
- Weekly Dashboard Report, July 19 – 25, 2015

15. APPENDIX F – ADDITIONAL SUGGESTED METRICS

Internal Metrics

Vacancies: To measure the average level of vacancies against goal

Internal: Staff Vacancies						
Vacancies by Month	Plan Review Vacancies	Plan Review Cumulative Avg. Vacancies	Plan Review Vacancy Goal	Inspector Vacancies	Inspector Cumulative Avg. Vacancies	Inspector Vacancy Goal
Jan	2	2.0	1	2	2.0	1
Feb	3	2.5	1	2	2.0	1
Mar	4	3.0	1	3	2.3	1
Apr	2	2.8	1	4	2.8	1
May	3	2.8	1	5	3.2	1
June	4	3.0	1	2	3.0	1
July	2	2.9	1	2	2.9	1
Aug	2	2.8	1	2	2.8	1
Sept	2	2.7	1	2	2.7	1
Oct	2	2.6	1	2	2.6	1
Nov	2	2.5	0	2	2.5	0
Dec	1	2.4	0	1	2.4	0

Turnover: To monitor rates of turnover

Internal: Staff Turnover				
Planned vs. Actual Turnover	Plan Review Planned Turnover	Plan Review Actual Turnover	Inspector Planned Turnover	Inspector Actual Turnover
Jan	2	1	2	1
Feb	1	2	1	2
Mar	2	3	2	3
Apr	1	2	1	2
May	2	1	2	1
June	1	3	1	3
July	2	1	2	1
Aug	1	1	1	1
Sept	2	1	2	1
Oct	1	1	1	1
Nov	2	1	2	1
Dec	1	1	1	1

Hires: To monitor the rate at which OOB is filling vacant positions

Internal: Monthly Hires		
Hires	End of Month Open Positions	Positions Filled in Month
Jan	10	1
Feb	10	2
Mar	8	3
Apr	9	2
May	8	1

June	8	3
July	8	1
Aug	8	1
Sept	7	1
Oct	10	1
Nov	12	1
Dec	10	1

Training Hours: To monitor how many training hours are provided to various units within OOB

Internal: Training Hours by Month

	Plan Reviewers - Zoning	Plan Reviewers - Plan Review	Plan Reviewers - Accela	Plan Reviewers - Zoning	Plan Reviewers - Other	Total Hours Per Month	Cumulative Hours	Goal Training Hours
January	80	80	20	20	20	220	220	280
February	80	80	20	20	20	220	440	280
March	64	75	19	19	19	195	635	280
April	120	86	22	22	22	271	905	280
May	64	82	20	20	20	207	1112	280
June	80	81	20	20	20	222	1334	280
July	64	79	20	20	20	202	1536	280
August	40	74	19	19	19	170	1706	280
September	120	79	20	20	20	258	1964	280
October	80	79	20	20	20	219	2183	280
November	80	79	20	20	20	219	2402	280
December	80	79	20	20	20	219	2620	280

Average Construction Value of Open Permits Per Plan Reviewer: To monitor the value of permits per plan reviewer

Internal: Average Construction Value Open Permits Per Plan Reviewer

	Open Permits Start of Month	Permits Assigned During Month	Permits Issued During Month	Open Permits End of Month
Reviewer A	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$250,000	\$62,500
Reviewer B	\$200,000	\$166,667	\$312,500	\$145,833
Reviewer C	\$250,000	\$285,714	\$100,000	\$333,333
Total	\$183,333	\$194,444	\$208,333	\$180,556

Customer Satisfaction: To monitor level of surveys completed as a way of validating satisfaction scores

Internal: Customer Satisfaction Scores

	Surveys Issued	Surveys Returned	Percentage Returned
Jan	100	20	20%
Feb	110	30	27%
Mar	120	40	33%
Apr	130	50	38%
May	140	60	43%

June	150	70	47%
July	160	20	13%
Aug	170	30	18%
Sept	180	40	22%
Oct	190	50	26%
Nov	200	60	30%
Dec	210	70	33%

Customer Satisfaction: To monitor level of surveys completed as a way of validating satisfaction scores

Internal: Customer Satisfaction Scores				
	Surveys Returned	Commercial Permits	Residential Permits	Trades Permits
Jan	20	4	6	10
Feb	30	5	7	18
Mar	40	6	8	26
Apr	50	7	12	31
May	60	8	15	37
June	70	9	17	45
July	20	12	4	4
Aug	30	10	6	14
Sept	40	17	23	0
Oct	50	19	26	5
Nov	60	21	28	11
Dec	70	23	30	17

Customer Satisfaction: To compare satisfaction scores against baseline scores from 2015 survey

External: Average Scores					
	Goal	Commercial Overall Satisfaction	Commercial Quality	Residential Overall Satisfaction	Residential Quality
Jan	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Feb	4.0	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.1
Mar	4.0	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5
Apr	4.0	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.6
May	4.0	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7
June	4.1	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8
July	4.1	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9
Aug	4.1	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Sept	4.2	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1
Oct	4.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2
Nov	4.2	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3
Dec	4.2	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4

