Mayor Muriel Bowser
City Administrator Rashad M. Young

PermitSTAT

DCRA • DDOT • DOEE • DOH • DC Water • OP • DGS

February 7, 2017
1. **System challenges:**
   a) Complex process (multiple agencies, numerous entry points and IT systems)
   b) Permit issuance times can be lengthy

2. **Questions:**
   a) What would it take to implement a streamlined, user-friendly permitting process?
   b) What would it take to have one, integrated District-wide permitting technology system?
   c) How do we reduce issuance times?

3. **Challenges and recommendations**

4. **Appendix slides**
## District’s Building Permitting Process Complexities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Multiple agencies and external partners</strong></td>
<td>• Plan review can be required by executive and independent agencies, WMATA, and federal partners&lt;br&gt;• 57% of plans require review by more than 1 agency&lt;br&gt;• Use of expediters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Various system entry points</strong></td>
<td>• Customers can enter the system by engaging various agencies&lt;br&gt;• Some permits can be issued entirely online, whereas some require applicants to visit DCRA in person to proceed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IT systems</strong></td>
<td>• 7 different IT systems&lt;br&gt;• Agencies do not all use the same system for plan review and approval&lt;br&gt;• Systems do not communicate well on the back end&lt;br&gt;• Cannot easily run reports for data to evaluate permitting process performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Complex and technical information</strong></td>
<td>• 53% of plans require 2 or more DCRA review cycles (ProjectDox data)&lt;br&gt;• Changing regulations: stormwater management, zoning***, heritage tree law</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Process map included in the appendix<br>**Matrix of IT systems included in the appendix<br>***See appendix for additional information on zoning regulations
What Agencies are Involved in Building Permitting?

Involved Agencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Number of Permits Issued</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DCRA</td>
<td>3,730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOE</td>
<td>1,103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OP</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DDOT</td>
<td>540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFA</td>
<td>379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCWATER</td>
<td>364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOH</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WMATA</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHITEHOUSE</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCPC</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of Agencies Involved

- **57%** of the time building permit reviews are required by more than one agency.

Number of Agencies Reviewing

- **1**
- **2 or more**

*DCRA ProjectDox data; calendar year 2016.*
How Many Days Does it Take to Issue the Top Construction Permits?

Top Construction Permits: Issuance Times (90th Percentile)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alteration and Repair</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misc.</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addition Alteration Repair</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solar System</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demolition</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fence</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Building</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sign</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addition</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retaining Wall</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of the top construction permit issuance times have reduced from 2014 to 2016; e.g. New Building permit issuance times have reduced 54%.

Includes PRC review. Review times equal to 0 days (walkthrough jobs) are filtered out.
*DCRA Accela data.
How Many Days are 90% of Building Permits Reviewed In?

First Review

Second Review

Third Review

*DCRA ProjectDox data; calendar year 2016
How Many DCRA Technical Reviews do Building Permits Take?

53% of plans require 2 or more review cycles by DCRA

*DCRA ProjectDox data; calendar year 2016
What DCRA Divisions are Reviewing Plans More than Two Times?

• 10% of plans require a 3rd green review
• 9%, a 3rd structural review
• 9%, a 3rd zoning review

*DCRA ProjectDox data; calendar year 2016
What Construction Permits Go Through the 3rd Party Review Program?

- 66% increase in Alteration and Repair permits from 2014 to 2016
- 105% increase in Addition Alteration Repair permits from 2014 to 2016

*DCRA ProjectDox data; fiscal years.
Sister Agency Data (FY16)

• Review/approval times across agencies are not comparable because of varying complexities of the permit reviews; target turnaround times also vary across agencies

*DC Water and DDOT listed in calendar days. DOH and DOEE in business days. Data is from each sister agency's system
Challenges

1. There isn’t one, cross agency permitting technology solution

2. Process challenges
   a) Customers must visit DCRA; not everything can be accomplished online
   b) Paper plan submission still required for certain agencies
   c) Payment challenges
   d) Review notification process for other District Government agencies
   e) Pre-screening process

