

Council Questions for CTO Appointment Rob Lloyd

- 1) Based on an [audit](#) that was completed last year that examined the city's process for reviewing construction permits, we have heard that there is a lack of cross-departmental collaboration. Specifically, it was recommended that there needs to be a strategy to address our IT needs when it comes to processing construction permits. SDCI's main application for processing permits is Accela, which has consistently fallen short of stability goals. Other departments may or may not use Accela, which can cause confusion for customers. My question here is: how will you work with the departments to improve the permitting process? What are your thoughts on using one system, whether it be Accela or another program, to ensure consistency across departments? Other than budget, what are some challenges you foresee with implementing one program for all permitting needs across the entire city?

A: Recently, Seattle Information Technology completed the project to migrate the Accela infrastructure, services, and applications to the cloud. The project started in August 2023, and the new version of Accela went live on July 15, 2024 – on schedule and on budget. This new technology environment is designed to provide improved security and resilience to the City's permitting, licensing, and building functions, as well as easing updates to new versions for the most current features of the Accela software.

In reviewing the audit's four general findings and eleven recommendations, there appear to be opportunities to jointly focus on process design for better performance and customer service tracking. Additionally, emerging process automation and intelligence technologies are at the front of what will reshape our platform and service standards for the coming generation of technologies. Director Torgelson and I met and had discussions about potential directions and investments.

Specific to the application and data strategy, there are advantages to merging planning, building, and development operations into a platform provided it can support the processes, performance, and service standards of the City. Often, there are some number of additional tools, middleware, and integrations layered to maximize performance—it is important to keep that portfolio as tight and optimized as possible as bloat means additional maintenance, break points, security risks, and costs. Deviation should be rare. Our community should have a consistent and easy experience.

Based on overall numbers and the audit, there appears to be both a chance to optimize more and further the one-stop-easy-shop approach. As I develop the City's IT Strategic Plan, we will work with the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections and partners to define the priorities, features, and workflow improvements where technology can resolve audit recommendations.

- 2) How will you support a culture of equity, diversity, and inclusion within the department? How will you ensure that complaints are taken seriously?

A: Equity has been a career-long mission for me, and I see the City's technology arm supporting the City's overall progress at multiple levels.

At the team level, we hold equity, diversity, and inclusion in sustaining a strong culture. This comes in part through People and Culture activities—staff investments such as hiring in a manner that includes and represents our community and that neutralizes bias trends; building growth opportunities for staff across low-income-to-hire internships, access-building mentorships, training programs that create advancement opportunities across gender and color, and refreshing classification and compensation to represent current skills and market conditions; celebrating the cultures and histories of our team members; and maintaining strong personnel action processes and respect in thoroughly investigating any and all complaints of misconduct and requests that our processes improve. Employees should always see a care for growth, deliberate action when there is misconduct or poor performance, and an earnest commitment to fairness and continuous improvement.

In our support of departments, we must provide the information and systems that support equity-based work, including the use of equity in operational decision-making; staff use of Racial Equity Toolkits; bias detection in the use of artificial intelligence; digital privacy and its resulting protection of vulnerable populations; our work advocating for and enabling Americans with Disabilities Act-protected access to the City’s online and mobile resources for differently-abled community members; and the like.

Additionally, there are areas where IT can lead. I have been proud of my past work wherein my teams have been at the forefront in supporting Digital Equity efforts that covered almost 160,000 people in lower-income areas with high-speed wireless access; leading standing up COVID testing serving Zip Codes with the most Essential Workers in Silicon Valley; supporting the creating and use of an Equity Atlas for decisions on municipal services and infrastructure investments; and coaching startups and small and disadvantaged businesses on working with governments at the request of equity forums. Seattle Information Technology is a leader in meeting the City’s Women Minority Business Enterprise goals and I aim to continue that good work.

You have my commitment that equity will be a value and practice in Seattle Information Technology at those personnel and team, operational, and community partnership levels under my watch.