



BALTIMORE CITY COUNCIL HOUSING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Mission Statement

The Housing & Economic Development Committee is dedicated to fostering equitable growth and opportunity across Baltimore while addressing historic injustices, such as redlining and other discriminatory policies. Our goals include eliminating vacant properties, ensuring affordable housing, promoting sustainable development, and driving economic growth, job creation, and community revitalization through equitable policies and targeted strategies. By utilizing transparent governance, collaboration, and innovative solutions, we strive to enhance the quality of life for all residents.

The Honorable James Torrence

CHAIR

PUBLIC HEARING

10/21/2025

5:15 PM

CLARENCE "DU" BURNS COUNCIL CHAMBERS

Resolution: 25-0003R

Title: Informational Hearing - Permit Reforms

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Paris Gray
Antonio Glover
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Meeting: Resolution Hearing
Committee: Housing & Economic Development
Bill # 25-0003R

Title: Informational Hearing – Permit Reforms

Purpose: FOR the purpose of inviting representatives from the Department of Housing and Community Development, the Office of the City Administrator, the Baltimore City Fire Department, the Office of the Fire Marshal, and other relevant parties to provide information on reforms to the Department of Housing and Community Development’s permit process.

REPORTING AGENCIES

Agency	Report
Fire Dept (BDCF)	
City Administrator	
Dept of Finance	
Dept of Public Works	
BCIT	
Dept of Housing & Community Development (DHCD)	

BACKGROUND

On July 22, 2025, the Housing & Economic Development Committee held a hearing on Resolution 25-0003R Informational Hearing – Permit Reform. This hearing focused on several points of how the permit process in Baltimore has been working and what improvements and updates the Administration has been working on. Topics included:

The implementation of the Accela Permitting system

- At that time there had been several issues in the implementation of the new permitting system including issues with:
 - Workflows
 - At that time Commissioner Kennedy noted that there was still work to do in addressing workflows and making sure that work was being routed to the correct staff
 - Staff power to address permits that were being applied for and the backlog of permits

- At the time of the hearing, DHCD noted that they did not have the capacity to address the need. DHCD has had several charges over the last several months for permit processing in the Baltimore City Open Checkbook. It is not clear from the data what this is, if it is contractors to help with the processing of permit applications, what precisely they are working on, and what the terms of the contract are.
- While DHCD noted that they did not have the staff capacity, they also indicated that they did not know if that was critical to the issues that they were experiencing, and categorized them as normal hiring issues.
- At the time of the hearing, DHCD noted that the backlog of permits was approximately 6,000, with 750 new permits being applied for each week.
 - DHCD noted that many permit applications become inactive, i.e. in the event that a project does not move through or if an applicant doesn't realize that their application requires additional information or follow-up from them. It was not clear at the time of the hearing how DHCD could or would reach out to these applicants to address these issues and keep the applications moving through the system.
- At the hearing, DHCD noted that the permitting system, once stabilized, should move relatively quickly on many permits
 - 20% of permits should be instantaneous on application
 - Simple permits should take approximately one week
 - More complex permits could take 6 weeks
- DHCD noted that they do not expect lost revenue as a result of the issues in the Accela system and did not notice an increase in unpermitted work moving forward. DHCD relies on citizen reports to address unpermitted work.

The BMORE FAST Initiative

- Since the last hearing, Justin Williams has been named the inaugural Director of Permitting & Development Services (colloquially the Permit Czar).
 - During the hearing, then Deputy Mayor Williams was noted as the leadership for the BMORE FAST initiative while Accela was stabilizing, but he was not confirmed as the formal permeate leader.
 - At that time, DHCD did not have any updates on the creation of a BMORE FAST Advisory Board
- BMORE Fast as an initiative was noted as being delayed due to the issues with Accela. It is not clear what the status of the initiative is based on public documentation. On the initiative's website, it notes that the goal of the initiative is to reform several key areas:
 - **Public Engagement & Access**

