



## **Audit Committee Meeting**

**Baker Tilly Audit  
Building Permitting Process  
Item #2 RTC 25-687**

**June 12, 2025**

1



**City of  
Santa Clara**  
The Center of What's Possible

## **Introductions**

- Afshan Hamid: Community Development Director
- Armand Lobao: Building Official
- David Tran: Assistant Building Official

2



## Primary Objective

1. Assess whether internal controls in the permitting process are effectively designed and implemented to ensure compliance with City Code and relevant regulations.
2. Evaluate whether the permit process is efficient and responsive, with mechanisms in place to ensure timely customer service.
3. Determine if billing and collections of permit fees and fines are properly managed to uphold financial accountability

3



## Agenda

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Overview

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Key Internal Improvements

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1. Policies & Procedures

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2. Timeliness of Permit Process

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3. Permit Fees

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4. Performance Monitoring & Process Improvement

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Raftelis Organizational Assessment

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Next Steps

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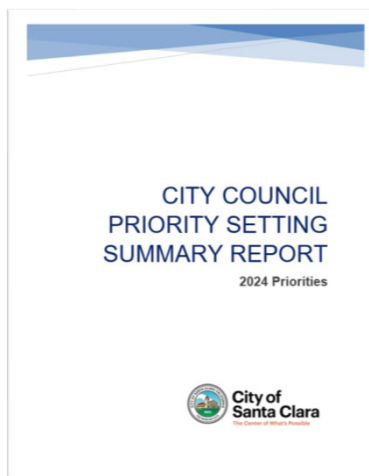
## Overview:

- Audit initiated in Fall 2023 by the City
- Staff acknowledged existing gaps in the process and actively implementing improvements
- Significant transitions:
  - Pandemic
  - Staff transitions: Retirements and Staff Turnover
  - New Staff: City Manager, CD Director, promotion of Building Official

5



## Council Priority



### UNDERWAY

*Top Priority initiatives which have already started in the planning phases or underway.*

**18. Streamline and Improve City permitting process for increased clarity and to fix inconsistencies for residents and businesses (Underway)**

6 6



## Overview: Department Overview

- 3 Divisions and one group: Planning, Building, Housing & Community Services and Technology & Innovation group.
- Overall 79 FTE and Building Division is 52 FTE
- Structure of Building Division:
  - Building Official and Assistant Building Official
  - Permit Tech and Administrative Staff
  - Permit Review and Inspections

7



## Overview: Permit Review Partners

- CDD: Planning and Housing & Community Services
- Fire Department
- Public Works (Traffic Division, Stormwater, Solid Waste)
- Silicon Valley Power
- Water & Sewer
  - Environmental FOG
- Parks & Recreation
- Santa Clara Unified School District
- Santa Clara County Environmental Health

8



## Overview: Tech & Innovation

- 2018: Accela Civic Platform, Accela Citizen Access, True Point Solutions
- 2021: Fully digital permitting process
- 2022: Management Analyst hired to lead technology
- 2023: Added a Web content team
- August 2023: Innovation Group to support:
  - CDD wide communications
  - New Technology Platforms
  - Support all CDD

9



## Audit Response & Commitment

- Staff collaborated transparently-documentation, identifying gaps, contributing to frontline insights
- Prior to release of audit, staff began addressing concerns, examining internal systems, resource allocation, and capacity
- Improvements in department have commenced

10

10



# Building Division

11 11

## Building Division Progress Overtime & Findings



2021

### Accela Civic Platform

- Launched August 2021
- All development review workflows are streamlined and in the system.

2022

### Permitting

- Received grant to implement SolarApp+
- Adopted the first Santa Clara Reach Code

### Staffing

- Initial internal staffing assessment for Admin, Permit Techs and Plan Reviewers

2023

### Conduct Outreach

- Improved Plan Review timelines for 4,6,10 weeks in first plan review. Subsequent reviews are at 50% of timelines
- (finding 2)

### Simple Permits

- Improved to 1-2 days with 70% permits issued same day
- Over the Counter
- (finding 2)

### Internal Coordination

- Reoccurring meeting to discuss applications and next steps

### Solar App+

- Automate plan checks with instant permits
- (finding 2)

