



# Permit Sonoma Management Study

Board of Supervisors Presentation

January 31, 2023



# ▲ Agenda

- BerryDunn Team
- Project Background
- Recommended Initiatives
- Questions and Discussion



# BerryDunn Team



**Kevin Price**  
Project Principal



**Fred Turnier**  
Project Manager

**BerryDunn Team**



# Project Background

- ▲ The focus of the project is to review and evaluate Permit Sonoma's current management practices; analyze service delivery, organizational structure, and operations; and recommended management processes and service improvements.
- ▲ The project consists of six phases:
  - Project Initiation
  - Service Delivery and Analysis
  - Organizational Assessment
  - Operational Assessment and Cost Analysis
  - Best Practices and Benchmark Analysis
  - Final Recommendations



# Recommendations

## Initiative Table Template

Initiative Name		
Initiative Summary		
	<i>Summary description for initiative and visual icon representing the initiative</i>	
Related Issue(s)		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Issue(s) the initiative seeks to address</i></li> </ul>	
Action Items to Implement		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Tasks required to implement the initiative.</i>	
Anticipated Benefits		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Benefits anticipated as a result of implementing the initiative</i></li> <li><i>Visual indicator communicating the anticipated benefits</i></li> </ul>	
Risks		
	<p><b>No Action:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Risks of taking no action or not implementing the initiative</i></li> </ul>	
	<p><b>During Implementation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Risks the County should consider while implementing the initiative</i></li> </ul>	
Implementation Timeline		
<b><u>Priority</u></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Description of the implementation timeline, including any dependencies or connections to other initiatives</i></li> <li><i>Visual indicator communicating the initiative priority</i></li> <li><i>Visual indicator communicating the initiative complexity</i></li> </ul>	<b><u>Complexity</u></b>
Best Practice Considerations		
	<i>Description of best practices related to the initiative and a visual indicator communicating the best practice or maturity of the initiative.</i>	



# Recommendations

## Priority Indicators



**High:** Initiative should be started in months 0-3



**Medium:** Should be started in months 4-6



**Low:** Should be started in months 7-12

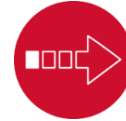
## Indicators



**High:** Implementation of this initiative will offer significant improvement moving Permit Sonoma toward the desired future state.



**Medium:** Implementation of this initiative will offer moderate improvement moving Permit Sonoma toward the desired future state.



**Low:** Implementation of this initiative will offer minor improvement moving Permit Sonoma toward the desired future state.

## Relative Benefit Indicators

## Implementation Complexity Indicators



**High:** Initiative will require significant resources to implement



**Medium:** Initiative will require moderate resources to implement.



**Low:** Initiative will not require significant resources to implement.

## Best Practice Indicators



**Established:** The practice included in this initiative is established and an industry best practice.



**Leading Edge:** The practice included in this initiative is common but is not broadly adopted as an industry best practice.



**Bleeding Edge:** The practice included in this initiative is rare but has been adopted by other organizations.



# Initiative 1

## Expand Instant Issuance OTC Permits and Implement an Express Permit Program



Permit Sonoma should expand OTC offerings and implement an express permit program. OTC permits should be offered for minor projects that do not require plan reviews, are non-structural, and do not alter existing floor plans. Expanding OTC offerings may improve customer service and permit issuance efficiency. Residential rooftop solar and storage systems are currently processed as issuance OTC permits. Permit Sonoma has also started efforts to set up water heater, furnace, and re-roof permits to be instance issuance OTC permits.

OTC permits should be automatically issued digitally after submission of a complete application. Projects that require a basic review should be set up as express permits. Express permits should be issued within five business days from the date of a complete application submittal.

This initiative should also include a review of current Conditional Use Permit (CUP) processes within the Planning Division. CUP guidelines should be reviewed to help ensure applications follow a CUP process only when required. A Zoning Administrator role should be established to lead this process.

- Application types recommended for instance issuance OTC consideration and further evaluation include: Water Heater Replacement, Furnace, Re-Roof, Residential Plumbing, Residential Siding Installation or Replacement, Residential Deck Repair, Residential Stair Repair or Replacement, Service Upgrade (max. 225 amps).
- Application types recommended for Express Permit consideration and further evaluation include: Residential Electrical, Non-Residential Electrical, Non-Residential Plumbing, Transportation, New Septic Tank (Tank Only), and Septic Tank Destruction.

