

DISTRIBUTION DATE: 4/20/12

City Administrator's Office



MEMORANDUM

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR &
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Larry Reid
Deanna J. Santana

SUBJECT: Building Services Improvements Update **DATE:** April 20, 2012

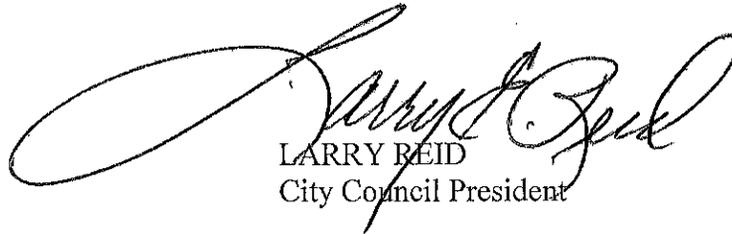
INFORMATION

The City has been working diligently to transform its code enforcement operations to provide the highest standards of care, service, and accountability. The overhaul of the Building Services Division is a long-term investment that requires a thoughtful process based upon best practice information, data on relevant Oakland conditions, analysis on effectiveness of existing strategies, and community involvement. The City has put together a comprehensive roadmap to oversee the changes, including the following components:

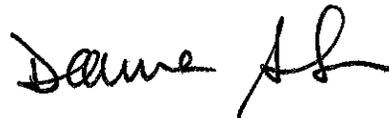
1. Oversight by the City Administrator's office.
2. A staff leadership team that meets weekly to assess and implement needed changes, including the utilization of a case study approach.
3. A workplan on changes to programs and procedures including integration of recommendations from the Alameda County Grand Jury report and the December 6th Council motion items.
4. Best practice research to guide both the new program design and procedures.
5. The convening of an advisory Task Force to provide feedback on proposed new program design and procedures, as well as meetings with interested community stakeholder groups.
6. A comprehensive management review.

While the comprehensive report on the changes to code enforcement operations was intended to be provided to the City Council in the Spring, we believe that it is critical for the Council to have full information on all the change components. Given that the comprehensive management review will not be finalized until this Summer and Task Force members requested more time to provide their feedback, the Administration will be providing the comprehensive report to the City Council in September 2012. Meanwhile, implementation of many of the administrative changes has begun and information on concrete outcomes will be included in the Fall report. We are attaching for your information a staff memo summarizing the progress made to date. We greatly appreciate your support and understanding of the significant undertaking that is involved in transforming code enforcement operations.

Respectfully submitted,



LARRY REID
City Council President



DEANNA J. SANTANA
City Administrator

For more information on the improvement process, please contact Ray Derania, Building Official at 238-4780 or Margaretta Lin, Special Projects Director at (510) 238-6314.

Attachments (1)
Staff Memo re: Updates on Building Services Code Enforcement Improvements



MEMORANDUM

TO: Deanna Santana, Larry Reid

FROM: Margaretta Lin
Special Projects Director

SUBJECT: Updates on Code Enforcement
Improvements

DATE: April 18, 2012

The City has dedicated efforts and resources on transforming Code Enforcement operations and improving services, especially since October 2011. A workplan was developed to address the recommendations issued by the recent Alameda County Grand Jury Report, City Council motion issued on December 2011, as well as administrative priorities. The following is a brief summary of the status of our efforts.

Highlights of Program and Procedural Changes:

The following is based upon change efforts that have occurred largely in the past five months.

Change Items	Implementation Completion Status
1. Organizational Culture Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified staff leadership team; meeting weekly to address priority change needs and align implementation details with new program design and goals. • Developed staff understanding and support of new program goals for code enforcement—public health and safety and community revitalization. • Developed staff leadership in new orientation to customer relations and problem-solving role. • Staff proactively identifying specific ways to assist property owners and new strategies to meet community revitalization, public safety and health goals • Holding regular proactive strategy discussions within Building Services staff and with City Attorney’s office and Housing Division • County Public Health Department staff conducted training for inspectors on health related inspection issues. • Developed preliminary resource guide for property owners. • Implemented new customer feedback vehicles.
2. Remediating Specific Cases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff has been meeting with different property owners to resolve specific issues. Liens have been pulled from property taxes for several cases.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council directed “amnesty program” is being established with selection of temporary staff.
<p>3. Due Process (Notices, Liens, Fees, Fines, and Appeals)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Services staff has stopped conducting appeal hearings. • Outside hearing officers serving as appeal hearing officers per practice of best practice peer jurisdictions; long-term plan of using an outside Board for hearings. • Prospective liens have been banned. • Notices are now also posted on the properties. • Draft new blight notices have been developed to be more user-friendly based upon best practice information. • Courtesy notices have been developed and implemented. • New notices and procedures for addressing bank-owned blighted properties have been developed and implemented. • Developing system for handling complaints about City staff. • Modified notices to be more customer friendly and accessible. • Amnesty program in development, anticipated launch in May.
<p>4. Policies and Procedures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implemented new program goals. • Completion of best practices research on both program design and procedures and operations to guide changes. • Developed preliminary program design for code enforcement based upon best practice information. • Implemented a new courtesy notice and owner self-certification procedure for minor blight violations per best practices of peer jurisdictions. • Developed new abatement procedures that distinguish owner-occupants, landlords, and “institutional” owners and beginning implementation immediately per CED committee feedback. • Developed new strategies to assist property owners with difficulties, including development of a resource guide. • Developing alternative collections mechanism including addressing abandoned properties with old liens. • Revised demolition process to require City Administrator sign-off and City Attorney’s office review prior to demolitions and information to Council. • Lowered cap on change orders from 31% to 10%. • Abatement contracting system being revised to increase efficiency and reduce costs—utilization of RFP process.
<p>5. Proactive Inspections Based Upon Collaborative Planning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implemented proactive inspections on blighted foreclosed properties with effective results, per regular staff reports to CED Committee. Existing gaps in City’s current laws to address problem properties in the foreclosure process have been identified and policy solutions developed for Council consideration. • Developing new policy proposal for addressing problems of vacant commercial properties.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing new pilot public health program with Alameda County Public Health and Lead Prevention Poisoning. • Completed preliminary best practice research scan of 27 jurisdictions with proactive inspections. • Conducted planning meetings with OPD and Neighborhood Services Division to enhance strategic collaboration in hot-spot areas.
<p>6. Improving transparency and accountability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing an online website to access information about complaints. • Regular weekly meetings between Building Services managers and senior inspectors with DIT and Accela representatives to coordinate information flow and development for the new centralized data management system. The Accela Automation Analysis stage is scheduled to be completed by March 2012. The collaboration between the CEDA staff and Accela has resulted in clearly identifying processes and areas of improvement that can be directly translated to the Accela Automation environment. Work on the Accela Automation project for permits, code enforcement, planning and zoning will continue throughout 2012 and is scheduled to be completed and online by June of 2013.

Status of Task Force:

- Completed Task Force meetings to provide feedback on proposed new program design and procedures per Council direction.
- One more Task Force meeting to be scheduled in July to provide feedback on preliminary management review recommendations.

Status of Management Review:

- Management Partners has begun its management review process and is on track to provide preliminary recommendations in time for the comprehensive report scheduled for Council meetings in September 2012.