

DEPARTMENT OF
CITY PLANNING
COMMISSION OFFICE
(213) 978-1300

CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

MONIQUE LAWSHE
PRESIDENT

VACANT
VICE-PRESIDENT

PRISCILLA CHAVEZ
CAROLINE CHOE
MARTINA DIAZ
SARAH JOHNSON
PHYLLIS KLEIN
BRIAN ROSENSTEIN
JACOB SAIMAN
ELIZABETH ZAMORA

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
CALIFORNIA



KAREN BASS
MAYOR

EXECUTIVE OFFICES
200 N. SPRING STREET, ROOM 525
LOS ANGELES, CA 90012-4801
(213) 978-1271

VINCENT P. BERTONI, AICP
DIRECTOR

KEVIN J. KELLER, AICP
EXECUTIVE OFFICER

SHANA M.M. BONSTIN
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

HAYDEE URITA-LOPEZ
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

ARTHI L. VARMA, AICP
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

LISA M. WEBBER, AICP
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

September 3, 2025

Los Angeles City Council
c/o Office of the City Clerk
City Hall, Room 395
Los Angeles, California 90012

Attention: PLUM Committee

Dear Honorable Members:

**DEPARTMENT REPORT BACK REGARDING THE DEVELOPMENT SERVICES BUREAU
AND ZONING REVIEW TRANSFER TO THE DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING (CF [25-0572](#))**

Summary

On August 12, 2025, the Los Angeles City Council passed a motion requesting the Department of City Planning (City Planning) report back on the readiness and launch strategy of a new Development Services Bureau that will facilitate streamlined and efficient processing of essential development projects in the City of Los Angeles. To accomplish this goal, as part of the FY 2025-26 budget, the City Council and Mayor facilitated the transfer of 42 zoning review positions from the Department of Building & Safety (LADBS) to City Planning to consolidate the City's zoning functions into a unified bureau within City Planning. City Planning is ready to launch the new Development Services Bureau in January, including the new zoning review component and other components outlined in this report.

This report responds to the City Council's request for a report on tasks that are critical to the successful launch of the new Development Services Bureau, including:

- An organizational chart showing the transfer of the LADBS zoning positions and the other development services divisions at City Planning that will be reorganized into the new Bureau;
- Future streamlining efforts and cost savings measures;
- The development of a public facing dashboard to track project metrics; and
- The preparation of evaluation metrics to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the new organization.

This report details City Planning leadership's goals for launching the Bureau, its strategic approach to ensure the Bureau's success, and opportunities to improve service delivery for customers through future and enhanced programs.

Goals of the Development Services Bureau and Program

The Department of City Planning's (City Planning) vision for the new Development Services Bureau is to create a "One-Stop-Shop" for all zoning-related services in the City of Los Angeles, providing a streamlined, efficient, and customer-centric experience for project applicants under both the Original Zoning Code and the recently adopted New Zoning Code. Working with other City departments, City Planning will ensure that zoning-related services integrate seamlessly with permitting functions conducted by other City departments, including other elements of the plan check process such as structural, electrical, and mechanical review.

