



# MEMORANDUM

## *Building & Safety Division*

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**To:** Honorable Mayor and City Council  
**Through:** Tom Williams, City Manager  
**From:** Keyvan Irannejad, Chief Building Official  
**Subject:** **Updates on Roadmap for Service Improvements**  
**Date:** July 25, 2007

In last two years major improvements in plan check, building inspection and building permitting process has taken place to provide a fiscally sound, proactive and effective process that is responsive and dependable.

We are constantly striving toward being more efficient, more effective, and more customer-responsive by being “Facilitator” not “Regulator”.

Building permits are the economic backbone of any city. Being able to process them efficiently and effectively is important in terms of providing competitive service levels to clients and at the same time making sure that public and private safety is ensured.

The following are the accomplishments and objectives in further improvement and streamlining of the permitting process:

1. Developments of the handouts for residential and commercial customers to help them better understand building permit submittals and construction requirements. Published plan check checklists and guidance for different type of permits.
2. Improvement of submittal requirements by consolidating requirements of all departments in one document.
3. Monitored and improved customer service through cold calls, meetings and customer satisfaction surveys.
4. Looked at permitting process as the whole, including all the departments and agencies involvement, not just a single department. Established ongoing weekly meetings with representatives from all involved departments on improvement of permitting process, communications, share technology, timelines and goals.
5. Established better internal and external coordination and consistency.

6. Improved plan check and inspection turn-around time.
7. Implemented single HOTLINE number. Customer calls are answered in an average of 10 seconds.
8. Improved the way we interact with the businesses and residents. Re-evaluated our services from the point of view of our customers such as customer service, efficiency, and responsiveness.
9. Simplified submittal requirements by eliminating drawing submittals for simple remodeling projects, such as kitchen and bathroom remodels and others. In order to eliminate drawing submittals we developed all necessary construction details and information on code requirements for the homeowners.
10. For the convenience of our customers Permit Center is now open during lunch time from 12:00 PM to 1:00 PM. Plan checkers are available to review plans and Permit Center staff is available to issue permits at that time.
11. Extended “Express Plan Check” program from half day to a full day including lunchtime. Applicant can receive plan check comments or obtain building permit for small size projects such as single-family residential addition or remodel up to 600 square feet within one hour without an appointment.
12. Offered “Plan Check by Appointment” services for the medium size projects such as residential additions up to 1,000 square feet or tenant improvements up to 10,000 square feet. Such services allow applicants to receive plan review comments or obtain building permit on the date of submittal instead of waiting for two to three weeks.
13. Offered “Preliminary Design Review” when requested by an applicant to facilitate the review process prior to submittal of building permit applications. Such service is designed to eliminate repeated re-submittals and allow customers to obtain their building permits sooner.
14. Offered “Temporary Building Permit” for projects with no structural and exterior work and providing courtesy inspections prior to obtaining building permits. Providing such service allows customers to complete their projects on time and improve their building occupancy and start of business operation time schedule.
15. Offered optional accelerated plan check and inspection after working hours and on weekends when requested by homeowners or businesses for an additional fee.
16. Assigned single point of contact (Project Coordinator) for every building permit submittal. It allows better streamlining of the permitting process toward common goals and improves coordination with other departments to assure better concurrence.
17. Conducting regularly scheduled meetings with public to address various topics related to building permits and building safety, such as “Homeowners Night”, and various meetings with the industry representatives.

18. In the last three years Building Department participated and organized “Building Safety Week” by reaching out to community in promoting building safety and educating residents on disaster preparedness and building permit requirements.
19. Created “Combination Permit” for residential remodel construction. To simplify permitting process and minimize waiting time, we consolidated Building, Electrical, Mechanical and Plumbing permits into one single permit.
20. Implemented “Voluntary Seismic Upgrade Program for Homeowners” to make their houses safer. We provide interested homeowners with a Prescriptive Plan Set that may be used to strengthen older homes and for obtaining their building permit. The Building Department will provide pre-construction and follow-up inspections to ensure that the construction is done properly. The cost of the program, which includes the Plan Set, permit fees and up to three inspections is only \$240.
21. Implemented Disaster Response Plan. The primary emphasis of this program is to be prepared for a disaster situation such as a major earthquake. Building plan checkers and inspectors have received special in-house training as well as attended State sponsored disaster response training. City has been divided into six zones and each zone assigned to two of building department staff, so in the case of emergency staff can respond to their assigned zone for the post-earthquake safety evaluation of buildings. Each vehicle will be equipped with emergency safety tools
22. Continued cross-training of staff by having building inspectors performing plan review of certain type of submittals and having office staff ride along with building inspectors to view inspections and see construction in progress at various stages. Making sure that staff is working smarter resulted in a faster turn around time.
23. Providing regular in-house training of staff and inviting number of manufacturer and building organizations representatives to participate in the in-house staff training.
24. Established uniformity of codes interpretations and consistency in plan check and inspection.
25. Improved quality of inspections by assigning same building inspector to the project from start to finish and providing quality control by having Senior Building Inspector perform periodic reviews.
26. Inspection requests received until 5 am scheduled for the same day inspection with a “2 hour window”. If staff is available we’ll continue to make inspections on the same day at any time inspection is requested by having inspectors cell numbers available to customers.
27. Utilized technology and automation to enhance department performance.
28. Implemented “digitized” imaging of construction documents for permanent filing allowing instant computerized records access.
29. Created workload indicator and performance targets. Monitored performance and hold staff accountable.

