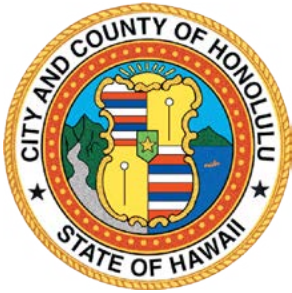




## Office of the City Auditor



City and County of  
Honolulu  
State of Hawai`i

Report to the Mayor  
and the  
City Council of Honolulu

# Audit of the Department of Planning and Permitting's Processes for Reviewing Building Permit Applications, Resolution 18-284, CD1, FD1



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# **Audit of the Department of Planning and Permitting's Processes for Reviewing Building Permit Applications, Resolution 18-284, CD1, FD1**

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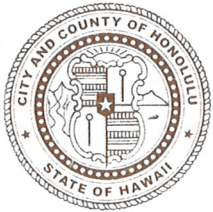
A Report to the  
Mayor  
and the  
City Council  
of Honolulu

Submitted by

**THE CITY AUDITOR**  
CITY AND COUNTY  
OF HONOLULU  
STATE OF HAWAII

Report No. 20-01  
January 2020





**OFFICE OF THE CITY AUDITOR**  
**CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU**

1001 KAMOKILA BOULEVARD, SUITE 216, KAPOLEI, HAWAII 96707 / PHONE: (808) 768-3134 / FAX: (808) 768-3135

**TROY SHIMASAKI**  
ACTING CITY AUDITOR

January 3, 2020

The Honorable J. Ikaika Anderson, Chair  
and Members  
Honolulu City Council  
530 South King Street, Room 202  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Chair Anderson and Councilmembers:

A copy of our report, *Audit of the Department of Planning and Permitting's Process for Reviewing Building Permit Applications, Resolution 18-284, CD1, FD1*, is attached. This audit was conducted pursuant to Resolution 18-284, CD1, FD1, which requested the city auditor to conduct a performance audit of the department's process for reviewing building permits and make recommendations for improving the experience of building permit applicants, including reduced processing time and providing applicants with a timely update on the status of their permit applications.

The audit objectives were to:

1. Determine if the city is effectively administering the required residential and commercial building permits as it relates to Chapter 18, ROH;
2. Determine whether current city staffing levels are sufficient;
3. Identify barriers for applicants that contribute to prolonged or delayed permit issuance;
4. Determine if DPP's processing systems are effectively managed;
5. Compare city building permitting issuance practices with other jurisdictions; and
6. Make recommendations as appropriate.

Initially, we planned to issue separate reports for reviews of residential and commercial building permit applications. However, during fieldwork, we learned that although residential and commercial building permit applications are subject to different requirements, intake and processing is generally the same. As a result, we opted to consolidate our review into a single report to reduce redundancy.

### **Background**

The Department of Planning and Permitting (DPP) is responsible for the City and County of Honolulu's major programs and land use laws, including long-range policy planning, community planning and zoning, infrastructure assessments and regulatory development codes. The department's Permit



Issuance Branch is responsible for receiving and processing residential and commercial building permit applications and plans, routes them to appropriate government agencies for review and approval, and collects applicable permit fees. Currently, DPP processes and issues over 50 different types of building-related permits for new construction as well as additions, alterations and repairs. Each permit falls into 1 of 20 different categories defined by DPP as an occupancy group. The single-family and two-family occupancy group accounts for 75 percent of the city's building permitting transactions of which 93 percent are residential applications for additions, alterations or repair related permits. The commercial occupancy group accounts for 25 percent of the city's building permitting transactions of which 96 percent are commercial applications for additions, alterations or repair-related permits. Over the last five years, total applications for residential and commercial building related permits decreased 37 percent from approximately 23,391 permits issued in FY 2014 to 14,763 permits issued in FY 2018. Residential two-family permits increased 57 percent over the last five years from 341 permits in FY 2014 to 537 permits in FY 2018. New building residential two-family permits also saw a significant increase of 61 percent over the last five years from 41 new two-family building permits issued in FY 2014 to 66 new two-family building permits issued in FY 2018. Comparatively, single-family related permits decreased 44 percent over the last five years.

### **Audit Results**

We found that the Department of Planning and Permitting does not effectively manage the permitting process for timeliness. More specifically:

- The department does not properly administer the Department of Planning and Permitting rules relating to the timely issuance of building permits as outlined in Administrative Code Section 20-2-4 and 20-2-5, Ordinance 18-41 and Section 18-6.4, Revised Ordinances of Honolulu. As a result, permit applications are subject to extended review times and excessive review cycles, which contribute to processing backlogs and excessive delays;
- The department is unable to meet the initial plan review benchmarks outlined in their administrative rules for both residential and commercial permits. The agency did not consistently implement internal controls outlined in administrative rules, Sect. 20-2-4 and 20-2-5, requiring plans that have more than one review cycle be limited to revisions and any plans not approved after the second review cycle either self-certify or request a permit by appointment;
- The departments One-Time Review 60 Day (OTR-60) Program for processing One- and Two- Family Dwellings did not result in expedited permit issuance as intended. The department's practice to accept incomplete OTR-60 applications and allow applications to be processed that did not meet initial program requirements contributed to the programs ineffectiveness;

The Honorable J. Ikaika Anderson, Chair  
and Members  
January 3, 2020  
Page 2 of 3

- The department's lax controls allowed private companies to monopolize permit review appointments and restricted access to the general public. The department should exercise better control and monitor the appointment system to ensure that proper internal controls are in place to prevent restricted public access and prevent abuse of city services by private for profit companies; and
- The department lacks a quality assurance system to monitor application processes, identify bottlenecks or challenges, and collect important data so that it can take corrective action to meet the mission to provide the public with efficient, timely service.

### Management Response

The Managing Director and the Department of Planning and Permitting broadly accepted the audit's findings and recommendations and indicated that it was in process of implementing many of those recommendations. The Managing Director also provided comments about the audit's scope, methodology, and findings. In one instance we amended the report to clarify the criteria used in our evaluations. This amendment did not significantly impact the audit's findings. In all other instances, we stand by our audit findings and recommendations. We also made technical, non-substantive changes to the audit report for purposes of clarity, accuracy, and style.

We would like to express our sincere appreciation for the cooperation and assistance provided us by the managers and staff of the Department of Planning and Permitting. We are available to meet with you and your staff to discuss this report and to provide more information. If you have any questions, please call me at 768-3134.

Sincerely,



Troy Shimasaki  
Acting City Auditor

c: Kirk Caldwell, Mayor  
Roy K. Amemiya, Jr., Managing Director  
Kathy Sokugawa, Acting Director, Department of Planning and Permitting  
Nelson H. Koyanagi, Jr., Director, Department of Budget and Fiscal Services

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction and Background

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### Introduction

On January 30, 2019, the City Council adopted Resolution 18-284, CD1, FD1, requesting the City Auditor to Conduct a Performance Audit of the Department of Planning and Permitting's Process for Reviewing all Building Permit Applications. The resolution cited delays in the permitting process and discussed the need for improvement. The City Council requested information related to the auditor's perspective and analysis of the Department of Planning and Permitting's (DPP) permit process for reviewing building permits. The resolution requested that the City Auditor analyze DPP's process for reviewing building permits and provide recommendations for improving the experience of building permit applicants, including, but not limited to, reducing processing time and providing applicants with a timely update on the status of their permit applications.

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### History

In 1998, as part of a city wide executive branch reorganization, the Department of Planning and Permitting was created by combining various land use and building permit functions into a single consolidated department. The new department initiated a complete re-engineering effort intended to create an agency focused on customer service. In addition, the department sought to remove redundancies, and improve, simplify, and streamline the permitting processes. Permitting functions were consolidated into *One-Stop Permit Centers*.

### ***Permits for Building, Electrical, Plumbing and Sidewalk Codes***

Revised Ordinances of Honolulu, Chapter 18, consolidates the building, electrical and plumbing permits, including permits for the construction of sidewalks, curbs and driveways, into a single permit. The Chapter also authorizes an assessment of fees based on the value of the work to be performed. The consolidation was intended to expedite permit issuance and improve administration of the building, electrical and plumbing codes. See Appendix A for a description of permits administered by DPP.

Building permits are required for any work that involves:

- Erection, construction, enlargement, alteration, repair, move, improvement, removal, conversion or demolition of any building or structure;

- Any electrical work;
- Installation, removal, alteration, repair or replacement of any plumbing, fire sprinkler, gas or drainage piping work or any fixture, gas appliance, or water heating or treating equipment; and
- Construction, reconstruction or improvement of any sidewalk, curb or driveway in any public street right-of-way.

A separate building permit is required for:

- A dwelling and its accessories, such as fence, wall, pool and garage without living quarters;
- Electrical work for a main building or for a private garage, shed or accessory building located on the same premises as the main building, and are supplied electrical power by a feeder or circuit from the main building;
- Plumbing work for main building, private garage, shed or accessory building located on the same premises as the main building and served by the same building water supply and building sewer as that serving the main building; and
- Sidewalks, curbs and driveways in public street rights-of-way and any building or structure which together, constitute all or part of a construction project.

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## Background


### Department of Planning and Permitting Responsibilities, Goals and Mission

The Department of Planning and Permitting is responsible for the City and County of Honolulu's major programs and land use laws, including long-range policy planning, community planning and zoning, infrastructure assessments and regulatory development codes. The department is comprised of eight groups:

1. Administrative Services Office
2. Honolulu Land Information System
3. Customer Service Division

- 4. Planning
- 5. Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)
- 6. Land Use Permits
- 7. Building
- 8. Site Development

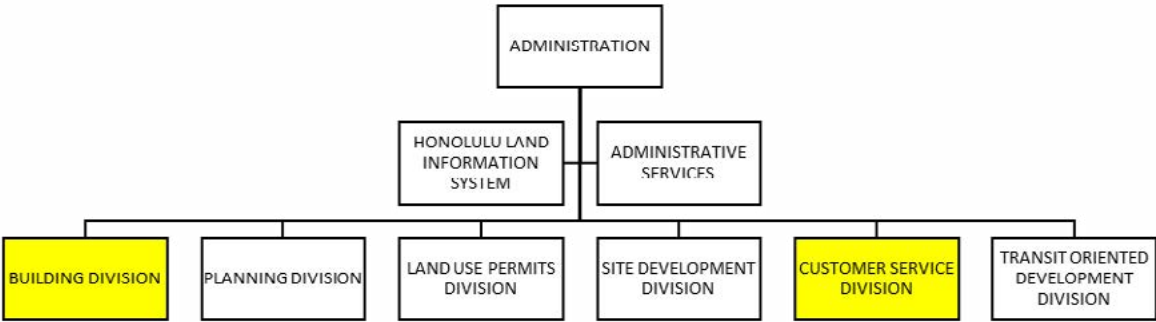
DPP also manages the Geographic Information System (GIS) used by various governmental agencies and private businesses. The department provides administrative support to the Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, Building Board of Appeals and the Design Advisory Committee. DPP’s mission is:



*To provide the public with efficient, timely service that is responsive and effective in guiding development to protect our unique resources and environment; provide livable neighborhoods that are compatible to their adjacent communities; provide a community that is responsive to the residents’ social, economic, cultural, and recreational needs; and ensure the health and safety of our residents.*

Mission Statement

**Exhibit 1.1  
Organizational Chart – Department of Planning and Permitting**



Source: Department of Planning and Permitting

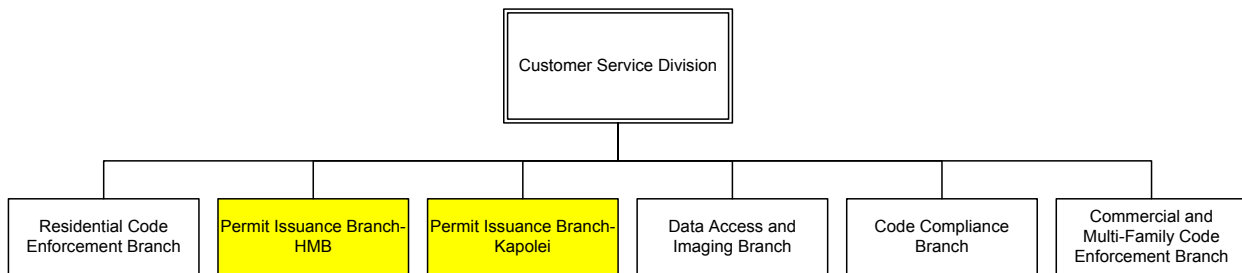
In FY 2018, DPP’s operating expenditures totaled \$21.6 million, revenues totaled \$20.3 million, and authorized staffing totaled 334 fulltime equivalents, with 56 vacancies. The DPP divisions which contain the permitting functions pertinent to the audit are the Customer Services and Building divisions. In FY 2018, the DPP Customer Service Division’s operating expenditures totaled \$3.3 million. The DPP Customer Service Division is subdivided into six branches.



### Customer Service Division Responsibilities

The Customer Service Division (CSD) is responsible for various services and functions that involve *front line* interaction with the public. It operates the consolidated permit counter which is responsible for handling customer inquiries, processing minor permits over the counter, receiving permit applications, and collecting permit fees. It also operates a consolidated permit records center which maintains the department’s historical and current property and permit records. The Customer Service Division receives and processes all complaints and inspects to ensure code compliance for existing buildings, structures, vacant lots, and sidewalks. The division seeks to eliminate unsafe and substandard conditions, and administers the civil fine program.

**Exhibit 1.2**  
**Organizational Chart – DPP Customer Service Division**



Source: Department of Planning and Permitting

As of March 6, 2019, the Customer Service Division, including the Permit Issuance Branch, was authorized 95 full time equivalents (FTEs) and has filled 73 FTEs. The unfilled FTEs represent a vacancy rate of 23 percent. The staffing for each office included in our audit is summarized in Exhibit 1.3.

**Exhibit 1.3**  
**DPP Customer Service Division, Permit Issuance Branch**  
**(PIB) Staff**

<b>Branch Unit</b>	<b>Staffing</b>
<b>Upper Management</b>	1 Chief Plans Examining Engineer
<b>Engineer VI</b>	1 Plans Examining Engineer, 1 Civil Engineer
<b>Engineer V</b>	1 Plans Examining Engineer, 1 Civil Engineer
<b>Engineer IV</b>	1 Plans Examining Engineer, 1 Civil Engineer
<b>Engineer III</b>	4 Plans Examining Engineer, 2 Civil Engineer
<b>Building Permit Plans</b>	1 Plan Checker I

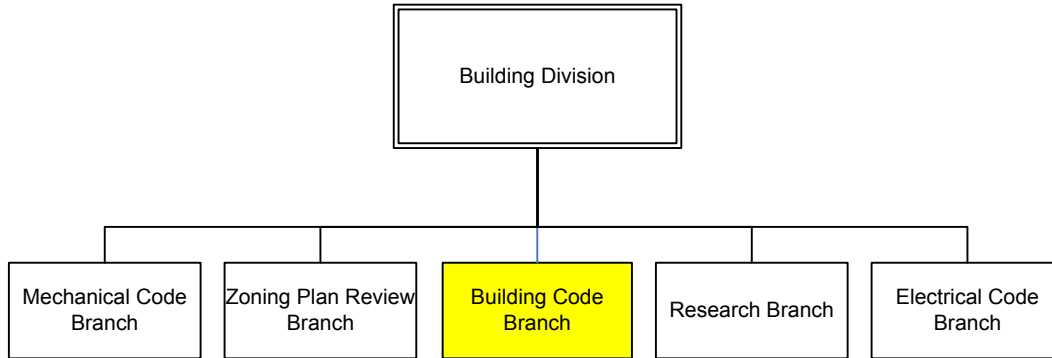
Source: Department of Planning and Permitting staffing positions as of March 6, 2019.

**Permit Issuance Branch (PIB).** The Permit Issuance Branch has two offices located in Honolulu and Kapolei. PIB staff operate the consolidated permit counters by answering customer inquiries about permit requirements and forms, and processing residential/commercial permit applications, and other minor permits. The branch receives all permit applications/plans, including *ePlans*, and routes them to appropriate divisions/departments. PIB also collects and processes applicable permit fees. Three positions are involved with the processing of a building permit: Plan Checker I, Plan Checker II and Building Inspector.

**The Building Division Responsibilities**

The Building Division is subdivided into five branches and is responsible for administering and enforcing building, electrical, plumbing, building energy efficiency, and housing codes. The division also reviews permit applications, plans, and specifications for building, relocation, and sign permits. Additionally, it inspects buildings, structures, sidewalks, and driveways under construction for compliance with approved plans and pertinent codes. Exhibit 1.4 shows the Building Division's current organization.

**Exhibit 1.4  
Organizational Chart –Building Division**



Source: Department of Planning and Permitting

**The Building Code Branch** consists of plans examining engineers and civil engineers who review commercial permit applications, plans, specifications, and calculations in conjunction with the issuance of building, relocation, and sign permits. Exhibit 1.5 shows the branch’s current staff distribution.

**Exhibit 1.5  
DPP Building Division, Building Code Branch (BCB) Staff**

<b>Branch Unit</b>	<b>Staffing</b>
<b>Upper Management</b>	1 Chief Plans Examining Engineer
<b>Engineer VI</b>	1 Plans Examining Engineer, 1 Civil
<b>Engineer V</b>	1 Plans Examining Engineer, 1 Civil
<b>Engineer IV</b>	1 Plans Examining Engineer, 1 Civil
<b>Engineer III</b>	4 Plans Examining Engineer, 2 Civil
<b>Building Permit Plans Checker I</b>	1 Plan Checker I

Source: Department of Planning and Permitting

Over the last five years, the Customer Service Division’s operating expenditures increased by 21 percent from \$2.75 million in FY 2014 to \$3.34 million in FY 2018, and Building Division operating expenditures increased 7 percent from \$5.36 million in FY 2014 to \$5.76 million in FY 2018. Total building permit revenues including plan review fees collected increased 4 percent from \$20.67 million in FY 2014 to \$21.50 million in FY 2018. Building permit revenues, including plan review fees, in FY 2018

accounted for approximately 99.5 percent of all DPP revenues collected. Exhibit 1.6 details the Customer Service and Building Division revenues and expenditures for FY 2014 – FY 2018.

**Exhibit 1.6**  
**Customer Service and Building Division Revenues and Expenditures**

<i>Fiscal Year</i>	<i>Customer Service Division Operating Expenditures (\$ million)</i>	<i>Building Division Operating Expenditures (\$ million)</i>	<i>Building Permit/ Plan Review Revenue (\$ million)</i>
2014	\$2.75	\$5.36	\$20.67
2015	\$3.03	\$5.37	\$21.76
2016	\$3.17	\$5.59	\$21.67
2017	\$3.21	\$5.71	\$21.85
2018*	\$3.34	\$5.76	\$21.50

\* FY2018 Building Permit/ Plan Review Revenue are estimates provided by BFS.

Source: Department of Planning and Permitting and Department of Budget and Fiscal Services (BFS)

Currently, DPP's PIB Branch processes and issues over 50 different types of building-related permits for new construction as well as additions, alterations and repairs. Each permit falls into 1 of 20 different categories defined by DPP as an occupancy group. The single-family and two-family occupancy group accounts for 75 percent of the city's building permitting transactions of which 93 percent are residential applications for additions, alterations or repair related permits. The commercial occupancy group accounts for 25 percent of the city's building permitting transactions of which 96 percent are commercial applications for additions, alterations or repair-related permits.

Over the last five years, total applications for residential and commercial building related permits decreased 37 percent from approximately 23,391 permits issued in FY 2014 to 14,763 permits issued in FY 2018. Residential two-family permits increased 57 percent over the last five years from 341 permits in FY 2014 to 537 permits in FY 2018. New building residential two-family permits also saw a significant increase of 61 percent over the last five years from 41 new two-family building permits issued in FY 2014 to 66 new two-family building permits issued in FY 2018. Comparatively, single-family related permits decreased 44 percent over the last five years. Exhibit 1.7 shows the number of building permits issued, by category, from FY 2014 to FY 2018.

## Exhibit 1.7 DPP Building Permits Issued

Fiscal Year	Residential			Residential			Commercial			Grand Total
	Single Family			Two Family			New Building	Addition, Alteration and Repair	Total	
	New Building	Addition, Alteration and Repair	Total	New Building	Addition, Alteration and Repair	Total				
FY 2014	875	17,929	18,804	41	300	341	84	4,162	4,246	23,391
FY 2015	965	13,444	14,409	40	258	298	128	3,987	4,115	18,822
FY 2016	744	14,746	15,490	49	264	313	138	4,133	4,271	20,074
FY 2017	740	10,129	10,869	76	368	444	171	4,201	4,372	15,685
FY 2018	764	9,803	10,567	66	471	537	138	3,521	3,659	14,763
Change from last year	3%	-3%	-3%	-13%	28%	21%	-19%	-16%	-16%	-6%
Change over last 5 years	-13%	-45%	-44%	61%	57%	57%	64%	-15%	-14%	-37%

Source: Department of Planning and Permitting

### **Building Permitting Review Process**

The DPP permit plan review process, as depicted in Exhibit 1.8, can be broken down into 5 different review categories and 4 review phases:

There are two ways in which an applicant can submit their building plans for review:

- 1) Paper Plans (Submitted Manually) See Exhibit 1.9; or
- 2) Electronic *ePlans* (Submitted on-line) See Exhibit 1.10.

