City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

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Agenda Item Number: 10

Agenda Date: April 27, 2022

In Control: Audit and Accountability Committee Meeting

DEPARTMENT: Office of the City Auditor

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Kevin Barthold

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: Citywide

SUBJECT:

Acceptance of the Office of the City Auditor Report AU21-001 of the Development Services Department's Accela System Release 2 Audit

SUMMARY:

The Development Services Department (DSD) is responsible for coordinating land and building development throughout the City. In partnership with other City departments, DSD helps homeowners, business owners, and those in the commercial industry plan and execute development projects.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Background
The Development Services Department (DSD) is responsible for coordinating land and building development throughout the City. In partnership with other City departments, DSD helps homeowners, business owners, and those in the commercial industry plan and execute

development projects.

For years, DSD has utilized disparate systems to deliver permit, inspection, land development and code enforcement services to their customers. These systems became outdated and were unable to easily adapt to DSD's changing business needs. In 2012, a business need to replace the outdated systems was identified and BuildSA formally initiated. BuildSA is the designated name of the project or software system that has either replaced or integrated with many of the systems used today by DSD. The provider or vendor of the system is Accela.

BuildSA is a web-based solution with workflow capabilities that allow DSD and partnering agencies to review, markup and comment on documents, eliminating the need for paperwork that typically accompanies paper-based reviews. Customers seeking to build, develop or improve property in the City now have access to new capabilities and ways of submitting applications, pulling building and fire permits, making payments and interacting with City and partnering agency staff.

Due to the complexity of DSD business and the amount of resources required to deploy a system like this, the project was divided into two phases that follow the development process:
- Release 1 included activities associated with horizontal development such as zoning, platting and construction inspections (Land Development). Release 1 was implemented on October 1, 2018.
- Release 2 is for activities associated with horizontal construction, such as plan review, permitting, inspections, building-related fire permits and includes code enforcement activities (Building Development & Code Enforcement). Release 2 was implemented on November 30, 2020.

Activities for these releases includes application submission, staff review and approval, invoicing, and payment receipts.

Audit Scope and Methodology
The audit scope was from November 30, 2020 through August 2021.

To establish our test criteria, we reviewed DSD and Information Technology Services Department (ITSD) policies and procedures, system documentation, and user access listings. We interviewed DSD and ITSD management and staff to gain an understanding of the Accela system Release 2 and the supporting infrastructure. Additionally, we reviewed the financial data generated from Accela.

As part of our testing procedures, we examined the following areas.
- User Access
- Password Settings
- Incident Management
- Change Management
- Backup and Recovery
- Interface Processing
- Input/Edit Data Entry

- Performance Measures
- Revenue Collection and Reconciliations
- Refund Processing

We relied on computer-processed data in SAP, the City's accounting system, to verify Accela refund payments were accurate. Our reliance was based on performing direct tests on the data rather than evaluating the system's general and application controls. We do not believe that the absence of testing general and application controls had an effect on the results of our audit.

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Conclusion
The system is working as intended to provide a more efficient and effective way for customer interaction and servicing.

However, significant opportunities exist to strengthen controls for:
- User Access
- System Backup Testing
- Segregation of Duties
- System Incident Tracking
- Revenue Account Reconciliations
- Open Job Tracking

ISSUE:

This item is for briefing only.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This item is for briefing only.

ALTERNATIVES:

This item is for briefing only.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends acceptance of this audit.