Customer-Facing Metrics

OOB Website Traffic: To monitor volume of activity moving to OOB website

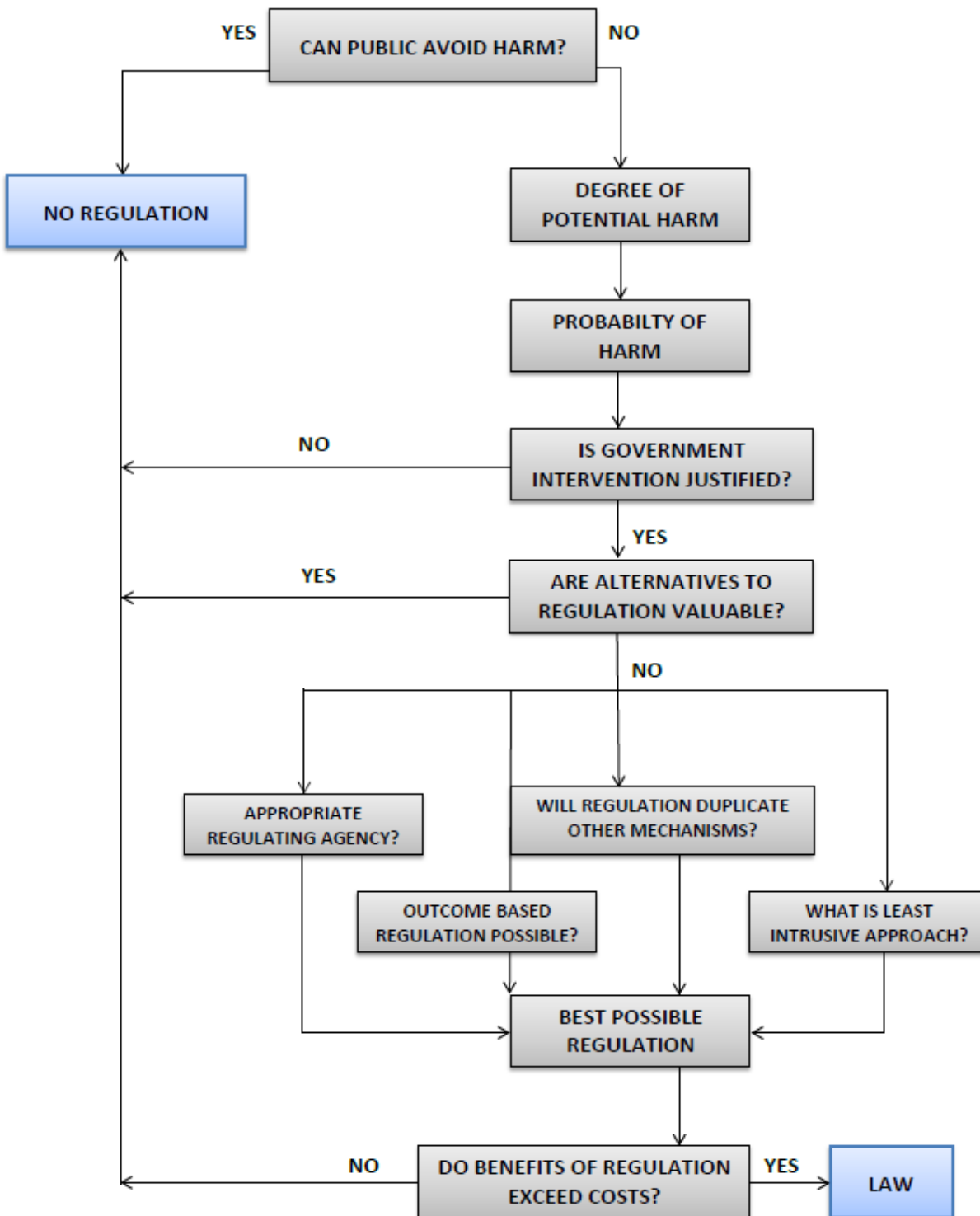
To monitor increases in website traffic, we would suggest the use of Google Analytics or another analytics package that can be easily integrated with the City's website in order to provide a suite of helpful metrics regarding web utilization.

16. APPENDIX G – PROPOSED NEW POSITIONS

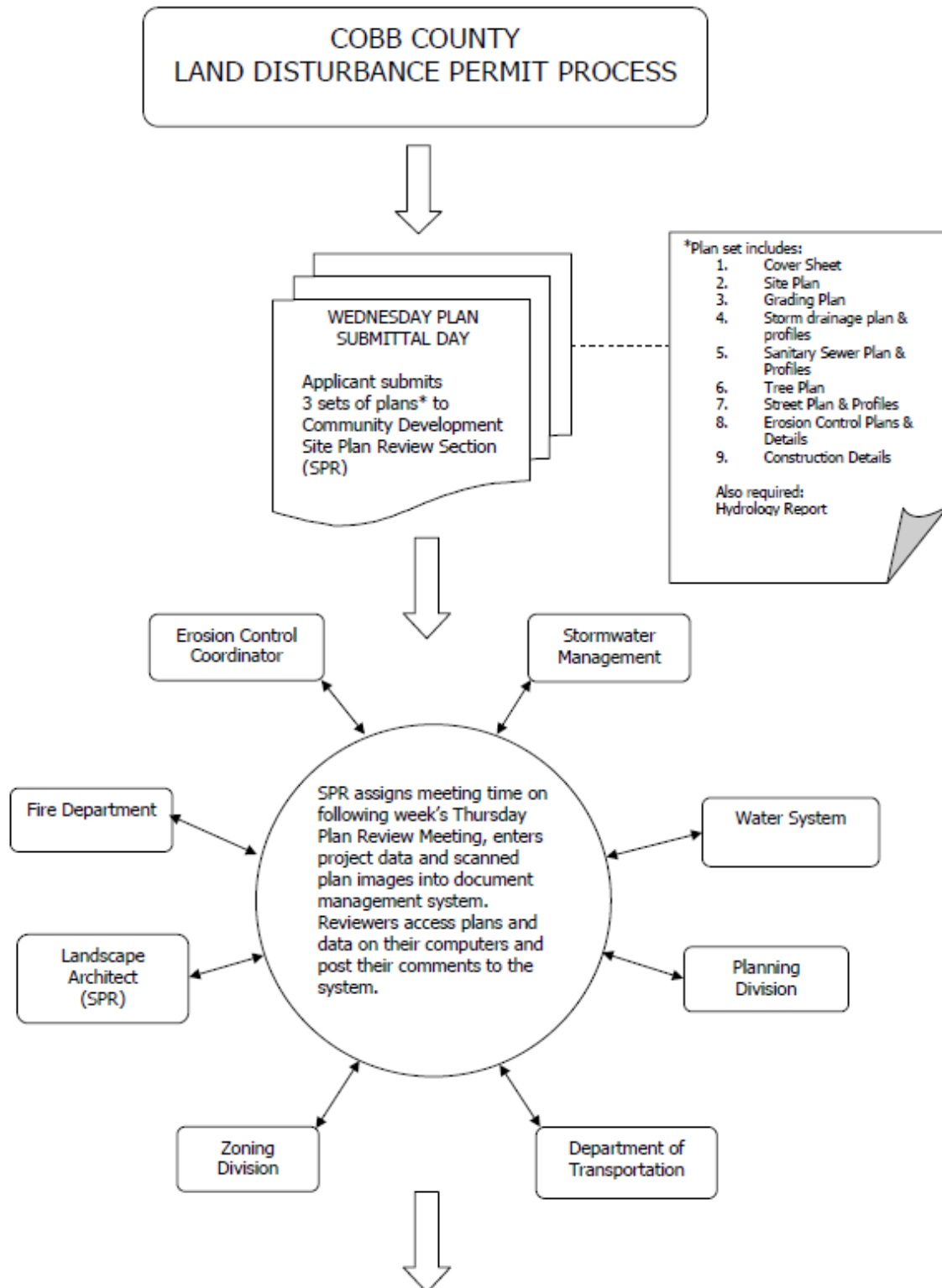
Proposed New Position	Justification	Reference	Permanent?
Dedicated HR Manager	The City of Atlanta’s Department of Aviation, similar to the Office of Buildings, is an enterprise funded-organization with its own dedicated HR executives. While the OOB does not require the level of dedicated HR support that the Department of Aviation does, it is appropriate that the OOB have a solely-dedicated HR resource, at least for the next 12-18 months.	Organizational Culture and Staffing Option 5	TBD – At least for next 12-18 months to ensure key positions are filled and processes put in place for future timely hiring, evaluation, and organizational development.
Chief Training Officer	The primary goal of this position will be to ensure that OOB staff is properly trained to perform their job duties. Doing so is also expected to improve the consistency with which zoning and codes are interpreted by staff.	Organizational Culture and Staffing Option 6	Yes
Customer Advocate	Will act as a mediator between customers and City employees when problems arise that require immediate action. The employee will also advise the Chief Training Officer of additional training needs observed, as well as work with the dedicated HR Executive to identify opportunities for employee recognition.	Organizational Culture and Staffing Option 7	Yes
Employee Relations Manager	Responsible for investigating customer claims of impropriety, as well as OOB staff’s adherence to the Customer Service Code of Conduct.	Organizational Culture and Staffing Option 8	TBD – At least for 18 months to help ensure adoption of the Customer Service Code of Conduct and City ethics rules.