- **Public Land Use & Liquor License Information Portal:** Centralized online resource for tracking development projects, zoning decisions, and public hearings
- **Enhanced Customer Service:** Expanding our successful permits call center that raised answer rates from 10% to 98%
- **Bilingual Access Initiative:** Making development services accessible to all communities with dedicated Spanish language resources
- **Virtual Office Hours:** Direct access to technical staff for guidance on permits and development requirements
- **Permit Review Time Transparency:** Publishing standard review times and implementing accountability measures
- **Developer & Builder Support**
 - **E-Permits Implementation:** Launching new comprehensive online platform for streamlined application processing
 - **Self-Certification and Third-Party Review:** Allowing qualified professionals to expedite routine approvals while maintaining safety standards
 - **Developer's Agreement Process Reform:** Simplifying requirements for work in the public right-of-way
 - **Utility Coordination Program:** Establishing formal coordination processes with all major utilities
 - **Major Projects Coordination Committee:** Enhanced support for complex development projects with significant economic impact
 - **Small Business & Emerging Developer Support**
 - **Small and MWBE Developer Support Programs:** Enhanced technical assistance for minority and women-owned businesses
 - **Pre-approved Plans and Documents:** Standard designs for typical renovation projects to reduce costs
 - **Streamlined Minor Variance Process:** Administrative approval pathway for uncontested minor variance requests
 - **Trade Licensure Reform Initiative:** Creating appropriately scaled licensing pathways for residential rehabilitation work
 - **Business License Coordination:** Better alignment of city and state processes to reduce duplication
- **City Operations & Capacity**
 - **Centralized Development Leadership:** Creating the Director of Permitting and Development Services role
 - **Comprehensive Staffing Assessment:** Ensuring adequate resources across all development agencies

- **PermitStat Implementation:** Data-driven performance management system for development services
- **Lien Release Process Reform:** Proactive clearing of liens on city-acquired properties
- **Zoning Administrator Reorganization:** Embedding the Office of Zoning Administrator within the Department of Planning for better alignment

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Fiscal Note:

Since the hearing on July 22, DHCD has paid several vendors for Permit Processing. Total payments since August include more than \$280,000 to 3 vendors: Avolve Software, Accela, & Rober Half International. It is not clear from the data in Open Checkbook what Permit Processing includes and what scope of work these contracts specify.

A contract listed under Information & Technology from the Board of Estimates December 20, 2023 meeting notes that the Avolve Technology contract is for a sole source contract for access to the ProjectDox Software, which is listed in the contract as a “Services Subscription, Implementation Services, and Training for Department of Housing and Community Development.” The contract is for a total of 494,572.50 and is scheduled for 3 years to expire on 12/19/2026. On the Avolve website, ProjectDox is noted to be a management software providing “ProjectDox adapts to each agency’s unique process with configurable workflows, task management, and real-time analytics, giving agencies with more complex workflows the visibility and control they need to keep projects moving.” It is not known if there is a need for additional support from Avolve past December 2026.

Payment Date	Agency	Cost Center Description	Spend Category Description	Supplier Name	Amount	Supplier Invoice Number
8/8/2025	Housing and Community Development	Permit Processing	Professional Services	Avolve Software	104,365.12	9298-1
8/22/2025	Housing and Community Development	Permit Processing	Professional Services	Avolve Software	104,365.12	9298-1
9/23/2025	Housing and Community Development	Permit Processing	Professional Services	Accela, Inc.	64,835.92	INV-ACC620808
9/24/2025	Housing and Community Development	Permit Processing	Professional Services	Robert Half International, Inc	1,299.60	65285839
9/24/2025	Housing and Community Development	Permit Processing	Professional Services	Robert Half International, Inc	1,299.60	65285852
9/24/2025	Housing and Community Development	Permit Processing	Professional Services	Robert Half International, Inc	1,039.68	65290449
9/24/2025	Housing and Community Development	Permit Processing	Professional Services	Robert Half International, Inc	2,339.28	65297487
9/24/2025	Housing and Community Development	Permit Processing	Professional Services	Robert Half International, Inc	2,599.20	65297958
10/1/2025	Housing and Community Development	Permit Processing	Professional Services	Robert Half International, Inc	2,339.28	65346349
10/8/2025	Housing and Community Development	Permit Processing	Professional Services	Robert Half International, Inc	2,252.86	65394772
Total					286,735.66	

Payment Date, Agency, Cost Center Description, Spend Category Description, Supplier Name, Supplier Invoice Number

