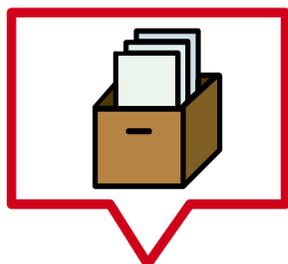


City Auditor's Highlights

Audit of the Permitting and Inspection of Large Detached Dwellings, Resolution 18-223, FD1 Report No. 19-03

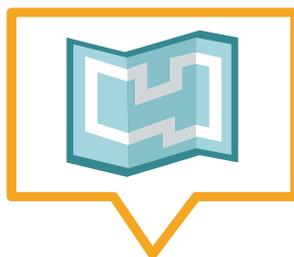


 We found that the department does not effectively use information from its operations to support its regulatory needs. The department inconsistently applied existing controls on large detached dwelling projects creating unwarranted authorization and difficulties in administration and enforcement. Many large detached dwelling plans were subject to plan expiration, but the department did not terminate those plans. Some building permits have exceeded their three-year validity, but the department has not revoked them. The department does not effectively or efficiently manage its overdue violations leading to a lack of violator accountability and limited deterrent effect. Furthermore, the department does not pursue all enforcement methods available.



Information is not organized to support regulation of at-risk properties

Although large amounts of information are produced by its permitting and inspection operations, little information about key criteria is assembled in the department's information systems to support its regulatory decisions and monitoring. This creates ongoing administrative difficulties and delays in researching, reviewing, monitoring, and reporting on large detached dwelling properties. This also led to improvised data assembly efforts of limited effectiveness, and limited the department's ability to discover issues with large detached dwellings to those from complaints only. This prevented the assessment of emerging risks and problems from development of large detached dwellings across O'ahu. The department was unable to effectively manage the situation.



Inconsistent controls application on large detached dwelling projects led to unwarranted authorization and difficulties in administration and enforcement

The department could use existing controls to better administer its program. Many large detached dwelling plans were subject to plan expiration, but they were not terminated. Residential covenants intended to prevent inappropriate uses in residential districts are inconsistently required. Internal alteration and partition violations could be better addressed by requiring covenants to deter unplanned illegal conversions. Many large detached dwellings burden inspection administration with incomplete construction that has not passed inspection for years. Some building permits exceeded their validity without making construction or inspection progress, but have not been revoked.



Ineffective management of overdue violations lead to lack of violator accountability and limited deterrence

Most violations issued to large detached dwellings we reviewed were for doing work without a building permit, not following plans, constructing unplanned internal alterations and partitions in the dwelling, and not following setback and building envelope requirements. Under the current system, violations take time to resolve. 41% of violations we reviewed were in violation for more than 6 months. Better internal coordination within the department is needed to promptly close out violations and pursue administrative enforcement when necessary. Potential actions, such as administrative liens to collect overdue fines, can still be taken.

Controls Review Highlights



Ordinance 19-3 Standards

74% of dwellings reviewed
Greater than 0.7 FAR

63% of dwellings reviewed
Too many bathrooms or half-bathrooms



3-year Building Permit Validity
Subject to current restrictions if permit revoked
Sixteen dwellings incomplete



1-Year Plan Review Expiration

Over one year in review:
23 building permits issued

Over two years in review:
4 building permits issued



Temporary Certificate of Occupancy (TCO)
One year authorization to inspect for post-construction changes
25 TCOs issued, but re-inspections were not conducted for 19 dwellings (76%)



Residential Use Covenant

Determination that layout or proposed use can be illegally converted
17 restrictive covenants on file of 105 review determinations



Accessory Dwelling Unit Restrictive Covenant

Requires 6 month lease term to deter short term rental or transient vacation rental use
Only 3 covenants filed out of 23 proposed ADUs



Illegal Dwelling Alterations
Unauthorized internal alterations or partitions constructed
16 dwellings with illegal alteration and/or partition violations

Source: Department of Planning and Permitting



For the full report, click or go to: <http://www.honolulu.gov/auditor>
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