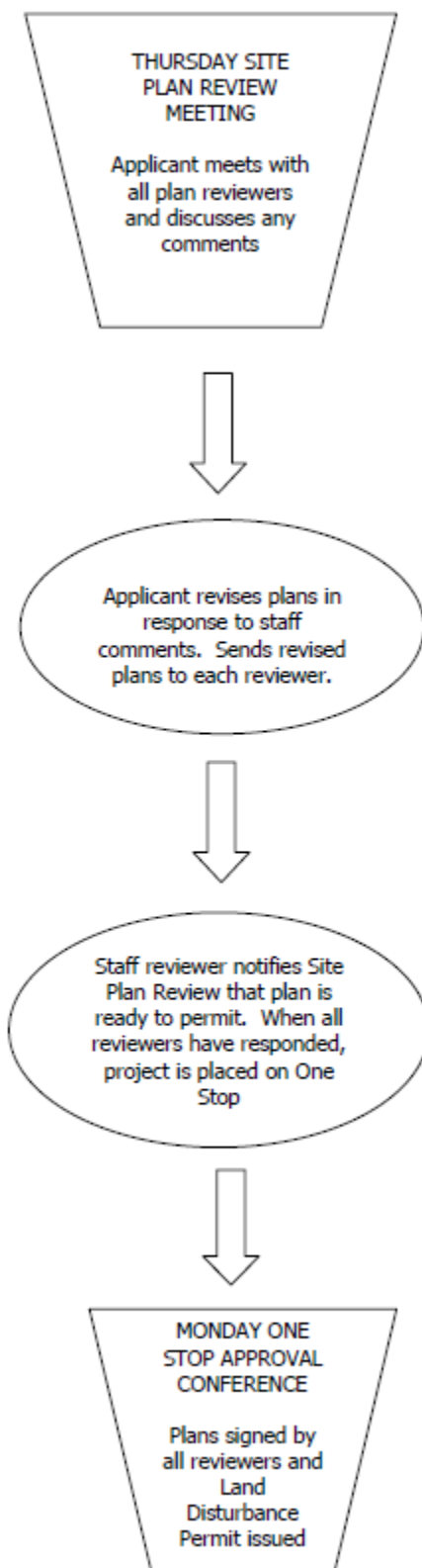
Accela Administrator	Responsible for maintaining functionality of the Accela product, consistent with the OOB's business processes and workflow needs.	Process and Technology Option 4	Yes
Accela Business Analysts (Contracted)	In addition to the Accela Administrator, the City also needs two to four business process experts to assist with maintaining the Accela product, including the implementation of several efficiencies.	Process and Technology Option 4	Yes

17. APPENDIX H – REGULATORY REFORM ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK



18. APPENDIX I – COBB COUNTY LAND DISTURBANCE PERMIT PROCESS





19. APPENDIX J – ACRONYMS

- AEEI - Atlanta Economic Empowerment Initiative
- AHFA – Atlanta Homeowner Freedom Act
- AIM – Atlanta Information Team
- BZA – Board of Zoning Adjustment
- CQG – Council for Quality Growth
- IVR – Interactive voice response
- NPU - Neighborhood Planning Units
- OOB – Office of Buildings
- OOP – Office of Planning
- PRIT – Process Redesign Implementation Team
- RSC – Regulatory Study Commission
- SLA – Service Level Agreements
- TAC - Technical Advisory Committee
- TCC – Tree Conservation Commission

Task	Responsible Party	Timeframe (months)																								
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	
Section 8.1: Culture and Staffing Options																										
Recommendation #1 - Implement a True "One Stop Shop"																										
The Commissioner will identify a project manager to act as the primary point of contact for stakeholders from all of the various departments	Commissioner																									
Commissioners from the various departments will identify key representatives to act as liaisons for the One Stop Shop Project Team	Applicable Commissioner(s)																									
The Project Team will tour the Tampa Construction Services one-stop shop	Project Team																									
The Project Team will develop best practices from a review of peer cities	Project Team																									
The Project Team will develop an RFP for design consulting firm services related to the new facility	Project Team																									
The Project Team will review proposals for design consulting firm services	Project Team																									
The Project Team will develop a design consulting services recommendation for Commissioner approval and consideration by the Mayor and City Council	Design Consultant																									
The selected Design Consultant will determine the amount of space required to house all City department staff involved in the permitting process, as well as include free/easily accessible parking and ample meeting space	Project Team																									
The Project Team will review the Design Consultant's recommendation for space requirements, location options (renovate an existing City owned location or new space) and construction estimates	Project Team/Design Consultant																									
The Project Team/Design Consultant will develop a preliminary recommendation on whether to move forward with existing locations or new space for Commissioner approval and consideration by Mayor and City Council	Design Consultant																									
The Design Consultant will develop finalized architectural/construction plans	Project Team																									
The Project Team will develop a formal recommendation for Commissioner approval and consideration by the Mayor and City Council	Project Team																									
The Project Team will present the recommendation to the Commissioner for approval and consideration by Mayor and City Council	Project Team																									
The Law Department and Design Consultant will complete the site acquisition, renovation and/or construction for the One Stop Shop	Law/Design Consultant																									
The Project Team will develop a plan to relocate services to the new building	Project Team																									
Director of Buildings will ensure that OOB staff include process changes in regular customer communications	Director of Buildings																									
All of the impacted agencies will complete their relocation to the new building	All Impacted Agencies																									
All of the impacted agencies will implement queuing management technology discussed in Process and Technology Options Recommendation #8	All Impacted Agencies																									
Leaders from all of the impacted agencies will schedule monthly all-hands meetings to help improve communications	All Impacted Agencies																									
Recommendation #2 - Fill the Director of Buildings Position Permanently																										
The Commissioner or Deputy Commissioner will work with HR staff to clarify the hiring process for the permanent position	Commissioner or Deputy Commissioner/ Human Resources																									
HR staff will initiate and complete the recruitment of the new position	Commissioner or Deputy Commissioner/ Human Resources																									
Recommendation #3 - Establish a Permitting Customer Service Code of Conduct																										
OOB staff will develop Code of Conduct using information from this business plan as a starting point	Deputy Commissioner																									
OOB staff will seek opinions about the draft Customer Service Code of Conduct from the building community and staff	Deputy Commissioner																									
The Commissioner will formally adopt the Customer Service Code of Conduct	Commissioner																									
The OOB Chief Training Officer will deliver training to staff regarding the Code of Conduct	Chief Training Officer																									
OOB staff begin operating consistent with the Code of Conduct	Deputy Commissioner/Director																									
The OOB Chief Training Officer will evaluate staff compliance with the Code of Conduct against routine customer satisfaction surveys (Recommendation #13)	Chief Training Officer																									
Recommendation #4 - Develop and Implement an Organizational Vision and Mission Statement																										
The Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, and/or Director of Buildings will draft clear, concise and realistic vision and mission statements	Commissioner/Deputy Commissioner/Director of Buildings																									
The Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, and/or Director of Buildings will seek opinions about the vision and mission statements from the building community and staff	Commissioner/Deputy Commissioner/Director of Buildings																									
The Commissioner will formally adopt the vision and mission statements	Commissioner																									
The OOB Chief Training Officer will deliver training to staff regarding the new vision and mission statements	Chief Training Officer																									
Director of Buildings will ensure that OOB staff discuss the new vision and mission statements in regular customer communications	Director of Buildings																									
Recommendation #5 - Assign a Dedicated Human Resources (HR) Manager																										
The Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner will work with HR staff to clarify the hiring process for the new position	Commissioner/Deputy Commissioner/Human Resources																									
If needed, the Director of Buildings will develop a formal recommendation for Commissioner approval and consideration by the Mayor and City Council	Director of Buildings																									
HR staff will establish the new position, dedicated to the OOB	Human Resources																									
HR staff will initiate and complete the recruitment of the new position	Human Resources																									
The OOB Chief Training Officer will deliver training to staff regarding the new hire and the position's role/responsibility	Chief Training Officer																									
The dedicated HR Manager will identify employees for the hiring committee	HR Manager																									
The HR Manager will establish and implement a strategy to facilitate employee recognition and raise employee morale	HR Manager																									
The HR Manager will meet with the Commissioner monthly to provide an update on staffing and hiring needs within the OOB	HR Manager																									
Recommendation #6 - Establish a Chief Training Officer Position																										
The Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner will work with HR staff to clarify the hiring process for the new position	Commissioner/Deputy Commissioner/Human Resources																									
If needed, the Director of Buildings will develop a formal recommendation for Commissioner approval and consideration by the Mayor and City Council	Director of Buildings																									
HR staff will establish the new position, dedicated to the OOB	Human Resources																									