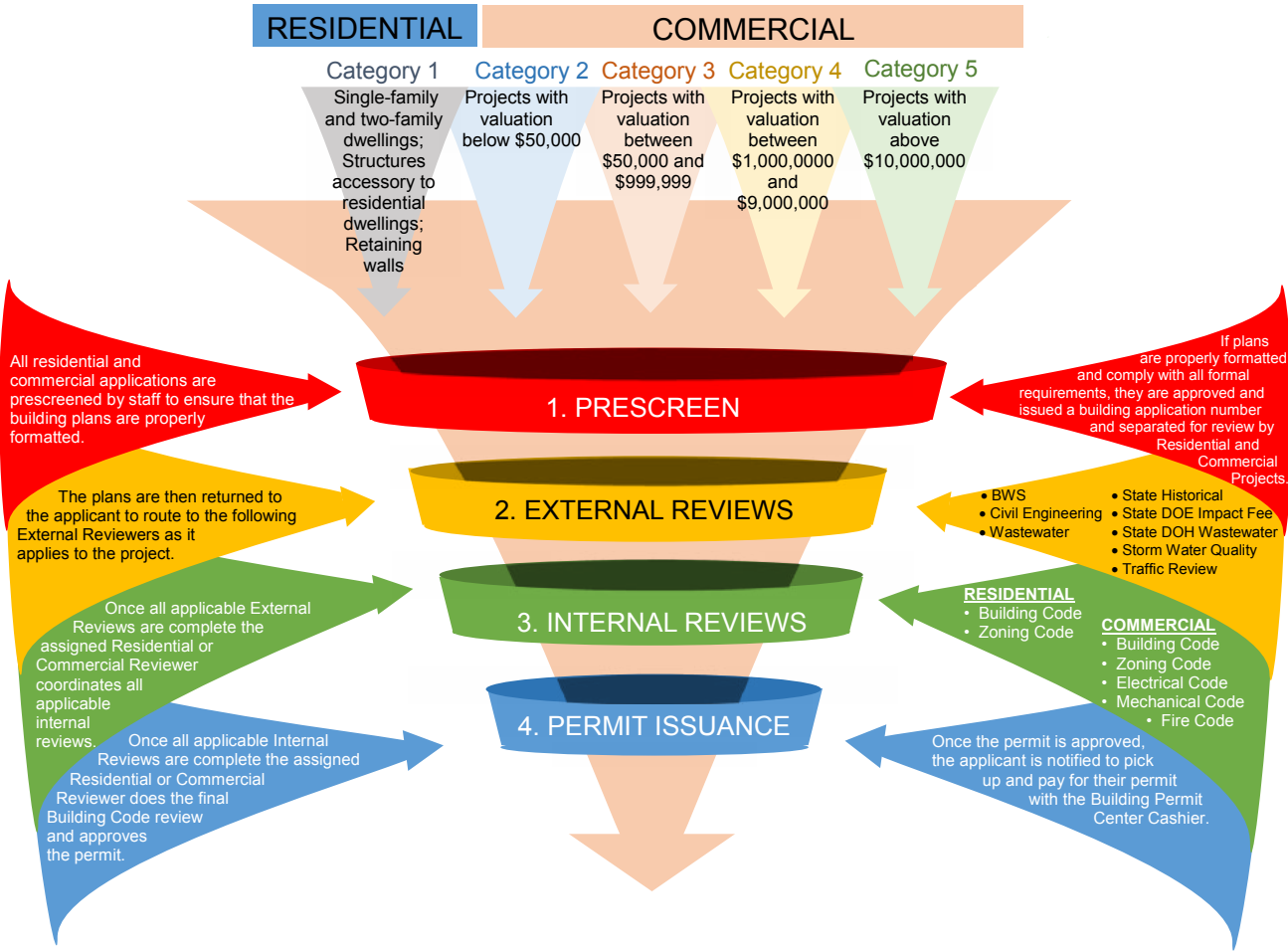
The DPP process for obtaining a building permit requires an applicant to:

- Submit an application online for a building permit to create an internet building permit (IBP) number;
- Complete an application and comply with the application checklist provided on the DPP website ;
- Submit paper building plans either in person or upload electronic *ePlans* via online submission;
- Pass initial prescreen;
- Pay the appropriate plan review fees;



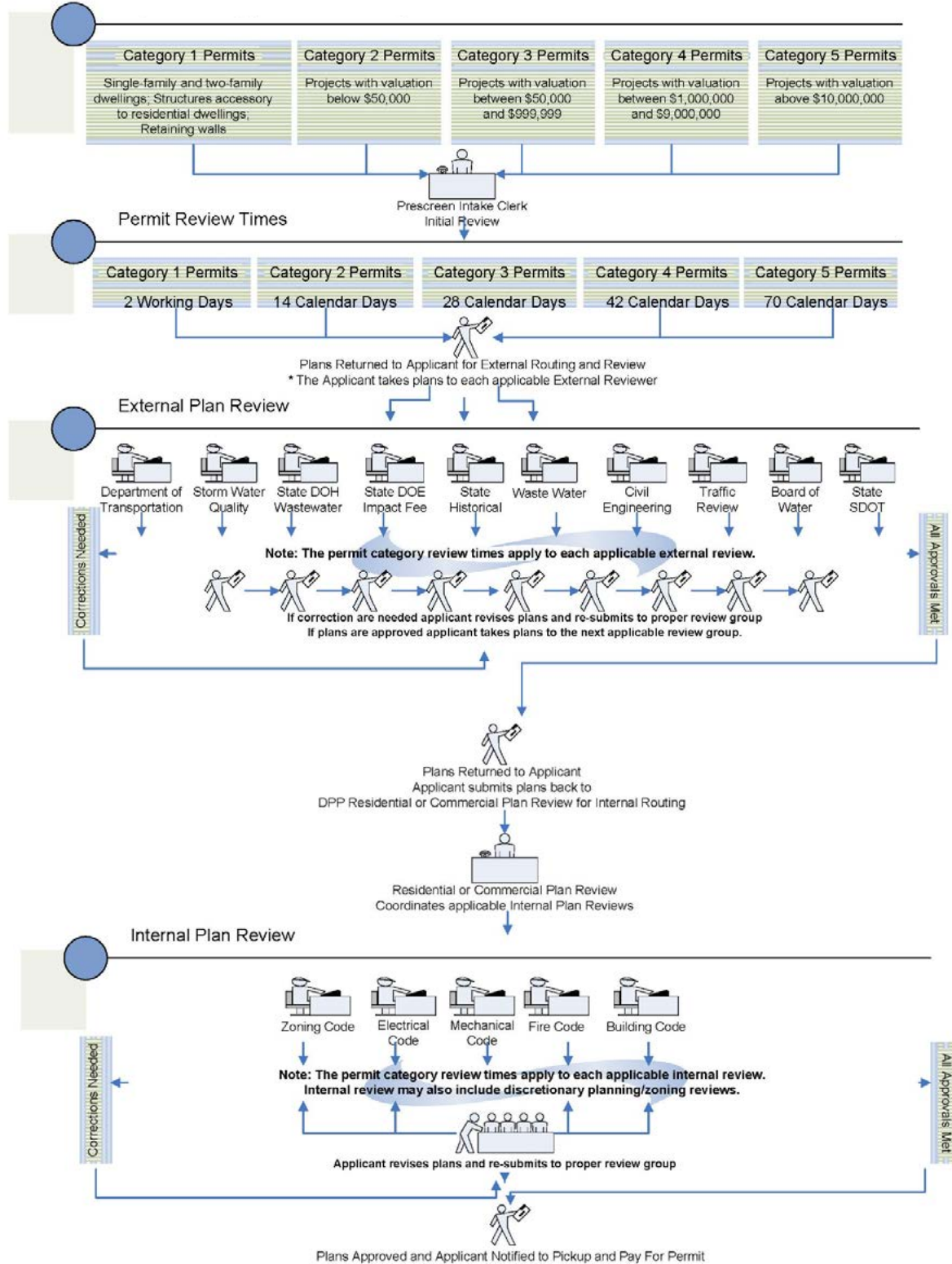
- If paper building plans were submitted, route and obtain the designated external reviews;
- Return plans to DPP with all appropriate external reviews for final approval; and
- Pay the appropriate permit fees and pick up permit.

**Exhibit 1.8  
DPP Building Permitting Review Process**



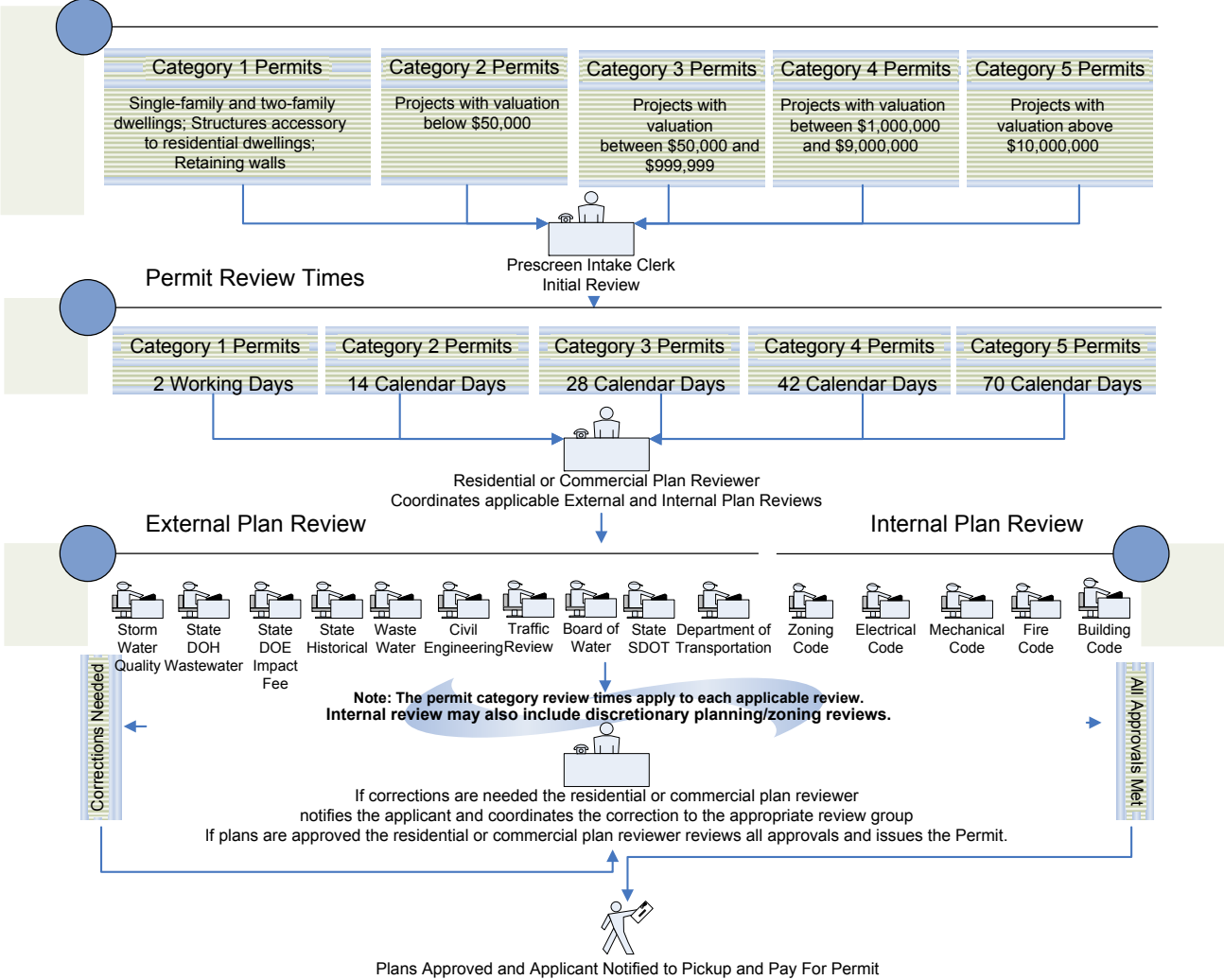
Source: Office of the City Auditor

### Exhibit 1.9 DPP Paper Permit Application Building Permitting Review Process



Source: Office of the City Auditor

**Exhibit 1.10  
DPP ePlans Permit Application Building Permitting Review Process**



Source: Office of the City Auditor

**Audit Objectives, Scope and Methodology**

This audit was conducted pursuant to City Council Resolution 18-284, CD1, FD1, Requesting the City Auditor to Conduct a Performance Audit of the Department of Planning and Permitting’s Processes for Reviewing All Building Permit Applications.

The Audit Objectives were to:

1. Determine if the city is effectively administering the required residential and commercial building permits as it relates to ROH, Chapter 18;
2. Determine whether current city staffing levels are sufficient;
3. Identify barriers for applicants that contribute to prolonged or delayed permit issuance;
4. Determine if DPP's processing systems are effectively managed;
5. Compare city building permitting issuance practices with other jurisdictions; and
6. Make recommendations as appropriate

The audit team performed a variety of tasks to address the audit objectives. We reviewed applicable federal and city laws, rules, and guidelines related to issuing building permit applications. We examined DPP's policies, procedures, rules, and guidelines as part of the internal control assessment. The audit team also interviewed DPP administrators and staff, and analyzed performance and operating data and statistics for the five-year period FY 2014 to FY 2018. We used FY 2014 through FY 2018 performance data to select a statistically valid sample of residential and commercial permits. From the total permits issued from FY 2014-FY 2018, we excluded all online permits and any permits issued in less than a day. The total population of residential and commercial permits in our criteria set was 40,937. We selected the parameters of our statistical sample and established a sample with a 95 percent confidence interval and a  $\pm 5.0\%$  margin of error. We then randomly selected 382 of the 40,937 permits and analyzed these permits to determine how long it would take for a permit to go through the permitting process from start to finish.

The sample of 382 randomly selected permits was then used to analyze and identify the permit application reviewing and permitting process and determine the areas in which permit review controls can be improved. Upon review we selected all 52 *ePlan* permits that were included in the 382 randomly selected permits and used the *ePlan* permits to identify areas that permits experience delays.

The audit team conducted observations at DPP's Honolulu and Kapolei permitting facilities, including residential and commercial operations, permit intake, plan review, and issuance. We examined DPP's software technology and report management programs including *POSSE*, *ePlan* and the appointment scheduling system. Audit staff collected applicable operational data and analyzed the two operating systems. We observed and evaluated applicants using the appointment system to determine service accessibility. The audit team also conducted interviews with third party reviewers and members of the Building Industry Association to gain user feedback of the city's building and permitting application and review process.

To compare and contrast Honolulu's building permitting review process with the International Accreditation Service's building department accreditation requirements and other jurisdictions, we examined requirements under Chapter 18, ROH, and assessed DPP's building permitting review services. We also reviewed comparable Building Permitting Review services provided by Pierce County, WA; Portland, OR; City of Roseville, CA; Clark County, NV; and; San Jose, CA.

This review covered the five-year period FY 2014 to FY 2018. In some instances we referenced performance activity that occurred outside this time period for comparison or clarification purposes.

This audit was performed in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards from February 2019 to October 2019. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient and appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

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## Audit Results

Despite DPP's efforts to improve the building permitting review process, further improvements are needed. In recent years, DPP increased its use of Third Party Reviews and started an internship program with Honolulu Community College to provide exposure and training for building permit processing. The department also expanded the *ePlan* filing system requiring all new construction applicants to submit electronic plans for review. DPP implemented *Malama Mondays*, a new policy to only receive payments on Mondays so the PIB staff can focus on processing permits. Despite implementing these key policy and



program changes, DPP operations remain inadequate to support current customer demand and permit application processes are hampered by inefficiencies. The operational deficiencies exist because DPP has not made sufficient effort to streamline its permit reviewing process. DPP administrators confirm that the department falls short in managing performance to meet the public's demand for timely services. DPP's building permitting review process is subjected to multiple review cycles contributing to extended review times. While DPP has been more customer service-oriented in processing building permit applications, this approach has encouraged the submission of inadequate work and plans. As a result, DPP expends resources to accommodate and correct inadequately prepared applications and plans. DPP does not properly administer plan review controls and, as a result, the building permitting review process is only able to meet the initial plan review benchmark of two days for all residential permits on average 26 percent of the time in the past five years. Instead, applicants are receiving their residential permits on average 108 days from application submission or 3 ½ months later.

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# Chapter 2

## DPP Does Not Effectively Manage the Permitting Process for Timeliness

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We reviewed the Department of Planning and Permitting's (DPP) FY 2014 - FY 2018 performance data to review timeliness of permit application processing and plan review. From the data provided by DPP we selected a statistically valid sample of the total residential and commercial permits submitted. The sample was used to analyze the permit application reviewing and permitting process and determine the areas which permit review controls could be improved. In our review, we found that extended review times and high number of excessive review cycles contribute to the backlog and excessive delays. Overall, permit review delays often fell into one of four categories: prescreen, multiple plan review, external routing/queuing time and pickup.

DPP administers over 50 different types of permits in accordance with the 1990 Revised Ordinances of Honolulu (ROH), Chapter 18. ROH was established to consolidate the building, electrical and plumbing permits, including permits for the construction of sidewalks, curbs and driveways, into a single permit and to assess fees based on the value of the work to be performed. The permitting process requires DPP to coordinate plan reviews with a number of agencies at the state and county levels. Permitting consolidation was intended to expedite permit issuance and improved administration of the building, electrical and plumbing codes by the former building department. Administration of the sidewalks, curbs and driveways codes by the then public works and building departments was also consolidated.

According to a former DPP Director, *the standard complaint received is that the review time takes too long*. The former director acknowledged that long review times was a challenge for the department and that the standard review process was excessive. The former director went on to say that, *so far, DPP is not making much head way. All the measures taken just has DPP treading water*.

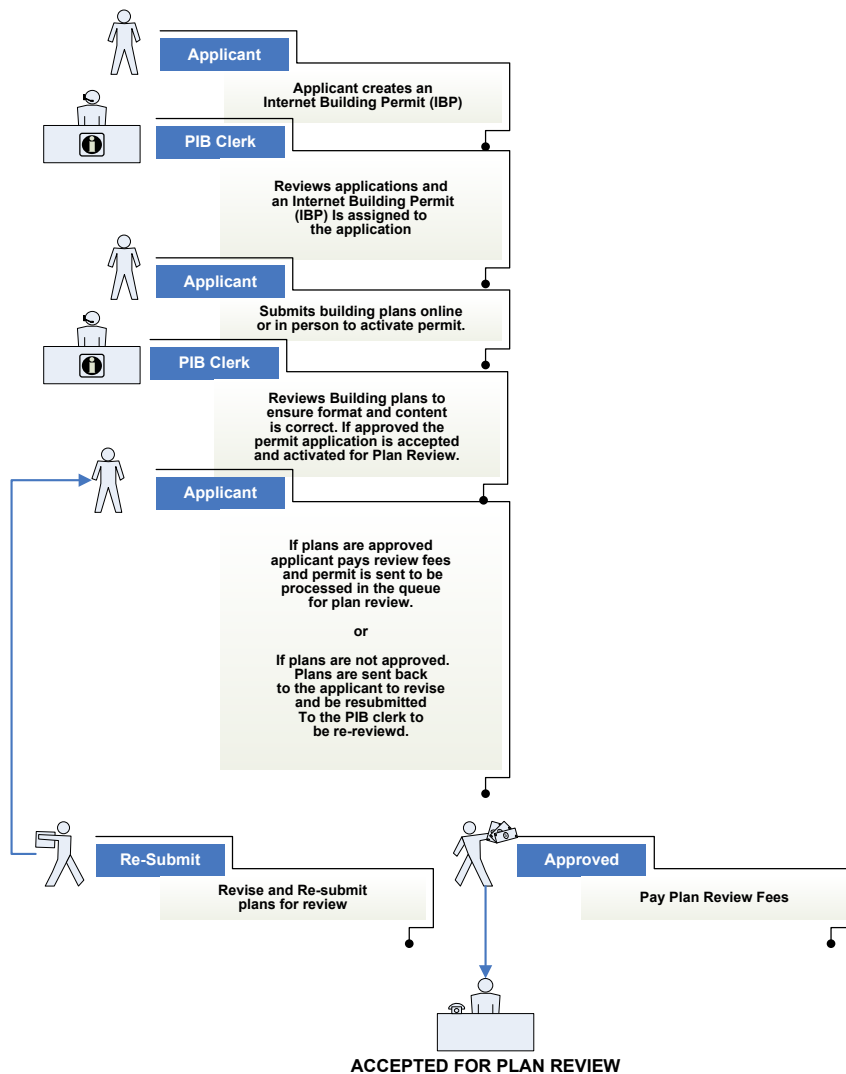
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### DPP's Prescreening Process Slows Down the Permitting Review Process Before It Even Starts

DPP requires plans to be submitted for quality assurance prescreening prior to routing to various city and state agencies for review and approval. The prescreening process is the initiation of the permitting process. During prescreen, plans are submitted and reviewed by a DPP Permit Issuance Branch (PIB) clerk, for basic information, such as correct property address and Tax Map Key. The PIB clerk also identifies any regulatory-based restrictions that

prohibit application acceptance. The prescreening process ensures that plans meet certain criteria before the permitting process can even begin. If plans are properly formatted and comply with the requirements listed in the Building Permit Plan Format Checklist and Building Permit Application Checklist for Residential or Commercial applications, those applications are approved for processing and the applicant receives a building permit application number. This prescreening process can take days, weeks or months before plans are qualified to begin the formal plan review process. Exhibit 2.1 depicts the general prescreen review process.

**Exhibit 2.1  
DPP’s Applicant Prescreen Process**



Source: Office of the City Auditor

Within our sample of ePlans permits we found that 10 out of 52 (19%) applications experienced excessive delays of 17 or more days during the prescreen process. One of the files reviewed was in held in prescreen review for 91 days. The prescreen process is intended to ensure plans are properly formatted and meet basic requirements; it is not intended to be used to conduct substantive reviews. To have an application held up in prescreen review for 91 days is excessive and does not contribute to improved processing time. According to a former DPP Director, *DPP does not have a good enough supervisory system set up, so whether out of intent or negligence, permits often get held up or overlooked.*

DPP may need to re-evaluate its prescreen process and determine if it hinders timely building permit applications processing. Under DPP's 2013 expansion of the online *ePlans* system, all building permit applications for new residential and commercial buildings must be submitted through the department's electronic plan review (*ePlans*) system. Electronic plan review requires the applicant's plans to be submitted and properly formatted in order for the system to accept the plans. DPP provides ePlans prescreen requirements online. In an effort to further expedite new prescreen requirements, the city established authorized qualified prescreening third party review. Under this program applicants can hire private companies to provide and submit electronic plans that meet all of DPP's electronic requirements, which allows the applicant to bypass DPP's prescreening process and go directly to the plans review phase. As a result, DPP is neglecting its responsibilities to process applications in a timely manner and is incentivizing the use of private providers to get quicker results. This practice places an additional burden on the applicant and increases profits of private businesses. Although considered an industry best practice to utilize third party review services, bypassing prescreen review should not be the primary motivation. If DPP is looking to further expand its use of electronic plan review, DPP should consider helping applicants by streamlining the prescreening process for all applicants.

DPP should consider a policy change to ensure that PIB effectively administers the prescreen process for what it was intended — formatting review. Instead DPP's prescreen process has become a potential hindrance to the overall permitting process delaying plan review and adding to what is already a lengthy permitting review process.

**Multiple plan review cycles contribute to excessive delays and weak system controls**

According to DPP administrative rules, Sect. 20-2-4 and 20-2-5, plans that require more than one review shall be limited to revisions and any plans not approved after the second review shall either self-certify or request a permit evaluation by appointment. We found that DPP routinely violates these rules by allowing excessive plan review cycles. We define excessive plan review cycles as a plan review that had two or more review cycles with two or more different reviewing agencies, or any plan review that had three or more review cycles with any one reviewing agency. Of the files reviewed 20 of 52 (38%) were identified as having excessive plan review cycles.