3. No structured, cross-agency permitting customer service feedback mechanism

4. Increasing zoning reviews coupled with more complex zoning regulations

5. Lack of transparency for customer once permit application submitted
   a) Review time uncertainty

6. Inability to view a complete “project / job;” rather records are kept by permit

7. Permit fee estimates can be challenging for customers

8. Reliance on expediters
   a) Development of entire industry to navigate government system
1. **Address business and IT process challenges**
   a) High priority to eliminate all required in person visits to DCRA
   b) Clear process maps accompanied by timeframes for all permit types

2. **IT system to view all data, to include data by project – not just individual permit**

3. **Improve customer service feedback loops**
   a) Cross-agency, structured feedback mechanism

4. **Establish District-wide permitting working group**
   a) Address process challenges
   b) Explore customer service improvement initiatives
   c) Design permit processing time dashboard
      a) Determine appropriate measures, e.g. initial online application to permit issuance time, PRC review time, etc., to track for reporting to OCA and stakeholder agency Directors

5. **Increase outreach to inform stakeholders of process**

6. **Permit application review project w/The Lab @ DC**
Permitting Process Map

Online application
- IT system for online application is single purpose; it is not used again in the process.

Customer visits DCRA to receive invoice
- Customer is required to visit DCRA; process cannot be completed entirely online.

Customer pays filing fees
- Customer pays filing fee to OCFO (located at DCRA).

Customer presents DCRA receipt
- Added step for the customer because OCFO and DCRA systems do not automatically record payment.

PRC records payment and sends invitation to ProjectDox

Customer uploads plans to ProjectDox

PRC reviews plans
- Target for PRC to review plans is 2 business days.

Does project meet standards?

NO
- PRC provides guidance

YES
- Process continues until plan can be accepted; multiple submittals of plans are not uncommon.

PRC accepts job

(continued on next page)
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Executive Office of Mayor Muriel Bowser
## IT Systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>System</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Users</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>Online Construction Permit Application Intake (OCPI)</strong></td>
<td>Customer facing, online system for initial building permit application</td>
<td>DCRA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <strong>Accela</strong>*</td>
<td>DCRA’s primary permitting system</td>
<td>DCRA, DDOT, DOH, OP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <strong>ProjectDox</strong>*</td>
<td>Electronic plan submission and review application; used by both customers, for upload, and agencies, for review</td>
<td>DCRA, DDOT, DOH, OP, DOEE, DC Water, DGS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. <strong>Transportation Online Permitting System (TOPS)</strong>***</td>
<td>Online system that enables customers to apply for permits; used by both customers and DDOT</td>
<td>DDOT, FEMS, PEPCO, DOEE, DC Water, Verizon, Washington Gas, CFA, OP, ANCs, WMATA, OCTFME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. <strong>Stormwater Database</strong></td>
<td>Database facilitates the implementation of stormwater regulations including: stormwater management performance requirements, tracking of reviews, calculation of fees, tracking of off-site compliance, and reporting to EPA on green infrastructure</td>
<td>DOEE, DDOT, DGS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. <strong>Maximo</strong></td>
<td>Manages permit review activities and customer account creation/modification. Maximo assigns review workflow and assists DC Water in tracking permits through the review process</td>
<td>DC Water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. <strong>Digital Health</strong></td>
<td>Web-based system to record inspection results. Used as the database to capture all licensed food and hygiene establishments and facilities in Washington, DC</td>
<td>DOH</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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*Not all agencies review plans in Accela and ProjectDox; however, agencies still approve in the system

**Approximately 60 different agencies and offices use TOPS for application processing and reviews**
Increasing Zoning Reviews

- 19% increase in zoning reviews from FY13 to FY16
- New regulations went into effect September 2016; more regulations and increased complexity
- In some zones, new regulations require reviewers to assess neighboring property conditions
- Increased regulations coupled w/complexity are worth following re Zoning review times