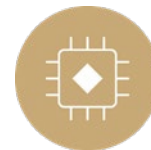
### Priority



### Anticipated Benefit



### Best Practice



### Complexity



# Initiative 2

## Create and Publish Application Response and Review Time Frame Targets



Permit Sonoma should establish application review time frame targets. Establishing these targets will help applicants better understand how long they should expect applications for specific project types to be reviewed. Establishing time frames and targets and tracking review times will also allow creation of internal performance metrics that can be analyzed and reviewed. These time frame targets should also include customer response time frame targets to help applicants better understand how long they should expect it to take to receive a first response related to a complete submittal. Permit Sonoma currently has some online dashboards that show actual review times for some application types. Some of these dashboards have a line suggesting a six-week target for review, however this is not presented on dashboards or explicitly stated as what should be expected by the applicant.

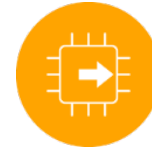
### Priority



### Anticipated Benefit



### Best Practice



### Complexity





# Initiative 3

## Consolidate and Standardize Accela Statuses



Permit Sonoma should consolidate application statuses in Accela, with the goal of creating uniform or consistent statuses across divisions where possible. Approximately 126 statuses are currently used in Accela. These include separate statuses for similar steps (e.g., Closed, Complete, Complete for Processing, File Closed, Final, Finaled, Finished). The overall number of statuses and application statuses should be reduced. Key statuses used to indicate when an application has been submitted, when it was ready for review, when reviews were completed, and when the application was approved or issued should be standardized.

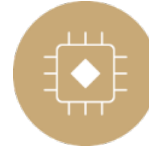
### Priority



### Anticipated Benefit



### Best Practice



### Complexity



# Initiative 4

## Expand Task Functionality in Accela and Implement Due Date Tracking



Once the application review time frames are established, Permit Sonoma should configure Accela so that each application type has tasks with default durations that support the overall review time frame targets (e.g., if there is a target for initial review within five days, the completeness review task should be complete within two days and the review task itself should be complete within three days). This functionality would also support management-level reports showing the status of tasks by division and individual (e.g., reviews due tomorrow, reviews due today, and reviews overdue). Staff will need to be trained on the new task functionality and educated on how this information will be tracked and reported on.

After other Accela improvements have been completed, the information shared online with applicants should be modified to include specific reviewer information. This level of detail is currently disclosed online as “TBD”.

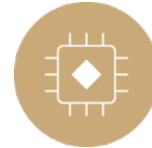
### Priority



### Anticipated Benefit



### Best Practice



### Complexity



# Initiative 5

## Expand Online Submittal, Electronic Review, Required Fields, and Status Inquiry



System configuration for planning applications should be updated so that all Permit Sonoma application processes managed in Accela are available for online application submittal and status inquiry.

Digital Plan Room (DPR) should be implemented for all other application types that require plan review.

Permit Sonoma should also use the required field functionality to the greatest extent possible. This functionality is currently underutilized. The required field functionality can help prevent the receipt of incomplete applications, which require additional staff time in application follow-up.

After Accela statuses have been consolidated and standardized, the status information and supporting detail available in the Civic Portal should be expanded. This should include displaying current status, the date the status was entered, and the remaining steps or activities in the workflow process.

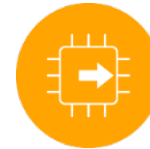
### Priority



### Anticipated Benefit



### Best Practice



### Complexity



# Initiative 6

## Establish Contracts With Third-Party Plan Reviewers to Provide As-Needed Supplemental Review Assistance



Permit Sonoma should establish contracts with third-party plan review companies to assist with completing technical reviews of applications. These as-needed resources should be used for one-time efforts to clear backlogs and then on an ongoing basis to provide supplemental review assistance when application volume in a defined period exceeds the capacity of Permit Sonoma staff to complete the review in accordance with target review time frames.

Permit Sonoma should start this initiative focused on permits that have the longest current application review time frames, from submission to issuance. Based on the Accela data provided and the information available on the Permit Sonoma performance dashboard, these application types should include septic, well, grading, encroachment, and building with plan check..

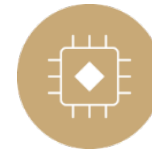
### Priority



### Anticipated Benefit



### Best Practice



### Complexity



# Initiative 7

## Implement a Checklist-Based Review and Resubmittal Process



Permit Sonoma should adopt a process designed to focus the review of resubmitted applications on items that changed based on previous comments. After the initial review, comments should be provided back to applicants in a clear and numbered list. As part of the resubmittal process, applicants should provide a written response to each comment, in addition to providing updated versions of the changed plans. Permit Sonoma's review of resubmittals should focus on the previously provided comments and any other indirect changes made to address the comment.

