



OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL

COUNCIL CONSIDERATION REQUEST

TO: Debbie Racca-Sittre, City Clerk
FROM: Councilmember Melissa Cabello Havrda
COPIES: Erik Walsh, City Manager; Andy Segovia, City Attorney
SUBJECT: **Enhancing Permitting Transparency & Expediency**
DATE: November 7, 2024

Issue for Proposed Consideration

After coordinating this Council Consideration Request (CCR) with the City Manager, I respectfully request for your support for the inclusion of the following item on the agenda of the earliest available meeting of the Governance Committee:

Requesting consideration of a **Enhancing Permitting Transparency & Expediency**

Brief Background

Homeownership and commercial development are some of the key indicators of a healthy and thriving economy and are critical to the overall economic development of the City. The ability to make changes to a home, whether it's a primary residence or an investment property, is crucial. These changes help maintain the home's structural integrity and can also increase its value. Likewise, the ability to attract and facilitate commercial development that improves the value and overall quality of life to our communities is paramount.

To ensure that all work done on residential or commercial properties meets current codes and regulations, the Development Services Department (DSD) has created several online resources. These resources are meant to guide residents and developers through the process of obtaining the necessary permits. While there is a wealth of information available online, gaps still exist that are leading to time and financial losses for property owners, developers, contractors and the real estate community writ large.

Delays & lack of clarity in the steps and information necessary to secure permits is causing:

- Increases in home costs, potentially reducing the pool of available buyers and making previously affordable homes out of reach for some.
- Increasing cost to contractors and developers leading to a negative perception of conducting business in the City
- Delayed construction affects businesses and residents



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The goal of this CCR is to identify and resolve gaps in the permitting process, communications, and to identify the unintended negative impacts and develop solutions.

The Real Estate community in particular has a unique vantage point to see the far reaching unintended negative impacts. One major issue for residents and property owners is receiving a permit denial after submitting their documents, only to discover that new code changes require additional or different information. This forces owners to redo their plans, incurring extra costs and delays. Often, denials are due to missing just one or two requirements. Instead of starting the process over, we could consider implementing a limited grace period that allows applicants to provide the needed information.

Currently, DSD offers Preliminary Plan Review Meetings for those seeking permits, where applicants can consult with DSD staff. However, this service costs \$100 per hour for each division involved, and there are 17 to 20 potential departments one might need to meet with. Determining the right department can be confusing for most citizens, highlighting another area for improvement. This is one attempt to address the previous issue but as of now it has yet to yield the results residents and developers need and this CCR is suggesting we re-visit this program and identify how to strengthen it and ensure permitting can be achieved in 30 days or less.

Strengthening Communication

Additionally, we need to strengthen our communication and timeliness regarding code and permit changes. Currently and historically the City has been backlogged or delayed in analyzing changes as they happen leading to confusion and wasted time and effort for those seeking a permit. A commitment to a more frequent regular schedule (quarterly or bi-annually) for assessing code and regulation changes could be adopted and provided on a dedicated webpage for changes. Incorporating and bringing in the key stakeholders such as the real estate and development community, CPS, and SAWS to this assessment session will help expedite and clarify what needs to be communicated and the best method for doing so.

Finally, an overarching concern for homeowners and property owners is the lengthy and costly amount of time it takes to secure a permit. At present, we do not provide any expedited services, whether through a fee-for-service model or other means as some of our other Texas cities do. Our goal would be to ensure the entire permitting process from plan to approval could take place in 30 days or less.



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Request

We request a multi-stakeholder review of specific operations related to permitting and communication of code requirements to enhance permitting transparency and expediency. This includes consideration of proposed changes to:

- The Preliminary Plan Review Meeting process and cost
- Improved communications & timely review of changes to permit requirements & code changes
- Incorporation of a downloadable checklist for residential and commercial permits
- Grace period if initially denied a permit
- Offering an expedited permit service for a fee
- Combined steps to set a goal that permitting is accomplished in 30 days or less

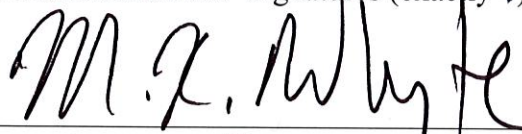
We believe that any efforts to help homeowners and property owners make necessary improvements to their properties benefit the overall economy and keep our communities vibrant and welcoming.

Submitted for Council consideration by:


Councilmember Melissa Cabello Havrda

Supporting Councilmembers' Signatures (exactly 4)

District

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