[illegible]

[illegible]

Task		Responsible Party	Timeframe (months)																								
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	
The OOB will evaluate the overall success of the sessions by confirming with the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) that the sessions are of value to the customer community		Director of Buildings/TAC																									
Recommendation #14 - Develop Employee Gain Sharing Plans																											
The HR Manager will develop options for a gain sharing program that incentivizes employee performance		HR Manager																									
The HR Manager will work with the Law and Human Resources Department, as well as the Mayor's office to confirm acceptability under City law		HR Manager/Legal/Human Resources/Mayor's Office																									
The Director of Buildings will identify a project manager for developing the employee gain sharing plans		Director of Buildings																									
For each of the three areas of focus (plan review, intake, and inspections) identify the key customer service-focused and efficiency metrics that can be used to form the basis of measurements for the gain sharing program.		Gain Sharing Project Mgr.																									
Create a baseline document for each area of focus (plan review, intake, and inspections) that shows current levels of performance versus the customer service-focused and efficiency metrics		Gain Sharing Project Mgr.																									
Facilitate sessions with management and employee teams to identify targets for improvements to be made on the customer service-focused and efficiency metrics.		Gain Sharing Project Mgr.																									
Work with management and Finance to determine the process for creating a fund source for the gain sharing programs that is directly tied to improvements in process efficiency that the employees commit to		Gain Sharing Project Mgr.																									
Work with management and employees to develop gain sharing plans for each of the three focus areas that are based on exceeding the customer-service focused and efficiency metrics and that involve individual incentive payments, team-based incentive payments, or a mix of both		Gain Sharing Project Mgr.																									
Document the specifics of each plan		Gain Sharing Project Mgr.																									
Assist in securing approval for these gain sharing plans from all required authorities		Gain Sharing Project Mgr.																									
Assist in developing and documenting sound monitoring processes that will determine whether performance improvement targets have been exceeded, whether gain sharing payments are warranted, and, if so, how much each individual and/or team will receive		Gain Sharing Project Mgr.																									
If needed, the Director of Buildings will develop a formal recommendation for Commissioner approval and consideration by the Mayor and City Council		Director of Buildings																									
Incorporate agreed upon performance improvement measurements into employee goals		HR Manager																									
Periodically evaluate progress towards goals		Director of Buildings/HR Manager																									
Evaluate the level of improvement in efficiency and effectiveness and initiate any distribution of initial bonuses to employees		Director of Buildings/HR Manager																									
Evaluate changes to future performance targets that will encourage continuous improvement		Director of Buildings/HR Manager																									
Recommendation #15 - Develop a Hybrid Quality Management Structure to Drive Continuous Improvement																											
Leaders of each major permitting process function will work with the Customer Advocate to identify "quality process leads"		Customer Advocate																									
The Customer Advocate and Chief Training Officer will identify the best quality improvement methodology for the OOB to follow		Customer Advocate/Chief Training Officer																									
The Chief Training Officer will coordinate quality management training (i.e. Six Sigma, Lean Six Sigma, etc.) for the Customer Advocate and quality process leads		Chief Training Officer																									
Quality process leads will have a portion of their time dedicated to working on projects approved by their supervisors and the Customer Advocate		Director of Buildings																									
Quality process leads begin periodic quality projects		Quality Process Leads																									
The Customer Advocate will convene regularly scheduled meetings to share project results, discuss challenges and provide input on OOB metrics to confirm that a data-driven approach to quality management has been established		Customer Advocate																									
Section 8.2: Process and Technology Options																											
Recommendation #1 - Transition All Necessary Legacy Data																											
Review the City's TruePoint project to determine whether all of the required data will be converted and identify any gaps that need to be filled		Assistant Director of Operations																									
Determine whether any gaps between the City and County data can be bridged to eliminate record conflicts		Assistant Director of Operations																									
Identify existing or external resources to review the known legacy databases, determine where data is housed (including paper data) and how it can be extracted		Assistant Director of Operations												</													

