



**CITY OF ELK GROVE
CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT**

AGENDA TITLE: Building Permit Policy and Streamlining Discussion, City Council Direction to staff, and Resolution Approving Administrative Policy for Building Permit Issuance Timeframes

MEETING DATE: May 13, 2015

PREPARED BY: Shane Diller, Code Enforcement Manager

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Richard S. Renfro, Chief Building Official

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Receive information on building permit streamlining efforts, provide direction to staff, and consider adopting resolution approving associated Administrative Policy for building permit issuance timeframes.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Permit Simplicity:

At its meeting of March 11, 2015, the City Council formed an ad-hoc committee to examine streamlining the process of issuing building permits and to consider modeling building permit process revisions after a program currently used in the City of Phoenix, Arizona.

Currently, the Building Department receives building permit applications and accompanying plans. These plans are reviewed for compliance with the California Building Code. Once permits are issued, building inspectors ensure the project is built in conformance with the plans and the code.

Improvements examined by the ad-hoc committee focused on the plans examination phase of the process. The Building Department has a current performance standard of a 15-day turnaround time on plans examination. This standard is met 96% of the time, with an average turnaround time of nine business days. In addition to meeting the current plans examination timing standard, the Building Department offers a number of expedited

permit processing options, including Tenant Improvement Tuesdays, 11 different over-the-counter permits that can be issued immediately, and concurrent plans review in which the City reviews plans simultaneously with outside agencies rather than waiting for their approval before beginning the City review.

Potential improvements to the current building permit process through Permit Simplicity have focused on Tenant Improvement permits (T.I.) and on the possibility of creating a system where industry professionals with the proper credentials could be prequalified by the City to submit T.I. plans that would not be subject to City plans examination in its current form.

Permit Simplicity would instead subject plans submitted by a pre-qualified professional to a less detailed initial review and, in turn, an expedited permit issuance. The City would then rely on the inspection process to identify and correct non-compliance with applicable codes. Additionally, the City would audit a percentage of plans submitted through this proposed system to perform a greater review and to re-confirm the plans are code compliant. Prequalified submitters that experience a certain audit failure rate would be excluded from the expedited process for the following twelve months and be required to attend a meeting with Building staff to review the audit failure causes before being readmitted to the program.

Under a Permit Simplicity program, the City would still issue permits, and buildings would still be required to comply with all applicable codes. The City would just be relying upon other professionals in the industry, such as private engineers and architects, to assist in review of the plans, at no additional cost to the City. At least initially, the Permit Simplicity program will be directed toward commercial T.I permits, subject to possible expansion later, depending on the results of the initial program.

The prequalified submitters would be required to submit an application to the program that includes:

- Proof of compliance with insurance requirements sufficient to protect consumers from defects and errors.
- Completion of a City indemnification agreement that requires the prequalified submitter to accept responsibility for plans and construction defects and errors.
- Appropriate Plans Examiner certification with the International Code Council (ICC), or completion of an approved alternative training program that may be developed in the future.

- California Accessibility Specialist (CASp) Certification.
- Present a planned process for dealing with unreasonable hardships encountered by property owners needing to comply with accessibility requirements.

Following receipt of the necessary application materials, the Building Department would create a database to track prequalified submitters and the projects upon which they have submitted. The prequalified submitter process could improve turnaround times from the 22-day average to between next day to three days, dependent upon the complexity of the project and the assumption that the submitter has received all necessary outside agency approvals prior to submittal.

Permit Simplicity could be ready to launch July 1, 2015.

It is important to note that Permit Simplicity would expedite the building permit process within the City Building Department; however, Permit Simplicity would not necessarily affect the development review process currently undertaken by other City departments or outside agencies.

Building Permit Turnaround Time Policy:

In an effort to improve transparency and as an economic development driver that would help promote Elk Grove as the place to do business in the Sacramento region, the Elk Grove Building Department proposes a policy clearly outlining the expected turnaround times for various permits. These performance standards illustrate the time in which an applicant can generally expect to have a permit ready for issuance should the applicant be diligent about processing on the applicant's side of the process.

