

Recommendation	Last Update	Status ▲	Audit
<p>The City Budget Office, in collaboration with other City departments, should evaluate the governance and funding structures of departments that review construction permit applications and determine if changes can be made to better position the City to quickly respond to fluctuations in permit demand while meeting customer expectations.</p>	<p>According to the City Budget Office (CBO), it is working with departments on the 2025-2026 budget process as the City of Seattle faces a budget deficit and as part of this process will be reviewing all programs. In addition, according to CBO, the 2024 Adopted Budget included funding to improve the Seattle Fire Department's construction-related permit review and process supported by a new fee. The Innovation and Performance Team within CBO is also working with Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections and other City departments to evaluate the entire permitting process and will collaborate on areas of additional system integration, process improvements, and workflow enhancements identified through that effort. This recommendation will be considered implemented when an evaluation of governance and funding structures is completed.</p>	<p>Pending</p>	<p>City's Construction Permitting Needs More Customer Focus and Consistency 10/2023</p>
<p>The Mayor's Office should develop and implement a strategy, including the required resources, for providing ongoing support for the Seattle Services Portal (Accela) and other software used in the construction permitting process. The Mayor's Office should collaborate with the Seattle Information Technology Department and other departments involved in construction permitting.</p>	<p>The Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) reported that it, the Mayor's Office, the Seattle Information Technology Department, and other City departments continue to collaborate to ensure that they are making necessary investments and adjustments regarding Accela to enhance their work. Work is underway to realign the governance structure for the Enterprise, Permitting, Inspection, & Compliance (EPIC) Program as well as to shift to Software as a Service (SaaS) and to begin using Managed Accela Services (MAS) to increase internal IT capacity. Creating feedback mechanisms for continuously gathering customer experience feedback across the entire platform to be able to use that information in their collective efforts towards continuous improvement will be a critical component of continuing to address the impacts of future changes to their technology. This recommendation will be considered implemented once the City demonstrates it has implemented a strategy to support Accela and other software in the long term. This may include completing the aforementioned steps—realigning the governance structure and using SaaS and managed services—and/or other means.</p>	<p>Pending</p>	<p>City's Construction Permitting Needs More Customer Focus and Consistency 10/2023</p>
<p>The Mayor's Office should lead a coordinated effort to document all recommendations related to the construction permitting process from consultant reports and internal improvement efforts. City departments should then evaluate each recommendation to determine whether they intend to implement it and why. The City should prioritize, assign an owner, and estimate a due date for each recommendation that is selected for implementation. Recommendations should be tracked in a central, publicly accessible location such as a dashboard to promote accountability.</p>	<p>The Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) reported that collaboration between it and the Mayor's Office is ongoing regarding this recommendation. This includes reviewing historical documentation and recommendations related to the construction permitting process from consultant reports as well as ongoing internal improvement efforts. This recommendation will be considered implemented after SDCI and the Mayor's Office complete work to document, evaluate, prioritize, assign an owner, and estimate a due date for recommendations from consultant reports and internal improvement efforts, as well as develop a method to track progress.</p>	<p>Pending</p>	<p>City's Construction Permitting Needs More Customer Focus and Consistency 10/2023</p>
<p>The Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) should address potential permitting barriers and equity concerns by incorporating the City's Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI) values into the permitting process. This should involve completing a Racial Equity Toolkit (RET) for the entire permitting process or several RETs for specific parts of the process. SDCI should consult with the Seattle Office for Civil Rights for RET guidance and support and with other City departments that are involved in permitting or have a stakeholder interest. In the RET, SDCI should evaluate the accessibility of their current process and tools, including considering the needs of customers who lack computer skills, people with disabilities, and people with limited English proficiency, among others. The RET should also include a stakeholder analysis to determine who is impacted by the permitting process and from whom SDCI should get regular feedback. The City should implement the recommendations that result from this effort.</p>	<p>The Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) reported it is working with its partners in other City departments on addressing permitting barriers and have collectively formed an Interdepartmental Workgroup focused on an Integrated Permit Improvement Program (IPIP). The IPIP is tasked with making and delivering recommendations to the IPIP steering committee (specified leadership of City departments who participate in whole or in part of the various City permitting processes) as a result of the Mayor's Housing Subcabinet effort conducted in 2023 for prioritization of efforts/projects to removing permitting barriers for housing production. SDCI stated it is also working with its partners in other City departments to address equity concerns. In December 2023, SDCI together with the Seattle Department of Transportation opened an in-person Customer Service Desk on the 4th floor of the Seattle Municipal Tower to support the accessibility of SDCI's current tools and to assist customers who lack access to computers or skills to use them and people with disabilities. The Customer Service Desk also helps people with language barriers by utilizing the Language Line for assistance. SDCI has not yet conducted a full Racial Equity Toolkit (RET) on the entire permitting process but reported it has completed several RETs in the past for specific parts of the permitting process and is committed to continuing to do so in the future. This recommendation will be considered implemented when SDCI demonstrates it has completed an evaluation of barriers and equity in the permitting process and implemented the resulting recommendations. This may include the aforementioned work of the Integrated Permit Improvement Program and/or completing a Racial Equity Toolkit.</p>	<p>Pending</p>	<p>City's Construction Permitting Needs More Customer Focus and Consistency 10/2023</p>