By allowing multiple plan review cycles, DPP is not properly administering plan review controls as established in administrative rules and perpetuates inefficiency in the plan review function. According to DPP excessive plan review cycles are a result of applicants submitting inadequate plans. In addition, a former DPP director stated that poor plans are often submitted by a term he coined as *rubber stampers*. These are architects and engineers that create rudimentary, low-quality plans, and *stamp* the unprofessional or incomplete plans for their client. As a result, DPP plan reviewers spend an inordinate amount of time to *red mark* the plans and send them back to the applicant for amendment. DPP believes that *rubber stampers* use DPP as quality control rather than the applicant spending time and resources to submit quality plans up front. By accepting inadequate plans, DPP allows the permitting plan review system to be vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. This contributes to the backlog because of the additional time taken as plans go back and forth for comments and corrections.

DPP should adhere to administrative rule, Sect. 20-2-3 (a) and not accept inadequate plans that fail to meet the basic requirements. By accepting inadequate plans DPP overextends its services, costing taxpayers time and resources to correct poorly executed plans that are the responsibility of private companies. DPP stated that they are starting to reject more incomplete plans and are in the process of rebalancing attention between individual customer service and overall service performance. If excessive review cycles continue to hinder and prolong the plan review process, DPP may need to re-evaluate its policies and procedures and consider promoting self-certification. Under DPP administrative rule Sect. 20-2-5, if plans are not approved by the department after a second review the applicant shall self-certify. Self-certification occurs when an applicant engages a licensed architect or engineer to attest that the remaining deficiencies have been addressed and may submit revised plans. Self-Certification results in automatic approval. Exhibit 2.2 shows three examples of projects that

experienced multiple review cycles and highlights the maximum 2 review cycle cut-off where applications should have been self-certified and issued a permit. All three examples were subject to five or more excessive review cycles which contributed to extended project review times. One of the three examples had a total of 17 review cycles, 9 of which should not have occurred had DPP authorized self-certification. By effectively administering self-certification, DPP can reduce overall extended plan review times by shifting project ownership and liability back to the architect/engineers.

**Exhibit 2.2**  
**Table of Examples of Plan Reviews With More Than 3 Cycles**

Example 1: Residential Project- \$600,000 Valuation					
Multiple Review Cycles					
Review Type	Date Received	Date Completed	Max Review Cycles <sup>1</sup>	Excessive Review Cycles	Total Review Cycles
Board of Water Supply	3/19/2018	3/19/2018	1		3
	9/26/2018	9/26/2018	2		
	10/26/2018	10/26/2018		3	
Building Code	5/4/2018	5/4/2018	1		4
	9/20/2018	10/2/2018	2		
	11/5/2018	11/8/2018		3	
Civil Engineering	3/23/2018	3/23/2018	1		4
	9/20/2018	9/20/2018	2		
	10/17/2018	10/17/2018		3	
Wastewater	3/23/2018	3/23/2018	1		6
	9/20/2018	9/21/2018	2		
	9/21/2018	9/21/2018		3	
	10/17/2018	10/18/2018		4	
	11/30/2018	11/30/2018		5	
<b>Total Count</b>	<b>260 Days</b>		<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>17</b>
Example 2: Commercial Project- \$700,000 Valuation					
Multiple Review Cycles					
Review Type	Date Received	Date Completed	Max Review Cycles <sup>1</sup>	Excessive Review Cycles	Total Review Cycles
Board of Water Supply	6/14/2013	6/14/2013	1		2
	9/28/2015	9/28/2015	2		
Civil Engineering Branch	1/15/2016	1/15/2016	1		2
	4/8/2016	4/8/2016	2		
Fire Code	4/15/2016	4/28/2016	1		2
	5/19/2016	5/26/2016	2		
Zoning Code	6/21/2013	7/18/2013	1		7
	6/21/2013	7/23/2013	2		
	10/22/2015	11/24/2015		3	
	5/31/2016	6/3/2016		4	
	5/31/2016	6/22/2016		5	
6/23/2016	6/23/2016		6		
7/5/2016	7/5/2016		7		
<b>Total Count</b>	<b>1117 Days</b>		<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>13</b>
Example 3: Commercial Project- \$13,800,000 Valuation					
Multiple Review Cycles					
Review Type	Date Received	Date Completed	Max Review Cycles <sup>1</sup>	Excessive Review Cycles	Total Review Cycles
Civil Engineering	2/3/2014	2/3/2014	1		1
Fire Code	6/24/2013	7/1/2013	1		2
	7/25/2013	7/26/2013	2		
State DOH A/C	4/28/2014	5/6/2014	1		1
Wastewater	6/19/2013	6/19/2013	1		2
	10/28/2013	10/28/2013	2		
Zoning Code	6/14/2013	6/14/2013	1		9
	6/14/2013	7/2/2013	2		
	12/9/2013	1/28/2014	3		
	4/23/2014	6/20/2014		4	
	4/23/2014	7/14/2014		5	
	4/23/2014	7/28/2014		6	
10/14/2014	12/22/2014		7		
2/5/2015	2/10/2015		8		
3/2/2015	3/4/2015		9		
<b>Total Count</b>	<b>628 Days</b>		<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>15</b>

Source: Office of the City Auditor

Additionally we found that the third party review process often experienced multiple review cycles as well.

In our sample, 67 of 382 (18%) permits were reviewed by a third party and, of those permits, 70 percent were held up in multiple review cycles. On average, we found that third party review (TPR) plans took 6 months to issue a building permit compared to the DPP plan review average of 7.5 months. In our assessment, TPR provided marginally quicker review times, but note that they often involved significantly more review cycles. Exhibit 2.3 compares TPR and DPP review cycle characteristics. We found that 70 percent of TPR applications experienced multiple review cycles. Compared to 25 percent of DPP applications experiencing multiple review cycles. The multiple review cycles defeats TPR's intent to act as an alternative review option that helps reduce DPP's plan review workload and increases plan review efficiency. DPP acknowledged that as of late 2018, excessive reviews have stopped as a result of the mayor's initiative.

### Exhibit 2.3 Third Party Multiple Review Cycles

	<i>Third Party Review</i>	<i>DPP Review</i>
Total Permits	67	382
Average Time to Issue	6 Months	7.5 Months
Multiple Review Cycles	70%	25%

Source: Office of the City Auditor

### **Excessive delays and extended permit review queuing times were identified as far back as 2004**

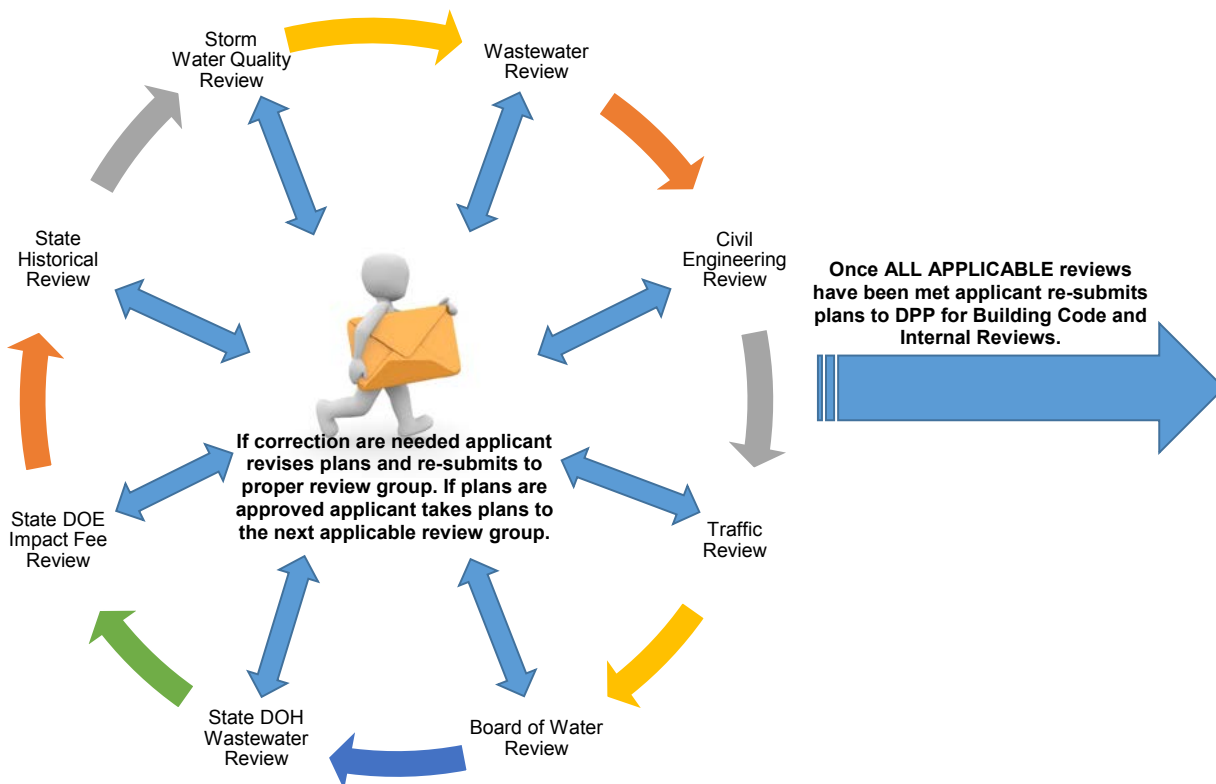
In 2004, the Office of the City of the City Auditor (OCA) conducted an audit of *the Review and Assessment of the Department of Planning and Permitting's One-Stop Permit Centers*. OCA's audit found that DPP had not considered the applicant's responsibilities in the permit streamlining process. The audit found that DPP's permit plan review process places responsibilities on the applicant as well as the department. The audit stated that DPP lacked clear guidelines, checklists, and other instructions or written assistance to facilitate completion of permit applications. In our current review of DPP's permit review process, we found that DPP had not successfully implemented clear guidelines, checklists, and other instructions or written assistance. We found that this issue, identified in 2004, has not been adequately addressed and permit review times remain lengthy.



**External plan review routing can cause applicant confusion and lead to unnecessary delays**

Currently, if an applicant submits paper plans for permit review and the plans have passed the prescreen process, it is the applicant’s responsibility to route the plans to appropriate review agencies. Routing requires the applicant to physically take a copy of the plans to various external agencies and obtain all necessary project approvals. Once all the required approvals have been obtained, the client resubmits the approved plans to DPP for final building code plan review. DPP staff stated that they don’t have a checklist or external review guide that can help the applicant successfully navigate the external reviews needed before DPP building code plan review can commence. According to plan reviewers, there have been times when a client has been unclear of the routing process and submitted plans for review only to have the plans sent back to the client to obtain the necessary external reviews. It is examples like this that prolong the review time. DPP staff confirmed that providing formal guidance to the applicant would help to streamline the plan review process and result in more timely issued permits. Exhibit 2.4 shows the current applicants process for obtaining all external reviews.

**Exhibit 2.4  
External Review Routing Process**



Source: Office of the City Auditor

**DPP does not account for the time between plan reviews, resulting in plans sitting waiting to be reviewed**

In our sample review, we found that 33 out of 52 (63%) ePlans applications experienced excessive queuing times. We defined excessive queuing time as any task that took longer than 15 days to close. Queuing time is the time that a building permit task sits waiting to be reviewed by a plan reviewer. Queuing time is often unaccounted for and is difficult to verify because DPP does not monitor permit application review times from start to finish. While DPP has the ability to monitor plan reviewer tasks and determine how long it took for a plan reviewer to complete a task, it does not monitor the overall time it takes to review permit applications, including time between reviews. Furthermore, staff confirmed that, generally, there are no supervisory reviews conducted to evaluate staff performance and timeliness. DPP reported that on average, a task is with a plan reviewer for 69 days. It is important to note that the average review time is based on tasks that were *accepted* by a plan reviewer, and does not include tasks that were resubmitted to the department that weren't accepted. As a result, DPP may be under-reporting actual permit review times. There was no clock running for the amount of time resubmitted tasks sat waiting to be accepted and reviewed. Exhibit 2.5 shows a DPP report calculating the total average days that a task sat with a residential plan reviewer.

**Exhibit 2.5  
Average Days a Task is With a Residential Building Code Plan Reviewer**

Residential Plan Examiner	Average Days	680.0
Overdue tasks since the inception of ePlans in 2012	Department Review Task	Average Days 1.5
	Average Days	1.5
	Average Days	80.0
	Average Days	203.3
	Average Days	9.0
	Average Days	36.0
	Average Days	56.7
	Average Days	176.5
	Average Days	19.2
	Average Days	241.0
	Average Days	69.8

Source: Department of Planning and Permitting

Our sample review confirmed that plans often experience excessive delays waiting for a task to be actively worked on by a plan reviewer. In our sample, we found that one plan review task sat with a plan reviewer for 136 days before action was taken. Exhibit 2.6 gives three examples of plans that experienced excessive delays due to a task sitting with a plan reviewer waiting to be completed.

**Exhibit 2.6  
Excessive Queuing Times**

Residential		\$3,200			New SFD w/Wetbar and Detached Carport	
Type	Date Process Created	Date Started Review	Date Completed	Status	Days in Queue	
Board of Water	3/18/2019	3/18/2019	3/19/2019	Reviewed-Comments	0	
Fire Code	3/18/2019	4/16/2019	6/26/2019	Reviewed-Comments	29	
Building Code (Residential)	3/18/2019	--	--	Reviewed-Comments	--	
Traffic Review	3/18/2019	3/29/2019	3/29/2019	Reviewed-Comments	11	
Wastewater Branch	3/18/2019	3/19/2019	3/28/2019	Reviewed-Comments	1	Total Days in Queue 112
Zoning Code	3/18/2019	5/28/2019	5/31/2019	Reviewed-Comments	71	
Residential		\$5,700			New 2-Story SFD w/Wetbar	
Type	Date Process Created	Date Started Review	Date Completed	Status	Days in Queue	
Board of Water	6/14/2019	6/14/2019	6/14/2019	Reviewed-Approved	0	
Civil Engineering	6/14/2019	6/28/2019	6/28/2019	Reviewed-Comments	14	
	7/10/2019	7/22/2019	7/22/2019	Reviewed-Approved as Noted	12	
Building Code (Residential)	6/14/2019	7/9/2019	7/9/2019	Reviewed-Comments	25	Total Days in Queue 70
	7/10/2019	7/29/2019	7/29/2019	Reviewed-Comments	19	
Wastewater Branch	6/14/2019	6/14/2019	6/14/2019	Reviewed-Approved	0	
Residential		\$313			New Chain Link Fence	
Type	Date Process Created	Date Started Review	Date Completed	Status	Days in Queue	
Building Code (Residential)	6/7/2019	7/12/2019	7/12/2019	Reviewed-Comments	35	Total Days in Queue 54
	7/17/2019	7/17/2019	7/17/2019	Reviewed-Approved as Noted	0	
Traffic Review	6/7/2019	6/21/2019	6/21/2019	Reviewed-Comments	14	
	7/17/2019	7/22/2019	7/22/2019	Reviewed-Approved as Noted	5	

Queue time is the "Date Process Created" until the "Date Started Review"

Source: Office of the City Auditor

***DPP focuses reports on the number of permits issued instead of how long permits take to be issued***

DPP provides the public with statistics on the number of permits that have been issued monthly and annually to show their productivity. Although DPP is able to report that they issue an average 18,547 permits a year, they are unable to accurately report how long it takes for a permit to be issued. We found that it takes DPP an average of 135 days to issue a permit.

According to DPP staff, the department has no formal policies and procedures to track, calculate, or report permit processing times. Currently DPP uses two electronic systems to manage building permit applications: POSSE and ePlans. POSSE is a sophisticated workflow management system designed to track business processes and manage information, comments, and requests made by the business process and workflow. POSSE is designed to develop new building business processing workflows. POSSE is flexible and can accommodate modifications as needed and can perform complex processes. Comparatively, ePlans is primarily a permit plan review software. ePlans operates outside

of POSSE, but it has the ability to interface with POSSE and report actions taken during the plan review process. POSSE is used to track and store information for all permits. POSSE data is inputted manually; the information in *ePlans* is automatically generated by each task. POSSE data is not programmed to automatically monitor and track plan review processing times. Instead, DPP relies on plan reviewers to manually generate, input and track plan review performance time, which may result in inconsistent performance time reporting. Because POSSE is not programmed to automate and track plan reviewer performance times, current practice allows the plan reviewer to adjust the time and date for when they received and completed a task which makes the data unreliable.

We requested data on the total average days that a task sat with a commercial plan reviewer. DPP responded that the commercial examiner's report showed no overdue tasks. DPP explained that there were no overdue tasks because commercial plan reviewers do not accept a task unless they are going to complete it immediately. As a result, the average task completed by plan reviewer report is not a true representation of the projects waiting for each individual plan review. In our review we found that plan reviewers only report the time that a plan is actively reviewed and not the time for when a task is received and it sits waiting to be reviewed. Due to the inconsistent reporting and DPP not accurately tracking and reporting permit timeliness, we often found discrepancies between what DPP reports publicly and what internal reports actually show. Exhibit 2.7 shows three examples of the time publically reported for time review versus the actual internal time it took for the plan review.

### Exhibit 2.7 Tables Comparing DPP Online Permit Tracking and Internal Report

**\*DPP Online Self-Check Permit Status- Does not report the actual created date**

Type of Review	Date Plans Received	Date Completed	Outcome	Outcome	Days in Review	Total Days in Review
Board of Water Supply (BWS)	May 1, 2019	May 1, 2019	Reviewed - Approved	Reviewed-Approved	0	0
Board of Water Supply (BWS)	May 29, 2019	May 29, 2019	Reviewed - Approved	Reviewed-Approved	0	
Building Code (Residential)	May 21, 2019	May 21, 2019	Not Reviewed This Cycle	Not Reviewed This Cycle	0	
Building Code (Residential)	May 30, 2019	May 30, 2019	Reviewed - Comments	Reviewed-Comments	0	
Building Code (Residential)	Jun 18, 2019	Jun 18, 2019	Reviewed - Approved as Noted	Reviewed-Approved as Noted	0	
Wastewater Branch (WWS)	May 1, 2019	May 1, 2019	Reviewed - Approved	Reviewed-Approved	0	
Wastewater Branch (WWS)	May 29, 2019	May 29, 2019	Reviewed - Approved	Reviewed-Approved	0	
<b>STORM WATER QUALITY REVIEWS</b>						
File Number	Created Date	Status				
	May 24, 2019	Complete				

**\*DPP Internal Permit Tracking – Includes created dates and reveals actual time for review completion**

Commercial				Add/Alt to Existing SFD		
Type	Date Process Created	Date Received	Date Completed	Status	Days in Review	Total Days in Review
Board of Water	5/1/2019	5/1/2019	5/1/2019	Reviewed-Approved	0	21
	5/29/2019	5/29/2019	5/29/2019	Reviewed-Approved	0	
Building Code (Residential)	5/1/2019	5/21/2019	5/21/2019	Not Reviewed This Cycle	20	
	5/29/2019	5/30/2019	5/30/2019	Reviewed-Comments	1	
	6/18/2019	6/18/2019	6/18/2019	Reviewed-Approved as Noted	0	
Wastewater Branch	5/1/2019	5/1/2019	5/1/2019	Reviewed-Approved	0	
	5/29/2019	5/29/2019	5/29/2019	Reviewed-Approved	0	

**\*DPP Online Self-Check Permit Status- Does not report the actual created date**

Type of Review	Date Plans Received	Date Completed	Outcome	Outcome	Days in Review	Total Days in Review
Board of Water Supply (BWS)	Apr 23, 2019	Apr 23, 2019	Plans Rejected	Plans Rejected	0	8
Board of Water Supply (BWS)	May 28, 2019	May 28, 2019	Plans Rejected	Plans Rejected	0	
Board of Water Supply (BWS)	Jun 3, 2019	Jun 6, 2019	Reviewed - Comments	Reviewed-Comments	3	
Board of Water Supply (BWS)	Jun 21, 2019	Jun 21, 2019	Reviewed - Approved	Reviewed-Approved	0	
Building Code (Residential)	May 20, 2019	May 20, 2019	Not Reviewed This Cycle	Not Reviewed This Cycle	0	
Building Code (Residential)	May 29, 2019	May 29, 2019	Reviewed - Approved as Noted	Reviewed-Approved as Noted	0	
Building Code (Residential)	Jun 3, 2019	Jun 3, 2019	Reviewed - Comments	Reviewed-Comments	0	
Building Code (Residential)	Jun 26, 2019	Jun 26, 2019	Reviewed - Approved as Noted	Reviewed-Approved as Noted	0	
Wastewater Branch (WWS)	Apr 16, 2019	Apr 23, 2019	Reviewed - Approved	Reviewed-Approved	5	
<b>STORM WATER QUALITY REVIEWS</b>						
File Number	Created Date	Status				
SWGR2019-05-1272	May 9, 2019	Complete				

**\*DPP Internal Permit Tracking – Includes created dates and reveals actual time for review completion**

Residential				Add/Alt to Existing SFD w/Wetbar		
Type	Date Process Created	Date Received	Date Completed	Status	Days in Review	Total Days in Review
Board of Water	4/18/2019	4/23/2019	4/23/2019	Plans Rejected	5	53
	5/28/2019	5/28/2019	5/28/2019	Plans Rejected	0	
	6/3/2019	6/3/2019	6/6/2019	Reviewed-Comments	3	
	6/20/2019	6/21/2019	6/21/2019	Reviewed-Approved	1	
Building Code (Residential)	4/18/2019	5/20/2019	5/20/2019	Not Reviewed This Cycle	32	
	5/28/2019	5/29/2019	5/29/2019	Reviewed-Approved as Noted	1	
	6/3/2019	6/3/2019	6/3/2019	Reviewed-Comments	0	
	6/20/2019	6/26/2019	6/26/2019	Reviewed-Approved as Noted	6	
Wastewater Branch	4/18/2019	4/18/2019	4/23/2019	Reviewed-Approved	5	

**Exhibit 2.7**  
**Tables Comparing DPP Online Permit Tracking and Internal Report**  
**(continued)**

\*DPP Online Self Check Permit Status Does not report the actual created date

Type of Review	Date Plans Received	Date Completed	Outcome	Outcome	Days in Review	Total Days in Review
Board of Water Supply (BWS)	Feb 8, 2019	Feb 8, 2019	Reviewed - Approved	Reviewed-Approved	0	0
Building Code (Residential)	Feb 21, 2019	Feb 21, 2019	Reviewed - Approved as Noted	Reviewed-Approved as Noted	0	
State DOH (Wastewater Branch)	Feb 11, 2019	Feb 11, 2019	Reviewed - Approved	Reviewed-Approved	0	
Traffic Review Branch (TRB)	Feb 15, 2019	Feb 15, 2019	Reviewed - Comments	Reviewed-Comments	0	
Traffic Review Branch (TRB)	Mar 20, 2019	Mar 20, 2019	Reviewed - Comments	Reviewed-Comments	0	
Traffic Review Branch (TRB)	Mar 29, 2019	Mar 29, 2019	Reviewed - Comments	Reviewed-Comments	0	
Traffic Review Branch (TRB)	Apr 5, 2019	Apr 5, 2019	Reviewed - Approved as Noted	Reviewed-Approved as Noted	0	

STORM WATER QUALITY REVIEWS

File Number	Created Date	Status
	Mar 21, 2019	Complete

\*DPP Internal Permit Tracking – Includes created dates and reveals actual time for review completion

Residential			New 2-Story SFD w/Wetbar			
Type	Date Process Created	Date Received	Date Completed	Outcome	Days in Review	Total Days in Review
Board of Water	2/8/2019	2/8/2019	2/8/2019	Reviewed-Approved	0	35
Building Code (Residential)	2/8/2019	2/21/2019	2/21/2019	Reviewed-Approved as Noted	13	
State DOH (Wastewater Branch)	2/8/2019	2/11/2019	2/11/2019	Reviewed-Approved	3	
Traffic Review	2/8/2019	2/15/2019	2/15/2019	Reviewed-Comments	7	
	3/15/2019	3/20/2019	3/20/2019	Reviewed-Comments	5	
	3/25/2019	3/29/2019	3/29/2019	Reviewed-Comments	4	
	4/2/2019	4/5/2019	4/5/2019	Reviewed-Approved as Noted	3	

Source: Office of the City Auditor

**Permits are not being picked up which inflates total project time reported by DPP**

DPP does not actively manage permit status which results in inactive permits remaining in the queuing system. This contributes to an already backlogged the system. In our review, we found that 12 out of 52 (23%) applications experienced extended pick up times. Pickup time is the time that a building permit sits waiting to be paid for and picked up by the applicant. We defined extended pick up time as any permit that took more than 20 days to be paid for and picked up. In one instance, we found that a building permit took 378 days before the applicant picked up their permit. According to DPP, it is not unusual for approved permits to sit waiting to be picked up. We found that pickup time is reported and accounted for in the total permit process review time. By DPP not closing out inactive permits it keeps the permit processing clock running and artificially inflates the average permit processing times reported by DPP. This practice also contributes to the inaccurate reporting of permit application times.



