



# City of San Antonio

## Agenda Memorandum

**File Number:**  
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**Agenda Item Number:** 13

**Agenda Date:** June 3, 2022

**In Control:** Audit and Accountability Committee Meeting

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**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:**

Determine if application controls for the Accela system are adequate and data is accurate and reliable.

**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 These systems became outdated and were unable to easily adapt to DSD's changing business needs. In 2012, a business need to replace the outdated systems was identified and BuildSA formally initiated.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 & 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.

### **Audit Conclusions**

The Accela system is working as intended by providing a more efficient and effective way for citizens to access City services and pay for those services in a secure manner. We determined that DSD has established policies and procedures to manage password requirements, data entry, change management, interface processing, and server security.

However, there are significant opportunities to strengthen the controls associated with user access, segregation of duties, and revenue account reconciliations, which are the same deficiencies identified in the prior Accela audit (Release 1) completed in 2020. The action plans provided by management were not fully implemented to strengthen controls and mitigate risk. In addition, server backups are not being validated, service-related incidents are not meeting the Service Level Agreement, and open jobs valued at \$6,360,238.22 that management is unable to determine the

current status.

The Development Services Department agreed with our observations and has developed positive action plans to address them.

**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.