<p>The Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) should develop a department policy for how construction permit corrections should be handled, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What rises to the level of needing an official correction • What is required back from the applicant to resolve the correction, including in what format • At what point to contact the applicant to discuss the issues, such as after a certain number of correction cycles • How this policy will be enforced • SDCI should coordinate with other City departments involved in the construction permitting process in developing and implementing this policy. <p>SDCI should also put relevant information about the policy on their website.</p>	<p>The Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) reported that it continues to use the policies that currently exist within the department while also encouraging staff to make earlier contact with applicants when correction cycles exceed normal averages or there seem to be communication gaps indicated by inadequate responses to corrections. Progress has been made toward approaching consolidation and consistency of these various policies across all teams/divisions and across all City departments involved in reviewing construction permit applications, though work continues. SDCI leadership is committed to working in coordination with the SDCI Continuous Improvement (CI) Team as well as the City-Wide Integrated Permit Improvement Program (IPIP) on consolidating these policies into a more comprehensive and consistent department-wide (and potentially City-wide) policy. This recommendation will be considered implemented when work is completed to consolidate and make more consistent policies on handling permit corrections, at SDCI and other departments that handle construction permit applications.</p>	<p>Pending</p>	<p>City's Construction Permitting Needs More Customer Focus and Consistency 10/2023</p>
<p>The Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) should develop a process to monitor and evaluate permit application corrections. This process should be sustainable given current resource levels and provide reasonable assurance that permit corrections are meeting SDCI's standards of being necessary, understandable, code-based, directive, and specific. SDCI should track this information so that correction quality can be evaluated over time. To ensure the consistency of permit corrections, SDCI should involve and coordinate with other City departments that issue permits.</p>	<p>The Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) reported it is currently working with its partners in the Seattle Information Technology Department to secure contracted services and technology licenses to implement and integrate Customer Experience (CX) and Employee Experience (EX) feedback software into the existing permitting process workflow to be able to establish a sustainable customer and employee engagement program. The information obtained from these tools will be collected/analyzed and then used for identifying and prioritizing opportunities for continuous improvement investments. Correction letter quality concerns identified through these feedback mechanisms will be routed to the appropriate resources in Technical Plan Review Supervision/Management for evaluation and monitoring of SDCI's ongoing correction letter quality. This recommendation will be considered implemented when SDCI begins using a process to monitor and evaluate permit application corrections, whether through the mechanism identified above or through other means.</p>	<p>Pending</p>	<p>City's Construction Permitting Needs More Customer Focus and Consistency 10/2023</p>
<p>The Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) should develop a strategic customer engagement program for their construction permitting process, which could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing customer service and satisfaction baseline data. • Defining performance measures that relate to SDCI's strategic goals. • A process to routinely monitor performance measures. • Defined roles for SDCI employees who are responsible for implementing process improvements. 	<p>The Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) reported that it is currently working with its partners in the Seattle Information Technology Department to secure contracted services and technology licenses to implement and integrate Customer Experience (CX) and Employee Experience (EX) feedback software into the existing permitting process workflow to be able to establish a sustainable customer and employee engagement program. The information obtained from these tools will be collected and analyzed to be used for identifying and prioritizing opportunities for continuous improvement investments. As of this update, SDCI stated that it has also established baseline Volume and Performance Timeline metrics as well as baseline Customer Satisfaction (CSAT) metrics for the Virtual Applicant Services Center (Chat & Email). SDCI is also collecting data for services provided at the 4th floor in-person Customer Service Desk to optimize appropriate staff level coverage for the most regularly needed services requested through that resource. This recommendation will be considered implemented when SDCI has established a consistent method for gathering and analyzing customer feedback on the construction permitting process, whether through the aforementioned feedback software or other means.</p>	<p>Pending</p>	<p>City's Construction Permitting Needs More Customer Focus and Consistency 10/2023</p>
<p>The Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) should develop metrics by construction permit type for total review time and a tracking process to support meeting those metrics. The metrics and SDCI's progress on meeting those metrics, along with the methodology and notices of any data limitations, should be displayed on SDCI's website and updated regularly. The data should meet the needs and expectations of customers and include other City departments' review times. SDCI should also consider whether to publish its review queue on its website.</p>	<p>As of this update, the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) reported that it has published data for permitting metrics tracking total Building Permit Timelines on its external facing website based upon requested formatting and permit type breakdowns requested by customer stakeholders. SDCI stated that it is also currently working with partners at the Seattle Information Technology Department to produce a report that will track Corrected Plan (CP) Review Performance in a similar way to the how SDCI currently reports on Initial Plan (IP) Review Performance. This new CP Performance report is expected to be ready by Q3 of 2024. This recommendation will be considered implemented when SDCI demonstrates it has an internal tracking process to meet metrics for total permit review time, and when SDCI has considered whether to publish its review queue on its website.</p>	<p>Pending</p>	<p>City's Construction Permitting Needs More Customer Focus and Consistency 10/2023</p>