2024

### Plan Check Dashboard

- Active Review Task/Workflow
- Shows active review tasks for all reviewers and consultants
- (finding 2)

### Reporting & Monitoring

- Monthly reports since July 2024
- Weekly Report of all stakeholders in BD process
- (finding 4)

### Pre-Approved ADU Program

### Submittal Handouts for various projects

- ADUs, Single-family, Duplex, Multi-family, Mixed-Use
- Guides for applicable codes, regulations, local ordinances and resolutions
- (finding 2)

2025

### Standing Hours

- Expand presence of all City Departments within Permit Center
- (finding 2)

### Website Improvements

- FAQ/Info Flowchart, What to Expect
- (finding 1)

### Small Businesses

- Targeted Info

### Major Pipeline Projects

- Dedicated inhouse staff
- (finding 2)

13 12

## Building Division Progress Roadmap



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2025/26

### Plan Review Timelines

- Coordinating with internal stakeholders
- All development review workflows are streamlined and in the system.

### Comprehensive Policies & Procedures

- Detailed permit fees

### Staffing

- Budget approved staffing

26/27

### Future Workplan

- Integrate permit system with GIS and SolarAPP

Multi-year

### Accela Portal (POP)

- Integration and Access
- GWIZ

### Dedicated One Stop Shop

14

13

## Gaps & Opportunities for Improvement



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**TABLE 1: Building Division Performance Measures Reported in FY 2023/24 and FY 2024/2025 Adopted Operating Budget**

Performance Measures	2020/21 Actual	2021/22 Actual	2022/23 Target	2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Target	2024/25 Target
Percent of short cycle plan checks performed within ten business days	N/A	N/A	50%	93%	90%	90%
Percent of regular cycle plan checks performed within target dates at 4,6,8, and 10 weeks	72%	93%	N/A	85%	85%	85%

15 14





## **Strategic Goals**

- Comprehensive formal policies and procedures—FY 2025-2026
- Actively monitor permitting process w/metrics—FY 2025-2028
- Adequate testing of fee calculations—FY 2025-2026
- Customer feedback—2025-2027
- Dedicated One Stop Shop—2025-2028