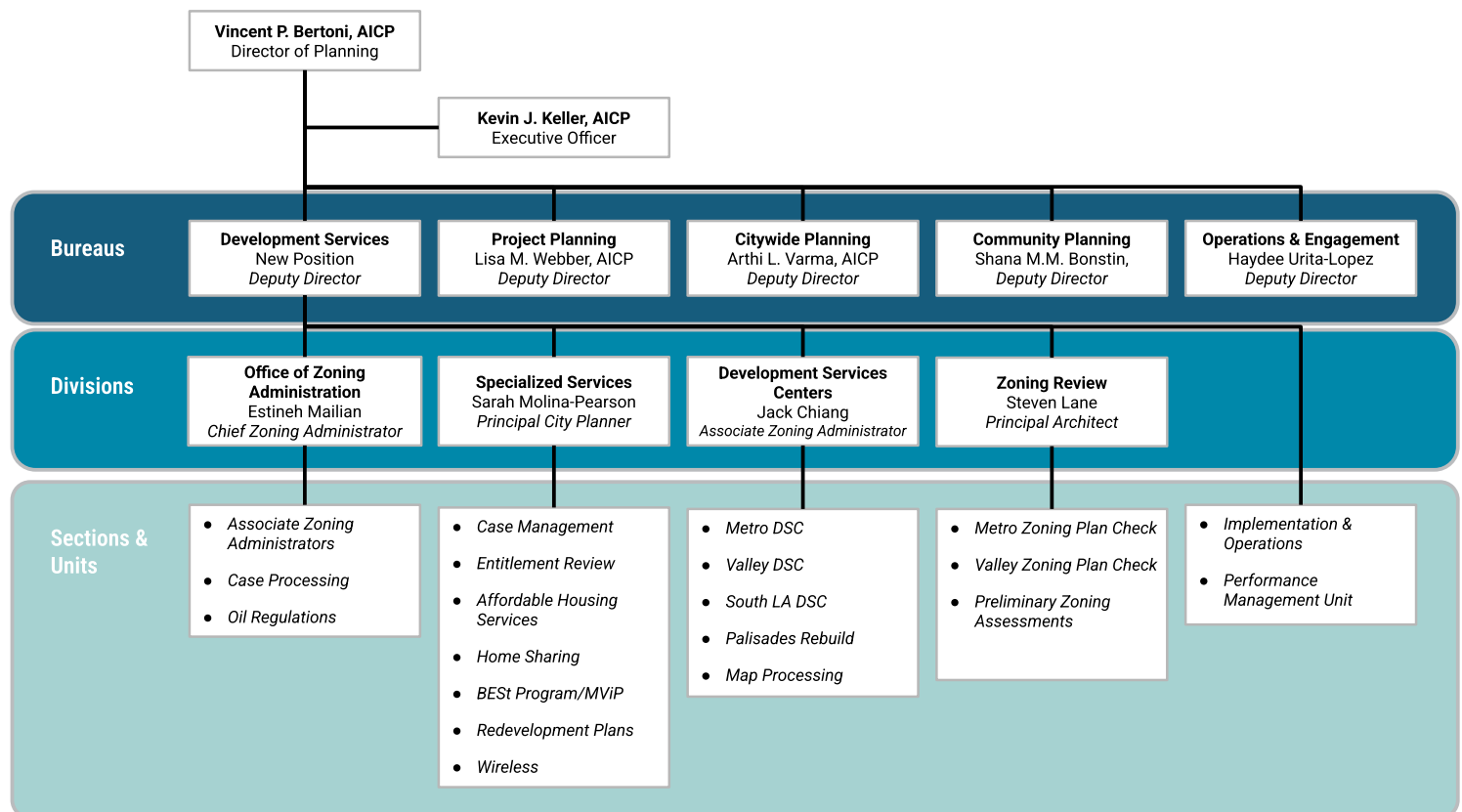
Going forward, all zoning code implementation functions will be administered by the Department of City Planning. This structure aligns zoning review with zoning implementation, placing existing processes into concurrent review within one department. Zoning implementation includes the zoning review currently conducted by LADBS, along with City Planning review for entitlements - both discretionary and ministerial - conducted by City Planning. This reorganization allows for a seamless review of zoning standards, improved response times, and will facilitate communication between applicants and City Planning staff conducting zoning review and processing entitlement applications.

Consolidating all zoning implementation functions into City Planning will:

- Improve operational efficiency;
- Enhance customer service by providing clearer project pathways and faster responses;
- Eliminate the need for applicants to navigate two departments for zoning matters;
- Reduce divergent interpretation of zoning standards between City Planning and LADBS that result in project review delays and customer confusion;
- Streamline project review by integrating zoning review processes into existing project planning workflows; and,
- Reconcile building, zoning, and administrative code interpretations.

Development Services Bureau Overview

The creation of the new Development Services Bureau is part of a larger citywide effort to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the City's development service process. The Bureau aligns all of City Planning's pre-development functions into a single unified Bureau that operates in close coordination with LADBS to efficiently route and process ministerial and discretionary projects. This departmental reorganization is part of an ongoing process advised by both LADBS and City Planning leadership with the assistance of an internal transition team. The organizational chart below shows the composition of the new **Development Services Bureau** which will comprise the **Development Service Centers (DCSs)**, **Office of the Zoning Administration (OZA)**, **Specialized Services Division**, **Performance Management Unit**, and the new **Zoning Review Division**.