Below is an outline of the turnaround times an applicant can currently expect from the City of Elk Grove when submitting a completed application. These timeframes are separate and apart from the timeframes participants in Permit Simplicity would expect, and we anticipate they will remain unchanged with implementation of the new program.

Building Permit Issuance Timeframes:

Same-day (Over the Counter) Permits with Plan Review:

- Attached Patio covers, trellises
- Residential Swimming Pools and Spas
- Kitchen and Bathroom Remodels

- Solar Photovoltaic
- Interior demolition permits (Residential and Commercial)
- New Sewer/Gas/Electrical
- Minor Fire Repairs
- New Commercial HVAC units
- Tile Roofing Projects
- Commercial Tenant Improvement - Minor (T.I. Tuesday)
- Storage or Utility Occupancy

Ten Day:

- All Residential Projects

Fifteen Day:

- Residential Master Plans (up to five floor plans)
- All Commercial Projects

FISCAL IMPACT:

No fiscal impact is anticipated. Should a streamlining model be adopted that creates negative fiscal impacts, staff would seek Council approval to adjust permit fees to ensure cost recovery.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Resolution
 - a. Building Permit Issuance Timeframe Policy

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ELK GROVE
APPROVING THE ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY FOR BUILDING PERMIT
ISSUANCE TIMEFRAMES**

WHEREAS, the City of Elk Grove believes in fostering an environment where City government provides unparalleled service to our residents, businesses, and industries; and

WHEREAS, one significant driver of economic development and job growth is performing development services, and specifically building safety services, in a manner that is easy to use and efficient; and

WHEREAS, clear performance standards for City staff and consultants provide for effective service levels when performing intake of applications, plans review, and issuance of permits; and

WHEREAS, clear and transparent permit issuance policies best demonstrate to the building and development community the expectations they can have when choosing to do business in Elk Grove; and

WHEREAS, City of Elk Grove Administrative Policy BD 15-001 sets forth clear timeframes for building permit issuance; contains standards which are reasonable to meet, while holding the City's process to a high level of service, and truly act as a driver of economic development and jobs growth.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Elk Grove hereby approves Administrative Policy BD 15-001, attached hereto as Exhibit A, establishing building permit issuance timeframes.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the City Council of the City of Elk Grove this 13th day of May 2015.

GARY DAVIS, MAYOR of the
CITY OF ELK GROVE

ATTEST:

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

JASON LINDGREN, CITY CLERK

JONATHAN P. HOBBS,
CITY ATTORNEY

EXHIBIT A



**City of Elk Grove
Administrative Procedure**

No. BD 15-001

Department/Division: Building Department Approved by City Council, _____, 2015.	Section: Permits and Plans Examination	Title: Building Permit issuance timeframes
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1. Purpose
To provide the building community, city consultants and Building Department staff clear direction on the generally expected turnaround times for building permits to be ready for issuance.
2. Scope
This policy will establish specific timeframes for building permit application review, comments and/or requested revisions to be provided back to the applicant, and review and resubmitted plans/applications. This policy applies only to building permits, and it is not intended to affect the review or processing of development applications by other City departments or outside agencies.
3. Responsibilities and Accountability
 - 3.1. Department/Division Heads (Management)
 - 3.1.1. City Manager, Department Director, Building Official, or designee will be responsible to ensure that all staff and consultants are trained on the policy and the systems are in place to ensure compliance with this policy.
 - 3.2. Supervisors/employees (Front Line Management)
 - 3.2.1. Building consultant and consultant's employees is tasked with monitoring day to day compliance with this procedure.
4. Policy

This policy is an outline of the turnaround times an applicant can generally expect from the City of Elk Grove. These timeframes are separate and apart from the timeframes participants in Permit Simplicity would expect and the City anticipates that they will remain unchanged with implementation of the new program.

This policy makes assumptions that the work performed by the submitter is of a quality and completeness that would require minimal correction by Building Department plans examiners and that the submitter is timely in the picking up of plans needing correction and permits ready for issuance.



City of Elk Grove Administrative Procedure

No. BD 15-001

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