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

Task	Responsible Party	Timeframe (months)																							
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
The Director of Buildings will have the responsibility to set each month's agenda, with the assistance of the Customer Advocate	Director of Buildings/Customer Advocate																								
The Director of Buildings will facilitate the meetings and schedule time for 2-3 designated department liaisons to review high-profile projects, discuss problematic/ conflicting decisions, re-occurring issues, possible code changes and personnel issues	Director of Buildings/OOP																								
Recommendation #15 - Achieve Zoning Approval Before Permitting Starts																									
The Director of Buildings will develop a Zoning Task Force consisting of OOP and OOB staff, as well as a third party consultant to develop process change recommendations	Director of Buildings																								
The Zoning Task Force will develop a process change to make zoning approvals performed first, followed by site development review and then plan review by the OOB	Zoning Task Force																								
The Zoning Task Force will consider consolidation of all zoning functions into Planning	Zoning Task Force																								
The Zoning Task Force will identify any significant risks associated with the process change	Zoning Task Force																								
The Zoning Task Force will develop risk response strategies	Zoning Task Force																								
The Zoning Task Force will define a new process that reflects this change in process	Zoning Task Force																								
The Zoning Task Force will develop formal recommendation for code changes for Commissioner approval and consideration by the Mayor and City Council	Zoning Task Force																								
The Zoning Task Force will test process changes before actively implementing them	Zoning Task Force																								
The OOB Chief Training Officer will deliver training for staff on the new processes	Chief Training Officer																								
Director of Buildings will ensure that OOB staff include process changes in regular customer communications	Director of Buildings																								
OOB staff will formally adopt the process changes	Director of Buildings																								
The OOB will evaluate the overall success of the process change by confirming with the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) that the process is working better for the customer community	Director of Buildings/TAC																								
Recommendation #16 - Provide a Fee Estimation Tool																									
The City will complete its Cost of Services study and make changes to the permitting fees	Commissioner																								
OOB staff will identify an internal or external resource to create the online fee estimation tool	Director of Buildings																								
The resource will develop the online fee estimation tool	Resource																								
OOB staff will test the tool to confirm that both fee calculations and explanations are correctly returned	Director of Buildings																								
The OOB Chief Training Officer will deliver training for staff on the new processes	Chief Training Officer																								
Director of Buildings will ensure that OOB staff include process changes in regular customer communications	Director of Buildings																								
OOB staff will publish the new online fee estimation tool onto the City's website	Director of Buildings																								
The OOB will evaluate the overall success of the process change by confirming with the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) that the process is working better for the customer community	Director of Buildings/TAC																								
Recommendation #17 - Identify More Opportunities to Utilize Permitting Data																									
Working with the Mayor's Office, the OOB will identify permitting data sets that would provide value to be used by the City for a cross-agency open-source predictive analytics application	Mayor's Office/Director of Buildings																								
The Director of Buildings will work with the Law Department to confirm the appropriateness of the use of such data sets	Director of Buildings/Law																								
OOB staff will identify data sets for use with the "Transparency Atlanta" open data portal	Director of Buildings																								
OOB staff will work with AIM to make those data sets available via Transparency Atlanta	Director of Buildings/AIM																								
The Director of Buildings will publicize to the Development Community the availability of such data sets via the Transparency Atlanta open data portal	Director of Buildings																								
Section 8.3: Regulatory Reform Options																									
Recommendation #1 - Create a Regulatory Study Commission with a Formal Regulatory Reform Methodology																									
Develop a formal recommendation for the Mayor to create a regulatory study commission (RSC) by executive order with a mandate to "review existing and proposed codes and regulations which are enforced by the City...and restrict or impose burdens on commercial, industrial, or not-for-profit activities."	Commissioner																								
Staff the RSC with City employees, representatives from the private sector, and City Council members willing to commit to a minimum eight month effort	Mayor/Commissioner																								
RSC adopts a formal process for analyzing regulations (example provided) and provides such to its subcommittees as a working model driving how regulations are to be evaluated	RSC																								
The Mayor tasks the RSC to oversee the development of the two main regulatory reform items (the "Atlanta Homeowner Freedom Act" (AHFA) and the "Atlanta Economic Empowerment Initiative" (AEEI)	Mayor																								
RSC establishes subcommittees for each of the two regulatory reform items (the "Atlanta Homeowner Freedom Act" and the "Atlanta Economic Empowerment Initiative") comprised of City employees, customers, and City Council members	RSC																								
The Mayor provides the RSC a target date for consideration of the initial 10 regulatory reform ideas from the Immediate Priorities effort	Mayor																								
The RSC works with the Office of Buildings (OOB) and its volunteers to finalize legislation formalizing the initial 10 regulatory reform ideas from the Immediate Priorities effort	RSC																								
The RSC works to secure passage of the initial 10 regulatory reform ideas from the Immediate Priorities effort	RSC																								
The Mayor provides the RSC a target date for consideration of draft recommendations for each of the "Atlanta Homeowner Freedom Act" and "Atlanta Economic Empowerment Initiative"	Mayor																								
The RSC works with the subcommittee for each draft recommendation (AHFA and AEEI) to finalize a draft for consideration by the Mayor and City Council	RSC																								
After an initial six month period following passage of the AHFA and the AEEI and for six month increments afterward, the RSC evaluates the impact of the changes in terms of savings to applicants and the City and communicate the overall success of the approved changes	RSC																								
Recommendation #2 - Develop and Pass the Atlanta Homeowner Freedom Act (AHFA)																									
The RSC creates an AHFA subcommittee to develop recommendations to either eliminate unnecessary permitting requirements or increase threshold amounts for basic home improvement permits (at least to the amount allowed by State law)	RSC																								

Extends beyond 24 mos.

[illegible]

[illegible]

Task	Responsible Party	Timeframe (months)																								
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	
OOB and OOP staff will define the appropriate level of professional discretion for the committee of administrators OOB and OOP staff will identify administrators for the committee The directors of Building and Planning, as well as BZA staff will develop a formal recommendation for RSC approval and consideration by the Mayor and City Council The directors of Building and Planning will present recommendations to RSC for approval and consideration by Mayor and City Council OOB and OOP staff will test process changes before actively implementing them The OOB Chief Training Officer will deliver training to staff related to the recommendations approved by the Mayor and City Council Director of Buildings will ensure that OOB staff include process changes in regular customer communications OOB and OOP staff will formally adopt the process changes approved by the Mayor and City Council The directors of Buildings and Planning, as well as BZA staff will evaluate the overall success of the approved changes as a minimum 25% reduction in the number of BZA appeals	Director of Buildings/OOP Director of Buildings/OOP Director of Buildings/Director of Planning/BZA Director of Buildings/ Director of Planning Director of Buildings/ Director of Planning Chief Training Officer Director of Buildings Director of Buildings/ Director of Planning Director of Buildings/Director of Planning/BZA																									
Recommendation #10 - Streamline Pool Permitting Process The OOB and agencies impacted by the recommendation to adopt the State swimming pool code will identify any significant risks associated with the recommendation The OOB and all impacted agencies will develop risk response strategies The OOB and all impacted agencies will define a new process that adopts the State swimming pool code, streamlines the permitting process and improves the overall coordination with the State The Director of Buildings and all impacted agencies will develop a formal recommendation for RSC approval and consideration by the Mayor and City Council The Director of Buildings and all impacted agencies will present the recommendation to the RSC for approval and consideration by Mayor and City Council The OOB and all impacted agencies will test the process changes before actively implementing them The OOB Chief Training Officer will deliver training to staff related to the recommendation approved by the Mayor and City Council The OOB and all impacted agencies will include process change in regular customer communications The OOB and all impacted agencies will formally adopt the process changes approved by the Mayor and City Council The Director of Buildings will evaluate the overall success of the process change by confirming with the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) that the process is working better for the customer community	Director of Buildings/All Impacted Agencies Director of Buildings/All Impacted Agencies Director of Buildings/All Impacted Agencies Director of Buildings/All Impacted Agencies Director of Buildings/All Impacted Agencies Director of Buildings/All Impacted Agencies Director of Buildings/All Impacted Agencies Chief Training Officer Director of Buildings Director of Buildings/All Impacted Agencies Director of Buildings/All Impacted Agencies																									
Recommendation #11 - Revise the Special Administrative Permit (SAP) Process The RSC commissions an employee-citizen committee (SAP Committee) to develop a plan to completely overhaul the SAP process The RSC will identify City employees and citizens for the committee The SAP Committee will identify any significant risks associated with an overhaul of the SAP process The SAP Committee will develop risk response strategies The SAP Committee will develop revisions to the process using a regulatory reform methodology included in this document, assessing the need for the process and with the assumption that a revised process be as minimal as possible yet accomplish legitimate regulatory objectives The RSC will develop a formal recommendation for Commissioner approval and consideration by the Mayor and City Council The RSC will present the recommendation to the Commissioner for approval and consideration by Mayor and City Council The OOB and all impacted agencies will test the process changes before actively implementing them The OOB Chief Training Officer will deliver training to staff related to the recommendation approved by the Mayor and City Council The OOB and all impacted agencies will include process change in regular customer communications The OOB and all impacted agencies will formally adopt the process changes approved by the Mayor and City Council The Director of Buildings will evaluate the overall success of the process change by confirming with the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) that the process is working better for the customer community	RSC RSC SAP Committee SAP Committee SAP Committee RSC RSC Director of Buildings/All Impacted Agencies Chief Training Officer Director of Buildings Director of Buildings/All Impacted Agencies Director of Buildings/All Impacted Agencies/TAC																									
Recommendation #12 - Combine Water/Sewer and Grease Management Permit Reviews OOB and Watershed Management staff will identify any significant risks associated with combining water/sewer and fat/oil/grease permit reviews OOB and Watershed Management staff will develop risk response strategies OOB and Watershed Management staff will define a new process that combines the permit reviews OOB, Watershed Management and Finance staff will develop an estimate of any financial impact, offset by anticipated increase in customer satisfaction The Director of Buildings and Watershed Management staff will develop a formal recommendation for RSC approval and consideration by the Mayor and City Council The Director of Buildings and Watershed Management staff will present the recommendation to the RSC for approval and consideration by Mayor and City Council	Director of Buildings/Watershed Director of Buildings/Watershed Director of Buildings/Watershed Director of Buildings/Watershed/ Finance Director of Buildings/Watershed Director of Buildings/Watershed																									