In June 2013, DPP implemented a plan review fee as an internal control to reduce the number of permits that were submitted for approval, but not picked up or paid. Under this policy, DPP is allowed to charge a plan review fee of 20 percent of the estimated building permit fee. The plan review fee would be credited toward payment of the building permit fee. The building permit fee is based on the estimated value of work (see Appendix C). The plan review fee was an attempt to increase plan pickup timeliness and mitigate waste of resources and effort by DPP staff to conduct plan reviews without charge that may result in unclaimed permits. In our assessment, the plan review fee has not been effective in deterring unclaimed permits. DPP should consider implementing another control measure that would encourage expedient permit pick up. Exhibit 2.8 provides examples of how unclaimed permit applications can adversely impact DPP’s overall workload.

**Exhibit 2.8  
Permit Project Timelines With Applicants Took Excessive Time to Pick-up Building Permit**

Example #1: Commerical/Private			
	Date	Days	Status
Application Received	10/3/2013	55	Permit Approved
Permit Review Completed	11/27/2013		
Applicant Notified for Pickup	11/27/2013	70	Time to Permit Pickup
Permit Picked Up	2/5/2014		
Total		125	
Example #2: Commercial/Private			
	Date	Days	Status
Application Received	3/22/2017	58	Permit Approved
Permit Review Completed	5/19/2017		
Applicant Notified for Pickup	5/26/2017	67	Time to Permit Pickup
Applicant Pickup	8/1/2017		
Total		125	
Example #3: Commercial			
	Date	Days	Status
Application Received	6/15/2015	113	Permit Approved
Permit Review Completed	10/6/2015		
Applicant Notified for Pickup	10/7/2015	149	Time to Permit Pickup
Applicant Pickup	3/4/2016		
Total		262	

Source: Office of the City Auditor

***DPP forgoes over \$60K  
in potential city revenues  
by allowing permit plan  
review to remain active  
over a year***

Section 18-6.4, ROH, states that applications, where plan review fees have been paid and no permit is issued within 365 days following the date of application, shall expire. The ordinance also states that applications may be extended by the building official and plans and other data submitted for review may thereafter be returned to the applicant or destroyed by the building official. In order to renew action on an application after its expiration, the applicant shall resubmit plans and pay a new plan review fee. In our sample review of 382 permits, we found 68 permit applications exceeded the 365 day limit without achieving permit issuance. In these instances, DPP did not enforce the internal review controls already in place and did not collect plan review fees as directed by city ordinance. The 68 expired applications is another example of the department expending excessive time and resources to conduct unnecessary, lengthy plan reviews that should have expired. If DPP followed the ordinance and had the 68 applications expire and closed, after one year, further reviews would have been avoided and the department could have reduced its total backlog by 16 percent. Additionally, DPP could have collected up to \$60,811 in resubmission of plan review fees if applicants opted to follow through with permit application.



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# Chapter 3

## Despite Many Improvements, DPP's Permitting Process Continues to Struggle to Meet Public Demand

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The Department of Planning and Permitting (DPP) implemented several key policy and program changes to improve its permitting process. DPP implemented an expedited One-Time Review (OTR-60) process for one- and two-family dwellings, expanded their appointment system for building permit applications, and made better use of its third party reviewers to supplement plan review services. Despite implementing these policies and programs, DPP has been unable to consistently meet benchmarks for initial plan review times over the past five years. Applicants experience excessive review times and requests for appointment services are difficult to obtain due to private companies monopolizing the system.

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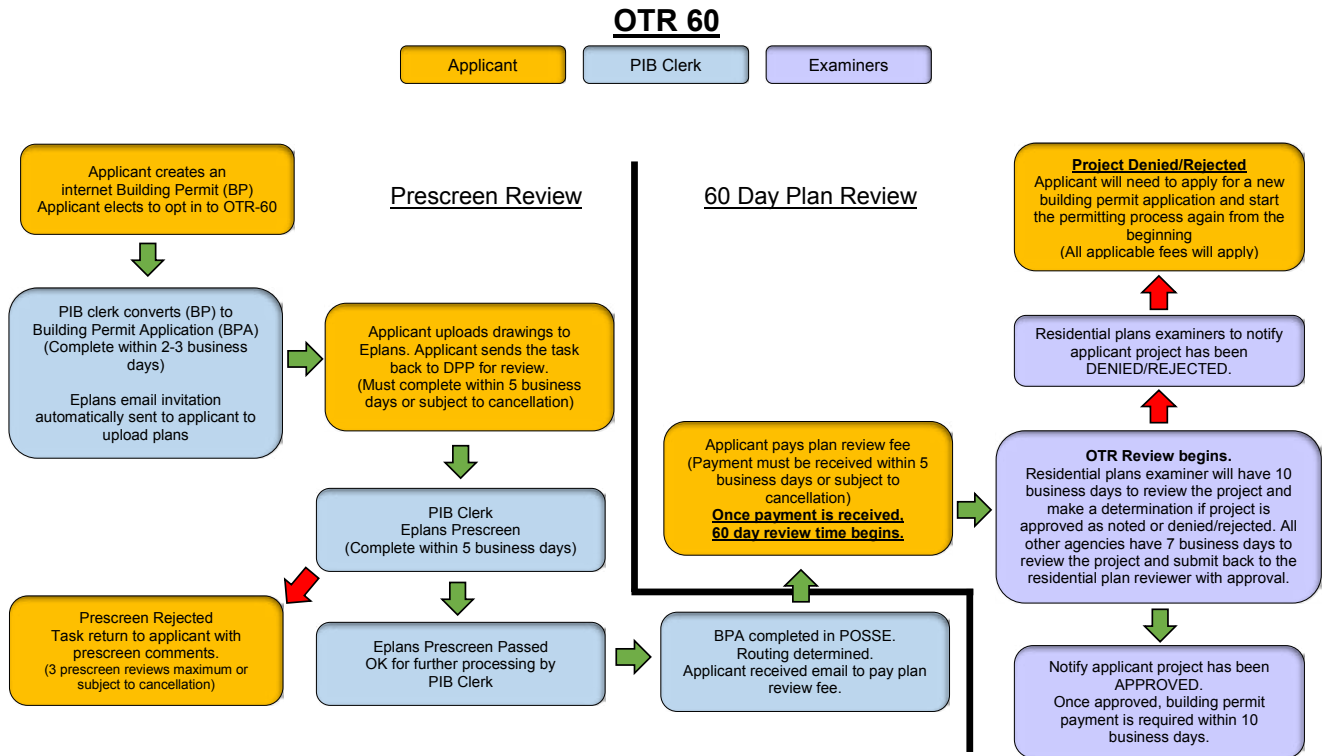
### **The One-Time Review 60 Day (OTR-60) Process for One- and Two-Family Dwellings Had No Effect on Expediting Permits Issued**

The Department of Planning and Permitting reports that it issued nine expedited building permits under the OTR-60 program. To qualify for the expedited permit review under OTR-60, applicants for one- and two-family dwelling units must meet five specific criteria and DPP must approve or deny the application, after one review, within 60 days. We found that none of the permits issued under OTR-60 conformed to program requirements because DPP did not fully enforce OTR-60 criteria. As result, OTR-60 had no effect on expediting permit application review.

OTR-60, established in 2002, was expanded under Ordinance 18-41, which took effect on November 28, 2018. Ordinance 18-41 established a 60-day turnaround time for new construction and renovation of single-family and two-family detached dwellings. Under the OTR-60 program, applications are guaranteed a one-time review, approval or denial, within a 60-day period. In order to meet the program's 60-day or less review, DPP's residential plans examiner is expected to comply with the 10 business day review requirement to approve or deny the plans. All other reviewing agencies are expected to comply with a seven business day review requirement to approve the plans and submit back to the residential plans reviewer. If the plans are approved, the building permit is issued and payment is required within 10 business days. If the plans are denied or rejected, the applicant must apply for a new building permit and start the permitting

process from the beginning and all applicable plan review fees will apply. The OTR-60 residential review process is illustrated in Exhibit 3.1.

**Exhibit 3.1**  
**One-time Review (OTR-60) Residential Plan Review Process**



Source: Office of the City Auditor

***DPP issued 9 building permits under OTR-60, but those applications did not meet program criteria and did not receive expedited processing***







Since OTR-60's inception there have been a total of 29 applicants who utilized the 60-day one-time review process. According to DPP, of the 29 applications 9 permits have been issued, and 20 were under active review as of August 13, 2019. We found, however, that the 9 permits issued under OTR-60 did not meet program criteria and did not receive expedited processing. Furthermore, none of the 29 applications met all criteria for expedited processing:

- 21 of 29 applications were not submitted electronically, which should have disqualified them from the start;
- 8 of the 9 permits issued under OTR-60 were not issued in 60 days or less; and

- 1 of the 9 permits issued under OTR-60 was issued within 60 days, but was not submitted electronically and should have been ineligible for expedited review

The first requirement for an application to be accepted under the OTR-60 process is electronic submission. We found that of the 29 OTR-60 applications received by DPP, only eight of the applications were filed electronically the other 21 applications were paper submission. Based on the programs requirements only eight applications should have been initially accepted and the 21 paper submissions should have been rejected. However DPP did not reject any plans and accepted all 29 applications. Additionally we found that under OTR-60 once an application is accepted the residential plans examiner has 10 days to review the project and make a determination to approve or deny the application. We determined that of the eight applications that was electronically filed only one of them was approved within 10 business days. The other seven were subject to more than one review cycle and did not receive an approval or denial within 10 business days and should have been rejected. Subsequently we found that only one electronic application passed residential plan review but was unable to pass the last OTR-60 requirement for all other agencies to approve or deny the application plans within seven business days. Thus, based on our review of the 29 OTR-60 applications, none of them met all of the program requirements and all 29 should have been rejected from the program. Exhibit 3.2 lists the OTR-60 program requirements and the 29 applications that failed to meet all of the established requirements.

### Exhibit 3.2 Ordinance 18-41 One-Time Review (OTR)-60 Requirements

<i>OTR-60 Requirements</i>	<b>Description</b>	<b># of applications that met the program requirement</b>	<b># of applications that DID NOT meet the program requirement</b>	<b>Did all applications comply with individual program requirements?</b>
<i>Electronic Application</i>	Applications must be filed electronically, under ePlans.	8	21	NO 
<i>OTR Residential Plan Review</i>	The residential plans examiner will have 10 business days to review the project and make a determination if the project is approved as noted.	1	7	NO 
<i>OTR Residential Plan Review</i>	The residential plans examiner will have 10 business days to review the project and make a determination if the project is denied.	0	0	NO 
<i>Other Reviewing Agencies</i>	All other agencies have 7 business days to review the project and submit back to the residential plans examiner with approval.	0	0	NO 
<i>Other Reviewing Agencies</i>	If the other reviewing agencies (non-residential code) cannot complete their review within the allotted time, the application will be disqualified from OTR-60 and proceed under regular review.	0	0	NO 
<i>Projects Completely Compliant with OTR-60 Established Rules</i>	<b>Total</b>	0/29	29/29	NO 

Source: Office of the City Auditor

Under Ordinance 18-41, DPP should have rejected all 29 non-compliant applications and directed applicants to reapply under the standard permit review process. Instead of rejecting non-compliant plans we found that DPP instead gave comments and provided applicants the opportunity to resubmit them for second and sometimes third and fourth reviews. In total, only nine of the 29 OTR-60 applications were issued permits and the remaining 20 applications continue under DPP's regular plan review process. In our review, DPP does not enforce OTR-60 controls and accepts non-compliant applications and plans, resulting in multiple review cycles and extended review times. By DPP processing the 20 applications under their regular plan review process and not rejecting them as prescribed by OTR-60, the department undermines program intent which guarantees applicants timely one-time review, approval or denial in 60 days or less.

**Failure to enforce OTR-60 requirements causes DPP to forgo potential city revenues**

By not enforcing OTR-60's one-time review requirement and rejecting applications, DPP foregoes potential city revenues of nearly \$14,863 in additional plan review and permit fees. Exhibit 3.3 shows the estimated value of work for each application under OTR 60 and the calculated tentative building permit fee and the subsequent estimated plan review fee for all 29 applications that were not compliant with the program.

**Exhibit 3.3  
One Time Review (OTR-60)-29 applications Estimated Plan Review Fees**

<b>ID</b>	<b>Job Description</b>	<b>Estimated Value of Work</b>	<b>Tentative Building Permit Fee</b>	<b>Estimated Plan Review Fee</b>
1	New 2-Story SFD w/Wetbar	\$350,000	\$4,200	\$840.00
2	Addition/Alt	\$40,000	\$802	\$160.40
3	New Farm Dwelling	\$450,000	\$5,200	\$1,040.00
4	Convert Carport to New 2-Car Garage	\$10,000	\$232	\$46.40
5	New 2-Story SFD w/Wetbar	\$385,000	\$4,550	\$910.00
6	Addition/Alt	\$70,000	\$1,266	\$253.20
7	Addition/Alt w/Wetbar	\$200,000	\$2,700	\$540.00
8	New SFD w/Wetbar and Carport	\$250,000	\$3,200	\$640.00
9	Addition/Alt	\$30,000	\$622	\$124.40
10	Add/Alt to SFD	\$10,000	\$232	\$46.40
11	New 2-Story SFD	\$700,000	\$6,700	\$1,340.00
12	Add/Alt to SFD w/Wetbar	\$192,000	\$2,620	\$524.00
13	Add/Alt to SFD	\$80,000	\$1,406	\$281.20
14	Add/Alt to SFD	\$8,000	\$188	\$37.60
15	Add/Alt to SFD	\$75,000	\$1,336	\$267.20
16	New 2-Story SFD w/Wetbar	\$500,000	\$5,700	\$1,140.00
17	New 2-Story SFD	\$700,000	\$6,700	\$1,340.00
18	New Chain Link Fence	\$13,700	\$313	\$62.68
19	New 1-story SFD w/Wetbar	\$447,000	\$5,170	\$1,034.00
20	New 1-story SFD	\$155,000	\$2,250	\$450.00
21	New 1-story SFD	\$335,000	\$4,050	\$810.00
22	Interior Alt	\$60,000	\$1,126	\$225.20
23	Add/Alt to SFD	\$16,650	\$378	\$75.66
24	Convert SFD to 2FD (ohana)	\$5,000	\$122	\$24.40
25	Add/Alt to SFD	\$190,000	\$2,600	\$520.00
26	Enclose Patio	\$40,000	\$802	\$160.40
27	Add/Alt to SFD	\$50,000	\$982	\$196.40
28	Add/Alt to SFD	\$134,200	\$2,042	\$408.40
29	New 2-Story SFD	\$725,000	\$6,825	\$1,365.00
				<b>\$14,862.94</b>

Source: Office of the City Auditor

As a result of not enforcing the OTR-60 one-time review cycle, DPP is not meeting the programs established objectives set forth

in Ordinance 18-41 and overextends its resources in staff time and cost to allow these plans to continue to be processed under DPP's regular plan review process.

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### **Private For Profit Companies Game the Appointment System and Exceed the Maximum Daily Appointment Allotment**

DPP's online appointment system was established to eliminate long lines and excessive wait times at the Permit Issuance Branch counters, and minimize the number of walk-in appointments. The online appointment system allows applicants to schedule in-person appointments with an intake plan reviewer. In an effort to streamline the permit application review process and provide better customer service, DPP expanded its online appointment system for building permit application appointments at its downtown Fasi Municipal Building (FMB) location. DPP's FMB location offers 18 appointments a day and the Kapolei Civic Center (Kapolei) location offers 8 appointments a day, Tuesday through Friday. Each appointment slot is 45 minutes and is reserved with an internet building permit (IBP) number. An applicant can reserve a maximum of two appointment slots per day. In general, appointments are available daily from 8:00 a.m. to 3:15 p.m., except during the 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. lunch hour, Saturday, Sunday, and State holidays. Although intake locations continue to accept walk-in applications, online appointments are given service priority over walk-in applicants.

Applicants are required to bring three hard copy project plans to be prescreened and reviewed by the intake plan reviewer. The Intake Plan Reviewer may allow the corrections to be made on the spot and approve the plans as noted during the appointment. This eliminates any unnecessary back and forth discussions that often occurs with online submittals or walk-in drop off submittals. Appointments are advantageous to the applicant because it minimizes the time spent on back and forth discussions and resubmittals which can lengthen the permit approval process. For this reason, we found that many private, for-profit companies prefer in-person appointments and utilize them as an expedited intake and routing process. We also found that some of these private for-profit companies are monopolizing appointments by exploiting lax controls over appointment bookings.

### ***Lax controls allow private companies to monopolize appointments and may restrict public access***

According to DPP's established appointment booking requirements, applicants may not book more than two appointment slots per day. We found that private for-profit companies routinely violate DPP's maximum daily appointment allotment of two appointment slots per day by using a different applicant or company name. We were able to identify applicant

appointment abuse by reviewing the contact phone numbers listed on the appointment reservations.

- Between January 2018 and April 2019, we identified three applicants representing a private company or firm, booking up to 21 percent of the total appointment slots during the 13 month period at the FMB and Kapolei offices;
- Between January 2018 and April 2019, the same three applicants, took up an average of 22 percent of appointment slots each month at the FMB and Kapolei offices; and
- One of the top three applicants with the most appointment bookings was also listed as an authorized third party reviewer.

Exhibits 3.4 and 3.5 below describe the total appointment slots taken by the top three violators of the appointment system and the booking slot proportion for the period of January 2018 through April 2019.

**Exhibit 3.4**  
**Average Number of Appointment Slots Taken Each Month by Top 3 Violators**

<i>Applicant</i>	<i>Total Appointments Taken Each Month</i>	<i>Total Available Appointments Each Month</i>	<i>Average % of Appointment Slots Taken Each Month (January 2018 through April 2019)</i>
Applicant A	685	8034	9%
Applicant B	522	8034	7%
Applicant C	468	8034	6%
Total	1675	8034	22%

Source: Office of the City Auditor

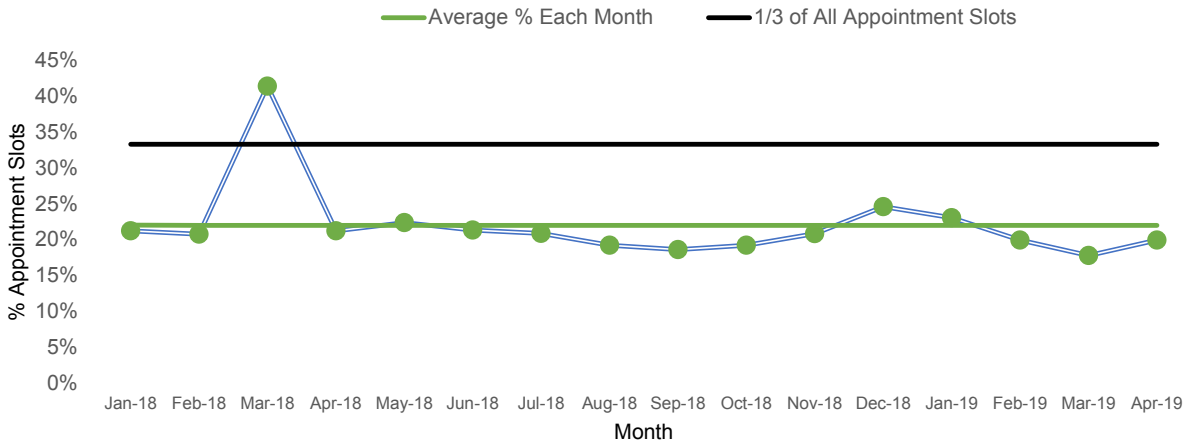
**Monthly bookings for top three appointment booking violators**

Exhibit 3.5 shows the booking percentage of the top three violators from January 2018 through April 2019. We found that in the month of March the top three violators booked a total of 118 appointments of the 520 available appointments accounting for over 41 percent of the available appointment slots for the month. By DPP allowing these companies to book multiple appointments, it violates the maximum daily appointment allotment and places



unnecessary capacity constraints on the appointment booking system.

**Exhibit 3.5**  
**Top 3 Applicant Monthly Booking Percentages in FY 2018**



Source: Office of the City Auditor

### Controls Over DPP's Online Appointment System are Inadequate

We found that DPP's online appointment system has controls in place to prevent applicants from booking more than two appointments per day. Some applicants, however, have found a way to bypass the system's internal control by using a different applicant or company name to book the appointment. These applicants or companies use the same contact phone number listed on their other appointments reserved on the same day. DPP's current online appointment system lacks sufficient internal system controls to prevent applicants from bypassing the name and IBP internal controls and gaming the appointment system with multiple appointment reservations. As a result, private for profit companies are monopolizing DPP's online appointment system and restricting public access by reducing the availability of appointments to the general public.

