



FY09 PERFORMANCE PLAN Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs

MISSION

The mission of the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) aims 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 business.

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.

OBJECTIVE 1: Provide efficient and effective regulatory and compliance processes.

INITIATIVE 1.1: Extend permitting functions into the community with a focus on green building advantages.

Homeowners and contractors alike are forced to visit DCRA to obtain permits before completing all simple improvement and construction projects. This burden discourages some from obtaining a permit, thus reducing city revenue and creating a safety hazard. By partnering with home improvement warehouses, DCRA will create three (3) fully connected customer service/virtual permit center kiosks within stores where customers can learn about required permits, explore the benefits of green building, and process online permit applications during store hours. Homeowners and contractors will be able to process and print permits while shopping for project materials. Kiosks will save customers' time by preventing visits to DCRA, allow them to process permits outside normal business hours, educate customers about DCRA's permit requirements, and promote green building programs and materials. Each kiosk will cost approximately \$30,000 for build-out and connectivity, and all are expected to be complete by February 2009.

INITIATIVE 1.2: Expand and refine the "consolidated citywide Permit Center" with sister agencies.

DCRA has successfully involved DDOT, DDOE, and DOH in the daily intake of construction plans in the Permit Center. Customers can now submit permit applications and plans for all three (3) agencies at a single entry point. Most reviews for the three (3) agencies are completed at DCRA for improved communication and to prevent losing plans during transport. Finally, questions for multiple agencies can be answered in a single visit to DCRA. Customers cannot, however, submit plans to the Water and Sewer Authority (WASA) staff or have questions answered by WASA staff in the Permit Center. In addition, DCRA cannot guarantee plan review timeframes, because performance targets have not been finalized with sister agencies. This year, DCRA will add WASA staff to the Permit Center thus creating a true one stop intake center. The agency will also define performance targets for all sister agencies' plan reviews. Completing the one stop Permit Center by adding WASA staff will save customers time, effort and confusion. Obtaining performance targets from sister agencies will allow DCRA to provide accurate and reliable plan review deadlines to customers. WASA involvement and performance targets should be complete by January and April 2009 respectively, and the build out for WASA is expected to cost \$99,000.

INITIATIVE 1.3: Expand web-based permitting services.

In fiscal year 2008, DCRA unveiled online permit processing for three (3) permit categories that do not require plan review. This year, the agency will expand permits available for online processing. For all EZ permits (those issued for non-structural interior remodeling) customers



will be able to submit applications, upload construction plans, read review decisions, and print permits without setting foot in DCRA. Developments in the permitting process will be marketed through an outreach campaign including press releases, added signage, and website updates. Customers will see time savings and lower gas and parking costs, and are expected to be increasingly satisfied with DCRA's customer service. IT enhancements will require approximately \$85,000 and are expected to be implemented in March 2009.

INITIATIVE 1.4: Develop Interactive Voice Routing (IVR) system for inspection scheduling unit.

Most interaction with DCRA requires contact with staff either by phone or in-person. Customers cannot obtain the status of permit applications easily or schedule inspections outside business hours. Additionally, customers are unaware of their scheduled residential inspection time until the morning of the day the inspection is to occur. Finally, when properties fail inspections, it is difficult to reach field staff to inquire about their inspections. The IVR system will resolve many scheduling, status and customer service issues for DCRA customers. The 24-hour phone-based system will improve scheduling by providing a voice operated, automated scheduling service which supplies a committed inspection date during the call. Retrieving permit applications statuses and inspection results will only require a confirmation number, and will be available through the automated system at all hours. Finally, customers will be able to leave voice messages for inspectors to inquire about failed inspections, and inspectors can return voice messages to customers through the IVR. Regardless of hectic schedules that may conflict with business hours, customers will be able to do business with DCRA at all hours with just a phone. The IVR system will cost \$250,000 and is expected to roll out in November 2008.

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

INITIATIVE 2.1: Implement an agency-wide proactive inspections and compliance program.

Inspections in the District are complaint driven, ad-hoc, and lack a systematic approach to compliance. As a result, inspectors remain in a constant reactionary state facing numerous emergencies and angry tenants, owners, and neighbors. Additionally, because DCRA has never surveyed buildings comprehensively, the agency has no conception of the potential code violations, and thus danger, in existing buildings throughout the District. DCRA will take a two-pronged approach to improving inspections in the District. First, the agency will develop an inspections career ladder that will attract talented candidates and require phased certifications. Second, the agency will inspect all multi-unit residential buildings in the District on a multi-year cycle. Coordination between the residential inspection program and enforcement unit will systematically improve the inspections and enforcement process, reduce the number of emergency violations in multi-unit buildings and provide tenants with a sense of security in the safety of their apartments. The inspections career ladder is expected to be implemented in October 2008, and the proactive inspections program will launch in April 2009. The proactive inspection program will cost approximately \$100,000 for (2) contract employees.

INITIATIVE 2.2: Streamline the Basic Business Licensing process and improve communication with customers.

Unlike most DCRA programs, the Basic Business License process has not undergone reengineering efforts in the recent past. The outreach, application, and issuance processes have remained still while IT, staff and customers transformed around them. As new general contractor and general business license categories are launched, DCRA licensing traffic will increase by roughly 25%, a volume that the current process cannot manage. To contend with the expected



license application growth and better manage licensure from start to finish, the Basic Business License program will make numerous improvements including enforcement coordination, website improvements and online license renewal capability. These improvements will streamline the new and renewal application processes, enable online renewals, improve online licensure information, enable multiple endorsements to be included on a single basic business license and ensure that unlicensed businesses are brought into compliance. The agency will spend approximately \$150,000 for IT enhancements that are expected to be complete by November 2008.