30. Implemented new automated permit information system enabling all departments involved in review process to better track and manage work activities.
31. Made more inspection field time available to inspectors by the use of laptop computers (TOUGHBOOK) in the field that allows full access to relevant information for the inspection, enter inspection results in the field and print inspection results for the customers at the job site.
32. Arranged fax permit applications for the customers to apply, pay for and obtain simple permits such as water heater or furnace replacement from their home or office by fax. This service eliminates car trips and saves customer time.
33. Implemented better tracking system for assignments and closure of service requests.
34. Implemented new permitting software and developing "On-Line" permit process allowing residents and building contractors easier and faster on-line access to permitting information and obtaining number of building permits without leaving their homes or offices.
35. Implemented Building and Safety web site that allows applicant to schedule inspection, receive update on the status of plan submittal, review plan check comments and obtain other general information.
36. Implementing IVR (Interactive Voice Response) that will allow customers to schedule inspection, access inspection results, plan check status, and general information 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

# MEMORANDUM

*Building & Safety Division*

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**To:** Honorable Mayor and City Council  
**Through:** Tom Williams, City Manager  
**From:** Keyvan Irannejad, Chief Building Official  
**Subject:** **Temporary Building Inspector**  
**Date:** July 25, 2007

City of Milpitas staff, as directed by City Council, is committed to provide high level of service to our residents and businesses. Due to high level of construction and permit activities in the City, Building and Safety Division cannot continue to offer the same level of quality service at a current staffing level. Use of temporary dedicated building inspectors on complex high-density residential buildings projects will allow us to maintain the high level of service and, at the same time, provide better level of quality control. I should note that there are several significant projects, which will soon be in full production. These include but are not limited to: Apton Plaza- 93 units' condominium complex, Aspen Village - 101 units' three apartments buildings, five new Cisco buildings and phase II of DR Horton's Centria 137 units condominium project.

Currently we have inspection staff consisting of four permanent Building Inspectors, Electrical Inspector and Senior Building Inspector. In addition, we have three temporary fully benefited temporary building inspectors: two are paid by KB Homes developer and one by DR Horton developer. To maintain high standards of quality and consistency of current construction we have assigned one permanent and one temporary building inspector to KB Homes projects. Also, we are utilizing one temporary building inspector and one permanent building inspector on a half time basis to fill full time position of the dedicated building inspector currently assigned to DR Horton project. These assignments are in addition to inspections provided by Electrical Inspector, as needed additional inspections by permanent inspectors and quality control inspections provided by Senior Building Inspector. Dedicated building inspectors provide better control and monitoring of the project progress, enforcement of State and local codes and ordinances, since they are stationed at the job site during construction. Since Senior Building Inspector directly supervises dedicated inspectors, it allows better quality control of the inspections then when private outside consulting companies are used. To attract better-qualified and experienced applicants from the larger pool of applicants City provides temporary building inspectors with a full benefits package, such as medical coverage, retirement benefits and other. Our temporary building inspectors are all State licensed general contractors. In addition, one inspector is a certified building and electrical inspector, another one is a certified combination building inspector and another one is a certified building inspector. Each of them has more than fifteen years of experience in construction industry. Our temporary building inspectors are well qualified and the level of service they provide has only positive effect on the high quality of service we are dedicated to provide to the residents and business in our City.

Many other Cities in Bay Area also use in-house temporary building inspectors or private outside consulting agencies for dedicated services to the large development projects. Use of temporary building inspectors hired directly by City provides higher level of quality to the City and the developer, uniformity of inspections, more financially feasible and provides overall better customer service.

I hope that above provided information will justify your approval of hiring a dedicated temporary building inspector for the Building and Safety Division.

Budget # \_\_\_\_\_  
 Refer # \_\_\_\_\_

City of Milpitas, California

**BUDGET CHANGE FORM**

Type of Change	From		To	
	Account	Amount	Account	Amount
Check one: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Budget Appropriation <input type="checkbox"/> Budget Transfer	100-3215	\$135,722	100-531-4112	\$98,104
	100-3601	\$29,978	100-531-41xx	\$36,768
			100-531-42xx	\$850
			100-2940	\$29,978

**Explain the reason for the budget change:**

DR Horton Inc. is requesting additional dedicated full time building inspector for Paragon Project to provide continuous and uninterrupted service for the duration of construction. Such service is currently provided by the City of Milpitas to DR Horton Centria project and other major projects and proved to be beneficial to both sides. It allows the City to provide a high level of customer service by considerably reducing the number of re-inspections, streamlining and maintaining construction schedule and minimizing the number of construction revisions. Existing workload will not allow the City to provide additional dedicated building inspector from its current staff to the DR Horton projects and necessitate hiring a temporary building inspector at the annual cost of \$165,700. This service will require the developer to pay the full cost of the service, which includes salary and benefits for the building inspector and an administrative fee.

Approve FY 2007-08 budget appropriation of \$165,700 from revenue (reimbursed by the developer) for a temporary building inspector to the Building Inspection Division's budget and the administrative fee into fund balance.

Check if City Council Approval required.

Meeting Date: August 7, 2007

Itemization of funds, if needed:		Amount
Requested by:	Division Head:	Date:
	Department Head:	Date:
Reviewed by:	Finance Director: <i>Emma Karlen by X</i>	Date: <i>8/1/07</i>
Approved by:	City Manager:	Date:
Date approved by City Council, if required:		Confirmed by: