



Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs DCRA (CR)

MISSION

The mission of the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) is to protect the health, safety, economic interests and quality of life of residents, businesses and visitors in the District of Columbia by ensuring code compliance and regulating businesses.

SUMMARY OF SERVICES

DCRA is responsible for issuing licenses and permits, conducting inspections, enforcing building, housing, and safety codes, regulating land use and development, and providing consumer education and advocacy services.

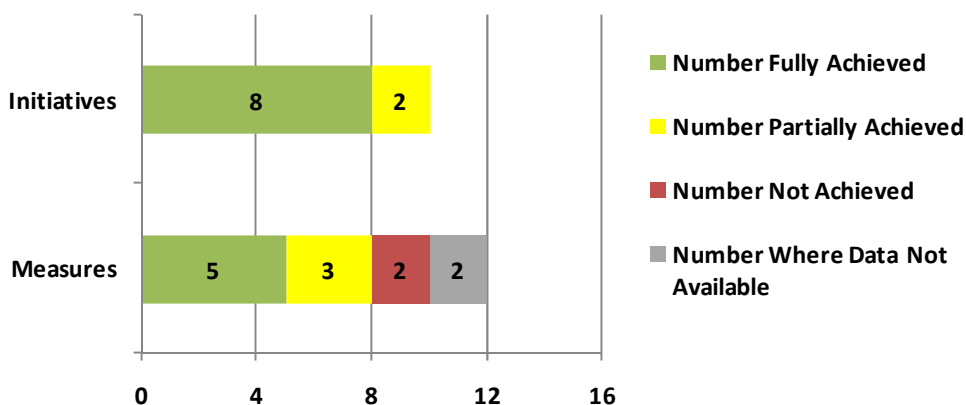
AGENCY OBJECTIVES

1. Enhance customer satisfaction through efficient and effective regulatory and compliance processes.
2. Protect the health and safety of people who visit, live, and work in the District of Columbia.
3. Encourage economic growth that maintains the character of neighborhoods and the quality of life of residents.

3 KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- ✓ 55% of inspections staff were certified by the International Code Council.
- ✓ Filed a criminal law suit against 50 slumlord properties.
- ✓ Eliminated a 3 year plan review backlog in the permitting division.

OVERVIEW OF AGENCY PERFORMANCE








Performance Initiatives – Assessment Details



Performance Assessment Key:

-  Fully achieved  Partially achieved  Not achieved  Data not reported

OBJECTIVE 1: Enhance customer satisfaction through efficient and effective regulatory and compliance processes.

-  **INITIATIVE 1.1: Establish a “consolidated citywide permit center” with sister agencies.**
Fully Achieved. DCRA has successfully involved the Department of Transportation, Department of the Environment, and Department of Health in the daily intake of construction plans in the Permit Center. Customers can now submit permit applications and plans for all three agencies at a single entry point. Most reviews for the three agencies are completed at DCRA within a single IT system for improved communication and to prevent losing plans during transport. Finally, questions for multiple agencies can be answered in a single visit to DCRA.
-  **INITIATIVE 1.2: Implement a comprehensive property management IT system (CPMS) for inspections and permitting operations.**
Fully Achieved. During FY 2008, DCRA implemented a comprehensive system to track all vacant property, inspections, abatement, and permitting activity. This system integrated over 10 independent databases, and enables staff to track all permitting, inspection, and enforcement activity by address, property owner, date, etc.
-  **INITIATIVE 1.3: Transition from a permission- to a compliance-based permitting process.**
Partially Achieved. In February 2008, DCRA launched an online Supplemental Permit application and issuance system. For jobs installing Air Conditioning and Refrigeration units, Plumbing Fixtures or Electrical Fixtures, DCRA allows contractors to apply for, pay for and print supplemental permits online.

OBJECTIVE 2: Protect the health and safety of people who visit, live, and work in the District of Columbia.