Amount

8/8/2025, Housing and Community Development, Permit Processing, Professional Services, Avolve Software, 9298-1	104,365.12
8/22/2025, Housing and Community Development, Permit Processing, Professional Services, Avolve Software, 9298-1	104,365.12
9/23/2025, Housing and Community Development, Permit Processing, Professional Services, Accela, Inc., INV-ACC620808	64,835.92
9/24/2025, Housing and Community Development, Permit Processing, Professional Services, Robert Half International, Inc, 65285839	1,299.60
9/24/2025, Housing and Community Development, Permit Processing, Professional Services, Robert Half International, Inc, 65285852	1,299.60
9/24/2025, Housing and Community Development, Permit Processing, Professional Services, Robert Half International, Inc, 65290449	1,039.68
9/24/2025, Housing and Community Development, Permit Processing, Professional Services, Robert Half International, Inc, 65297487	2,339.28
9/24/2025, Housing and Community Development, Permit Processing, Professional Services, Robert Half International, Inc, 65297958	2,599.20
10/1/2025, Housing and Community Development, Permit Processing, Professional Services, Robert Half International, Inc, 65346349	2,339.28
10/8/2025, Housing and Community Development, Permit Processing, Professional Services, Robert Half International, Inc, 65394772	2,252.86
Total	286,735.66

Information Source(s):

- BMORE FAST Site <https://www.baltimorecity.gov/bmore-fast>
- Comptroller's Office invoice data (see table above)
- Hearing Notes – Housing & Economic Development Committee July 22, 2025 (see bill file 25-0003R)

Analysis by: Tony Leva
Analysis Date:10/17/2025

Direct Inquiries to: Anthony.Leva@BaltimoreCity.gov

Baltimore City Council



Land Use & Transportation Committee

Resolution: LO25-0028

**Title: Informational Hearing - Permit
Reforms**

Agency Reports



Baltimore City Council **Permit Hearing**

October 21, 2025

City Council Resolution 25-0003R



Brandon M. Scott
Mayor

Road Map: Stabilization to Optimization

PHASE ONE

Transition Management

- Data Migration and Applicant Onboarding
- Priority Technical Enhancements

PHASE TWO

Key Process Improvements

- Data Dashboard
- Auto-issue permits
- Added Technical Review Staff
- Additional Customer Notifications

PHASE THREE

Customer Experience and Added Efficiencies

- Message Board
- Restructure Permits Office
- Redesign Intake Questions
- BMORE FAST broader policy reforms
(third party review expansion, zoning administrative docket, et al.)



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Mayor





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Key Accomplishments

Data Dashboard

- Created unified data dictionary and launched public and internal dashboards showing application intake and workflow
- Establishes a foundation that can now be built upon and refined.

Workflow Stabilization (applications in vs. out)

- Permit output near pre-Accela Levels
- **Auto-issue permits** will reduce need for manual reviews

Increased Staff Capacity

- Contractual technical reviewers onboarded
- Additional full-time positions filled or in hiring process

Call Center Expansion

- Licensing and Inspections phone lines added



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Permit Dashboard

Building Permits Issued

The City issues several types of building permits depending on the project. These include One- and Two-Family Combo permits, Commercial and Multifamily permits, Use and Occupancy permits, Razing and Moving permits, and Temporary Event permits.

Data for September 2025

Permits Issued During Month

2,602



Permits Issued This Month Last Year

2,693



Days to Issue Permit During Month (Median)

17



Permits Issued During Month

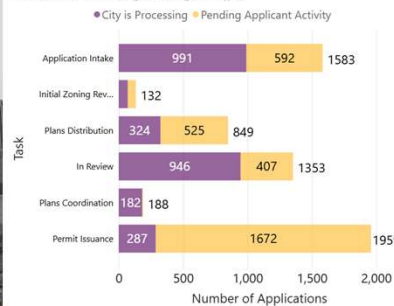
Permit	Permits Issued During Month	Median Days to Issue
Commercial & Multifamily Combo	300	80
One & Two Family Combo	1955	12
Razing or Moving	28	12
Temporary Event	3	65
Use & Occupancy	316	87



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Mayor

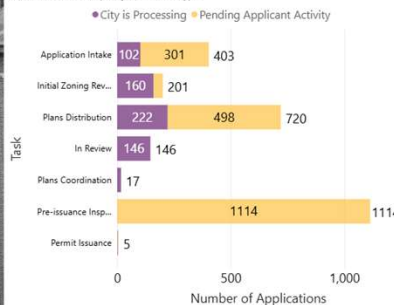
Construction Applications in Process by Task

Includes all Construction, Razing, and Moving Permit Types



Use & Occupancy Applications in Process by Task

Includes U&O and Temporary Event Permit Types



Permit Dashboard

Applications in Progress

Data last updated on 10/17/2025

Permit applications that have been submitted but are not yet closed, cancelled, or issued are considered "in progress." These pending applications make up the City staff's current workload, as they are actively being reviewed and addressed.