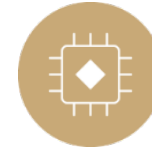
### Priority



### Anticipated Benefit



### Best Practice



### Complexity



# Initiative 8

## Implement Time Accounting in Accela and Develop a Policy for Plan Review Time Tracking



Permit Sonoma should move all time tracking for at-cost fees to be managed in Accela. This includes implementing Accela time-tracking and invoicing functionality, which would replace the functionality currently managed in the Dimensions system.

Permit Sonoma should also develop and implement a time-tracking policy that includes the following elements:

- Daily entry of staff review time and release to be available to applicants in real-time
- Further defining the project cost-estimation process described in the fee schedule to include providing overall hours estimate to the applicant after initial application review
- Monthly reports, provided to applicants for all in-progress applications, containing the percentage of hours expended against the initial estimate, the percentage of completion for the application, description of remaining activities, and an updated hours and expense estimate

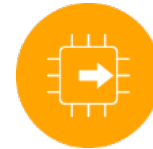
### Priority



### Anticipated Benefit



### Best Practice



### Complexity



# Initiative 9

## Expand and Promote Third-Party Review Process for Select Application Types



Permit Sonoma should modify and expand the Third-Party Plan Check (TPPC) program. The TPPC program allows applicants to utilize a preapproved outside consultant to complete plan review. The purpose of this initiative is to modify, promote, and expand this program. Currently the TPPC program is available for building plan review. Permit Sonoma staff estimated that approximately 5% of current building permit applications with plan review are processed through the TPPC program.

Key changes to this program include modifying the fees required for applications in this program, promoting it as an option to customers, and expanding the program to additional application types. Permit Sonoma should consider expanding the TPPC program to permits issued by Engineering & Water Resources and Well & Septic sections.

Application types to consider including in the TPPC program include: Grading, Stormwater, Road (Right-of-Way) Encroachment, Road Improvement Plan Review, Sanitation Sewer, Well Permit, and Septic Permit.

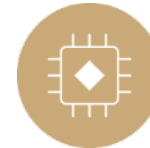
### Priority



### Anticipated Benefit



### Best Practice



### Complexity



# Initiative 10

## Implement a Self-Certification Program for Select Application Types



This program would eliminate staff review of plans for select application types where a registered professional is assuming additional responsibility. In this program, a registered professional (e.g., architect, professional engineer, landscape architect) takes responsibility for and certifies a project's compliance with all applicable building codes, standards, and ordinances.

Permit Sonoma should pilot this program with regular grading permits. Additional application types should include private driveways, minor private roads, landscape, small commercial tenant improvements, and minor traffic control.

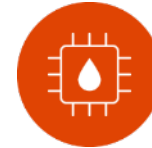
### Priority



### Anticipated Benefit



### Best Practice








### Complexity





# Initiative 11

Establish a Customer Service Framework				
	Permit Sonoma should develop a customer service policy, create a Customer Service Committee (CSC), develop a customer satisfaction measurement system, develop a customer complaint submission process, and provide public access to performance data.			
<u>Priority</u>	<u>Anticipated Benefit</u>	<u>Best Practice</u>	<u>Complexity</u>	
				

# Initiative 12

## Centralize Process Improvement and Establish a Governance Process



Permit Sonoma should have a standard process for submitting, evaluating, and implementing process improvements. Some divisions are working on business process improvements. Staff reported many in-progress improvements and plans; however, staff stated priorities and dates are not communicated and enforced as new requests are made. This centralized process should include improvements to Accela and other software tools.

Permit Sonoma should establish a process improvement governance committee. This committee would coordinate closely with the CSC and may have some overlap in membership, but the process improvement governance committee should also focus on internal improvements that will not directly contribute to customer service (e.g., improving the time entry and invoicing process, updating internal system training materials after system updates).

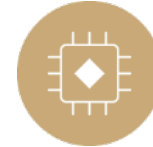
### Priority



### Anticipated Benefit



### Best Practice



### Complexity



# Initiative 13

## Develop SOPs and Training Materials



Establishing SOPs provides staff with clear guidance on department processes and procedures to help ensure consistency across the department. SOPs can help streamline processes and improve cross-division communication and collaboration. SOPs help ensure that staff are providing consistent services to customers, and customers know what to expect when they work with multiple divisions. As part of this initiative, Permit Sonoma should conduct a process diagramming and analysis effort. This exercise will create diagrams for inclusion in SOPs and training materials, but will also help identify areas of process inefficiency, duplicative steps, and other areas for potential process improvement.