### Poor Internal System Controls Could Lead to Possible Abuse of City Services

During our review, we found that an authorized third party reviewer was one of the private for-profit companies that monopolized DPP's online appointment system. We also found that some third party reviewers advertise their ability to expedite client's permits *through exclusive in-house experienced permit routing and expediting services or with contacts made at the City and*

*County of Honolulu*<sup>1</sup>. We believe that third-party businesses that offer expedited review and routing services as an authorized third party reviewer may be in violation of DPP's Third Party Administration Rules (TPAR) Section 20-2-9. TPAR states that third-party review shall not be permitted if the "third party reviewer" has a conflict of interest involving the party with whom it has contracted to perform plan review services, including, but not limited to, where the third party reviewer's performance of plan review services would result in financial benefit to the third party reviewer. As a result, third party reviewers, who charge a fee for their ability to expedite client permits, may be offering that expedited service by monopolizing DPP's online appointment system in violation of DPP's Third Party Administration Rules. Proper internal controls are not only necessary to prevent restricted public access to the online appointment system, but also in preventing abuse of city services.

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### **The City Promotes Increased Use of Third Party Review to Accelerate the Permitting Plan Review Process**

Third Party Review (TPR) enables an applicant to have optional plan review processing. In October 2004, administrative rules were adopted for DPP's Building Division to enable optional permit processing using Third Party Review. A TPR is a technical officer, individual or firm, duly authorized by the Department of Planning and Permitting, pursuant to Chapter 7, ROH, to review Codes (Building Code, Plumbing Code, Electrical Code, Housing Code, Shoreline and Special Management Area Code, Grading, Grubbing and Stockpiling Code, Land Use Code and ordinances pertaining to Land Use and Building Energy Efficiency Standards.) TPR eligibility requirements are listed in Appendix B.

Third party reviews supplement the current DPP permit review process. TPR is a professional service designed to work in tandem with DPP as an external service and help expedite building permit application review. Currently, there are 54 registered and certified third party reviewers, comprised of 12 companies and 42 individuals as listed on DPP's website. Exhibit 3.6 shows the increased use of TPR services over the last five years.

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<sup>1</sup> These claims made by third party reviewers suggest instances of non-compliance with city regulations, and may warrant a more thorough examination for potential fraud, waste, and abuse.

### Exhibit 3.6 Increased Use of TPR Services

	<b>FY 14</b>	<b>FY 15</b>	<b>FY 16</b>	<b>FY 17</b>	<b>FY 18</b>	<b>Total</b>
# of DPP Reviewed Permits	18,001	19,557	16,101	14,114	15,664	83,437
# of Third Party Reviewed Permits	853	1,017	1,251	1,045	1,551	5,717
% Change of Total TPR Reviews	--	19%	23%	-16%	48%	--
% of TPR Reviews	5%	5%	7%	7%	9%	6%

Source: Office of the City Auditor

In January 2019, the Office of Climate Change, Sustainability and Resiliency created a *Resilience Strategy for the City and County of Honolulu*, which established 44 discrete policies or actions and projects that were deemed measurable and meaningful. Each action addresses specific policies or programs that the city and its partners can establish to help achieve the city's overall resilience goals. Action 6 states: *Expand Housing and Energy Transformation by Accelerating the Permitting Process*, calls for an increased self-service, third party review, and automated processes and certifications to achieve a quicker, more efficient permitting process.

Customers who choose to use TPR services sign a contract with the DPP registered company or individual and agrees to the services provided. Upon execution of the contract and payment for services, the TPR official becomes authorized to conduct all permit-related business on behalf of their customer. All building permit application submission, permit review correspondence and plan review submissions are submitted and processed by the TPR official.

Over the last five years DPP has seen an increase in applicants electing to use TPR in hopes of expediting their permit review process and issuance. The use of TPR services has increased steadily and in FY18 TPR services reached a high of 1,551 permits reviewed. That is an 82 percent increase since FY14 and trends indicate a continued rise in TPR service numbers.

***Third party reviews do not always result in expedited review times due to DPP duplicative reviews***

Third party review companies often advertise being able to provide a faster and more efficient way of obtaining a building permit. However, in our review, we found that third party review were also subject to excessive review time and multiple review cycles. According to DPP's Standard Operating Procedures, Section 9, plan review fees are not required for TPR and any fees and costs for services performed by TPR shall not be governed by, nor monitored by, the City and County of Honolulu. In our review, we found that DPP often re-reviewed TPR submissions resulting in extended review times and multiple review cycles costing the city time and money to provide services that TPR companies are being paid to perform. Exhibit 3.7 shows three examples that received multiple review cycles and incurred excessive delays in permit issuance.

**Exhibit 3.7**  
**Third Party Review Files that Received Multiple Review Cycles**

Example 1: Residential Project \$600,000 Valuation					
Multiple Review Cycles					
Review Type	Date Received	Date Completed	Max Review Cycles <sup>1</sup>	Excessive Review Cycles	Total Review Cycles
Board of Water	2/23/2016	2/25/2016	1		4
	3/18/2016	3/22/2016	2		
	3/30/2016	4/6/2016		3	
Building Code	2/23/2016	2/24/2016	1		4
	3/22/2016	3/22/2016	2		
	3/30/2016	4/4/2016		3	
Civil Engineering Branch	2/23/2016	2/25/2016	1		3
	3/18/2016	3/21/2016	2		
	3/30/2016	3/30/2016		3	
Traffic Review Branch	2/23/2016	2/24/2016	1		1
Wastewater Branch	2/23/2016	2/24/2016	1		1
<b>Total Count</b>	<b>49 Days</b>		<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>13</b>
Example 2: Commercial Project- \$3,857,000 Valuation					
Multiple Review Cycles					
Review Type	Date Received	Date Completed	Max Review Cycles <sup>1</sup>	Excessive Review Cycles	Total Review Cycles
Board of Water	1/7/2014	1/7/2014	1		3
	7/7/2014	7/7/2014	2		
	7/8/2014	7/8/2014		3	
Fire	12/19/2013	1/8/2014	1		2
	5/8/2014	5/8/2014	2		
Wastewater	7/9/2014	7/9/2014	1		3
	12/2/2014	12/2/2014	2		
	12/2/2014	12/2/2014		3	
Zoning	12/31/2013	1/8/2014	1		7
	12/31/2013	1/23/2014	2		
	6/3/2014	6/24/2014		3	
	6/3/2014	7/14/2014		4	
	7/18/2014	7/24/2014		5	
	8/19/2014	9/3/2014		6	
12/18/2014	1/8/2015		7		
<b>Total</b>	<b>385 Days</b>		<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>15</b>
Example 3: Residential Project- \$600,000 Valuation					
Multiple Review Cycles					
Review Type	Date Received	Date Completed	Max Review Cycles <sup>1</sup>	Excessive Review Cycles	Total Review Cycles
Board of Water	3/19/2018	3/19/2018	1		3
	9/26/2018	9/26/2018	2		
	10/26/2018	10/26/2018		3	
Building Code	5/4/2018	5/4/2018	1		4
	9/20/2018	10/2/2018	2		
	11/5/2018	11/8/2018		3	
Civil Engineering	3/23/2018	3/23/2018	1		4
	9/20/2018	9/20/2018	2		
	10/17/2018	10/17/2018		3	
Wastewater	3/19/2018	3/21/2018	1		6
	3/21/2018	3/21/2018	2		
	9/20/2018	9/21/2018		3	
	9/21/2018	9/21/2018		4	
	10/17/2018	10/18/2018		5	
11/30/2018	11/30/2018		6		
<b>Total</b>	<b>260 Days</b>		<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>17</b>

Source: Office of the City Auditor

Administrative rules, Sect. 20-7-8 (a) allows DPP to monitor and conduct unannounced audits of work performed by third-party reviewers. However, DPP should not be conducting duplicative reviews of TPR plans because the city is not collecting any plan review fees to conduct duplicative work. Furthermore, duplicating the TPR review work wastes city time and resources. Under current practice, the TPR plan review process does not improve the overall efficiency of building application processing. DPP acknowledged that in the past they have been poorly administering TPR and has recently instructed staff not to double check the work of third party reviews. However, DPP currently does not have any policies or procedures in place to formalize how the department should audit or monitor TPR work.

**DPP Does Not Properly Manage TPR Registration and Renewal Fees**

DPP is responsible for monitoring and tracking the eligibility of registered third party reviewers. DPP provides a list of registered TPR companies and individuals on its website. DPP is responsible for properly administering TPR and ensuring that the individuals and companies who apply meet and maintain all of the eligibility requirements established in administrative rule Sect. 20-7-2 and 20-7-3. Appendix B list the 14 criteria required to become an authorized third party reviewer. One of the 14 requirements is submission of TPR registration fees. DPP administrative rules Sect. 20-7-3(e) states that within five business days of the department's notification to the individual or firm confirming the individual or firm's authorization to conduct plan review, the individual or firm shall remit a registration fee of \$300. Exhibit 3.8 below shows DPP's registration fees collected over the last five years for third party reviewers.

**Exhibit 3.8  
DPP's Registration Fees Collected Over the Last 5 Years for Third Party Reviewers**

	<i>FY 14</i>	<i>FY 15</i>	<i>FY 16</i>	<i>FY 17</i>	<i>FY 18</i>
TRP Reported Registration Fees	\$300	\$1,200	\$1,800	\$2,400	\$3,000

Source: Office of the City Auditor

**DPP is unable to account for \$36,300 in TPR renewal fees**

DPP administrative rules, Sect. 20-7-4 states; that a third party reviewer's registration shall automatically expire on July 31, two (2) years following the date of the individual or firm's registration. To maintain TPR eligibility, third party reviewers are required to submit a renewal application, provide proof of requisite liability insurance and pay a renewal fee of \$300 prior to the expiration of the third party reviewer's registration.

We reviewed the list of registered third party reviewers and DPP's annual operating budget, and were unable to verify that DPP collected any renewal fees over last five years. In our review, we found that DPP only reports TPR initial registration fees and not TPR renewal fees. DPP was unable to account for \$36,000 in TPR renewal fees that should have been collected for FY2014-FY2018 because DPP does not report collecting TPR renewal fees. Exhibit 3.9 below identifies TPR renewal fees that should have been collected over the last five years.

**Exhibit 3.9  
Unaccounted For Third Party Review Renewal Fees**

	<i>FY 2014</i>	<i>FY 2015</i>	<i>FY 2016</i>	<i>FY 2017</i>	<i>FY 2018</i>	<i>Total</i>
TPR Renewal Fees	\$ 15,000	\$ 2,100	\$ 5,400	\$ 2,100	\$ 11,700	\$ 36,300

Source: Office of the City Auditor

According to DPP administrative rules, Sect. 20-7-4, if the third party reviewer fails to submit the required renewal information and fails to remit the required renewal fee prior to the expiration of the renewal deadline, the third-party reviewer's registration becomes null and void. By DPP not collecting required renewal fees, they are at risk of having TPR companies and individuals providing unauthorized plan reviews.

DPP administrative rules, Sect. 20-7-3(f), requires DPP to provide the public with a list identifying individuals and/or organizations registered as third party reviewers. Because DPP could not account for renewal fees, we are unable to verify that the list of 42 of individuals and 12 companies listed on the department's website met the renewal requirements and are authorized to perform third party reviews for the City and County of Honolulu. DPP needs to ensure that they have the proper internal controls in place to be able collect and accurately report required TPR

registration fees. The department also needs to improve its TPR eligibility monitoring by documenting initial registrations and renewals.



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# Chapter 4

## Operational Improvements in Staffing, Training, Technology and Efficiency Should Be Prioritized

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The Department of Planning and Permitting (DPP) is unable to support current customer demand and performance improvements are limited. Operational deficiencies exist because DPP has not made sufficient effort to streamline the permit review process. Current DPP administrators admit to not managing performance to meet the public's demand for timely services. DPP's building permitting review process is hampered by multiple review cycles contributing to extended review times. DPP does not properly administer plan review controls and, as a result, the building permitting review process is only able to meet the initial plan review performance time of two days for all residential permits on average 26 percent of the time in the past five years. We also found that applicants are receiving their residential permits on average 108 days after application submission or 3 ½ months later.

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### Background

In 2004, the Office of the City of the City Auditor (OCA) conducted an audit of the *Review and Assessment of the Department of Planning and Permitting's One-Stop Permit centers Report No. 04-02*. At the time, we found that DPP's permit centers continue to experience a number of operational problems that hamper the delivery of effective service. OCA identified the following areas in need of improvement:

- DPP needs to develop meaningful goals and objectives by which to measure the performance of the permit centers.
- Although meaningful measures of performance are available, those that the department does report are not effective measures of building permit process performance.
- Permit centers are hampered by shortages of staff due to turnover, inability and delays in hiring new staff, and a significant number of staff retirements. This has resulted in staff morale problems and high work demands upon existing staff.

- Permit counter staff were overwhelmed by POSSE input requirements, and lacked proper skills and training to effectively execute the permit processing requirements.
- There are inadequate in-house training programs to ensure that staff are properly trained. External training has been curtailed, and staff turnover has resulted in a shortage of experienced in-house personnel to conduct training.

As of April 2018, DPP considered all five recommendations resolved. However, our current review found that two of the five recommendations have only been partially implemented. In our opinion, these recommendations, if fully implemented, could address some of the problems that DPP continues to face.

The two recommendations partially implemented were:

**Recommendation 1:**

- Expedite an objective evaluation and development of a plan to assess and address the personnel issues that accompany its permit centers and building permit processing. This should include, but not be limited to:
  - o Reviewing and identifying the minimal qualifications and job duties necessary to determine proper classification for permit counter clerks;
  - o Determining proper staffing levels necessary to provide improved application processing service; and
  - o Developing appropriate training programs to assist and guide staff in the performance of their jobs.

DPP is currently working with the Department of Human Resources (DHR) to establish a new professional series to help address high turnover rates for entry level positions. DPP worked with DHR to review and identify the minimal qualifications and job duties necessary to determine proper classification for permit counter clerks and plan reviewers. As of September 2019, DPP was in the process of circulating the proposed new class specification created by DHR to the other counties and municipalities it will affect all counties that provide the same building permit plan review services as DPP. Appendix D details the Proposed New Class Specification.

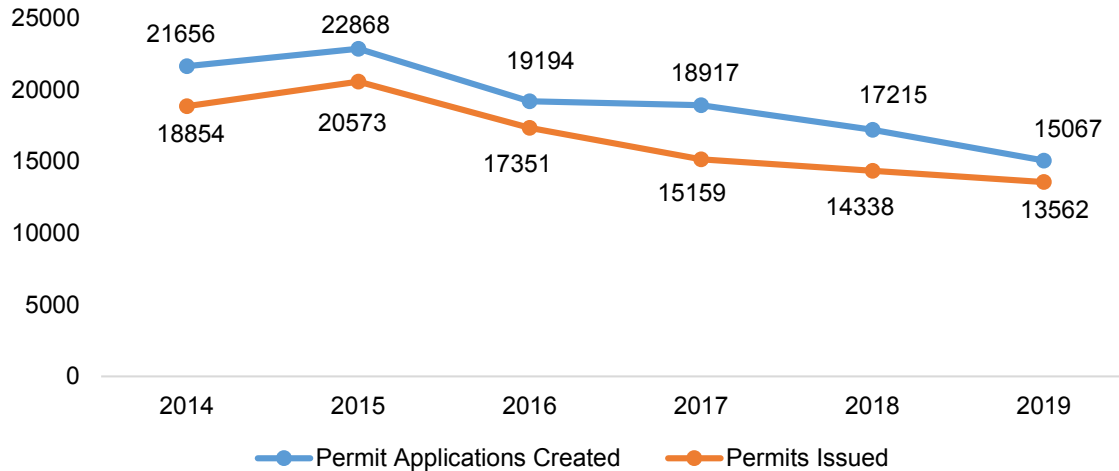
***Compared to other jurisdictions, DPP Plan Reviewers are less skilled and receive lower compensation***

As part of our audit, we reviewed other jurisdictions and compared applicable position job descriptions, requirements, training, licensing and pay scales. See Appendix E. We found that of the five jurisdictions reviewed, the City and County of Honolulu is the only jurisdiction that did not require plan reviewer licensing or plan examiner certifications. Honolulu also provided the lowest pay ranges in comparison to other jurisdictions and the positions that provided comparable services. We concluded that DPP should consider licensing or certification requirements for its plan reviewers to ensure the recruitment of qualified plan review staff. Additionally, if DPP implemented licensing or certification requirements they would be able to justify higher pay ranges that would be more comparable to other jurisdictions reviewed.

***DPP is unable to keep up with workload demands due to low staffing levels and insufficient training***

Although DPP has addressed and identified proper staffing levels necessary to provide improved application processing services, the department still finds itself, 15 years later, struggling to develop an appropriate training program to ensure that staff have sufficient skills to perform their job duties. According to DPP, staff training opportunities are limited due to the fast pace nature of their work and the volume of permits that need to be reviewed during intake. In the department's view, there is no time for formal training. Currently there is only Informal on-the-job training provided by senior staff who must manage their current responsibilities in addition to new hire training. As a result, new staff hires are unable to immediately help alleviate the heavy workload on existing intake clerks and plan reviewers. Furthermore, due to the limitations of time and training resources, DPP has not been able to successfully transition more reviewers to *ePlan* review. Currently there are only two plan reviewers who are experienced and knowledgeable with electronic plan review. This contributes to increased work load on more experienced reviewers and a disproportionately lighter workload distribution for new, less experienced reviewers. Exhibit 4.1 shows the number of permit applications created and the number of permits issued over the last six years.

**Exhibit 4.1  
DPP Applications Created Vs. Permits Issued**



Source: Office of the City Auditor

DPP’s permit applications created decreased by 21 percent from 21,656 permit applications in 2014 to 17,215 permit applications in 2018. Additionally, the number of permits issued also saw a decrease of 24 percent from 18,854 permits in 2014 to 14,338 permits in 2018. Despite these declining trends, DPP has been unable to close the gap between applications created and permits issued and continues to have a consistent workload rollover each year. On average, there are 2,513 applications that rollover each year steadily contributing to DPP’s already strained and overworked staff.

**Recommendation 2:**

- Conduct an objective evaluation of the Honolulu Permit Center and develop a plan to implement operational improvements. The plan should include targeted goals; specific operational improvements to personnel, workflow, and processes; technological support; and customer service. Any plan should include provision and methodology to evaluate and assess performance.

According to DPP, the department implemented *ePlans* in 2012, a web-based digital submission and review system that can be deployed rapidly, is easy to use, works with existing or planned/ future technology, and streamlines the business process. The *ePlans* system has the ability to perform review, markup, and comment of permit plans using web-based software tools. It

has the ability to submit, review, track, and store permit plans electronically. The software provides tools that make it easier to review plans by providing a central repository of information that is easy to navigate, and does not take up desk space. With the implementation of *ePlans*, DPP sought to reduce plan review turnaround time and provide transparency and accountability during the review process. DPP also added eight new online features that allowed applicants to submit more types of building permits electronically, pay application fees, and review approvals in a single transaction.

In addition to the new software and online services, DPP created performance metrics to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and output of building permits by:

- Reducing the turnaround time for processing building permit applications by 10 percent; and
- Increasing the number of on-line permits issued by 50 percent.

Although DPP has implemented and expanded its *ePlans* system the department is not actively enforcing directed expansion policies. In August 2013, DPP issued a public news release stating that beginning October 1, 2013 the department will require that building permit applications for new residential and commercial buildings be submitted exclusively through *ePlans* system. We found, however that DPP does not enforce the *ePlans* submission requirement for new construction projects. As a result, potential efficiency, transparency, and accountability gains provided by electronic submissions are not being realized.

According to DPP staff, management did not issue any internal policies requiring regulation and enforcement, or compliance with the new construction *ePlan* requirement. Instead the department has been making exceptions for applicants who claim that they are unable to submit their plans electronically and continue to allow the submission of paper plans. Staff reported that they are frustrated because DPP management continues to make exceptions and accommodations to the same people who refuse to comply with the *ePlans* submission requirement that is designed to make the permitting process more timely and efficient. Because DPP does not enforce its own policies, it undermines the department's technology mission to provide the public with efficient, timely service that is responsive and effective in guiding development. Exhibit 4.2 shows the count and percentage of new constructions plans that were not submitted electronically.

**Exhibit 4.2  
New Construction ePlan Requirement Percentage**

<i>New Construction</i>		
<i>ePlans</i>	<i>Paper</i>	<i>Total</i>
24	11	35
69%	31%	

Source: Office of the City Auditor

The use of electronic plan submission was established to provide a more transparent permitting process. It would eliminate the time-consuming practice of having an applicant going to the permit counter to submit building plans and having to physically route plans amount governmental agencies. DPP needs to properly enforce electronic building permit application requirements and provide fair and equitable service to all applicants.

***DPP has not developed meaningful and measurable performance measures***

DPP performance metrics are established in Section 20-2-2, Administrative Rules. The rules identify the maximum time limits for initial plan review. According to DPP staff, the department has no formal policies and procedures in place to properly track, record, or report permit processing times. Management stated that DPP’s POSSE system does have the capability to monitor and track the various types of reviews and their associated timelines. However, DPP’s IT administrator noted that although POSSE is capable of tracking, recording, and reporting timeliness, management did not implement the proper system controls to review the data in that way. Exhibit 4.3 is DPP’s current maximum time limits established for plan review and the results of our sample as to DPP’s performance and ability to meet the established maximum time limits.