Applications in
Process

8,670



Applications Awaiting
Applicant Input

5,220



Percent that Need
Applicant Input

60%

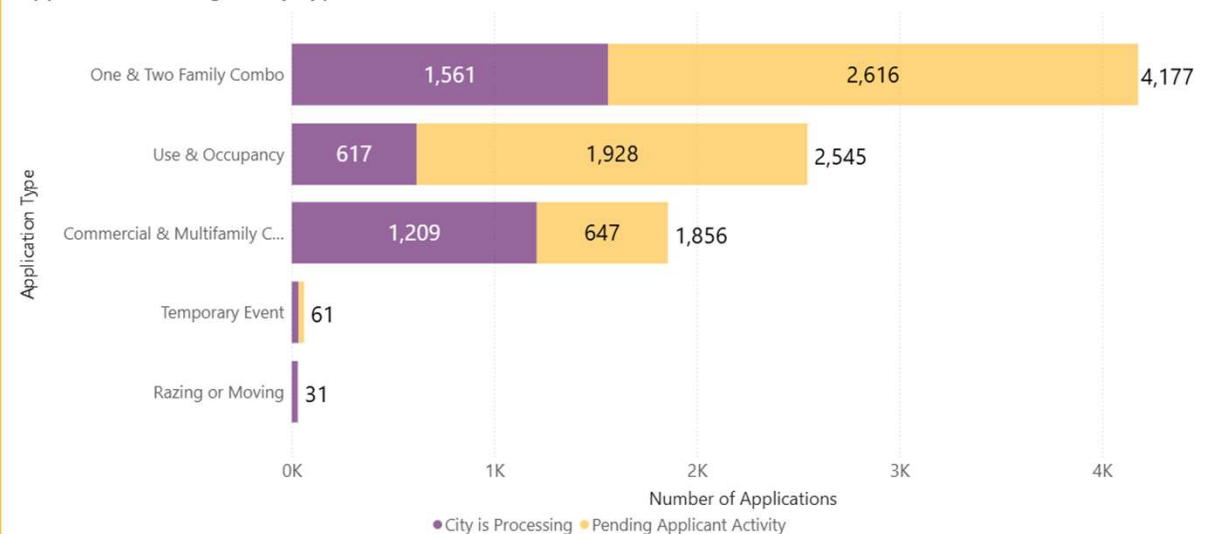


Median Age of
Applications

86 days

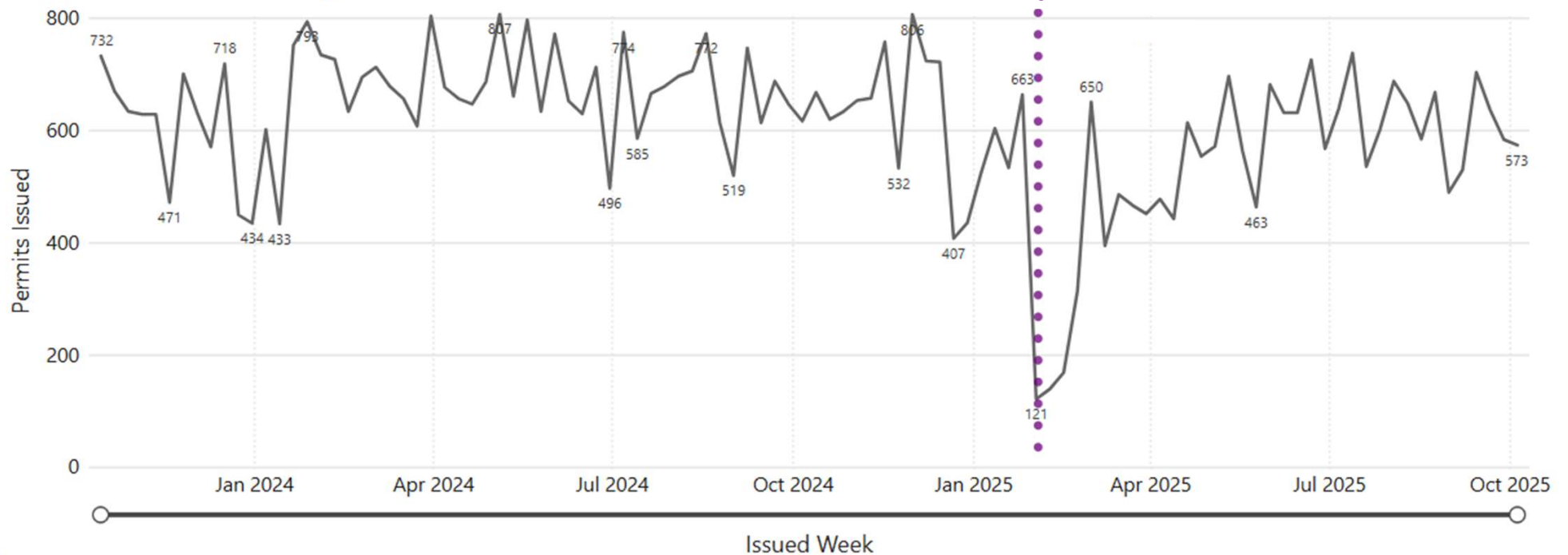