Internal process documentation and system training materials should be developed for each application or record type. This should include overall process diagrams, desk-level procedures, and software training materials. Code Enforcement currently has a policy and procedure manual, and Planning has started development.

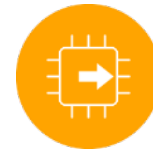
### Priority



### Anticipated Benefit



### Best Practice



### Complexity



# Initiative 14

## Provide Opportunities for Customers to Learn About Permit Sonoma



Establishing an information bulletin on the Permit Sonoma website or hosting lunch and learn sessions can help educate the public on Permit Sonoma business processes and application types. Topics can range from department business processes for different application types to expectations for customers submitting applications. Informational bulletins or lunch and learn sessions can also be used to educate on new County ordinances or provide customers the opportunity to provide feedback on how new initiatives are working.

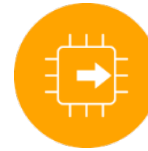
### Priority



### Anticipated Benefit






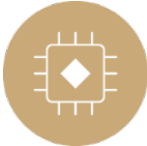

### Best Practice



### Complexity



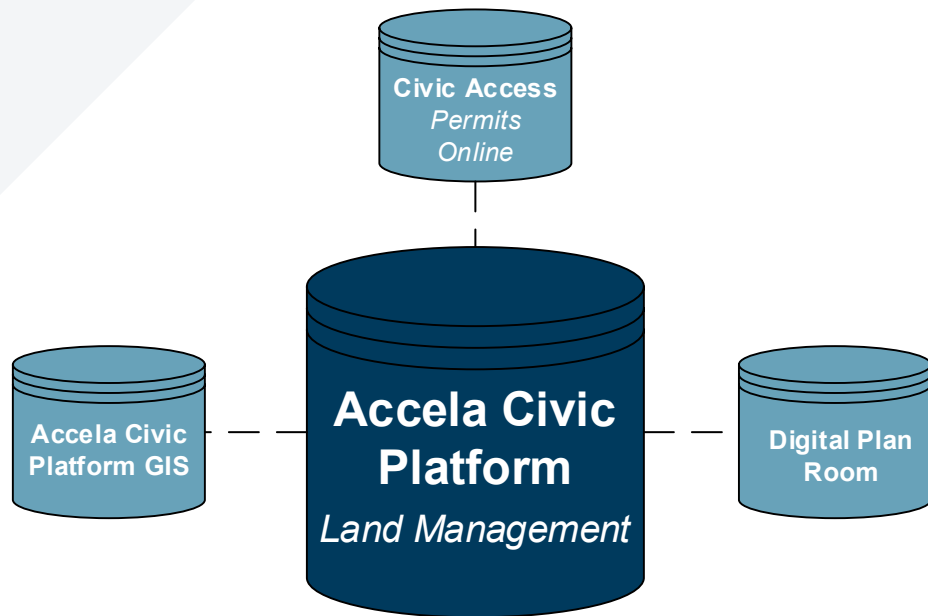
# Initiative 15

Standardize Division and Section Structure			
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<u>Priority</u>	<u>Anticipated Benefit</u>	<u>Best Practice</u>	<u>Complexity</u>
			

# Accela Summary

## Initiatives 3, 4, 5, and 8 relate to Accela improvements.

Permit Sonoma uses Accela to manage applications and cases for Planning, Building, Engineering, Fire, Well and Septic, and Code Enforcement.



### ▲ Civic Platform – Land Management

- The Land Management solution automates, tracks, and manages land use activities. These activities include permit request processing, plan reviews, inspections, investigations, fee calculations and collections, signoffs, and permit issuance.

### ▲ Civic Access (Permits Online)

- A customizable, web-based application that integrates with Accela Civic Platform to provide the public (residents and business professionals) with online access to government services and information.

### ▲ Accela Civic Platform Geographic Information System (GIS)

- An integrated Accela product that enables users to view maps and geospatial representations of land use, zoning, and infrastructure information.

### ▲ Digital Plan Room

- The ePermitHub Digital Plan Room plug-in for the Accela Civic Platform is specifically designed to integrate electronic plan review with the workflows in place in the Accela Civic Platform.



# ▲ Questions and Discussion