16

15

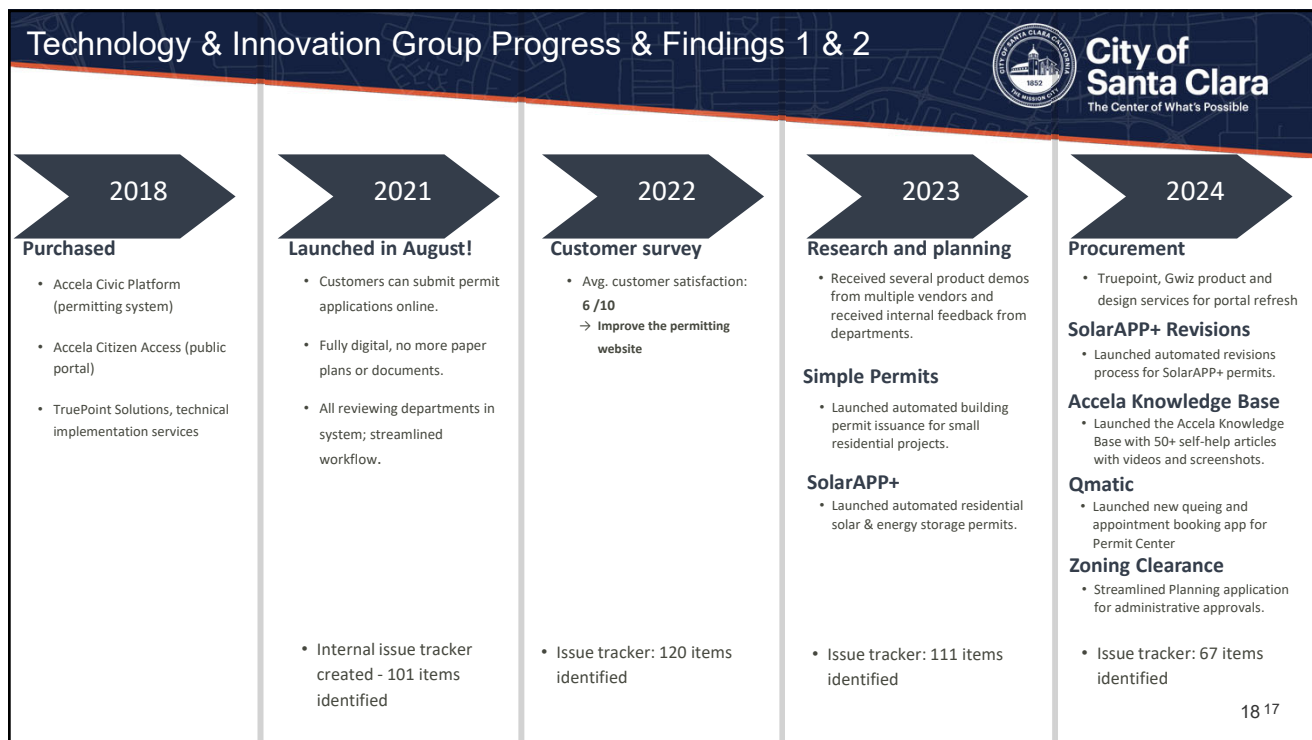


## **Technology & Innovation Group**

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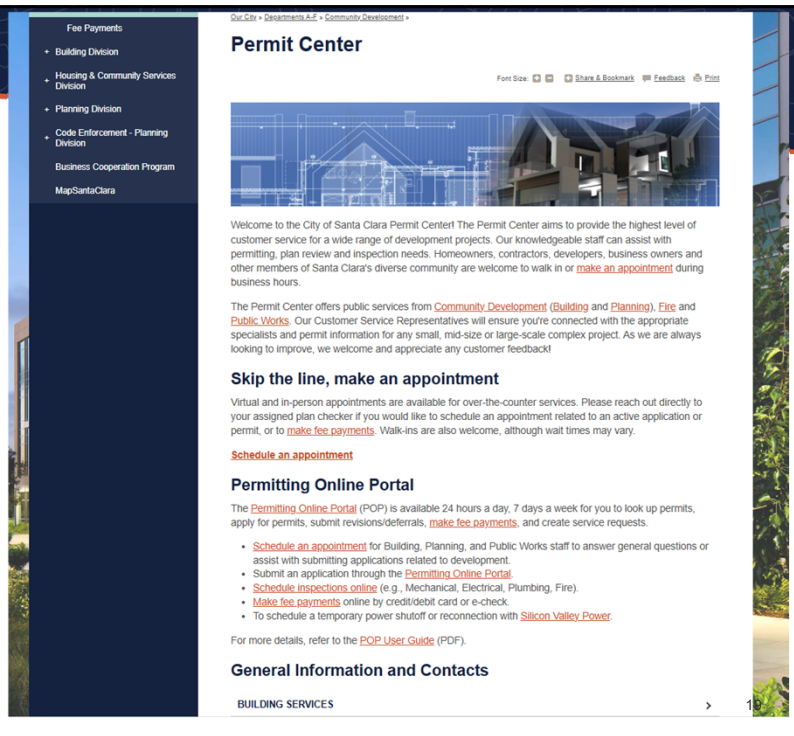




## Website Improvements

- Digital permit center
- Apply for permits via Permitting Online Portal
- Schedule an appointment
- Contact Information

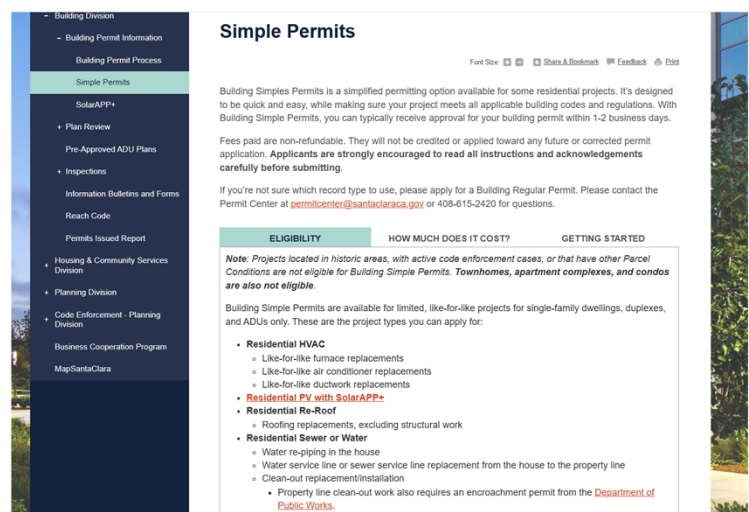
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## Website Improvements

