

Enhancing the Permit Process

1. **To save time and allow applicants to be more prepared** – developed permit application forms so applicants can have all needed information prior to visit to office; writeable on-line.
2. **To be more flexible** – accepting copies of owner’s affidavit and digital signatures (rather than only an original).
3. **To be more flexible** – allowing payment of most utility fees when meter is set (rather than all up front with permit).
4. **To be more flexible** – accepting building permit applications from permit-runner (rather than only from applicant).
5. **To facilitate architect review of permit comments** – reorganized permit comments to make clear distinction between boilerplate and project-specific comments.
6. **To help keep permit reviews moving and shorten time of issuance of permits** – weekly emails are now sent out to internal and external reviewers indicating which plan reviews are pending.
7. **To help permit applicants track their permits** – modified on-line plan review status check feature to let applicants know what reviews are still required.
8. **To make it possible for permit package to be ready when applicant arrives for pick-up** – staff posted a manual on how to make on-line payments on PCAD web page. (Packets are not assembled until permit fee is paid.) Promoted by email to all licensed contractors.
9. **To shorten time of permit issuance** – City will issue demolition permits even if do not have MDE review and sign-off. Gaining MDE approval of demolition is responsibility of applicant.
10. **To bring permit cost in line with neighboring jurisdictions** – City will waive permit application fee for single water heater replacement.
11. **To give permit applicants a heads up on expiring permits** – sending out letters a few days in advance of expiration of permits to alert applicant of the need to seek an extension if project is still in process.
12. **To be more flexible** – modified administrative policy on expiring building permits to allow up to three extensions (instead of only one). If City is in a new code cycle, all trades permits must be active and current to gain building permit extensions.
13. **To allow long distance submittals of permit applications** – developing means of allowing submittal of permit applications on-line. Should be available in early 2019.

Enhancing the Inspection Process

1. **To cover growing construction activity and to allow more time for on-site interaction with contractors** – shifted staffing responsibilities to have two positions dedicated to building inspections. This change will allow building inspectors to have more time on job sites to answer questions and offer suggestions to problems.
2. **To create better communication and remove surprises in the field** – City requires inclusion of City staff in kick-off meeting with contractors and encourages inclusion of City staff in project progress meetings to ensure contractors are aware of permit

comments and to allow face-to-face interaction on field complications and plan changes.

3. **To keep projects moving** – implemented a ‘proceed at your own risk’ process when inspectors find work that does not match permit-approved plans and allow construction to continue with understanding sealed plan revisions or as-built plans will be submitted before final inspection.
4. **To keep projects moving** – inspectors will provide requested inspection even though it cannot pass until other work is completed and has passed inspection.
5. **To keep projects moving and help meet deadlines** – if inspector observes unpermitted work which is associated with permit, staff will issue temporary U&O upon request.
6. **To keep projects moving and help meet deadlines** – if inspector observes unpermitted work not associated with permit (e.g., permit is for addition and unpermitted work is observed elsewhere in the house), staff will issue final U&O for permitted work and issue correction notice for unpermitted work (unless it is more than a year old and meets minimums of PMC – note in file).
7. **To facilitate the Maryland Theatre expansion project** – assigned a PCAD Construction Liaison at the project. Building inspector visits site twice per day, attends progress meetings with other staff, and engages in problem solving sessions with associated building and trade experts on staff and project contractors and designers.

Helping Property Owners Understand the Permits and Enforcement Process

1. **To help home-owners with permit process** – created eight ‘how to’ brochures for simple permit projects: decks, fences, swimming pools, porches, sheds, carports, garages, and additions.
2. **To help home-owners find contractors** – added page to City web site which identifies licensed contractors and provides link to HBA and ABC web sites. Promoted on the front page of the City web site and on the City’s cable channel.
3. **To be more user friendly** – updated PCAD web page using web statistics to make the most popular items more accessible or easier to use.
4. **To help applicants and interested citizens follow permitted work or enforcement actions** – created on-line tool to track status of permits and inspections.
5. **To give softer first contact approach on yard violations** – created door-hangers on 14 simple yard violations.
6. **To give early notification of code violations** – sending emails in conjunction with written notices of violation.
7. **To educate landlords and property managers and to help with consistency between inspectors** – created a more detailed checklist for Property Maintenance Code inspections. Posted on-line.