Applications in Progress by Type



Workflow Stabilization

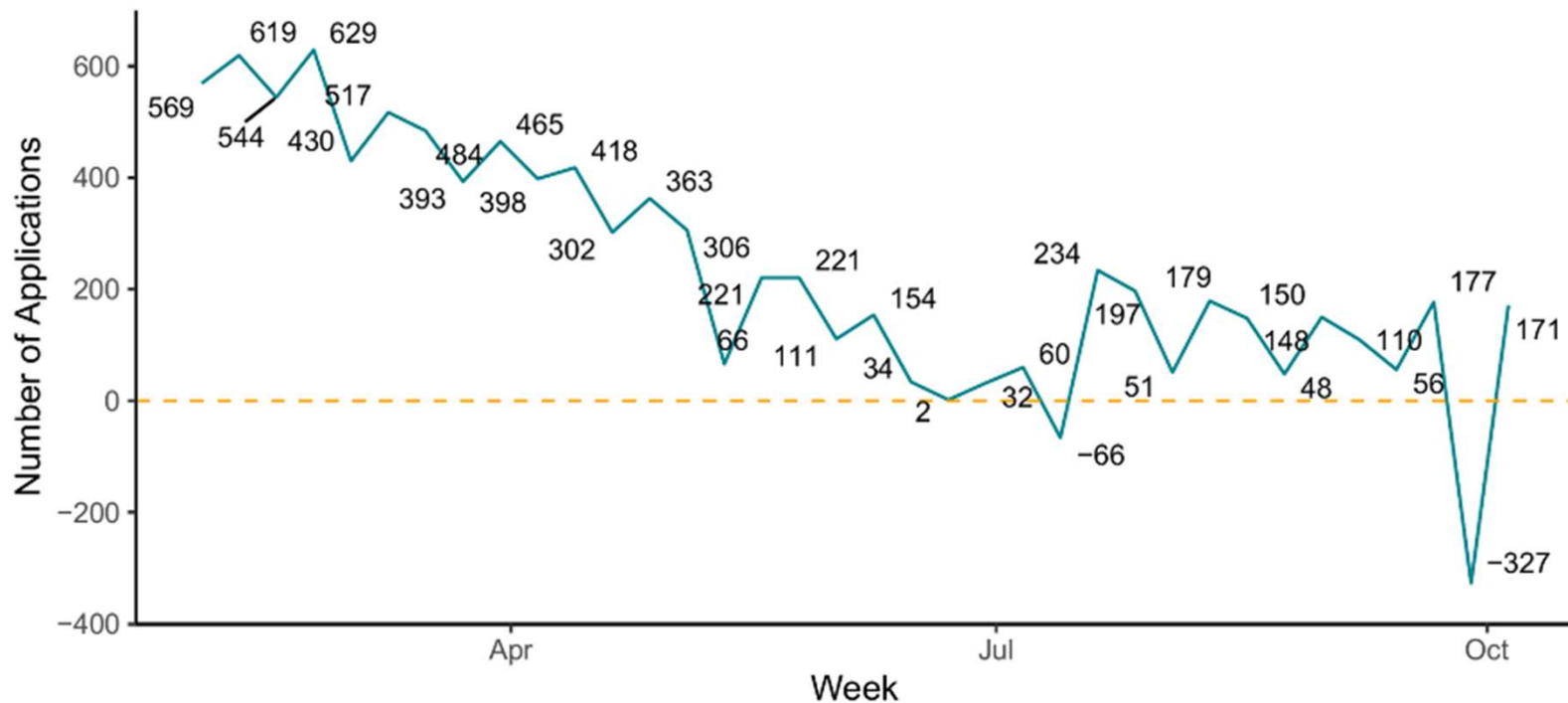
Permits Issued by Week



Workflow Stabilization

NET PERMIT APPLICATIONS PROCESSED PER WEEK

Processed means issued, closed, or no additional city actions needed.