<p>The Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) should evaluate its ethical culture and make any needed improvements. SDCI should consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Periodic evaluations of the workplace culture and ethical environment through anonymous employee surveys • An internal ethics policy to address situations that are unique to SDCI's work environment • Ongoing ethics training that is tailored to SDCI's work environment and potential ethical scenarios employees may encounter • A clear process for employees to anonymously report ethical concerns • Leadership's demonstrated commitment to strong ethical values through their directives, attitudes, and behavior (also known as "tone at the top") • Reviewing and determining which employees should complete the City's Financial Interest Statement form based on their responsibilities 	<p>The Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) reported it is currently working with its partners in the Seattle Information Technology Department to secure contracted services and technology licenses to implement and integrate Customer Experience (CX) and Employee Experience (EX) feedback software into the existing permitting process workflow to be able to establish a sustainable customer and employee engagement program. The information obtained from these tools will be collected/analyzed and then used for identifying and prioritizing opportunities for continuous improvement investments. Any ethical concerns identified through these feedback mechanisms will be routed to the appropriate resources in SDCI-HR for evaluation and monitoring of SDCI's workplace culture and ethical environment. SDCI reported that, in partnership with the City's Office of Ethics and Elections, it has reimplemented Annual Ethics Training (previously offered regularly up until the pandemic), and all SDCI staff that have completed the training are being credited with completion in the City's Learning Management System (Cornerstone). Make-up training will be provided on an as-needed basis. SDCI stated it has also incorporated the City's online Ethics Training Overview into the New Hire Onboarding process. According to SDCI, its leadership has committed to making it absolutely clear to staff that ethical values are a top priority and has clearly identified integrity as a leading departmental value as indicated in the SDCI Strategic Plan. SDCI reported it has completed a review of the 2023 City Financial Interest Statement Disclosure Form process and has determined that 100% of those identified as needing to complete the form had done so by the required deadline. As of this update, SDCI said it is currently in the process of completing the 2024 City Financial Interest Statement Disclosure Forms and is committed to continuing to hold 100% of those required to complete the form accountable for doing so. This recommendation will be considered implemented when SDCI demonstrates it has evaluated its ethical culture and makes any needed improvements stemming from the evaluation.</p>	<p>Pending</p>	<p>City's Construction Permitting Needs More Customer Focus and Consistency 10/2023</p>
<p>The Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) should evaluate which departments are using Accela for construction permit review and determine how to improve their integration and use of the portal. SDCI should coordinate with other City departments involved in the construction permitting process.</p>	<p>The Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) reported that it is continuing to collaborate with the Mayor's Office, the Seattle Information Technology Department, and other City departments regarding this recommendation. Work is already underway to migrate the existing on-premises Enterprise-Wide implementation of Accela to the Software-as-a-Solution (SaaS) Online/Cloud-Based version of Accela which will provide greater opportunities for further integrations together with enhanced stability and security of the system. This SaaS migration is scheduled for completion in July 2024. The timing of any future departmental integrations is related to the backlog of knowments improvements/enhancements that have been limited by ongoing IT capacity issues together with the one-time delay necessary for the platform freeze required for the cloud migration. This recommendation will be considered implemented when SDCI has evaluated how to improve the integration of other departments that use Accela for construction permit review, particularly in relation to the new cloud-based version.</p>	<p>Pending</p>	<p>City's Construction Permitting Needs More Customer Focus and Consistency 10/2023</p>
<p>The Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) should solidify and make more transparent how it prioritizes construction permit applications for review. This could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a policy and providing training on how permit reviewers should prioritize projects assigned to them • Improving the workflow screen in Accela to make the priority of projects clearer • Reviewing and making updates to the Plan Review Priorities Guideline document (for example, considering the priority of medical or disability accommodations) and making it publicly available • Creating a method to document when and why the prioritization process is circumvented <p>SDCI should coordinate with other City departments as needed to implement this recommendation.</p>	<p>As of this update, the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) reported that it has reviewed, revised, and published its Plan Review Priorities Guidelines on its external facing website. SDCI has also reviewed, revised, updated, and published its Guide to Construction Permit Initial Plan Review Categories in its external facing website. This recommendation will be considered implemented when SDCI demonstrates it has made efforts to ensure reviewers prioritize applications consistently, including among all departments that review permits. This may include additional policies and trainings or changes to Accela to make the priority of projects clearer.</p>	<p>Pending</p>	<p>City's Construction Permitting Needs More Customer Focus and Consistency 10/2023</p>