*DCRA data
What agencies are involved in the permitting process?
## Involved Agencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DCRA</th>
<th>DDOT</th>
<th>DOEE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Primary permitting agency</td>
<td>• Review of building projects that touch public space permanently (construction) or temporarily (occupancy)</td>
<td>• Review of building project plans w/an environmental component, to include:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Regulates construction and issues building permits</td>
<td>• Public space includes:</td>
<td>• Storm water mgmt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Review disciplines include:</td>
<td>• Roadways</td>
<td>• Lead-based paint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Structural</td>
<td>• Sidewalks</td>
<td>• Asbestos abatement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fire Protection</td>
<td>• Public Parking</td>
<td>• Water quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mechanical</td>
<td>• Trees</td>
<td>• Hazardous material mgmt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Plumbing</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Air quality (Federal Gov; EPA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Electrical</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Involved Agencies

### DC Water
- Review of construction/alteration projects that touch DC’s water and/or sewer systems
- Reviews are to ensure projects meet design criteria and requirements and that DC Water can meet demand/handle capacity of change
- DC Water also performs inspections to ensure work quality
- Assess inspection fees and work orders for each project

### DOH
- Regulates building quality and safety for healthcare and food establishment facilities
- Healthcare facilities include: hospitals, nursing homes, home health agencies, outpatient rehab facilities
- Food establishments include: restaurants, wholesale markets, grocery stores, hotels, swimming pools

### OP
- Review of construction/alteration projects in historic districts or on site of a historic landmark
- District’s liaison w/US Commission on Fine Arts; all permits requiring CFA approval are routed through OP
What types of permits are issued?
Building Permits Issued

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*DCRA Accela data. One job may require multiple permits.
Building Construction Permits

Top 10 subtypes account for 97% of all construction permits; the Alteration and Repair subtype alone is 62% of all construction permits.
How Many Days Does it Take to Issue Non-construction Building Permits?

Supplemental permits can be issued entirely online; Certificate of Occupancy and Home Occupation permits require an in person visit to DCRA. Issuance time includes PRC. Review times equal to 0 days (walkthrough jobs) are filtered out.

*DCRA Accela data.
How is customer service feedback solicited? How can we improve the customer’s experience?
Customer Service Feedback

Current:

- Permitting feedback, if collected, is done so on an agency-by-agency basis
- It's difficult to quantify the customer’s experience of the entire process
- DCRA is the only agency w/ a structured, permitting specific customer service survey; survey launched in July 2016
- Grade.DC being used by DCRA and DDOT
  - OPM is working to replace Grade.DC

Initiatives In-Progress:

- DCRA implementing more comprehensive permitting survey (status: ongoing)
- Automatic text surveys to customers following permit issuance and/or final inspection: (status: complete December 31)
Improving Customer Service: Form-A-Palooza

- Partner w/The Lab @ DC to review DCRA forms
- A form that is difficult to use can cause annoyance, waste time, and prompt errors, which collectively undermine the quality of customer service
- The behavioral sciences offer a wealth of theory and evidence on how people interact with a form and, by implication, how those processes might be improved
- Follow DCRA form project w/broader, District-wide Form-A-Palooza to generate excitement

Envisioned Process

1. Prioritize DCRA forms for review
2. Modify forms w/ behavioral science insights
3. A/B test to ensure sufficient improvement
4. Repeat
How are sister agencies performing?
### DDOT Construction Permitting

- Nearly 3 times as many approved permits from FY11 to FY16
- Same day approval occurred 48% of the time in FY16

**Construction permits account for 34% of all DDOT-issued permits**

*DDOT TOPS data. Fiscal Years. Calendar days.*
17% percent increase in permits approved within 30 days and 41 day decrease in average approval time from FY11 to FY16, despite approx. 3 times as many permits approved.
DC Water Reviews (FY16)

*DC Water data.*
DOEE: ESC Reviews

**Soil Erosion and Sediment Control (ESC) Plans**

![Graph showing monthly approved ESC plans from October to September.]

**ESC Review Times**

![Bar chart showing average business days under review for each month from October to September.]

*DOEE data*
DOEE: Stormwater Management Reviews (FY16)

*DOEE data
DOH: Food Establishment Health Reviews (FY16)

- Approved: 368
- Avg. Initial Review Time: 8.25 days (DOH goal is 14 business days for review)
- Average Time to Approve: 27 days

*DOH data*
HPO reviews are performed by OP staff; HPRB reviews are performed by the Historic Preservation Review Board. *OP data.

*DCRA Accela data. Construction Permits only; top subtypes (excluding New Buildings). OP does not track review times.