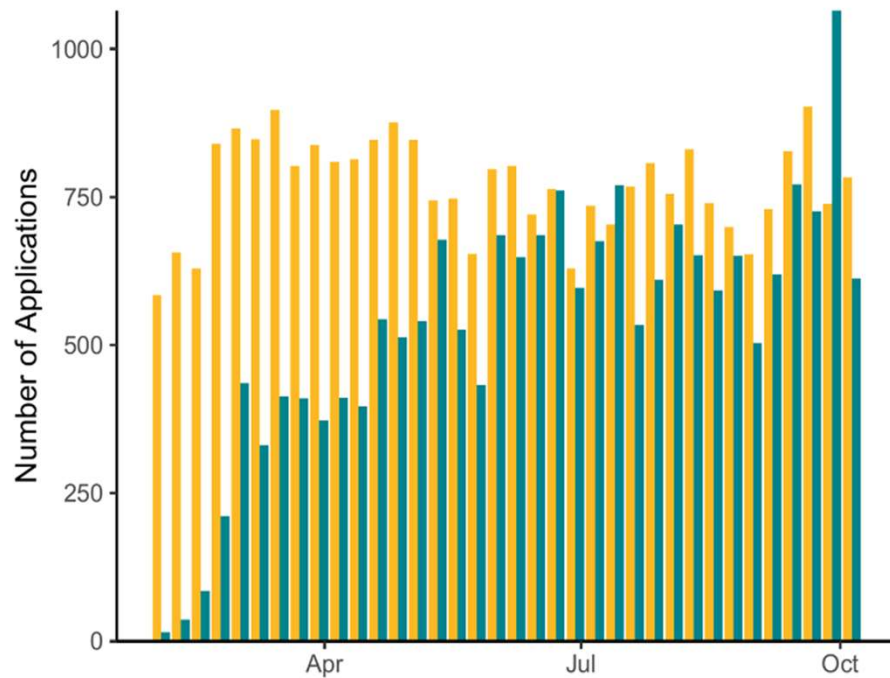


Ideally, the net number is at or close to zero



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Workflow Stabilization



Number of Applications Submitted and Completed by Week Since Accela's Go-Live Date on February 3, 2025.

Data as of October 16, 2025

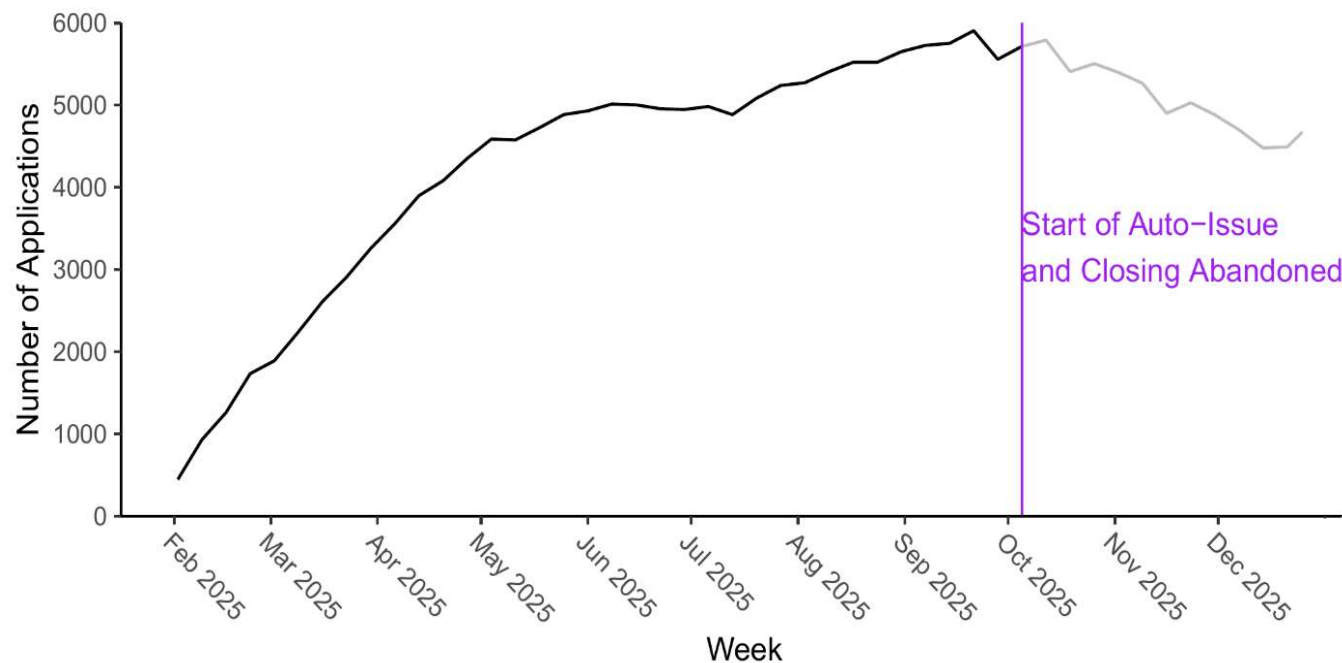
Weekly Average	Feb – Jul	Aug – Oct	Projected
New Applications Submitted	770	765	765
Applications Completed	568	718	918
Net Addition to Workload	202	47	-153