The Department's Development Service Centers are responsible for case intake and route administrative and discretionary cases to the appropriate geographic planners and specialized service units. The Office of Zoning Administration oversees all zoning interpretation, nuisance abatement and revocation cases, and rules on quasi-judicial cases such as variances and conditional use permits, which account for a significant share of the discretionary cases that City Planning processes. The Specialized Services Division processes complex, specialty, and streamlined cases such as wireless, restaurant beverage, and affordable housing projects. This larger reorganization, and the addition of the Zoning Review Division, will facilitate the creation of a "One-Stop-Shop" for project intake.

Background

Currently, responsibility for implementing the City's Zoning Code is distributed between the Department of Building and Safety (LADBS) and City Planning. LADBS reviews projects for compliance with the City's Zoning Code (zoning plan check) as a part of building permit application. This function is one component of an LADBS "plan check," which also includes review of structural, mechanical, and other safety elements. The Department of City Planning currently conducts both ministerial, or "by-right," review for projects that require an administrative Planning approval, as well as discretionary land use applications as established by the City's Zoning Codes. Changes to State regulations, as well as the City's commitment to streamlining housing projects, have led to an increase in ministerial review in recent years, a trend that is expected to continue.

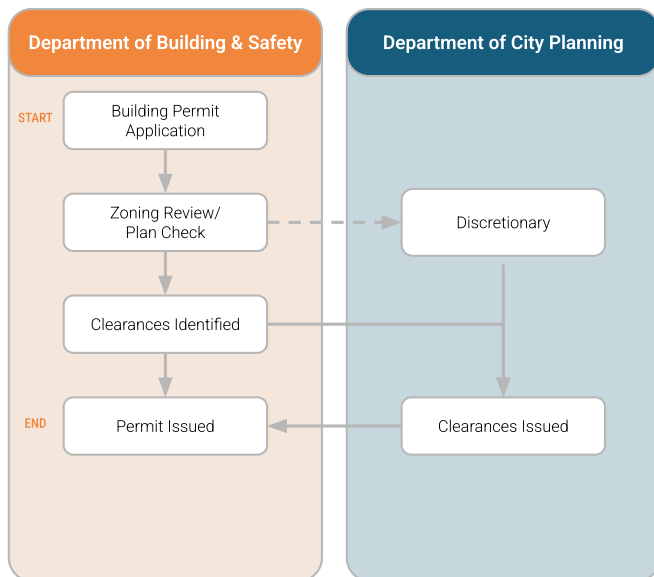
The Office of Zoning Administration is a quasi-judicial agency within City Planning which maintains the authority to interpret zoning code provisions and make determinations on

conditional use permits, all variances, and other discretionary relief actions from the Zoning Codes. The Office of Zoning Administration may also initiate revocation/ nuisance abatement proceedings. In addition, The Chief Zoning Administrator may adopt rules necessary to carry out the requirements prescribed by ordinance and which are not in conflict or inconsistent with those ordinances.

Applicants may begin the City permitting and review process in multiple places, depending in part on whether the applicant anticipates that a project requires action by City Planning. Two common pathways for project review (showing the previous Zoning Review function at LADBS) are detailed below.

Current Pathways

Scenario One - Starting at Building Permit Application



Scenario One (Current)

Applicants typically initiate the zoning review process by applying for a building permit at LADBS and are subsequently directed to City Planning for further review (including requests for relief) as required by the zoning and/or geographic overlays for proposed projects.

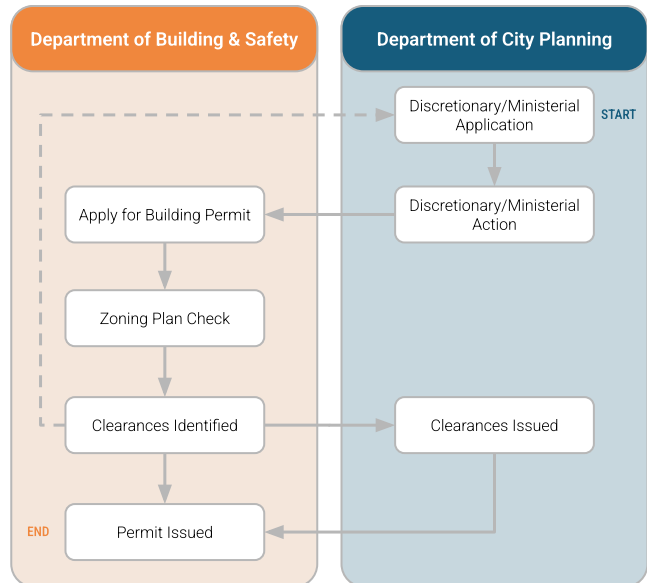
Scenario Two (Current)

Applicants may choose to begin the process at City Planning, and then proceed to LADBS for permit review.