-  **INITIATIVE 2.1: Cross-train all inspectors on International Code Council (ICC) standards.**
Fully Achieved. DCRA trained all residential and commercial inspectors in preparation for various ICC certification exams. As of September 20, 2008, 70% of residential inspectors were certified to regulate housing preservation using the International Property Maintenance Code, and the remaining 30% are new hires who will be required to pass the exam within 1 year of hire. A number of inspectors were separated from the agency after failing to pass the required ICC exam. In addition, 33% of commercial inspectors were certified to inspect electrical, building, fire, and/or plumbing construction and renovation. All commercial inspectors (except new hires) are required to be certified in a building trade of their choice by December 31, 2008. New hires will be required to receive a certification within one year of employment.
-  **INITIATIVE 2.2: Implement certification and auditing functions for third party program participants, and establish certification criteria for home improvement contractors.**
Fully Achieved. DCRA developed a third party inspection program manual to clarify licensure, experience, and International Code Council certification requirements for each professional trade. The manual also outlines clear application processes for all third party program participants (including existing third party inspectors), mandates information sharing between third party inspectors and DCRA, and summarizes reporting



requirements. Most importantly, the manual authorizes DCRA to perform random audits and dismiss any third party inspectors not complying with all requirements. These requirements will be implemented in conjunction with the 2008 Building Code once the code is approved by Council.

● **INITIATIVE 2.3: Develop a comprehensive and robust Consumer Protection program.**

Fully Achieved. In an effort to unify the base knowledge standard of all staff, Consumer Protection investigators participated in the National Association of Consumer Protection Investigators annual conference where they received training on current consumer concerns. Training topics included Home foreclosures, Gas Prices and Price Gouging, DTV Transition, and Pyramid Schemes. While Consumer Protection investigators were not legally authorized to write notices of infraction during FY 2008, they referred 33 cases to regulatory investigators for business license violations, and 18 cases to the Attorney General for criminal prosecution.

● **INITIATIVE 2.4: Expand the capacity of the Illegal Construction and Enforcement (ICE) Unit.**

Fully Achieved. The Illegal Construction Unit was staffed with a supervisor and three full-time inspectors. The unit's increased productivity is shown by its performance indicators; the number of permits that resulted from illegal construction inspections nearly doubled during the first 3 quarters and totaled 673 by the fiscal year's end.

OBJECTIVE 3: Encourage economic growth that maintains the character of neighborhoods and the quality of life of residents.

● **INITIATIVE 3.1: Reduce the number of blighted properties in communities by expediting the Board of Condemnation's owner hearing process and by forcing owners to quickly remedy the cited conditions of properties.**

Partially Achieved. The legal organization of the board prohibited DCRA from requiring owners to remedy violations within 30 days as planned at the outset of the fiscal year. Instead, the agency attacked this problem from another angle. By vetting problem properties through traditional residential inspection processes, the agency reduced the Board's caseload, allowed Board members to focus on egregious violations, and encouraged property owners to abate violations quickly through civil enforcement mechanisms.

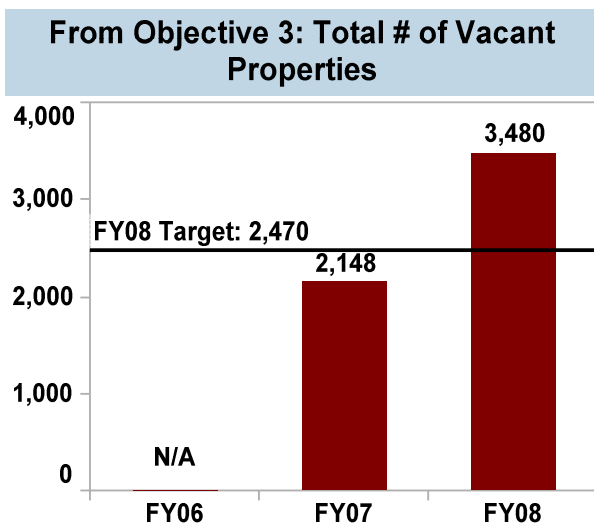
● **INITIATIVE 3.2: Develop a comprehensive strategy to identify and address vacant and blighted properties through existing authorities.**

Fully Achieved. In FY 2008, the Office of Vacant Property conducted an arduous city wide block-by-block survey that identified 3,344 vacant properties. Approximately 33% were "for sale" or "under active construction renovation." By forwarding the properties to be taxed at \$10 per \$100 of property value, DCRA encouraged property owners to reuse their properties. These efforts are not reflected in the numbers because the housing market downturn led to increased foreclosures. The universe of vacant properties rose slightly from 3,344 in the first quarter to 3,480 by the fiscal year's end. All vacant properties that were surveyed received notices of violation for housing code violations, and entered into DCRA's enforcement and abatement process. Throughout the year, 82% of housing code violations on vacant properties were remediated.