The goal is to process applications at or above the rate at which new applications come in

From Accela launch to Permits ICS implementation, the net addition to the workload was 202 per week. That number decreased to 47 between August and October. The addition of auto-issue permitting and other technical enhancements is projected to increase processing capacity beyond what is coming into the pipeline.

Applications in Process - Current and Projected

Number of Applications in Processing Queue Over Time Since Accela's Go-Live Date on February 3, 2025
with Projected Future Counts after Changes. Data as of October 16, 2025.



There will always be some large volume of applications in process in any given week.

When the workflow is stabilized, that number should remain at a relatively steady rate

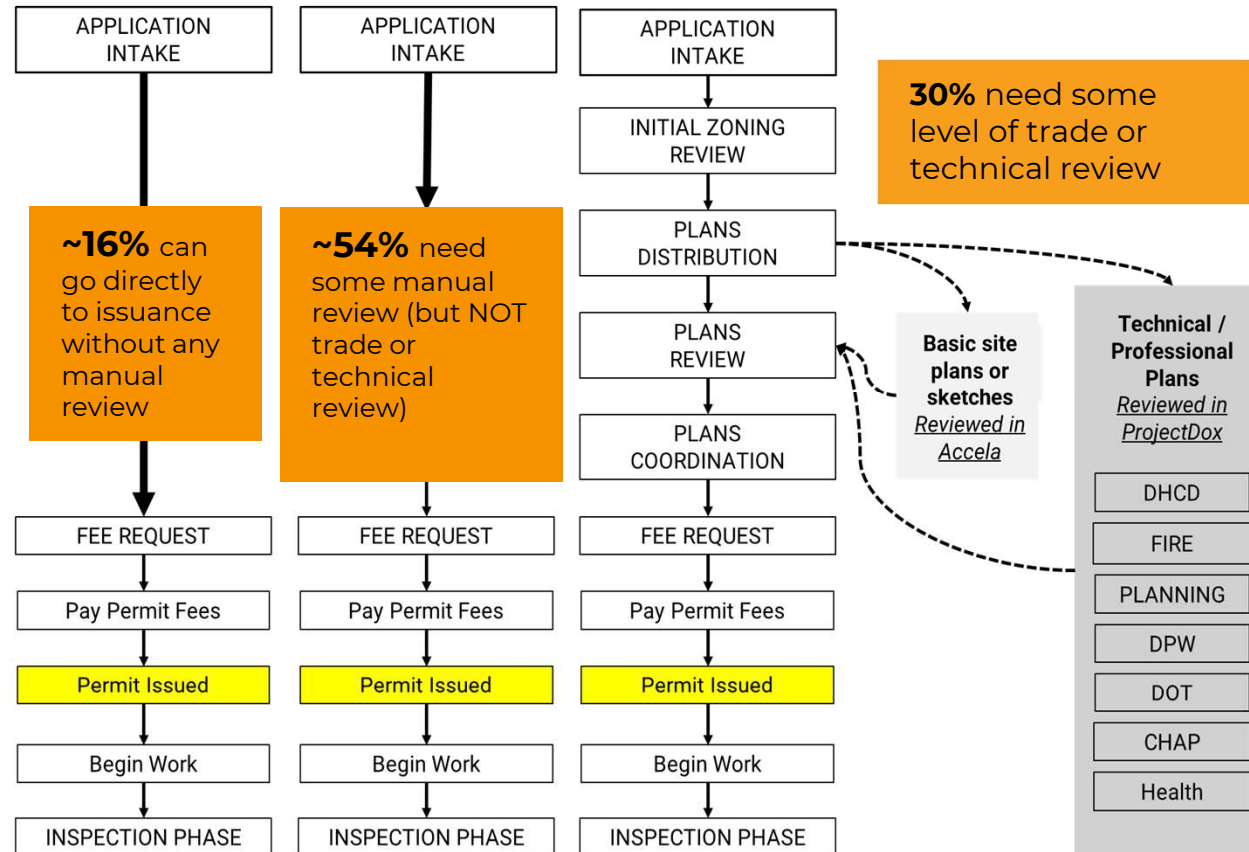


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Number of Trade and Technical Reviews Required per Permit

For all permits started and issued in Accela as of October 16, 2025

Review Types	Number	% of Total
None	12,183	70%
1-2	2,207	13%
3-5	2,555	15%
>5	489	2%





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Additional Staff Capacity

Internal Hiring

- Engineer I began on August 18, 2025.
- Engineer II began on September 1, 2025, was filled as a promotion.
- Engineer I applicant accepted, start date pending background investigation.
- Engineer I vacancy on September 1, 2025 with promotion.
- Engineer II position is advertised.
- Permit and Record Tech I started September 29, 2025.
- Permit and Record Tech II new vacancy as of October 6, 2025. Interviews being scheduled.
- Training Officer interviews were conducted the week of October 13th.

Contractual Technical Reviewers – KCI

- (3) Electrical Reviewers
- (3) Mechanical Reviewers
- (2) Architectural / Structural Reviewers



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Questions/Discussion





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Appendix



Permit Types

Multiple permit categories were consolidated into five basic types:

Permit Type	Permit No. Prefix
Residential Construction (1-2 Units)	BRCM
Commercial & Multifamily Construction	BCCM