While some level of concurrent review is possible, this current process often results in applicants learning that additional City Planning review is required late in the design process.

The transfer of 42 positions from LADBS to City Planning and subsequent departmental reorganization creates a new Bureau dedicated to delivering improved and efficient development services. In the 2024/25 fiscal year budget, the Department secured position authority for a Deputy Director position to oversee this new Development Services Bureau. City Planning and LADBS have been exploring the addition of zoning functions as far back as 2014,

Scenario Two - Starting at DCP Discretionary/Ministerial Application

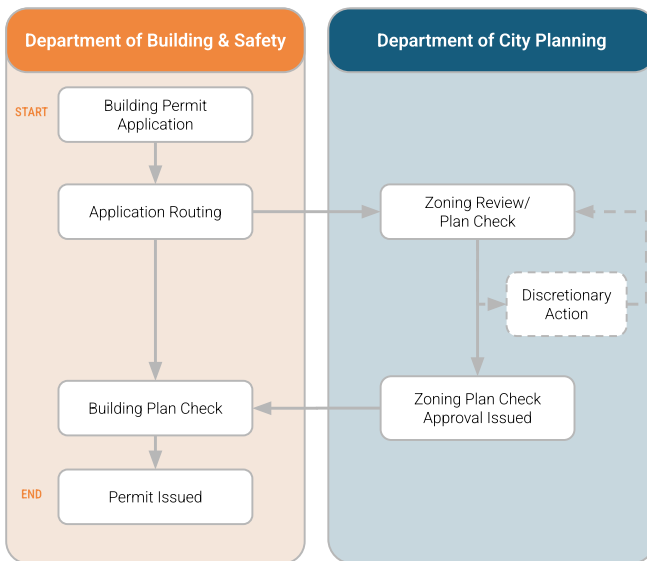


and previously commissioned a study that recommended the full integration of zoning implementation functions into City Planning.

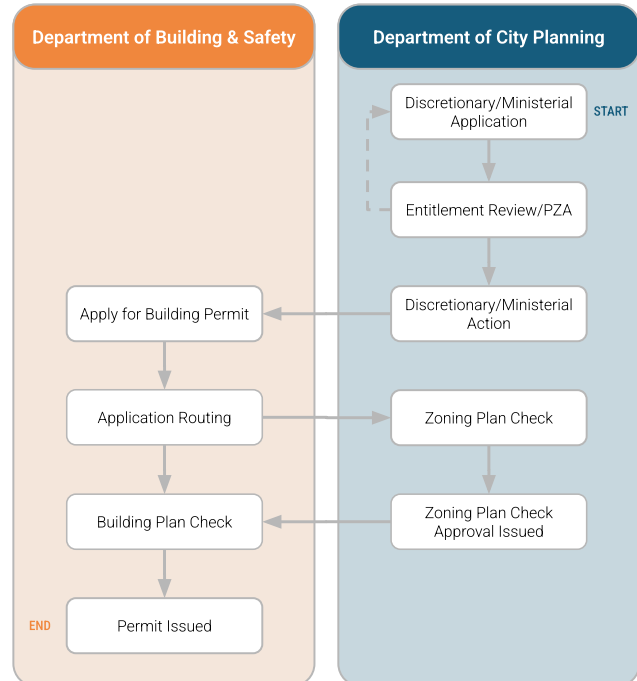
The FY 2025-26 Budget effectuated the transfer of the 42 LADBS zoning review positions into City Planning, as well as the addition of five planning positions to support the new Zoning Review Division. While effectively part of City Planning's organizational chart as of July 1, 2025, the 42 LADBS positions are currently on loan to LADBS to provide a transition of services from July 1, 2025 to January 1, 2026. The City Planning Department will launch the new Development Services Bureau and fully integrate Zoning Review into the new Bureau on January 1, 2026. The following outlines a conceptual framework detailing the operational mechanics of the two previously described development review pathways, after the transfer of zoning plan check responsibilities to City Planning.