**Exhibit 4.3**

**Department of Planning and Permitting Rules Relating to Administration of Codes Section 20-2-2**

Department of Planning and Permitting Rules Relating to Administrative Codes Section 20-2-2: Maximum time limits. Maximum time limits as specified below, shall apply to the first plan review and shall be calculated in accordance with subsection (e). Maximum time limits for the second plan review shall be one-half of the maximum time limits for the first plan review unless there are major revisions, in which case the maximum time limits shall be as specified below. Plans that are not approved after second submittal shall be the subject to the provisions of §2-5. The maximum time limits shall begin upon receipt of the building permit application and plans, and shall stop when the applicant is called to pick up plans. Failure to complete plan review within the maximum time limit, as specified herein, shall result in the automatic approval of the plan review, in accordance with the requirements of Chapter 91, Hawaii Revised Statutes. Automatic approval shall not be construed to be an approval of any violation of applicable codes, regulations, or ordinances.				
Project Category	Maximum Time Limit (Days)	Average Initial Review Time (Days)	% DPP Met Maximum Time Limit	Maximum Time Limit Met 40% or more
Category 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Single-family dwelling and two family dwelling including alterations and additions (not part of a large development)</li> <li>Structures accessory to residential dwellings</li> <li>Retaining walls and fences</li> </ul> *Category 1 applications for property that is subject to a zoning variance, or that fall within a potential slide area, special district or shoreline setback area shall be evaluated for complexity upon submissions of the building permit application and may be placed within a higher category.	2 working days first plans review  1 working day second plan review	108	26%	No
Category 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commercial projects with valuation below \$50,000</li> <li>Sign Permits</li> <li>Relocation Permits</li> </ul>	14 calendar days first plan review  7 calendar days second plan review	157	40%	Yes
Category 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commercial projects with valuation between \$50,000-\$999,999</li> </ul>	28 calendar days first plan review 14 calendar days second plan review	206	75%	Yes
Category 4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commercial projects with valuation between \$1,000,000-\$9,999,999</li> </ul>	42 calendar days first plan review  21 calendar days second plan review	432	17%	No
Category 5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commercial projects with valuation \$10,000,000 and over</li> </ul>	70 calendar days first plan review  35 calendar days second plan review	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: Office of the City Auditor

Based on our review we found that on average, over the last five years, Category 1 permits have accounted for 77 percent of the total permits issued. Category 1 permits relate to all residential permits needed for single and two family dwellings. Over the past five years DPP issued an average of 14,414 residential (Category 1) permits a year and an average of 4,132 commercial permits

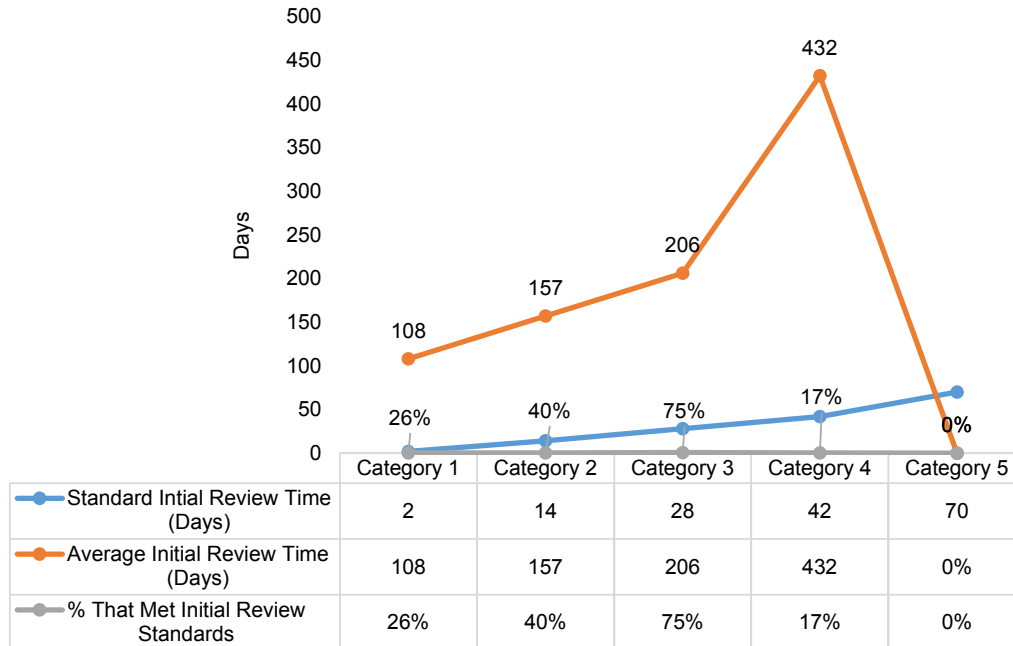


(Category 2-5) a year. With residential permits accounting for 77 percent of DPP's workload we identified category 1 permit plan review as being the weakest in timely performance evaluation. DPP staff stated that the two-day initial plan review deadline is unrealistic and very unlikely to be achieved. Furthermore, we found that DPP was unable to meet the established maximum plan review time limits for Category 1, 84 percent of the time. Our sample analysis showed an average time for a Category 1 permit to be issued was 108 days or 3 ½ months, which is 36 times longer than the maximum established time limit. Based on our analysis we, found that DPP has not established meaningful goals and objectives to assess efficient plan reviews.

Based on our findings and DPP's inability to meet initial permit plan review time frame we agree with DPP staff that the maximum time limits for initial plan review established in DPP's Administrative Rules, sect. 20-2-2, is unrealistic and unattainable. DPP management should reevaluate initial plan review time frames and consult with DPP's IT administrator on the systems capabilities and promote more data driven-decisions.

DPP needs additional training to understand the full capabilities and functions of POSSE and *ePlans* and their ability to automate plan review workflows. According to management, administration is not familiar with POSSE so they continue to do tedious manual processing and tracking instead of creating and establishing controls and fields in POSSE that can be used to establish an automated workflow that will track, monitor and report on various processes. DPP staff confirmed that timeliness has not been a priority over the past 29 years. DPP needs to identify and formalize necessary workflows needed to establish and enforce the issuance of timely permits.

**Exhibit 4.4  
Permit Review Times**



Source: Office of the City Auditor

The International Accreditation Service (IAS) AC251 Sect. 2.35 states that building departments should establish performance measures for each service area under its jurisdiction. Goals must be quantified (expressed as a number, rating or grade) and established in cooperation with users of agency services (citizens, architects, engineers, contractors, etc.) as well as elected and appointed officials. A system must be in place to regularly measure progress in meeting service goals. As part of this system, targets should be established for improvements in three separate areas of overall service: timeliness (turnaround time); quality (error rate); and professionalism [quality of interactions with staff (e.g., knowledge, attitude, responsiveness and helpfulness of staff members) as perceived by users of department or third-party services.

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## **DPP Lacks Clear and Consistent Management Guidelines to Effectively Administer Timely Building Permits**

DPP does not have an effective quality management system in place. Currently there are no policies, processes or procedures in place to meet DPP's mission to provide the public with efficient, timely service. According to IAS building agencies should establish a proper quality management system that will ensure that agencies are competent and comply with industry and/or international standards. By having an IAS accreditation, building departments are able to demonstrate that they have met the national standard and are competent to provide public safety services for their communities. The accreditation is based on *IAS Accreditation Criteria for Building Code Regulatory Agencies and Third-Party Service Providers*.

### ***IAS accreditation requirements could provide DPP with a model and frame work for proper building code review and enforcement***

IAS Accreditation criteria provides building departments with guidance in the following areas: General Operations; Quality Management; Management Commitment; Internal Audits; Management Reviews; Corrective Actions; Control of Documents and Records; Complaints and Appeals; Personnel; Permitting; Finance; Plan Reviews; Verification of Professional Credentials/Licenses; and Inspections.

One of the quality management systems IAS requires an internal audit function. IAS states that building departments should conduct annual internal audits to provide information on whether the department's quality management system conforms to its own quality management requirements and the requirements of AC251. Requirements state that internal audits shall be planned and implemented with consideration to areas of responsibility, importance of processes audited, changes affecting the organization, and results of previous audits. DPP does not have an effective quality management system in place that requires annual internal audit and, therefore, does not have sufficient internal controls to effectively manage and administer timely permit issuance.

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# Chapter 5

## Conclusions and Recommendations

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The Department of Planning and Permitting (DPP) have made key policy and program changes to improve the building permitting review process. DPP increased its use of Third Party Reviews, and started an internship program with the Honolulu Community College to address staffing shortages. The department also expanded the *ePlan* filing system requiring all new construction applicants to submit electronic plans for review in an effort to help streamline the plan review process. DPP also implemented *Malama Mondays*, a new policy to only receive payments on Mondays so the Permit Issuance Branch (PIB) staff can focus on processing permits. Despite implementing these policies, programs and procedures, DPP is unable to effectively and efficiently support current customer demand. DPP has many of the controls needed to enforce the timely issuance of building permits outlined in their administrative rules, Ordinance 18-41 and Section 18-6.4, Revised Ordinances of Honolulu. However, they do not properly implement or enforce these administrative controls, as a result in the building permitting review process is subject to multiple review cycles contributing to extended review times. Rather than following administrative rules, DPP has been more customer service-oriented in processing building permit applications, allowing customers to submit inadequate plans and not adhere to program requirements. While this customer service orientation is valuable, it comes at the expense of operational efficiency, as a result, DPP expends resources to accommodate and correct inadequately prepared applications and plans.

More specifically, DPP needs to address their inability to meet the initial plan review benchmarks outlined in their administrative rules for both residential and commercial permits. The agency must implement the internal controls outlined in administrative rules, Sect. 20-2-4 and 20-2-5, requiring plans that have more than one review cycle be limited to revisions and any plans not approved after the second review cycle either self-certify or request a permit by appointment. A comprehensive evaluation of DPP's maximum review guidelines is also needed to guide DPP operations in the future. Specifically evaluating Section 20-2-2 and performance benchmarks to identify any outdated or unachievable requirements.

From a policy perspective, DPP should evaluate the overall permit application process and consider fully implementing and enforcing electronic plan submission and plan review.

Enforcement of electronic plan review is a possible way to manage demand and streamline operations. DPP should also exercise better oversight of Third Party Review performance and compliance by conducting annual audits as mandated in Section 20-7-8 (a) of DPP's administration rules. DPP has the right to monitor and conduct unannounced audit of work performed by third-party reviewers as a mechanism to ensure monitoring and accountability of third-party reviewers. Additionally, DPP should implement and enforce controls to deter private entities including third-party reviewers from monopolizing the appointment system and violating the maximum daily appointment allotment.

The Department of Planning and Permitting has the tools and controls necessary to more effectively manage permit application review and issuance. However, if they lack an effective system to monitor application processes, identify bottlenecks or challenges, and data reports to take corrective action. DPP should establish a quality management system to ensure DPP is complainant with building industry standards. Additionally DPP should consider becoming accredited. Accreditation requirements can provide DPP with a framework to establish proper monitoring and enforcement of building code review.

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## Recommendations

We recommend that DPP should:

1. Enforce The Department of Planning and Permitting Rules Relating to Administration of Codes (Administrative Rules) Administrative Rules Section 20-2-4 and 20-2-5, to eliminate excessive plan review cycles;
2. Evaluate all its current administrative rule requirements (e.g. Section 20-2-2) and performance benchmarks to identify and revise any outdated or unachievable requirements;
3. Enforce the requirements of Ordinance 18-41 and reject non-compliant applications;
4. Enforce Section 18-6.4, Revised Ordinances of Honolulu, to expire permit applications when permits are not issued and picked up within 365 days;
5. Improve its workflow processes by prioritizing building application types, segregating them by complexity, and distributing them among staff so that less complex permit applications can be reviewed quicker;

6. Formalize its workflows and processes and integrate them with POSSE and ePlans;
7. Establish meaningful performance measures, collect appropriate data, and report its compliance with performance benchmarks;
8. Evaluate and establish an appropriate professional designation for entry-level intake clerks and permit reviewers that include minimum qualifications, description of duties, certification requirements, and compensation;
9. Properly collect, calculate, and report performance data for how long building permits take from time of initial application receipt to building permit issuance, to include sub-data for each review agency and account for time between reviews;
10. Implement an internal audit function within the permit issuance branch to oversee plan review including Third Party Reviewer;
11. Formally account and document third party review certification fees to ensure that program requirements are met;
12. Review and incorporate applicable IAS Accreditation criteria into its policies and procedures to ensure DPP's services meet the national standards to provide public safety services for the city and county of Honolulu;
13. Develop clear guidelines and user information for its online appointment scheduling services and post them on the department's website;
14. Implement and enforce controls to prevent private entities from booking more than two (2) building permit review appointments per day;
15. Improve customer education and outreach by distributing or posting an online checklist or other pertinent information about the overall permit process requirements, and associated processing times; and
16. Reaffirm DPP's commitment to educate and expand its ePlans program by establishing, and enforcing, formal policies and procedures that require all new building applications be submitted through ePlans.

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## Management Response

The Managing Director and the Department of Planning and Permitting broadly accepted the audit's findings and recommendations. The department also commented on several aspects of the audit. We provide the following clarifying comments. The department indicated that during the audit period we ignored the initiatives and proposed changes made to address the challenges identified in the audit report. We note that the seven initiatives that were announced by the mayor on November 28, 2018 to improve the building permit process was not applicable to our audit review period. Furthermore these initiatives were deemed not suitable audit criteria to assess permit plan review processing because they were not formalized in the department's policies, procedures, or administrative rules.

The department stated that the report's quantitative analysis relied on permit information from several years ago, FY14-18, and was erroneously compared against measures taken by the DPP since that time. However, the permit information used to conduct the quantitative analysis was within the audit review period and was relevant in identifying bottlenecks or challenge areas that need corrective action to meet the department's mission to provide the public with efficient, timely service. In addition, all findings were based on DPP's administration rules, pertaining to the timely issuance of building permits as outlined in Administration Code Sections 20-2-4 and 20-2-5, Ordinance 18-41 and, Section 18-6.4, Revised Ordinances of Honolulu.

The department also disagreed with the use of the term "effectiveness," as used in the audit's objectives, as misleading and incomplete. We acknowledge that the building permit application process is complex and impacted by many variables. However, the audit's focus was based on City Council Resolution 18-284, CD1, FD1 which requested the city auditor to assess improving the experience of building permit applicants, including reduced processing time and providing applicants with a timely update on the status of their permit applications.

The department also commented that it is not supportive of automatically cancelling expired permit applications as legally provided, and that the law should be applied carefully. Section 18-6.4, Revised Ordinances of Honolulu, states that permit applications shall expire after 365 days, unless extended by the building official. In our view, permit extensions should be the exception, rather than the rule. Based on our analysis, we found that the department does not effectively utilize this legally-available tool to manage permit applications.

The department is critical of the audit for not reviewing all the various review processes that it contends are involved in the building permit process. We acknowledge and are aware of additional processes, but they are not material to the findings of this report. However, the focus and limitations of the review were always clearly stated to the department from the inception of the audit. Additionally, some of the information provided in the response directly contradicts information provided in files we reviewed and interviews we conducted.

We amended the report to address information provided by management in its response to the draft audit report. Those amendments did not substantively change our audit results. In all other instances, we stand by our audit findings and recommendations. We also made other technical, non-substantive changes to the draft report for purposes of accuracy, clarity, and style. A copy of management's full response can be found on page 62.



**OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU**

530 SOUTH KING STREET, ROOM 300 \* HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813  
PHONE: (808) 768-4141 \* FAX: (808) 768-4242 \* INTERNET: [www.honolulu.gov](http://www.honolulu.gov)

KIRK CALDWELL  
MAYOR



ROY K. AMEMIYA, JR.  
MANAGING DIRECTOR  
GEORGETTE T. DEEMER  
DEPUTY MANAGING DIRECTOR

December 31, 2019

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Troy Shimasaki, Acting City Auditor  
FROM: Roy K. Amemiya, Jr., Managing Director   
SUBJECT: Response to Audit of Processes for Reviewing Building Permit Applications

This is the Administration's response to the Office of the City Auditor's December 2019 draft report, "Audit of the Department of Planning and Permitting's (DPP) Processes for Reviewing Building Permit Applications." The audit was initiated under City Council Resolution 18-284, CD1, FD1.

We appreciate the efforts put forth by the Office of the City Auditor to understand and evaluate the complexity of DPP's permitting process within a short amount of time. We respect the effort to develop a quantitative analyses of the permit process, and the neutral attitude of the staff to understand the process.

However, we have four overarching comments on this audit:

- 1) On November 28, 2018, Mayor Kirk Caldwell announced seven initiatives to improve the building permit process. Although this announcement preceded Resolution 18-284, and the audit's study period, these initiatives were largely ignored by the audit.
- 2) The quantitative analysis used permit information from several years ago, FY14-18, and erroneously compared these results against measures taken by the DPP since that time. This is an apples to orange comparison. In addition, the report does not recognize key differences between ePlan submittals versus hard copy submittals.
- 3) The use of the term "effectiveness," as used in the audit's objectives, is misleading and incomplete. The audit does not acknowledge that the length of time at which building permits are issued is one, but not the most important criteria by which to evaluate the effectiveness of the building permit process. Building safety and public safety are paramount, as well as accuracy and completeness of agency reviews. Customer service is also important to the City.

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- 4) The Department has already looked into or already is implementing the recommendations included in this audit. Completion of these initiatives will depend on availability of resources.

These points underlie our responses below to each of the report's recommendations, which are summarized herein.

### **Recommendations and Responses**

1. *Enforce DPP (Sec. 20-2-4 and 20-2-5) Rules Relating to Administration of Codes to eliminate excessive plan review cycles.*

In process. The subject rules were adopted in 2004, and admittedly, outdated. Since that time, there has been significant increase in review requirements, mandated at the federal, state and city levels. Some of these new requirements include new Water Quality Rules, changes to the review of eligible historic and archeological resources, and introduction of the One Time Review option. These additional review requirements can greatly lengthen the review process and non-City agencies are often the cause of delays.

Nevertheless, the department has taken action by limiting the number of review cycles. After the second review cycle, applicants are required to bring the projects' owners to a staff meeting to resolve outstanding issues and assure the owners of current status. If owners and applicants refuse this meeting, the permit can be cancelled.

There are concerns relating to the automatic cancellation of permit applications, especially those that have just exceeded the time limit threshold. As stated in the City's response to the audit on Large Detached Dwellings, DPP is not supportive of the automatic cancellation of permit applications and the revocation of building permits. While legally available, it needs to be carefully applied. The department has cancelled permit applications with no activity in 365 days, but some applications older than 365 days continue to be processed if approval is imminent. In some instances, the revocation of the permits is not in the public's interest as the permit is needed to correct deficiencies.

2. *Evaluate all DPP administrative rule requirements (e.g. Sec. 20-2-2) and performance benchmarks to identify and revise any outdated or unachievable requirements.*

See response to No. 1 above.

3. *Enforce the requirements of Ordinance 18-41(60-day deadline for review of eligible single-family dwelling applications) and reject non-compliant applications.*

In process. However, in lieu of rejecting applications for non-compliance, they are converted to the standard review process. No additional fees are charged.

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4. *Enforce Sec. 18-6.4, ROH, to expire applications when permits are not picked up within 365 days.*

In process. We expect to continue this “shredding” on a regular basis. The audit laments the loss of applicable building permit revenue. However, recent applications must pay a “plan review fee” (not to be confused with building permit fee) at the outset, which is intended to cover the cost of the review process. Thus, while there is no new revenue, the cost of review is covered. In addition, there is no significant “storage” cost to DPP by holding permits ready to be issued for lack of building permit fee payment, especially electronic documents.

While the law allows the department to cancel permits and permit applications, it is not employed without due consideration of circumstances. To automatically apply deadlines without due considerations would not be in the best interest for either the DPP or the members of the public desiring a building permit.

5. *Improve workflow processes by prioritizing building application types, segregating them by complexity and distributing among staff so that less complex permit applications can be reviewed quicker.*

Disagree. Although this would seem to be a logical suggestion, it is not practical because of the varying degrees of staff experience. The less complex applications are assigned to the most recently hired staff, with complex ones assigned to seasoned staff.

Additionally, we have taken additional steps to identify “simple” permit applications and have enabled these permits to be issued “on-line” without staff intervention. Today, about 35 percent of the total number of building permits are issued by this online process. This reduces both applicant and staff time. This provides more staff time to review “complex” projects.

6. *Formalize workflows and processes and integrate them with POSSE and ePlans.*

Agree. We will be updating our workflows and process as we migrate to a web-based POSSE process. ePlans operates under the POSSE framework. In the meantime, we are updating and establishing our performance measures.

7. *Establish meaningful performance measures, collect appropriate data and report its compliance with performance benchmarks.*

See response to No. 6 above. Many of the current performance reports existing on POSSE for the commercial and residential review processes will be incorporated into the web-based POSSE platform.

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 December 31, 2019  
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8. *Evaluate and establish an appropriate professional designation for entry-level intake clerks and permit reviewers that include minimum qualifications, description of duties, certification requirements and compensation.*

In process. We have examined this idea for several years, and more recently have been in discussion with our neighbor island counterparts, as this relates to collective bargaining and uniform classification of positions, statewide.

9. *Properly collect, calculate and report performance data for how long building permits take from time of initial application receipt to building permit issuance, to include sub-data for each review agency and account for time between reviews.*

Agree. We will be incorporating these monitoring needs as we update POSSE.

10. *Implement an internal audit function within the permit issuance branch to oversee plan review including Third Party Reviewer (TPR).*

This recommendation requires further study. DPP does not have staff capable of performing audits and a more neutral party may be more appropriate to oversee TPR entities.

11. *Formally account and document Third Party Review certification fees to ensure that program requirements are met.*

In process. The TPR renewal fee of \$300 is being collected prior to the expiration of TPR registration. Some firms or individuals may choose not to renew their TPR standing. Collected renewal fees are deposited into the TPR account. Precise accounting for each renewal fee could be attributed to the lack of a cashiering software available for the Department's use. The Department is in the process of integrating a cashiering software with POSSE web by mid-2020, which could include automating the TPR certification process.

12. *Review and incorporate applicable IAS Accreditation criteria into its policies and procedures to ensure DPP's services meet national standards to provide public safety services for the City.*

In process. An all-day staff workshop was conducted on June 21, 2019, wherein an IAS representative provided an overview of the requirements and benefits of being an accredited building department. Attending staff earned training certificates, the DPP believes it complies with most of the requirements for accreditation, and will continue to pursue in 2020.

13. *Develop clear guidelines and user information for its online appointment scheduling service and post them on the department's website.*

Agree. Chapter 3 of the audit report asserts that certain companies may be violating the online appointment system by monopolizing appointment slots, and in violation of the

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DPP TPR Rules. This abuse is an unanticipated consequence and DPP will pursue alternative solutions.

14. *Implement and enforce controls to prevent private entities from booking more than two building permit review appointments per day.*

See response to No. 13 above.

15. *Improve customer education and outreach by distributing or posting an online checklist of other pertinent information about the overall permit process requirements, and associated processing times.*

Agree. This is a good suggestion, although the challenge is to provide useful, simple, decisive information given the complexity of permitting.

16. *Reaffirm DPP's commitment to educate and expand its ePlans program by establishing, and enforcing, formal policies and procedures that require all new applications be submitted through ePlans.*

Ongoing. We remain optimistic that as DPP migrates to a web-based POSSE system which will include a more POSSE-compatible ePlan software, deployment will be quicker, more pervasive and more popular.

Other comments on the audit report are contained in Exhibit A.

Thank you for this opportunity to respond. Should you have any questions, please contact Kathy Sokugawa, Acting Director, at 768-8000.