Use and Occupancy	USE
Razing or Moving	DEM
Temporary Event (on Private Property)	TEM

Every individual permit number in the system begins with a series of letters indicating the type, e.g. DEM for a demolition permit.



Brandon M. Scott
Mayor

Baltimore City Council



Land Use & Transportation Committee

Resolution: LO25-0028

**Title: Informational Hearing - Permit
Reforms**

Additional Materials

SB-23-14576 - Sole Source - Agreement - Avolve Software Corp - ProjectDox SaaS Subscription

AGC3100 - Housing and Community Development

ACTION REQUESTED:

The Board is requested to approve a Technology License/Service/Software Agreement Award - Sole Source Avolve Software Corporation. Period of agreement is: Based on Board Approval with a duration of 3 Years

12/20/2023 / to 12/19/2026

AMOUNT AND SOURCE OF FUNDS:

Transaction Amount: \$ 494,572.50

Project Fund	Amount
4001-CCA000343-SC630326	\$ 130,815.00
Year 2	
4001-GRT001398-CCA001365-SC630326	\$ 232,942.50
Year 1	
1001-CCA000343-SC630326	\$ 130,815.00
Year 3	

BACKGROUND/EXPLANATION:

The Board is requested to approve a Sole Source contract with Avolve Software Corporation for ProjectDox Software as a Services (SaaS) Subscription, Implementation Services, and Training for the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). The contract amount is \$494,572.50 and contract term will start the date of Board approval and terminates three (3) years thereafter. The supplier will provide use rights for the remotely hosted ProjectDox subscription and related Professional Services to assist DHCD with implementation and training. Avolve Software Corporation is the sole creator and SaaS provider of ProjectDox and is the only representative that can install and configure ProjectDox within Microsoft Azure's infrastructure.

EMPLOY BALTIMORE:	LIVING WAGE:	LOCAL HIRING:	PREVAILING WAGE:
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

MBE / WBE Participation not required / This is a sole source contract

COUNCIL DISTRICT: Citywide**ENDORSEMENTS:**

Finance (BBMR) has reviewed and approved for funds.

Law has reviewed and approved for form and legal sufficiency

SMBA&D has reviewed and approved.