- Website content audit
- Improving customer interface
- Accuracy of content
- Accessibility of content

21



20

## Website Improvements

- Recently launched 6/6/25
- On-line payments
- Wire transfer
- Improves customer experience through website

22

**Fee Payments**

The information mainly applies to building permit or application-related fees. Please confirm with the other City departments/divisions that invoiced your fees for specific payment instructions. For current fees, rates, or charges, refer to the [Municipal Fee Schedule](#) (PDF).

**Note:** Fees of \$100,000 or more must use e-check (bank account), check, or wire transfer. Fees of \$500,000 or more must be paid by check or wire transfer.

**Pay online by credit/debit card or e-check**

1. Log in to the [Permitting Online Portal](#).
2. From the **Home** screen, click **My Records**.
3. Expand the category of records you would like to view. In the action column, click **Pay Fees Due**.
4. Review the fees and click **Pay Fees**.
5. Complete the billing and payment information.
  - Make sure the name matches what is on the card or bank account. Refunds are made only to the exact billing name and address listed during payment.
6. Click **Pay**. A confirmation screen will appear.
7. Click **Print/View Receipt** to print a hard copy of your receipt.
  - The same receipt will also be emailed to the email address provided in the Payment Details.

**Pay in person by credit/debit card, check, or cash**

For Building, Planning, or Public Works payments in person, visit our [Permit Center](#) at 1500 Warburton Avenue during office hours.

For Fire payments, visit the Community Risk Reduction Division at 1675 Lincoln Street. Check the [Santa Clara Fire Department](#) page for office hours.

**Making a Payment In Person**

**WHERE TO PAY**

Building, Planning, Public Works:  
1500 Warburton Avenue, Santa Clara, CA, 95050

Community Risk Reduction (Fire):  
1675 Lincoln Street, Santa Clara, CA, 95050

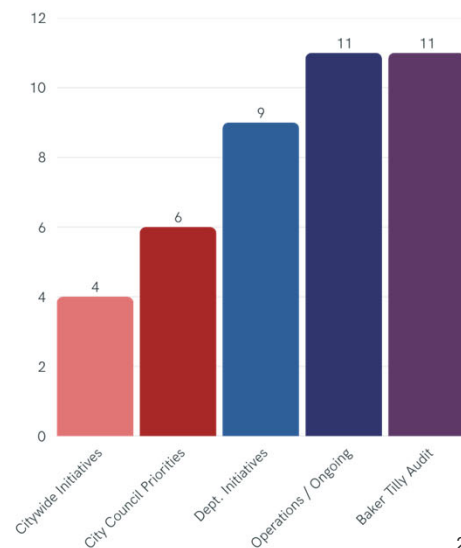
**PAYMENT METHOD**

Building: Credit/debit card, check, cash  
Planning: Credit/debit card, check  
Fire: Check

If paying by check, please make checks out to the City of Santa Clara -- Permit Center. Make sure to include your record number and project address in the check's reference section.

## NEAR TERM DELIVERABLES

The CDD Technology Project Manager and the CDD Web Content Team are responsible for 41 near-term deliverables on behalf of several project drivers ranging from findings in the Baker Tilly Audit, to City Council Priorities, ongoing operations and existing projects.



23 22



## **Qmatic program**

**July 1, 2024  
to  
March 26, 2025**

- 87.6% gave a 5/5 when asked to rate their Permit Center experience.
- 86.1% gave a 5/5 when asked to rate the wait times.
- 90% gave a 5/5 when asked to rate their satisfaction with the staff member they worked with.
- 87.1% say the Department were able to resolve their issue.

24

23

## **Raftelis Organizational Assessment**

Launched in February 2025

Interviews conducted March/April 2025

Comprehensive review of operations and functions  
with staffing capacity

## **Building Permitting Process**



25

Questions and Feedback

# Building Permitting Process



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26