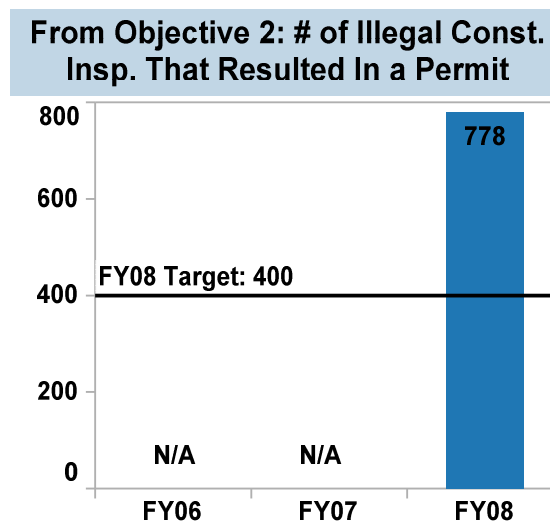
● **INITIATIVE 3.3: Identify multi-family housing providers who are repeated housing code violators in order to expedite criminal referrals.**

Fully Achieved. DCRA identified 50 multi-family properties with significant housing code violations, invalid or absent business licenses, and invalid or absent Certificates of Occupancy. In coordination with OAG, DCRA filed a criminal suit against the 13 owners of the identified properties. After repeated owner repairs and re-inspections, 37 of the properties were brought into compliance. DCRA and OAG requested the remaining 13 properties to be placed in receivership. As a result of the case, all 13 properties have either been repaired and licensed, are in the process of being repaired and licensed, or are in various stages of negotiation with the judge.

Key Performance Indicators – Highlights



↑
NO RATING
↓



↑
FULLY ACHIEVED
↓

More About These Indicators:

How did the agency's actions affect this indicator?

- DCRA conducted a block-by-block survey to inventory the District's vacant properties.
- The agency classified properties as vacant and referred addresses to the Office of Tax and Revenue for taxation at the \$10 Class 3 tax rate.

What external factors influenced this indicator?

- As a result of the housing downturn, increased foreclosures, and slow economic growth, many more properties have been vacated. Few people can afford to re-use properties.

How did the agency's actions affect this indicator?

- DCRA dedicated an additional inspector and program manager to the Illegal Construction program
- The agency shifted internal policy from a focused approach emphasizing infraction issuance for code violation to a holistic approach that ensures compliance.

What external factors influenced this indicator?

- Though the agency exceeded its goal, far more illegal construction sites would have been operating if not for the economic downturn. The agency's 23% reduction in building permit issuance signifies a significant reduction in construction District-wide.



Key Performance Indicators – Details

Performance Assessment Key:

- Fully achieved
 ● Partially achieved
 ● Not achieved
 ● Data not reported

| | FY06 Actual | FY07 Actual | FY08 Target | FY08 Actual | FY09 Projection |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|--------------------|
| OBJECTIVE 1: Enhance customer satisfaction through efficient and effective regulatory and compliance processes. | | | | | |
| ● % of customers satisfied with DCRA's customer service. | N/A | N/A | 60.0% | 84.7% | 70.0% |
| ● % of complex building plans reviewed within 30 business days. | 45.0% | 68.7% | 75.0% | 81.9% | 80.0% |
| ● % of express building permits issued within 24 hrs. | 63% | 82% | 85% | 84% | 90% |
| ● % of permits available online. | N/A | N/A | 50.0% | 22.4% | 55.0% |
| OBJECTIVE 2: Protect the health and safety of people who visit, live, and work in the District of Columbia. | | | | | |
| ● % of scheduled inspections conducted. | N/A | 74.1% | 75.0% | 76.9% | 80.0% |
| ● % of third party inspections verified to be code compliant | N/A | N/A | 60% | N/A | 70% |
| ● % of consumer complaints resolved within 90 days. | N/A | N/A | 75.0% | 62.6% | 80.0% |
| ● % of illegal construction inspections completed within 24 hours. | 95.0% | 78.0% | 80.0% | 71.3% | 85.0% |
| ● # of illegal construction inspections completed that resulted in a permit issued. | N/A | N/A | 400 | 778 | 350 |
| ● % of BCIB cases in which an owner remedied all cited violations within 60 days. | N/A | N/A | 60% | 0% | 65% |
| OBJECTIVE 3: Encourage economic growth that maintains the character of neighborhoods and the quality of life of residents. | | | | | |
| ● % of vacant housing units brought into compliance and/or alternative corrective methods to remove blighted conditions. | N/A | 60.0% | 75.0% | 82.5% | 78.0% |
| ● Total # of vacant properties. | N/A | 2,148 | 2,470 | 3,480 | 2,320 |