Proposed Conceptual Pathways

Scenario One - Starting at Building Permit Application



Scenario Two - Starting at DCP Discretionary/Ministerial Application



Scenario One (Proposed)

Under this conceptual scenario, applicants may choose to apply for building permits and be routed to City Planning for Zoning Review after an initial application while concurrently beginning the non-zoning portions of Building Plan Check. By shifting the zoning review process earlier in the timeline and operating it concurrently with Building Plan Check, all permits will receive early guidance as to any required entitlements that may be necessary, reducing or eliminating “late hits” or subsequent relief requests and additional entitlement applications.

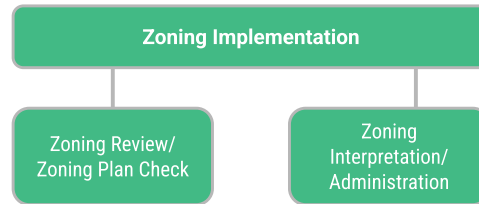
Scenario Two (Proposed)

Applicants may choose to begin the process at City Planning, with all projects receiving a higher level of service to fully screen for potential zoning issues and ensure complete entitlement packages, also reducing or eliminating “late hits” that require additional entitlements and add more time to the permitting process.

In addition to taking on the responsibilities of the 42 positions that will be integrated with the Department on January 1, 2026, City Planning will also assume the zoning tasks of over-the-counter plan check. This counter currently screens, processes, and routes projects for zoning plan check and maintain other public zoning information functions. City Planning and LADBS management is working collaboratively to transition this work in line with the larger re-organization and launch of the Development Services Bureau.

Overview of Zoning Related Functions

The new Development Services Bureau will consolidate all zoning-related tasks within a single hub to accelerate project review and reduce delays. Implementation of the Zoning Codes encompasses a range of development review activities that are authorized by the City Charter and defined in the LAMC. These activities include zoning review/ zoning plan check functions and the Office of Zoning Administration's authority to interpret and adopt regulations as necessary to implement and administer the zoning codes.



Zoning Review/ Zoning Plan Check involves reviewing a project for consistency with zoning regulations (such as density, land use, scale, height, and setback) as part of the project permitting process. In the case of certain planning entitlements, a preliminary zoning assessment (PZA) is filed with the planning application so that non-complaint aspects of a project can be identified earlier in the process.

Zoning Interpretation and Administration functions are related to interpretation of zoning regulations and code provisions, zoning implementation memos, and other duties related to the administration of the Zoning Codes.

The zoning-related tasks currently identified as being transferred from LADBS include:

Zoning Counter

- **Zoning Information Services:** Staff handle in-person and virtual counter appointments as well as 311 inquiries.
- **Application Intake:** Consists of screening applications, initial zoning review, determining whether the project should be routed to zoning plan check, and directing planning-related clearances.
- **Counter Plan Check:** Involves review of less complex projects such as single-family additions, swimming pools, signs, and changes of use for compliance with the zoning regulations.

Zoning Review

- **Regular Plan Check:** Involves zoning plan check for larger, more complex projects, including commercial buildings, apartments, and new single-family dwellings (currently performed by LADBS architects). Staff also provide preliminary zoning assessments for qualifying projects.

Case Management – Pre-Development Review

- Case management staff provide feasibility studies, zoning determination letters, subdivision letters, and yard determination letters for projects enrolled in case management. City Planning will expand its current offering of Case Management services to include the new key zoning review and zoning plan check functions that have been transferred to City Planning.

Zoning Code Manual

- Maintains and updates the Zoning Code Manual and Commentary, updates zoning information bulletins, and correction sheets.
- Works closely with the Office of Zoning Administration and citywide policy teams to advise on and help implement zoning ordinances.