Extends beyond 24 mos.

Extends beyond 24 mos.

Extends beyond 24 mos.

Extends beyond 24 mos.

[illegible]

ATTACHMENT 1 - Business Plan Task List

Task	Option Category	Option	Priority	Timeframe (months)		
				1-6	7-18	19+
Implement a True "One Stop Shop"	Culture and Staffing	1	1 - High			
Fill the Director of Buildings Position Permanently	Culture and Staffing	2	1 - High			
Establish a Permitting Customer Service Code of Conduct	Culture and Staffing	3	1 - High			
Develop and Implement an Organizational Vision and Mission	Culture and Staffing	4	1 - High			
Assign a Dedicated Human Resources Manager	Culture and Staffing	5	1 - High			
Establish a Chief Training Officer Position	Culture and Staffing	6	1 - High			
Establish a Customer Advocate Position	Culture and Staffing	7	1 - High			
Establish a Temporary Employee Relations Position	Culture and Staffing	8	1 - High			
Develop and Institute Routine Customer Satisfaction Surveying	Culture and Staffing	12	1 - High			
Transition All Necessary Legacy Data	Process and Technology	1	1 - High			
Temporarily Suspend the 10 Day SLA and Develop New SLAs Tailored to Particular Permit Types	Process and Technology	2	1 - High			
Clarify Plan Review Comments and Implement "One Pass" Plan Review	Process and Technology	3	1 - High			
Establish Dedicated Accela Business Process Expertise and Complete "Immediate Priority" Improvements	Process and Technology	4	1 - High			
Streamline the Water Meter Installation Process	Process and Technology	13	1 - High			
Standardize Documents and Processes, including SOPs	Process and Technology	5	1 - High			
Create a Two Component "Express Service" Capacity	Immediate Priorities	2	1 - High			
Eliminate or Increase Thresholds On At Least 10 Current Permits	Immediate Priorities	4	1 - High			
Create a Small Two or Three Person Team Tasked with Major Projects	Immediate Priorities	5	1 - High			
Coordination and Public Development Projects	Immediate Priorities	5	1 - High			
Create a Regulatory Study Commission with a Formal Regulatory	Regulatory Reform	1	1 - High			
Develop and Pass the Atlanta Homeowner Freedom Act (AHFA)	Regulatory Reform	2	1 - High			
Develop and Pass the Atlanta Economic Empowerment Initiative	Regulatory Reform	3	1 - High			
Define and Clarify Appropriate Use of Professional Discretion	Culture and Staffing	9	2 - Medium			
Define a Tiered Approach to Permitting Related Decisions	Culture and Staffing	10	2 - Medium			
Institute Vacation Scheduling for Plan Review	Culture and Staffing	11	2 - Medium			
Institute Monthly Customer Education Sessions and Forum	Culture and Staffing	13	2 - Medium			
Develop Employee Gain Sharing Plans	Culture and Staffing	14	2 - Medium			
Develop a Hybrid Quality Management Structure to Drive Continuous Improvement	Culture and Staffing	15	2 - Medium			
Draft a Handbook Describing Necessary Documents and Process Steps for each Type of Permit	Process and Technology	6	2 - Medium			
Complete Website Update	Process and Technology	7	2 - Medium			
Plan and Implement Electronic Plan Review	Process and Technology	8	2 - Medium			
Improve Inspector Processes and Personnel Accountability	Process and Technology	12	2 - Medium			
Achieve Zoning Approval Before Permitting Starts	Process and Technology	15	2 - Medium			
Create Concierge Position	Immediate Priorities	1	2 - Medium			

ATTACHMENT 1 - Business Plan Task List

Organize Pre-intake, Intake and Permit Issuance Around Three Service Stream Teams - Express, Residential and Commercial	Immediate Priorities	3	2 - Medium			
Streamline the Tree Posting Process	Regulatory Reform	5	2 - Medium			
Implement Residential Building Plan Review "Opt Out"	Regulatory Reform	6	2 - Medium			
Combine Demolition and Land Development Permit Processes and Fees	Regulatory Reform	7	2 - Medium			
Eliminate Separate Fire Plan Review Process and Permit Fee	Regulatory Reform	8	2 - Medium			
Reduce Volume of Board of Zoning Adjustment (BZA) Appeals	Regulatory Reform	9	2 - Medium			
Implement a Queuing Application to Improve Permit Intake Line Management	Process and Technology	9	3 - Low			
Implement True Time Tracking for Permit Issuance and Plan Review	Process and Technology	10	3 - Low			
Implement Data Request Security	Process and Technology	11	3 - Low			
Institute a Permit Liaison Monthly Roundtable	Process and Technology	14	3 - Low			
Provide a Fee Estimation Tool	Process and Technology	16	3 - Low			
Identify More Opportunities to Utilize Permitting Data	Process and Technology	17	3 - Low			
Eliminate Hard Copy Stamped Plans Requirement	Regulatory Reform	4	3 - Low			
Streamline Pool Permitting Process	Regulatory Reform	10	3 - Low			
Revise the Special Administrative Permit (SAP) Process	Regulatory Reform	11	3 - Low			
Combine Water/Sewer and Grease Management Permit Reviews	Regulatory Reform	12	3 - Low			
Reform the Neighborhood Planning Unit (NPU) Process	Regulatory Reform	13	3 - Low			
Revise Loading and Parking Requirements	Regulatory Reform	14	3 - Low			