INITIATIVE 2.3: Improve auto-related consumer experiences through improved Consumer Protection regulations and programs.

Recent changes to District taxi legislation and legal precedents regarding after market auto parts, combined with current auto repair shop enforcement policies, have transformed the auto-related market into a turbulent and dangerous forum for consumers. Auto-related complaints compile 13% of all consumer complaints submitted to DCRA's Consumer Protection program—the office's second common complaint. The program plans to focus education, investigations, enforcement, and outreach programs on auto-related industries. Specifically, the office will launch a program to provide highly visible stickers to licensed auto repair shops. DCRA stickers will allow consumers to quickly identify reputable shops, and protect them from businesses not in good standing. Educational materials, outreach programs, and the auto repair sticker program are expected to cost \$35,000 and will be implemented by January 2009.

INITIATIVE 2.4: Develop a Building Code advisory process.

In the past, building code revisions were driven by the Building Code Advisory Council. As a result, code reviews were guided by the building industry rather than the Chief Building Official within DCRA. In FY 2009, DCRA will establish an internal Building Code Advisory Protocol that will allow the Chief Building Official to manage the overall code revision adoption process. The Protocol will include the creation of 13 trade-specific subcommittees composed of DCRA and sister agency experts. The new building code advisory process will ensure that all building code updates are made objectively for the sole purpose of protecting the health and safety of District residents, employees, and visitors.

OBJECTIVE 3: Encourage economic growth in neighborhoods and improve the quality of life of residents through licensure and code compliance.

INITIATIVE 3.1: Enhance and streamline enforcement process.

A hierarchical organizational structure and inadequate software have prevented DCRA from effectively pursuing fines or filing criminal charges against incompliant building and business owners. DCRA will implement a new comprehensive Nuisance Abatement enforcement procedure, and redesign internal enforcement processes to effectively abate violations, collect fines, and forward egregious cases for criminal enforcement. Revised processes are expected to be implemented by December 2008.

INITIATIVE 3.2: Develop a comprehensive strategy to bring vacant and blighted properties back to productive use through coordination with sister agencies.

In FY 2008, DCRA successfully surveyed every city block to create a comprehensive list of vacant properties in the District, and created a comprehensive plan to address vacant properties holistically with sister agencies. During FY 2009, DCRA will focus on bringing vacant properties back into productive use. In addition to referring 20 properties to the Department of Housing and Community Development's Home Again and (newly reinstated) Homestead Programs, DCRA will forward eligible properties to OTR for tax sale. Finally, in extreme cases,



DCRA will increase its use of Demolition by Neglect legislation in coordination with the Office of Planning. Improved coordination between DCRA and sister agencies will expedite the reuse of vacant properties making neighborhoods more safe and productive.

INITIATIVE 3.3: Coordinate with sister agencies to improve building stock in Focus Improvement Areas (FIAs) through comprehensive inspections (residential, commercial, and vacant property).

In the past, DCRA's involvement in economic development projects has been reactionary, and focused solely on residential property. In FY 2009, the agency plans to proactively work with sister agencies to target inspections of all types within Focus Improvement Areas. Teams of residential, commercial, and vacant property inspectors will survey all 150 buildings within FIAs to ensure that residences *and* businesses are compliant with the building code, and that vacant properties are registered with DCRA. Improvements in FIAs' building stock will change the physical appearance of the areas, thus changing both insiders' and outsiders' perception of them and encourage economic development.



PROPOSED KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Measure	FY07 Actual	FY08 Target	FY08 Actual	FY09 Projection	FY10 Projection	FY11 Projection
Objective 1						
% of customers satisfied with DCRA's customer service	N/A	75%	77%	80%	85%	87%
% of permits issued online	N/A	N/A	N/A	250	350	400
% of customer calls agency-wide received by IVR	N/A	N/A	N/A	30%	35%	40%
% of inspections scheduled to appropriate discipline/inspector	N/A	N/A	N/A	65%	75%	80%
# of permits issued at virtual Permit Center kiosks	N/A	N/A	N/A	100	150	200
% of building plan reviews completed within identified timeframes	N/A	N/A	N/A	95%	100%	100%
Objective 2						
% of basic business licenses processed online	N/A	N/A	N/A	40%	70%	90%
% reduction in auto-related consumer complaints	N/A	N/A	N/A	20%	30%	40%
% of consumer protection complaints resolved within 90 days	N/A	65%	64%	75%	80%	85%
# of proactive building-wide inspections conducted in multi-family residential buildings	N/A	N/A	N/A	625	625	850
% of illegal construction inspections completed within 24 hours	78%	80%	75%	85%	90%	95%
Objective 3						
# of vacant properties identified in FIAs	N/A	N/A	N/A	70	50	40
% of vacant housing units brought into compliance and/or alternative corrective methods to remove blighted conditions	60%	85%	83%	85%	90%	95%
# of cases referred to OAG for criminal prosecution	N/A	N/A	N/A	25	40	50
# of vacant property cases forwarded to the Homestead Program	N/A	N/A	N/A	12	13	14
# of vacant property cases forwarded to the Home Again Program	N/A	N/A	N/A	20	22	24
# of vacant property cases forwarded to OAG for demolition by neglect	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	3	3
# of inspections conducted in FIAs	N/A	N/A	N/A	150	175	200