Related Improvements

In addition to reorganization, City Planning is implementing related functional improvements to development services that will be re-organized into the new Bureau. This work is being done to prioritize a seamless transition of responsibilities from LADBS to City Planning, and to create a "One-Stop-Shop" to house all zoning functions. The goal for this consolidation is to improve customer service, expedite review, reduce redundant workflows and support concurrent review of projects on either an entitlement, administrative, or by-right track.

The result of this effort is anticipated to reduce late hits and interdepartmental conflicts by optimizing zoning review across all existing project screening and intake processes. City Planning is preparing to launch the following additional related improvements:

- Enhanced pre-application/pre-filing service options for all discretionary projects, starting with the launch of a pilot program for Zoning Administrator cases in January 2026.
- Implementing Preliminary Zoning Assessments (PZAs) beyond certain residential projects to facilitate earlier, more comprehensive zoning review for all project types.
- Expansion of City Planning's Case Management program to improve upon the existing review of complex projects requiring interdepartmental coordination, and provide navigation guidance to complex projects during the development review process.

City Planning will update its website, forms, and workflows to assume the full spectrum of zoning implementation functions and services.

Proposed Plan for Zoning Review Integration

City Planning has established a comprehensive work program to integrate zoning review functions and establish the new Development Services Bureau. The program commenced in July 2025 and is anticipated to conclude all major tasks by the end of the 2025-26 fiscal year, resulting in a fully functional Development Services Bureau. Additionally, the work program does include some future improvements and further optimization to the new zoning implementation responsibilities. This effort will be an iterative process and has the Department's full commitment to improved service delivery.

City Planning has established a team whose primary responsibility is the implementation of the work program, as well as coordinating and supporting the Divisions being reassigned into the new Development Services Bureau. This transition team is focused on ensuring that City Planning delivers on a smooth and effective transition. In addition to establishing work flows for providing the new zoning review services, this work program includes the following components:

Systems Updates

- Working closely with LADBS to identify and assemble the technological components and integrations needed to support the transfer of zoning review functions to the new Development Services Bureau.

Code Amendments

- Identifying and preparing code amendments necessary to transfer zoning review functions and fully implement the new Development Services Bureau.

The Administrative Code, Original Zoning Code, New Zoning Code, and Building Code contain certain provisions specifying responsible departments for the implementation of zoning regulations, as well as processes for a variety of zoning review functions. Amendments to some of the provisions may be required to ensure that the review processes are clear. City Planning will return with any proposed code amendments for City Planning Commission and Council review.

Metrics, Dashboards, & Portals

Performance Metrics

As part of the reorganization, City Planning's existing Performance Management Unit (PMU) will be placed within the Development Services Bureau and will continue to be responsible for monitoring and analyzing City Planning's workload and performance metrics. This Unit will also continue to advise Department leadership on implementing new strategies that aim to improve case processing timeframes, data collection, and analysis around policy outcomes. The reorganization of this Unit will further the City Council and Mayor's goals to make the City's development services more efficient for all Angelenos.

A key element of the new Bureau's formation will include assessments of the ongoing performance of existing and transferred functions; PMU will be integral in the success of the development and tracking of these performance measures. In order to ensure optimized and effective development services throughout the City of Los Angeles, City Planning has identified

an initial list of Key Performance Indicators which are proposed for utilization in Departmental analytics and reports. Potential quantitative performance measures include, but are not limited to:

- Number of zoning plan checks completed;
- Average zoning plan check turnaround times;
- Average entitlement review and processing times;
- Application processing accuracy;
- Reduction in process steps/handoffs;
- Staff proficiency with both Zoning Codes;
- Number of customers served; and
- Housing units reviewed/approved.

Dashboards & Portals

Related to performance measurement - and as part of its communications and transparency efforts - City Planning currently maintains a number of datasets, portals, and reports related to ongoing projects and citywide development trends. These portals, or dashboards, serve different functions and provide varying levels of information related to individual projects or Department-wide statistics. The current dashboards also vary in the complexity of graphical interface, presence of mapping functions, and ability for users to generate reports. In addition to dashboards offering real-time project data, City Planning prepares a number of static reports analyzing project data.