Attachment



**EXHIBIT A**  
**Additional Comments on Audit of DPP Building Permit Processes**  
**By City Auditor**

Exhibit Comments:

- Exhibit 1.3, staffing position information for Permit Issuance Branch does not match the Department's approved organization. The FMB positions consist of: 1-Chief Building Plans Examiner, 1-Building Plans Examiner V, 4-Building Plans Examiner IV, 1-Building Plans Examiner III, 3-Intake Clerks as Building Plans Examiner II, and 10-Intake Clerks as Building Plans Examiner I. The Kapolei Branch positions consist of: 1-Building Plans Examiner VI, 1-Building Plans Examiner IV, 1-Building Plans Examiner III, 2-Intake Clerks as Building Plans Examiner II, and 2-Intake Clerks as Building Plans Examiner I.
- Exhibit 1.5, staffing position information does not match the Department's approved Building Division, Building Code Branch organization. The Branch consist of two sections. The first is the Plans Examining Section and the second is the NPDES Plans Examining Section. The Plans Examining Section positions consist of: 1-Plans Examining Engineer VI, 1-Plans Examining Engineer V, 4-Plans Examining Engineer III, and 1-Civil Engineer I. The NPDES Plans Examining Section positions consist of: 1-Civil Engineer VI, 1-Civil Engineer V, 2-Civil Engineer III, and 1-Civil Engineer I. Only the Plans Examining Section is reflected in Exhibit 1.5.

Chapter 1 Comments:

- The report discussion relating to the Building Division role in the permit review process should be expanded to include the NPDES Plans Examining Section, Electrical Code Branch, Mechanical Code Branch, and Zone Plans Review Branch. These units are crucial in the review of building permits.

Chapter 2 Comments:

- Pages 25-26 text and tables appear to intermingle references to the commercial plan review process and the residential review process. This leads to seemingly erroneous conclusions, as the processes are different.
- The report states that the prescreening process slows down the permitting review process before it starts. We strongly disagree. This process assures the accuracy of basic information such as correct address and zoning, and complete drawings. If this quality check is not done before the application is accepted, each downstream reviewing staff member would have to discover and correct this misinformation, slowing down the process. Digital technology has contributed to both better and worse drawings; human review is still required. Prescreening increases the efficiency of the department. The report does not give enough acknowledgement to delays caused by the applicant or agent. Two common reasons for delay include: non-payment of required plan review fee and lack of plans submitted. These are requirements under the control of the applicant.
- The audit cites one application that was held for 91 days in the pre-screen stage. In this particular situation, the lengthy delay was mainly caused by lack of timely submittal of required documents by the applicant. Hard copy pre-screening takes approximately 10 business days and ePlan pre-screening takes approximately 5 business days. The sample that was used for the report may be random, but not representative of the building permit process.
- Regarding long-standing applications, as of December 16, 2019, 1,422 applications ready to be issued permits up to December 31, 2016 were cancelled. The Department is in the process of cancelling additional permit applications.

December 31, 2019  
Page 2

Chapter 5 Comments:

- The Department has conducted meetings with Third Party Review entities to discuss concerns relating to building permit applications and provide information on new requirements. We expect to continue these meetings in 2020, as new building codes area updated.
- The Department has an internship program with Honolulu Community College. It hires students as temporary part-time workers. This additional help frees staff to perform more substantive tasks, while it gives students valuable work experience that gives them an advantage in being considered for permanent positions. In contrast, other job candidates often have little, to no experience with codes and cannot read building permit drawings.

Recommendations:

Since September 2019, the Branch Chief of the Permit Issuance Branch holds regular monthly meetings with staff members at Honolulu Hale to include staff meetings at Kapolei Hale focusing on customer service, permit issuance, reviews on permit issuance requirements and the overview and suggestions on improvements on the acceptance of applications and stricture reviews of large detached dwellings.

# Appendix A

## Department of Planning and Permitting Permit Types

Permit Type	Sub-Type	Review Type	Definition
<b>Additions, Alterations and Repair</b>	Shell	Bldg.	Core and shell only, occupancy and use are not known
	Demolition	Bldg.	Demolition
	Alteration	Bldg./Fire	Any interior remodel (e.g., loft conversion, bathroom/kitchen remodel, demolition of any portion of interior or exterior)
	Addition	Bldg./Fire	Adding additional sq. footage to existing home
	Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)	Bldg./Fire	Accessory or second unit that includes its own kitchen, bedroom, and bathroom facilities and is attached or detached from primary dwelling unit on the zoning lot
	Ohana Unit	Bldg./Fire	Ohana accessory dwelling unit
	Patio or Deck Enclosure	Bldg.	An existing covered deck or patio that will be enclosed
	Water Heater	Bldg.	Replace existing water heater
	Relocation To	Bldg.	Relocation of a Building or Structure
	Relocation From	Bldg.	Relocation of a Building or Structure
	Repair	Bldg.	General repair to building structure or plumbing, fire sprinkler, gas or gas or drainage piping work or any fixture, gas appliance, or water heating or treating equipment
	Miscellaneous	Bldg./Fire	Any project that does not fit into one of the above types
Permit Type	Sub-Type	Review Type	Definition
<b>New Buildings</b>	Production Home	Bldg.	Multiple single family dwellings to be built off an approved master plan
	Custom Home	Bldg.	House will only be built once
	Foundation Only	Bldg.	Building permit fee based upon market value of this phase of construction. Allows foundation to be started while plans are still in the approval process
Permit Type	Sub-Type	Review Type	Definition
<b>Separate/ Additional Building Permits</b>	Electrical Work Only	Bldg.	Any electrical work not associated with an interior remodel, new home or addition (e.g., adding outlets, adding lighting, service change, etc.)
	Plumbing Work Only	Bldg.	Any plumbing work not associated with an interior remodel, new home or addition (e.g., adding/relocating sink, adding gas line) (Does not include water heater)
	Mechanical Work Only	Bldg.	Any mechanical work not associated with an interior remodel, new home or addition (e.g., Adding gas line, new ductwork)(Does not include A/Cs)
	Fire Sprinkler Work Only	Fire	Residential construction that requires the installation of a sprinkler system
	Pool, Spa or Hot Tub	Bldg.	Installation of pool, spa or hot tub
	Fence	Bldg.	Fencing that is more than 30 inches in height.
	Retaining Wall	Bldg.	Retaining walls that is more than 30 inches in height.
	Garage	Bldg.	Addition or alteration
Sidewalks, curbs and driveways	Bldg.	Work which are within the public streets rights of way standards of which are found in ROH Chapter 14.	



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# Appendix B

## Department of Planning and Permitting Registered Third Party Review Requirements

<i>Third Party Review General Requirements</i>	
1. General Requirements	Possesses the appropriate licenses, specialized knowledge, and experience to perform the review;
2. Documentation of Good Standing	Individual or firm is in good standing and was not the subject of prior adverse determination(s) by a court or regulatory authority, including any disciplinary board.
3. Annual Licensure Review	Annually submit evidence to the department confirming the validity of such appropriate licensure.
4. National Certification	A minimum possession of a current national certification as a plans reviewer, issued by a certifying agency recognized by the International Codes Council, in the discipline or disciplines in which the reviewer is applying to perform reviews.
5. Examination	DPP is required to administer an examination on Land Use Ordinance. The applicant must pay an examination fee of \$25.00.
6. Re-examination	Applications to retake the examination shall be submitted not earlier than six (6) months from the date of the administration of the examination in which the applicant failed to obtain a passing score shall pay a reexamination fee of \$25.00.
7. Registration Fee	Within five (5) business days of the department's notification to the individual or firm confirming registration to conduct plan review, the individual or firm shall remit a registration fee of \$300.00 to the department.
8. Annual Update	The third party reviewer shall immediately notify the department in writing of any change affecting the third party reviewer's eligibility to conduct compliance reviews.
9. Certified Registration List	DPP will manage a list identifying individuals and/or organizations registered as third party reviewers and update as necessary, and make available to the public.
10. Registration Term	A third party reviewer's registration shall automatically expire on July 31, two (2) years following the date of the individual or firm's registration.
11. Renewal Requirements	Proof of requisite liability insurance
12. Renewal Fee	Applicant must pay a Renewal Fee of \$300.00 prior to the expiration of the third-party reviewer's registration.
13. Expired Registration	Third-party reviewer fails to submit the required renewal information and fails to remit the required renewal fee prior to the expiration of the renewal deadline, the third-party reviewer's registration becomes null and void.
14. Restored Registration	Registrations which have expired for non-payment of renewal fees on or before the renewal deadline may be restored within one (1) year upon remittance to the department of an additional \$300.00 fee for each renewal. The third party reviewer must demonstrate continued eligibility at the time of renewal.

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# Appendix C

## Department of Planning and Permitting Building Permit Fee Calculations Table

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Total Estimated Valuation of Work	Fees to be Charged
From \$0.01 to \$500.00	\$20.00
From \$500.01 to \$1,000.00	\$8.00 + \$2.50 per \$100.00 of the total estimated valuation of work
From \$1,000.01 to \$20,000.00	\$12.00 + \$2.20 per \$100.00 of the total estimated valuation of work
From \$20,000.01 to \$50,000.00	\$82.00 + \$18.00 per \$1,000.00 of the total estimated valuation of work
From \$50,000.01 to \$100,000.00	\$286.00 + \$14.00 per \$1,000.00 of the total estimated valuation of work
From \$100,000.01 to \$500,000.00	\$700.00 + \$10.00 per \$1,000.00 of the total estimated valuation of work
From \$500,000.01 to \$2,000,000.00	\$3,200.00 + \$5.00 per \$1,000.00 of the total estimated valuation of work
From \$2,000,000.01 and above	\$4,300.00 + \$4.50 per \$1,000.00 of the total estimated valuation of work

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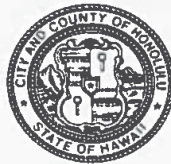
# Appendix D

## DPP's Proposed New Class Specifications

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DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES  
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU  
850 SOUTH KING STREET 10<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR • HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813  
TELEPHONE: (808) 768-8500 • FAX: (808) 768-5563 • INTERNET: www.honolulu.gov/hr

KIRK CALDWELL  
MAYOR

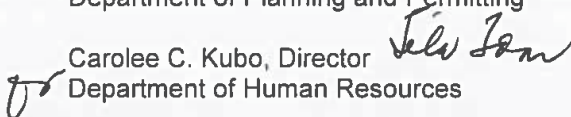


CAROLEE C. KUBO  
DIRECTOR  
NOEL T. ONO  
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

September 17, 2019

### MEMORANDUM

TO: Kathy K. Sokugawa, Acting Director  
Department of Planning and Permitting

FROM:  Carolee C. Kubo, Director  
Department of Human Resources

SUBJECT: Proposed New Class Specification

This is to inform you that as result of classification review, we are proposing to establish a new class series:

- Building Plans Examiner I
- Building Plans Examiner II
- Building Plans Examiner III
- Building Plans Examiner IV
- Building Plans Examiner V
- Building Plans Examiner VI
- Chief Building Plans Examiner

Attached for your perusal is a copy of our proposed specification for the new classes.

If you have any comments regarding this specification, we shall appreciate receiving them by September 27, 2019. If we do not hear from you by that date, we shall assume that the specification meets with your approval.

Attachment

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES  
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

XXXXXX

BUILDING PLANS EXAMINER I  
XX XX, BU 03

Duties Summary:

Receives training in the methods and resources used in reviewing building plans and specifications for conformance to the Building Code, Housing Code, Zoning Code, and related ordinances; assists in the review and approval of building plans for residential buildings and structures of limited size and scope; provides counter service to the public in the intake, review, processing, and routing of building permit applications; approves and issues building permits; performs other related duties as required.

Distinguishing Characteristics:

This class is the entry level into the Building Plans Examiner series and is distinguished by its responsibility for serving as trainees who receive training in the methods and resources used in reviewing building plans and specifications for conformance with provisions to the Building Code, Housing Code, Zoning Code, and other related ordinances and assist higher level building plan examiners in the review and approval of building plans for residential buildings and structures of limited size and scope. Positions allocated to this class also spend more time providing counter service to the public in receiving, processing, routing, and issuing of building and related permits. Work is performed from specific instructions and under close guidance.

Illustrative Examples of Work:

*(The following examples of work are generally stated and are not necessarily descriptive of any one position in this class. The omission of specific duties statements does not preclude management from assigning such duties if such duties are a logical assignment for the position and consistent with the class concept.)*

- Receives training in the methods and resources used in reviewing building plans for compliance with provisions to the Building Code, Housing Code, Zoning Code, and other related ordinances.
- Assists higher level building plan examiners in the review and approval of building plans for residential buildings and structures of limited size and scope.
- Receives building permit applications and plans over the counter and makes preliminary review of plans for adequacy of information.

BUILDING PLANS EXAMINER I

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- Approves, processes, and issues building and related permits.
- Assists in coordinating the review and routing of plans between all applicable government agencies.
- Computes fees against standard fee schedules and receives payments.
- Assists the public with information and questions relating to the code and other building requirements and regulations.
- Assists in preparing monthly statistical reports such as the number and kind of permits issues, fees collected, etc.

Minimum Qualification Requirements for the Class:

Training and Experience: A combination of education and experience substantially equivalent to graduation from high school and two years of general work experience which shall have included the operation of a personal computer, and including or supplemented by one year of public contact work which required, as a regular assignment, providing information, answering questions and inquiries, and explaining processes and procedures in person or by telephone.

License Requirement: None.

Knowledge of: general provisions of the Building, Housing, and Zoning Codes and ordinances of the City and County of Honolulu; procedures involved in processing building permit applications; building construction and construction terminology; office practices and procedures.

Ability to: learn, understand, interpret, and apply provisions of the Building, Housing, and Zoning codes and ordinances; learn to read and interpret building plans and specifications; make accurate arithmetic computations; operate a personal computer and use applicable software; deal courteously and effectively with the public.

Physical Requirement:

Persons seeking appointment to positions in this class must meet the health and physical condition standards deemed necessary and proper for performance of the duties.

#####



BUILDING PLANS EXAMINER I

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050850

This is the first specification approved for the new class, BUILDING PLANS EXAMINER I, effective .

APPROVED:

CAROLEE C. KUBO  
Director of Human Resources

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES  
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

XXXXXX

BUILDING PLANS EXAMINER II  
XX XX, BU 03Duties Summary:

Reviews and approves simple building plans and specifications for residential buildings and structures for conformance to the Building Code, Housing Code, Zoning Code, and related ordinances; approves and issues building and related permits; provides counter service to the public in the intake, review, processing, and routing of building permit applications; performs other related duties as required.

Distinguishing Characteristics:

This class reflects the advanced trainee level in the Building Plans Examiner series and is distinguished by its responsibility for reviewing and approving simple building plans and specifications for residential buildings and structures, such as small residential buildings, accessory structures, fences, signs, and other minor construction, for conformance with the Building code, Housing Code, Zoning Code, and related ordinances. Positions allocated to this class also spend more time providing counter service to the public in receiving, reviewing, processing, and routing of building permit applications, including commercial and industrial buildings, and approves and issues building permits. Work is performed under close to general supervision on a progressively responsible basis.

Illustrative Examples of Work:

*(The following examples of work are generally stated and are not necessarily descriptive of any one position in this class. The omission of specific duties statements does not preclude management from assigning such duties if such duties are a logical assignment for the position and consistent with the class concept.)*

- Reviews and approves simple building plans and specifications for residential buildings and structures for compliance with provisions of the Building Code, Housing Code, Zoning Code, and related ordinances.
- Receives building permit applications and plans over the counter and makes preliminary review of plans for adequacy of information.
- Assists in coordinating the review and routing of plans between all applicable government agencies.
- Approves, processes, and issues building and related permits.

BUILDING PLANS EXAMINER II

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- Computes fees against standard fee schedules and receives payments.
- Assists the public with information and questions relating to the code and other building requirements and regulations.
- Assists in preparing monthly statistical reports such as the number and kind of permits issues and fees collected.

Minimum Qualification Requirements for the Class:

Training and Experience: A combination of education and experience substantially equivalent to graduation from high school and one year of experience in reviewing building plans and specifications, or inspecting building construction, for conformance with the provisions of laws, codes, and related ordinances.

License Requirement: None.

Knowledge of: general provisions of the Building, Housing, and Zoning codes and ordinances of the City and County of Honolulu; procedures involved in processing building permit applications; building construction and construction terminology; office practices and procedures.

Ability to: interpret and apply provisions of the Building, Housing, and Zoning Codes and ordinances; read and interpret building plans and specifications; explain laws, rules, regulations, and procedures involved in processing building permit applications; make accurate arithmetic computations; operate a personal computer and use applicable software; deal courteously and effectively with the public.

Physical Requirement:

Persons seeking appointment to positions in this class must meet the health and physical condition standards deemed necessary and proper for performance of the duties.

#####

This is the first specification approved for the new class, BUILDING PLANS EXAMINER II, effective .

APPROVED:

CAROLEE C. KUBO  
Director of Human Resources

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES  
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

XXXXXX

BUILDING PLANS EXAMINER III  
XX XX, BU 03

Duties Summary:

Reviews and approves simple to moderately complex building plans and specifications for residential buildings and structures for conformance with provisions of the Building Code, Housing code, Zoning Code, and other related ordinances; approves and issues building and related permits; and performs other related duties as required.

Distinguishing Characteristics:

This class reflects the first independent level in the Building Plans Examiner series and is distinguished by its responsibility for independently reviewing and approving simple to moderately complex building plans and specifications for residential buildings and structures, including moderately sized residential buildings, multi-room additions, and projects in flood hazard areas, for conformance with provisions of the Building code, Housing Code, Zoning code, and other related ordinances. Positions allocated to this class also assist higher level building plans examiners with the review and approval of more complex, or multi-storied, buildings and structures.

Illustrative Examples of Duties:

*(The following examples of work are generally stated and are not necessarily descriptive of any one position in this class. The omission of specific duties statements does not preclude management from assigning such duties if such duties are a logical assignment for the position and consistent with the class concept.)*

- Independently reviews and approves simple to moderately complex building plans and specifications of residential buildings and structures for compliance with provisions of the Building Code, Housing Code, and Zoning Code, and other related ordinances.
- Checks plans and specifications for requirements such as location of building on property, type of construction allowed, building use and occupancy restrictions, height and area of building allowed, exit facilities sanitation, and ventilation facilities, fire extinguishing systems, etc.
- Checks detailed drawings on foundations, structural framework, exterior walls and openings, floors, stairways and roofs for compliance with minimum requirements as to

BUILDING PLANS EXAMINER III

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- size, thickness, and quality of materials used.
- Checks for special provisions on height, location, materials used on buildings located in the City's fire zones.
  - Notes errors and omissions and changes required in plans.
  - Confers with architects, engineers, contractors, and others on interpretation of code requirements.
  - Assists in coordinating the review and routing of plans between all applicable government agencies.
  - Assists higher level plan examiners in the review and approval of more complex building plans and specifications for residential buildings and structures.
  - Assists the public with information and questions relating to the code and other building requirements and regulations.
  - Provides counter service to the public by receiving, reviewing, and routing building permit applications and plans, computing payments, and processing and issuing building and related permits.
  - Maintains files of subdivision actions and maps.

Minimum Qualification Requirements for the Class:

Training and Experience: A combination of education and experience substantially equivalent to graduation from high school and two years of progressively responsible experience in reviewing building plans and specifications, or inspecting building construction, for conformance with the provisions of laws, codes, and related ordinances.

License Requirement: None.

Knowledge of: the Building, Housing, and Zoning codes and ordinances of the City and County of Honolulu; procedures involved in processing building permit applications; construction and engineering terminology as they apply to reviewing building plans and specifications; standard practices, methods and materials and in building construction including empirical formulae of structural stability and safety.

Ability to: interpret and apply provisions of the Building, Housing, and Zoning codes and ordinances; read and interpret building plans and specifications; apply formulas on simple problems of stress and strain; check detailed drawings of foundations, walls, stairways, roofs, etc.; explain laws, rules, regulations, and procedures involved in processing building permit applications; deal effectively with engineers, architects, contractors, and the general public; maintain records and prepare

BUILDING PLANS EXAMINER III

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reports.

Physical Requirement:

Persons seeking appointment to positions in this class must meet the health and physical condition standards deemed necessary and proper for performance of the duties.

#####

This is the first specification approved for the new class, BUILDING PLANS EXAMINER III, effective .

APPROVED:

CAROLEE C. KUBO  
Director of Human Resources



DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES  
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

XXXXXX

BUILDING PLANS EXAMINER IV  
XX XX, BU 03

Duties Summary:

Independently reviews and approves the full range of building plans and specifications of residential buildings and structures for conformance with provisions of the Building Code, Housing Code, Zoning Code, and other related ordinances; approves and issues building and related permits; and performs other related duties as required.

Distinguishing Characteristics:

This class reflects the journey level in the Building Plans Examiner series and is distinguished by its responsibility for independently reviewing and approving building plans and specifications for the full range of residential buildings and accessory structures, including the more complex plans and specifications such as multi-storied additions, multi-storied residential buildings, and projects located in slide and flood areas, for conformance with provisions of the Building Code, Housing Code, Zoning Code, and other related ordinances.

Illustrative Examples of Work:

*(The following examples of work are generally stated and are not necessarily descriptive of any one position in this class. The omission of specific duties statements does not preclude management from assigning such duties if such duties are a logical assignment for the position and consistent with the class concept.)*

- Independently reviews and approves the full range of building plans and specifications for residential buildings and structures, including the more complex plans and specifications, for compliance with provisions of the Building code, Housing Code, Zoning Code, and related ordinances.
- Checks plans and specifications for requirements such as location of building on property, type of construction allowed, building use and occupancy restrictions, height and area of building allowed, exit facilities sanitation, and ventilation facilities, fire extinguishing systems, etc.
- Checks detailed drawings on foundations, structural framework, exterior walls and openings, floors, stairways and roofs for compliance with minimum requirements as to size, thickness, and quality of materials used.

BUILDING PLANS EXAMINER IV

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- Checks for special provisions on height, location, materials used on buildings located in the City's fire zones.
- Notes errors and omissions and changes required in plans.
- Confers with architects, engineers, contractors, and others on interpretation of code requirements.
- Approves and issues building and related permits.
- Coordinates the review and routing of plans between all applicable government agencies.
- Provides counter service to the public by receiving, reviewing, and routing building permit applications and plans, computing payments, and processing and issuing building and related permits.
- Assists the public with information and questions relating to the code and other building requirements and regulations.
- May advise inspectors on interpretation of the Building code relative to approved plans and specifications.
- Maintains records and files for permits issued, plans approved, and subdivision actions and maps.

Minimum Qualification Requirements for the Class:

Training and Experience: A combination of education and experience substantially equivalent to graduation from high school and four years of progressively responsible experience in reviewing building plans and specifications, or inspecting building construction, for conformance with the provisions of laws, codes, and related ordinances, two of which shall have involved interpreting, applying, and/or enforcing the Building Code and related ordinances.

License Requirement: None.

Knowledge of: the Building, Housing, and Zoning codes, and ordinances of the City and County of Honolulu; procedures involved in processing building permit applications; basic principles of building design; construction and engineering terminology as they apply to reviewing building plans and specifications; standard practices, methods and materials and in building construction including empirical formulae of structural stability and safety.