ATTACHMENT 2 - Peer Comparison Data

				Peer Group					
Peer Comparison of Permitting	City of Atlanta, GA	Peer Group Average	Variance to Peer Group Average	Mecklenburg County, NC	Nashville / Davidson, TN	City of Tampa, FL	Montgomery County, MD	City of Houston, TX	Cobb County, GA
Adequacy of Resources									
\$ permits issued in last fiscal year (exclude airport)									
Commercial	1,213,263,661	1,513,242,187	- 299,978,526	1,780,403,486	1,054,215,895		1,437,932,822	2,547,783,896	745,874,836
Multifamily	1,271,838,932	880,112,143	391,726,789	880,112,143					
Residential	401,273,965	1,316,643,243	- 915,369,278	1,231,341,540	1,361,029,995		529,975,477	3,022,330,879	438,538,324
Other	151,804,368	1,389,638,914	- 1,237,834,546		15,899,155			2,763,378,673	
Total	3,038,180,926	3,369,498,874	- 331,317,948	3,891,857,169	2,431,145,045	2,408,176,123	1,967,908,299	8,333,493,448	1,184,413,160
FTE									
Authorized									
Plan Reviewers	67.00	28.07	38.93	48.00	6.00	16.00	33.50	62.40	2.50
Inspectors	48.00	67.22	- 19.22	97.00	30.00	24.00	32.00	200.30	20.00
Supervisors	9.00		9.00	20.00	4.00	7.00	13.00	73.20	2.00
Other		34.33	- 34.33	55.00	5.00	12.00	20.00	91.50	22.50
Total	124.00	149.48	- 25.48	220.00	45.00	59.00	98.50	427.40	47.00
Filled									
Plan Reviewers	63.00	24.17	38.83	41.00	6.00	12.00	27.50	56.00	2.50
Inspectors	37.00	59.83	- 22.83	87.00	32.00	23.00	30.00	167.00	20.00
Supervisors	9.00	17.50	- 8.50	18.00	5.00	5.00	10.00	65.00	2.00
Other		30.67	- 30.67	55.00	-	12.00	20.00	74.50	22.50
Total	109.00	132.17	- 23.17	201.00	43.00	52.00	87.50	362.50	47.00
Percent of Authorized Positions Vacant									
Plan Reviewers	6%	11%	-5%	15%	0%	25%	18%	10%	0%
Inspectors	23%	5%	18%	10%	-7%	4%	6%	17%	0%
Supervisors	0%	8%	-8%	10%	-25%	29%	23%	11%	0%
Other		20%		0%	100%	0%	0%	19%	0%
Total	12%	12%	1%	9%	4%	12%	11%	15%	0%
\$ value of permits per authorized plan reviewer									
\$ value of permits per authorized inspector	45,345,984	217,140,096	- 171,794,112	81,080,358	405,190,841	150,511,008	58,743,531	133,549,574	473,765,264
	63,295,436	63,970,655	- 675,219	40,122,239	81,038,168	100,340,672	61,497,134	41,605,060	59,220,658
Plan reviewers / total staff									
Inspectors / total staff	54%	19%	35%	22%	13%	27%	34%	15%	5%
	39%	45%	-6%	44%	67%	41%	32%	47%	40%

ATTACHMENT 2 - Peer Comparison Data

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Peer Comparison of Permitting	City of Atlanta, GA	Peer Group Average	Variance to Peer Group Average	Mecklenburg County, NC	Nashville / Davidson, TN	City of Tampa, FL	Montgomery County, MD	City of Houston, TX	Cobb County, GA
Duration of Plan Review (from Open to Ready to Issue)									
Average days for approval of commercial plans	64	29.67	34.33			45		30	14
Average days from Open to 1st comments	10	18.30	- 8.30			15	21.2	30	7
Average days for approval of residential plans									
New Residential	70	15.5	54.5	8.5		35	18	15	1
Average days from Open to 1st comments	10					10		15	0
Residential Additions	49	13.5	35.5	8.5		35	8	15	1
Average days from Open to 1st comments	10					10		15	0
Residential Alterations	13	11.1	1.90	8.5		35	8	3	1
Average days from Open to 1st comments	10					10		3	0
Average days for approval of MEP	1	7.33	- 6.33	see note 2 & 2a			1	20	1
Typical number of revisions required by plan review prior to plan approval				NA		1		2	
Commercial new or addition				see note 4		1	2	2	
Residential new or addition				see note 5		1	2	2	
Does someone review open permits to find applications open longer than the SLA or service standard? (1=Yes, 2=No)	2	1.4	0.60	1		1	1	2	2
Are time-certain inspections available?	2	1	1.00	1		1	1	1	
Permitting System									
System in use (and version)	Accela 7.3.3.6.0 (7.3 FP3 SP 6)	na	na	POSSE by Computronix	Accela	Accela	Hansen 8.2.3. E-plans are submitted via Avolve ProjectDox	*ILMS	Accela
Plans filed electronically (1=Yes, 2=No)	2	1.2	0.8	1		1	1	1	2
% of Commercial plans filed electronically	0%	33%	-33%	100%		25%		5%	0%
% of Residential New filed electronically	0%	36%	-36%	99%		25%	50%	7%	0%
Scope of Responsibilities				see note 7					
Construction (1=Yes, 2=No)	1	1.0	-	1	1	1	1	1	1
Land Development / Site plans (1=Yes, 2=No)	1	1.3	- 0.33	2	2	1	1	1	1
Zoning (1=Yes, 2=No)	1	1.3	- 0.33	2	1	1	1	2	1
Watershed / Stormwater (1=Yes, 2=No)	2	1.3	0.67	2	2	1	1	1	1
Arborist (1=Yes, 2=No)	1	1.3	- 0.33	2	2	1	1	1	1
Public Works / Traffic, Sanitation (1=Yes, 2=No)	2	1.5	0.50	2	2	1	1	1	2
Plumbing (1=Yes, 2=No)	1	1.2	- 0.17	1	1	1	2	1	1
Fire (1=Yes, 2=No)	2	1.3	0.67	1	2	1	1	1	2
Traffic (1=Yes, 2=No)	2	1.5	0.50	2	2	1	1	1	2
Training									
Minimum years experience for plan reviewer	0	5	- 4.60	9		5	2	2	5
Minimum years experience for inspector	0	4	- 3.80	5		5	2	2	5
Permitting system initial training (hours)	0	66	- 65.60	120		40	8	160	0
Applicant handout available explaining commercial permitting process (1=Yes, 2=No)	1	1	-	1		1	1	1	1