Dashboards, datasets, and reports maintained by City Planning include:

- **Planning Case Tracking System (PCTS):** The Department's proprietary, staff-only portal which allows for case creation and tracking; the data entered into this portal provides the base dataset which enables the other dashboards. Information in this system is accessible in the Planning Document Information System.
- **[Open Data:](#)** For wide-ranging, continuously-updated datasets, including geo-location data, City Planning maintains a robust presence on the City's [Open Data portal](#) and its related [GeoHub](#).
- **[Case Reports and Mapping hub:](#)** The Department's own hub functions as a dashboard showing a variety of reports along with related geographic mapping. Reports found on this hub include a chronological list of all case filings, bi-weekly reports of cases filed and completed, a report of cases using AB 2097 parking incentives, and a report of active case prefixes and suffixes.
- **[Planning Document Information System \(PDIS\):](#)** When a City Planning case number is known, this portal provides access to case summary information and electronic case submittal documents. PDIS functions in concert with City Planning's Zone Information and Map Access System (ZIMAS), a mapping portal that provides property information, including geo-tagged case numbers.
- **[Housing Progress Reports:](#)** This dashboard provides a number of interactive infographics related to the City's housing pipeline, including units approved through different case types and types of unit approved (e.g. 100% affordable housing).
- **[ED1 Project Dashboard:](#)** This dataset shows the address, timelines, and units approved through the Mayor's Executive Directive 1.
- **[Department of City Planning Publications:](#)** The Department regularly publishes recent metrics (both raw numbers and trends) on monthly, quarterly, and annual bases.

Development of a new, centralized dashboard will offer greater transparency and access to data regarding project submittals, planning approvals, permit issuances, and processing times. This will be achieved through a phased implementation of the Bureau's operations.

The first phase focuses on delivering a simple, reliable, and automated tool with data that is readily available on City Planning's website and which requires minimal modification. This information would be refreshed on a regular schedule, and provide project-specific information from PCTS (Case Number, Address, Filing Date, Completion Date, Status, Project Description) and simple calculated fields, such as "Approval Time." A dashboard with these features is under development.

Future phases would include tools that allow for greater user customization, complex reporting functionality (such as statistics functions across timeframes or project type), and geo-coded visualizations (i.e. information points or heat maps). City Planning is preparing to incorporate information from BuildLA, including the use of the Unified Project ID which will allow tracking projects across systems from various departments.

Longer-Term Opportunities

The Department is re-organizing to assume responsibility for these essential zoning functions by January 1, 2026 and to implement the seamless transition and integration of these services into the larger Development Service Bureau. Moving beyond January, City Planning recognizes longer term opportunities to enhance the operation of the new Development Services Bureau and continue to optimize and re-align Planning processes. To that end, the City Planning transition team is developing training for all Bureau staff to ensure they are proficient in both the Original Zoning Code and New Zoning Code to promote consistent and accurate service.

City Planning is also exploring technological improvements to better integrate City Planning's current online application system (OAS) and other backend systems with the BuildLA appointment and LADBS permitting systems. The Department is identifying immediate, mid-term, and long-term systems improvements to optimize its workflows. To further improve front end processing and project intake, City Planning's development services staff are developing a Dynamic Application System to screen and route customers to the correct application forms based on pre-filing queries. Lastly, development services staff are exploring the deployment of online express approvals for simple requests such as changes of use.

Conclusion and Next Steps

As outlined in the adopted FY 2025-26 budget, the Department of City Planning will launch the Development Services Bureau and integrate Zoning Review into the Department as planned on January 1, 2026. The Department is focused on moving towards concurrent processes for entitlement and zoning review that will streamline the review of land use and development projects, with a particular focus on improving customer service, reducing redundancies and procedural "late hits" to applicants. This effort will maintain and enhance existing entry points for project applicants by establishing clear pathways for project review and more clearly communicate regulations up front to inform project development.

City Planning looks forward to continued collaboration with the Department of Building and Safety, as well as other City agencies, to improve the larger development service system. Additionally, City Planning is prepared to provide any requested follow up reports to City Council and to communicate progress on work program milestones. For additional questions, please

PLUM Committee
CF 25-0572
Page 11

contact Cameron Carrasquillo at cameron.p.carrasquillo@lacity.org or Clare Kelley at clare.kelley@lacity.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Vincent P. Bertoni". The signature is stylized with a large, loopy "V" and "B".

VINCENT P. BERTONI, AICP
Director of Planning

VPB:KK:EL:CC:CK:AJ