Ability to: interpret and apply provisions of the Building, Housing, and Zoning codes, and ordinances; read and interpret building plans and specifications; apply formulas on simple problems of stress and strain; check detailed drawings of foundations, walls, stairways, roofs, etc.; explain laws, rules,



BUILDING PLANS EXAMINER IV

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regulations, and procedures involved in processing building permit applications; deal effectively with engineers, architects, contractors, and the general public; maintain records and prepare reports.

Physical Requirement:

Persons seeking appointment to positions in this class must meet the health and physical condition standards deemed necessary and proper for performance of the duties.

#####

This is the first specification approved for the new class, BUILDING PLANS EXAMINER IV, effective .

APPROVED:

CAROLEE C. KUBO  
Director of Human Resources

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES  
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

XXXXXX

BUILDING PLANS EXAMINER V  
XX XX, BU 03

Duties Summary:

Supervises and participates in the review and approval of building plans and specifications of residential buildings and other structures for conformance with provisions of the Building code, Housing Code, Zoning code, and other related ordinances; and/or regularly and primarily performs the most difficult and complex reviews pertinent to the forgoing; supervises and participates in the processing, routing, approval, and issuance of permits; and performs other related duties as required.

Distinguishing Characteristics:

This class reflects the working supervisory or senior level in the Building Plans Examiner series. Positions allocated to this class supervise and participate in the review and approval of building plans and specifications of residential buildings and structures for conformance with provisions of the Building Code, Housing Code, Zoning code, and other related ordinances, and/or regularly and primarily review and approve the most difficult and complex building plans and specifications.

Illustrative Examples of Work:

*(The following examples of work are generally stated and are not necessarily descriptive of any one position in this class. The omission of specific duties statements does not preclude management from assigning such duties if such duties are a logical assignment for the position and consistent with the class concept.)*

- Supervises and participates in the review and approval of building plans and specifications of residential buildings for compliance with provisions of the Building code, Housing Code, Zoning Code, and related ordinances.
- Assigns, reviews, and monitors the work of subordinates and resolves differences between subordinates and the public.
- Supervises and participates in the performance of counter service to the public, including the receipt, review, and routing of building permit applications and plans, computing payments, and approving and issuing building and related permits.
- Provides technical advice, guidance, and training in matters regarding building plan reviews, interpretation of the Building, Housing, and Zoning Code and related

BUILDING PLANS EXAMINER V

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ordinances to lower level building plan examiners.

- Reviews and approves building plans and specifications for residential buildings and structures, which may regularly and primarily involve the most difficult and complex building plans, for requirements such as location of building on property, type of construction allowed, building use and occupancy restrictions, height and area of building allowed, exit facilities sanitation, and ventilation facilities, fire extinguishing systems, etc.
- Checks detailed drawings on foundations, structural framework, exterior walls and openings, floors, stairways and roofs for compliance with minimum requirements as to size, thickness, and quality of materials used.
- Checks for special provisions on height, location, materials used on buildings located in the City's fire zones.
- Notes errors and omissions and changes required in plans.
- Confers with architects, engineers, contractors, and others on interpretation of code requirements.
- Coordinates the review and routing of plans between all applicable government agencies.
- Keeps informed of applicable changes in codes, laws regulations, and policies.
- Assists the public with information and questions relating to the code and other building requirements and regulations.
- May advise inspectors on interpretation of the Building code relative to approved plans and specifications.
- Supervises and participates in the maintenance of records and files for permits issued, plans approved, and subdivision actions and maps.
- Prepares correspondence and other reports.

Minimum Qualification Requirements for the Class:

Training and Experience: A combination of education and experience substantially equivalent to graduation from high school and five years of progressively responsible experience in reviewing building plans and specifications, or inspecting building construction, for conformance with the provisions of laws, codes, and related ordinances, three of which shall have involved interpreting, applying, and/or enforcing the Building Code and related ordinances.

License Requirement: None.

Knowledge of: principles and practices of supervision;

BUILDING PLANS EXAMINER V

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050858

the Building, Housing, and Zoning codes, and ordinances of the City and County of Honolulu; procedures involved in processing building permit applications; basic principles of building design; construction and engineering terminology as they apply to reviewing building plans and specifications.

Ability to: plan, assign, and coordinate the work of subordinates; interpret and apply provisions of the Building, Housing, and Zoning codes and ordinances; read and interpret building plans and specifications; explain laws, rules, regulations, and procedures involved in processing building permit applications; advise others in the proper interpretation of provisions of the Building, Housing, and Zoning Codes and ordinances; deal effectively with subordinates, engineers, architects, contractors, and the general public; maintain records and prepare reports; give oral and written instructions.

Physical Requirement:

Persons seeking appointment to positions in this class must meet the health and physical condition standards deemed necessary and proper for performance of the duties.

#####

This is the first specification approved for the new class, BUILDING PLANS EXAMINER V, effective .

APPROVED:

CAROLEE C. KUBO  
Director of Human Resources

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES  
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

XXXXXX

BUILDING PLANS EXAMINER VI  
XX XX, BU 04

Duties Summary:

Plans, supervises, and is responsible for the work of subordinates engaged in the review and approval of building plans and specifications of residential buildings and other structures for compliance with provisions of the Building code, Housing Code, Zoning Code, and other related ordinances; supervises the approval and issuance of permits; and performs other related duties as required.

Distinguishing Characteristics:

This class reflects the full supervisory level in the Building Plans Examiner series and is distinguished by its responsibility for supervising the review and approval of building plans and specifications of residential buildings for compliance with provisions of the Building Code, Housing Code, Zoning Code, and other related ordinances, as well as the performance of counter service to the public. Positions allocated to this class also assist with developing training programs and in coordinating the development of procedures to ensure uniform interpretation of applicable codes and ordinances among staff.

Illustrative Examples of Work:

*(The following examples of work are generally stated and are not necessarily descriptive of any one position in this class. The omission of specific duties statements does not preclude management from assigning such duties if such duties are a logical assignment for the position and consistent with the class concept.)*

- Plans, assigns, and reviews the work of subordinates engaged in the review and approval of building plans and specifications for conformance with provisions of the Building Code, Housing Code, Zoning code, and related ordinances, and in the performance of counter service to the public, which includes the receipt and review of building permit applications, computing payments, and issuing permits.
- Monitors and evaluates subordinates' work performance. Provides feedback and consultation as needed.
- Resolves differences between subordinates and the general public.
- Advises developers, contractors, architects, and engineers of the Building Code, Housing Code, Zoning Code, and other



BUILDING PLANS EXAMINER VI

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050860

related ordinances and regulations.

- Keeps informed of applicable changes in codes, laws regulations, and policies. Assists in developing training programs for subordinates and other Departmental employees of new and revised regulations and procedures.
- Reviews and recommends amendments to provisions of the Building code, and operational policies, procedures, and standards.
- Supervises and coordinates the review and routing of plans between all applicable government agencies.
- Provides information to the public relating to the code and other building requirements and regulations.
- Advises inspectors on interpretation of the Building code relative to approved plans and specifications.
- Supervises the maintenance of records and inspections relating to building plans and permits and prepares correspondence and other reports.

Minimum Qualification Requirements for the Class:

Training and Experience: A combination of education and experience substantially equivalent to graduation from high school and six years of progressively responsible experience in reviewing building plans and specifications, or inspecting building construction, for conformance with the provisions of laws, codes, and related ordinances, four of which shall have involved interpreting, applying, and/or enforcing the Building Code and related ordinances. Such experience must also include, or be supplemented by, work experience demonstrating aptitude or potential for the performance of supervisory duties through successful completion of regular or special assignments which involve some supervisory responsibilities or aspects; by serving as a group or team leader, or in similar work in which opportunities for demonstrating supervisory capabilities exist; by completion of training courses in supervision accompanied by application of supervisory skills in work assignments; or by favorable appraisals by a supervisor indicating the possession of supervisory potential.

License Requirement: Possession of an appropriate valid driver's license, as required.

Knowledge of: principles and practices of supervision; the Building, Housing, and Zoning codes and ordinances of the City and County of Honolulu; procedures involved in processing building permit applications; basic principles of building design; construction and engineering terminology as they apply to reviewing building plans and specifications.

BUILDING PLANS EXAMINER VI

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Ability to: plan, assign, and coordinate the work of subordinates; interpret and apply provisions of the Building, Housing, and Zoning codes and ordinances; read and interpret building plans and specifications; explain laws, rules, regulations, and procedures involved in processing building permit applications; render decisions in the proper interpretation of provisions of the Building, Housing, and Zoning Codes and ordinances and advise others; determine need for and recommend amendments to specific wording or provisions of the Building Code; deal effectively with subordinates, engineers, architects, contractors, and the general public; maintain records and prepare reports; give clear and concise oral and written instructions.

Physical Requirement:

Persons seeking appointment to positions in this class must meet the health and physical condition standards deemed necessary and proper for performance of the duties.

#####

This is the first specification approved for the new class, BUILDING PLANS EXAMINER VI, effective .

APPROVED:

CAROLEE C. KUBO  
Director of Human Resources

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES  
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

XXXXXX

CHIEF BUILDING PLANS EXAMINER  
XX XX, BU 04

Duties Summary:

Plans, directs, and coordinates a program involving the issuance of building permits and the review and approval of building plans and specifications of residential buildings and structures for conformance with the Building Code, Housing Code, Zoning Code, and other related ordinances; and performs other related duties as required.

Distinguishing Characteristics:

This class is the top level in the Building Plans Examiner series and is distinguished by its responsibility for overseeing and directing all operational activities related to the issuance of building permits and review and approval of building plans and specifications of residential buildings and structures for compliance with provisions of the Building Code, Housing Code, Zoning code, and other related ordinances. This class also has responsibility for developing and implementing new policies and procedures to improve the permit process and developing training programs to ensure the uniform interpretation of codes and ordinances.

Examples of Duties:

*(The following examples of work are generally stated and are not necessarily descriptive of any one position in this class. The omission of specific duties statements does not preclude management from assigning such duties if such duties are a logical assignment for the position and consistent with the class concept.)*

- Plans, directs, and coordinates all operational activities related to the review and approval of building plans and specifications buildings and structures for compliance with the Building Code, Housing code, Zoning Code, and related ordinances, and the processing and issuance of building and related permits.
- Reviews program to determine efficiency of organization, work processes, relevance of current codes and ordinances, standard operating procedures, uniform interpretation of codes and ordinances, and staffing and training needs.
- Determines priorities of work to be performed and makes assignments accordingly.



CHIEF BUILDING PLANS EXAMINER

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- Develops training programs to keep staff informed of all aspects of the plan review process including customer servicing, building industry standards and innovations, and code changes and interpretations.
- Develops and implements policies and procedures for improvement of the building plan review and permit issuance programs.
- Advises developers, contractors, architects, and engineers of the Building codes, Zoning codes, and other related ordinances and regulations and their application.
- Resolves disputes between contractors and staff in the interpretation and application of the Building code and related ordinances.
- Develops and recommends adoption of amendments to provisions of the Building Code.
- Oversees and coordinates the review and routing of plans between all applicable government agencies.
- Attends meetings or conferences with organizations as it relates to the architectural review or building inspection programs.
- Provides information to the public relating to the code and other building requirements and regulations.
- Oversees the maintenance of records and inspections relating to building plans and permits and the preparation of correspondence and other reports.

Minimum Qualification Requirements for the Class:

Training and Experience: A combination of education and experience substantially equivalent to graduation from high school and seven years of progressively responsible experience in reviewing building plans and specifications, or inspecting building construction, for conformance with the provisions of laws, codes, and related ordinances, five of which shall have involved interpreting, applying, and/or enforcing the Building Code and related ordinances. Such experience must also include, or be supplemented by, work experience demonstrating aptitude or potential for the performance of supervisory duties through successful completion of regular or special assignments which involve some supervisory responsibilities or aspects; by serving as a group or team leader, or in similar work in which opportunities for demonstrating supervisory capabilities exist; by completion of training courses in supervision accompanied by application of supervisory skills in work assignments; or by favorable appraisals by a supervisor indicating the possession of supervisory potential.

CHIEF BUILDING PLANS EXAMINER

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License Requirement: Possession of an appropriate valid driver's license, as required.

Knowledge of: principles and practices of supervision; the Building, Housing, and Zoning codes and ordinances of the City and County of Honolulu; procedures involved in processing building permit applications; basic principles of building design; construction and engineering terminology as they apply to reviewing building plans and specifications.

Ability to: plan, assign, and coordinate the work of subordinates; interpret and apply provisions of the Building, Housing, and Zoning Codes and ordinances; develop and implement operational procedures to assure maximum efficiency of operations; read and interpret building plans and specifications; explain laws, rules, regulations, and procedures involved in processing building permit applications; render decisions in the proper interpretation of provisions of the Building, Housing, and Zoning Codes and ordinances and advise others; determine need for and recommend amendments to specific wording or provisions of the Building Code; resolve disputes between contractors and subordinates in the interpretation of the Building code; deal effectively with subordinates, engineers, architects, contractors, and the general public; maintain records and prepare reports; give clear and concise oral and written instructions.

Physical Requirement:

Persons seeking appointment to positions in this class must meet the health and physical condition standards deemed necessary and proper for performance of the duties.

#####

This is the first specification approved for the new class, CHIEF BUILDING PLANS EXAMINER, effective .

APPROVED:

CAROLEE C. KUBO  
Director of Human Resources

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# Appendix E

## Plan Reviewer Jurisdiction Comparison

	City of Portland, OR	Peirce County, WA	City of Roseville, CA	San Jose, CA	Clark County, NV	City and County of Honolulu, HI
<b>Novice</b>	<b>Building Plans Examiner I</b>		<b>Building Plans Examiner I</b>	<b>Plan Checker I</b>		<b>Building Inspector</b>
Job Description	Examines 1 & 2 Family Dwelling building plans and plans for related accessory structure for compliance with the State of Oregon Residential Specialty Code, assists the general public in obtaining permits and compliance with the requirements of the Oregon Residential Specialty Code and local ordinances		Entry Level Class: Reviewing and approving building construction plans ensuring compliance with pertinent codes and ordinances; and to provide assistance to the public with respect to permit process, code application, and code interpretation.	Review construction plans for code compliance.		Independently reviews and approves plans and specifications for a wide variety of residential buildings and accessory structures, including the more difficult plans and specifications such as those involving new buildings, two story additions, multi-storied residential buildings, and projects located in slide and flood areas for which building permit applications have been submitted.
Pay Range	\$45,323.20 - \$60,736.00 Annually		\$55,243.08 - \$77,733.12 Annually	\$83,990.40 - \$107,203.20 Annually		\$46,476 Annually
Education Requirements Experience and Training	One (1) year construction trade experience; OR One (1) year of building code related course work; OR One (1) year building inspection or plan review experience in the specialty codes;	No Information Available	Completion of thirty units from an accredited college or university with major course work in engineering, architecture or a related field.	Graduation from high school or tested equivalent and two years of building plan review, design, or combination building inspection experience; OR An Associate's degree or 60 semester units or 90 quarter units from an accredited college or university with major coursework in engineering, architecture, or a related field; AND one year of experience of building plan review, design, or combination building inspection experience.	No Information Available	A combination of education and experience substantially equivalent to graduation from high school and four years of experience in inspecting or supervising building construction work, two of which shall have been in building code enforcement work.
Licensing or Certification	Residential Plans Examiner Certification; or an International Code Council Residential Plans Examiner Certification and obtain an Oregon Residential Plans Examiner Certification within six (6) months. Oregon Inspector Certification; or an Authorization to Perform Work from the Oregon Buildings Code Division within 30 days and obtain a valid Oregon Inspector Certification within six (6) months.		I.C.C. certificate as a Building Plans Examiner is required within one year of appointment to the position	ICC Residential Plans Examiner OR ICC Building Plans Examiner OR Certification as a licensed architect, licensed structural or civil engineer with the State of California at the time of application and ICC Residential Plans Examiner or ICC Building Plans Examiner within the first six months of hire date.		No Certification Requirements
<b>Complex</b>	<b>Commercial Plans Examiner</b>	<b>Plans Examiner II</b>	<b>Building Plans Examiner II</b>		<b>Building Plans Examiner Specialist</b>	<b>Senior Building Inspector</b>
Job Description	Reviews plans of all building types, including residential, for compliance with State building codes and other applicable city and state regulations. Duties include advising design professionals, owners, and builders of minimum code requirements during all phases of design, identifying possible solutions, working with city inter-agency partners, and helping guide applicants through the building permit process as smoothly as possible towards their goals.	Examine commercial and residential building plans electronically for the Building and Code Enforcement Division of Planning and Public Works Department.	Journey Level Class: Reviewing and approving building construction plans ensuring compliance with pertinent codes and ordinances; and to provide assistance to the public with respect to permit process, code application, and code interpretation.		Examines complex building and development plans for compliance with building, electrical, mechanical, plumbing and zoning codes and regulations; plans, directs and reviews the work of a team of plans examiners.	Independently reviews plans and specifications for all types of buildings (particularly those involving major and complex projects) for conformance to the Building Code, Housing Code, Comprehensive Zoning Code, and other pertinent ordinances administered by the Building Department (structural phase excluded).
Pay Range	\$79,476.80 - \$97,635.20	\$69,180.80 - \$87,963.20 Annually	\$58,921.80 - \$82,908.72 Annually	No Information Available	\$64,001.60 - \$99,236.80 Annually	\$50,304 Annually
Education Requirements Experience and Training	Experience reading, interpreting and applying Oregon Specialty Codes. Experience reading and interpreting site, architectural and structural plans.	Associate of Arts degree in Building Technology, Engineering, Architecture, or related field.	Completion of thirty units from an accredited college or university with major course work in engineering, architecture or a related field. Two years of increasingly responsible building plan examination experience similar to that of a Building Plans Examiner I with the City of Roseville, which includes at least one (1) year as an I.C.C. certified Building Plans Examiner.		Bachelor's Degree in Engineering or Architecture	A combination of education and experience substantially equivalent to graduation from high school and five years of experience in inspecting or supervising building construction work, three of which shall have been in building code enforcement work.
Licensing or Certification	Oregon Inspector Certification (OIC) Structural Plans Examiner - A-level (PEA) Certification Oregon Residential Plans Examiner (CAX) Certification Oregon Fire and Life Safety Plans Examiner (PEF) Certification	ICC Plans Examiner certification	I.C.C. certificate as a Building Plans Examiner		I.C.C. Plans Examiner certificate, or I.C.C. Building, Electrical, Plumbing, or Mechanical Inspector certificate, or IAEI Electrical Plan Review certificate or Master Electrician certificate	No Certification Requirements

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# Appendix F

## Resolution 18-284 CD1, FD1

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**CITY COUNCIL**  
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU  
HONOLULU, HAWAII

No. 18-284, CD1, FD1

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### RESOLUTION

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REQUESTING THE CITY AUDITOR TO CONDUCT A PERFORMANCE AUDIT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND PERMITTING'S PROCESS FOR REVIEWING BUILDING PERMIT APPLICATIONS.

WHEREAS, the City Council ("Council") has received multiple complaints from constituents, contractors, and developers that the time for the City's review of building permit applications has become unreasonably long; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Planning and Permitting ("DPP") has acknowledged that the building permit review process has become lengthy due to multiple factors, including but not limited to increased scrutiny for certain types of projects, review by other City agencies, and the changing demands on the DPP in recent years; and

WHEREAS, the DPP has also commented that it has been struggling to find additional staff with adequate experience and knowledge to address the lengthy delays in processing building permits, despite the increase in funding provided by the Council for additional staff; and

WHEREAS, the DPP has stated that the maximum time limits of two full working days for the first plan review of one- and two-family dwelling building permits, established by administrative rule, are rarely met; and

WHEREAS, the Council recently has adopted and enacted several measures addressing the problems experienced by constituents and contractors in obtaining building permits for construction, renovation, and repair of one- and two-family dwellings; and

WHEREAS, Resolution 18-208, FD1, adopted on November 14, 2018, creates a Permitted Action Group of Councilmembers to investigate matters relating to the delays in the permitting process at the DPP, and to discuss opportunities for improvement within the department; and

WHEREAS, Ordinance 18-41, enacted on November 28, 2018, requires that the DPP process applications for building permits for one- and two-family dwellings within 60 days of acceptance of an application under certain circumstances; and

WHEREAS, the Council and the City could additionally benefit from the City Auditor's perspective and analysis of DPP's permit process for reviewing building permits; now, therefore,



**CITY COUNCIL**  
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU  
HONOLULU, HAWAII

No. 18-284, CD1, FD1

**RESOLUTION**

**BE IT RESOLVED** by the Council of the City and County of Honolulu that the City Auditor is requested to conduct a performance audit of the Department of Planning and Permitting's process for reviewing building permits; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the performance audit should include recommendations for improving the experience of building permit applicants, including but not limited to reducing processing time, and providing applicants with a timely update on the status of their permit applications; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the City Auditor is requested to complete the performance audit no later than one calendar year after the adoption of this resolution; and

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED** that copies of this resolution be transmitted to the Mayor, the Managing Director, the Director of Planning and Permitting, and the City Auditor.

INTRODUCED BY:

Joey Manahan

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DATE OF INTRODUCTION:

December 3, 2018  
Honolulu, Hawaii

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Councilmembers

CITY COUNCIL  
 CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU  
 HONOLULU, HAWAII  
 CERTIFICATE

RESOLUTION 18-284, CD1, FD1


Introduced: 12/03/18 By: JOEY MANAHAN Committee: BUDGET

Title: RESOLUTION REQUESTING THE CITY AUDITOR TO CONDUCT AN AUDIT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND PERMITTING'S PROCESSES FOR REVIEWING BUILDING PERMIT APPLICATIONS.

Voting Legend: \* = Aye w/Reservations

01/23/19	BUDGET	CR-13(19) - RESOLUTION REPORTED OUT OF COMMITTEE FOR ADOPTION AS AMENDED IN CD1 FORM.
01/30/19	COUNCIL	RESOLUTION AMENDED TO HAND-CARRIED FD1 (OCS2019-0078/1/29/2019 11:19 AM). 8 AYES: ANDERSON, ELEFANTE, FUKUNAGA, KOBAYASHI, MANAHAN, MENOR, PINE, TSUNEYOSHI. CR-13(19) AND RESOLUTION 18-284, CD1, FD1 WERE ADOPTED. 8 AYES: ANDERSON, ELEFANTE, FUKUNAGA, KOBAYASHI, MANAHAN, MENOR, PINE, TSUNEYOSHI.

I hereby certify that the above is a true record of action by the Council of the City and County of Honolulu on this RESOLUTION.

  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 GLEN I. TAKAHASHI, CITY CLERK

  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 ANNI H. KOBAYASHI, INTERIM CHAIR AND PRESIDING OFFICER



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