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				Peer Group					
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Applicant handout available explaining residential permitting process (1=Yes, 2=No)	1	1	-	1		1	1	1	1

ATTACHMENT 2 - Peer Comparison Data

				Peer Group					
Peer Comparison of Permitting	City of Atlanta, GA	Peer Group Average	Variance to Peer Group Average	Mecklenburg County, NC	Nashville / Davidson, TN	City of Tampa, FL	Montgomery County, MD	City of Houston, TX	Cobb County, GA
Rate Structure									
Based on recent cost of service study (1=Yes, 2=No)	2	1.2	0.83	1	1	1	1	1	2
Construction fee basis (1=per sf, 2=per project valuation, 3=other)	2	1.6	0.40	2		1	1	2	2
Budgeted Expenditures, current Fiscal Year	22,616,619	24,196,676	- 1,580,057	25,845,325		9,529,040	33,893,405	48,148,001	3,567,607
Actual Revenues, last Fiscal Year	26,493,794	28,424,341	- 1,930,547	25,820,306		7,599,346	38,663,986	66,038,068	4,000,000
% of Budget via Enterprise Fund	98%	75%	24%	59%		100%	114%	100%	0%
Months of Budgeted Expenditures that could be funded from current fund balance	12	7	5	7.2		4.5	13.69	3.84	
Permit volumes							1		
Commercial		13,041	- 13,041	28,870		13,208	9,303	8,735	5,087
Multifamily		4,281	- 4,281	4,431				4,131	
Residential		33,580	- 33,580	56,192		24,742	21,707	60,170	5,087
		40,277	- 40,277	89,493	-	37,950	31,010	73,036	10,173
Certificate of Occupancy Approval									
Building Dept (1=Yes, 2=No)	1	1.0	-	1		1	1	1	1
Fire Dept (1=Yes, 2=No)	2	1.2	0.80	1		1	1	2	1
Dashboard report to management (1=Yes, 2=No). Get copy	1	1.4	- 0.40	1		2	1	1	2
Contact	Chris Colbert			Jim Bartl	Wade Hill	John Barrios	George Muste	Mark McAvoy	Lee McClead

Mecklenburg County NC

NOTES:

Note 1: using Fy14 numbers as we recently discovered a bug in constr value permitted impacting Fy15 #'s

Note 2: in Fy15, small com'l projects (<10,000 sq ft) had an av'g turnaround time for BEMP of 3.4 days

Note 2a: medium and large com'l projects use a scheduling process, so there is no queue. Projects come in and review starts the day scheduled; in Fy15 work was completed on time/early 95.4% of the time.

Note 3: Dept maintains response time goals for normal service and posts performance. Premium services available include; Express Review, 3rd party plan review, Inspection by Appointment and 3rd party inspections.

Note 4: 69% of all comm'l projects (small-medium-large) passed 1st review; 84% of medium-large projects passed 2nd review.

Note 5: 74% of residential plans passed 1st review.

Note 6: recently evaluated as in during the recession (in Fy10-11)

Note 7: reviews by agencies marked '2', although outside our Department's responsibility, are included in the EPS review process, and are performed by other agencies

Cobb County, GA

Georgia law does not allow an engineer to sign or seal plans electronically. Architects yes; engineers, no. 3rd party authentication of signatures and seals is permitted.

They cannot find sufficient plan reviewers and inspectors. They hire inspectors off the street and give them on-the-job training with constant supervision until they are ready to function independently.

Plan review positions are promotions from inspectors, also with on-the-job training with constant supervision

Plan review one-stop process: If the application is completed by Wednesday, there will be a one-stop (all relevant reviewers with stamps) on Monday.

No residential plan review done, except for multifamily. Inspectors have to know code and applicants know that if it doesn't meet code, it won't pass inspection or get a C.O.

Fire Marshal is now needing 2 weeks to do plan reviews

They are in beta testing for electronic plan submission. IT has taken much longer than expected to do its part to get ready.

They do not do multi-trade inspections. They think single-purpose inspections are better and more thoughtful.

They have a "really good relationship with the Fire Marshal."

City of Houston, TX

Building Code Enforcement is a group within our total division called Planning & Development Services (PDS). The FTEs, revenues, and expenditures provided here reflect this group only and not the entire division.

- * Office of Building Official
- * Permit Applications and CACD (Customer Assistance & Code Development)
- * Plan Review
- * Electrical Inspection
- * Mechanical Inspection
- * MultiFamily & Habitability Inspection
- * Occupancy Inspection
- * Plumbing Inspection
- * Sign Administration (excluded from this exercise)
- * Structural Inspection

Sections within our division (PDS):

- * Management Services > all Special Revenue Fund
- * Code Enforcement > all Special Revenue Fund
- * Office of City Engineer > All Special Revenue
- * Real Estate > General & CIP Funds
- * Utilities Analysis > Enterprise Utility Fund

We track our building valuations as follows:

I-5	Residential - \$3,022,330,879
I-6	Non-Residential - \$2,547,783,896
I-7	Additions & Alterations - \$2,763,378,673
I-55	* Permitting System Note: The permitting system used by COHwill be replaced in the next few years with a more robust and modern system.
I-57	* Electronic Plan Review for commercial construction launched in June of 2015
I-58	* Electronic Plan Review for residential construction launched in September of 2015
I-72	An Associate Degree in Building Inspection or the equivalent is required. Two years of skilled, journey level experience in building trades, inspection, or plan examining in the area of analysis to be performed as required. Four years of skilled, journey level experience in building trades, inspection, or plan examining in the area of analysis to be performed may be substituted for the above education and experience requirements. A bachelor's degree in Construction Management, Architect, Engineering or a closely related discipline may be substitute for the above education and experience requirements.
I-73	Requires a high school diploma/GED, and up to 18 months of education or training in the area of inspection to be performed. Two years of journey level experience related to the area of inspection to be performed are required.
I-85	All Building Code Enforcement activities are funded through a Special Revenue fund, which is wholly supported by permit

Montgomery County Notes:

The Department of Permitting Services is a one-stop-shop and handles commercial and residential building permits, fire system and fire alarm permits, electrical and mechanical permits, environmental permits (sediment control, small land disturbance, stormwater management, tree canopy, flood plain, etc.), right-of-way permits (grading, paving, utility and driveways), well and septic permits, sign permits, vendors licenses and other miscellaneous permits and licenses. As a one-stop-shop, DPS also handles zoning reviews for permit issuance and zoning and site plan enforcement.

DPS has a personnel complement of 212 for all of its functions.

The numbers in the table includes staffing for processing, plans review and inspections for: residential and commercial, mechanical electrical, fire protection systems and fire alarms. Note that this approach is the same as reflected in the City of Houston Note.

Our numbers for those functions are as follows:

FTEs

Plan reviewers 33.5

Inspectors 32

Permit technicians 20

Supervisors 13

Filled positions

Plan reviewers 27.5

Inspectors 30

Permit technicians 20

Supervisors 10