

ALAN M. ARAKAWA  
Mayor

WILLIAM R. SPENCE  
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COUNTY OF MAUI  
**DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING** OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

September 29, 2017

Honorable Alan M. Arakawa  
Mayor, County of Maui  
200 South High Street  
Wailuku, Hawaii 96793

For Transmittal to:

Honorable Stacy Crivello, Chair  
Housing, Human Services, and Transportation Committee  
Maui County Council  
200 South High Street  
Wailuku, Hawaii 96793

APPROVED FOR TRANSMITTAL

  
Mayor   
Date

Dear Chair Crivello:

**SUBJECT: "ONE-STOP SHOP" FOR PROCESSING PERMITS (HHT-4)**

Thank you for your correspondence dated September 14, 2017, inquiring about statistics relating to the "building plans application report." I initially note the Department of Planning reviewed 1,763 building permit applications in Fiscal Year 2017.

In response to your first question, the biggest factors in maintaining and improving efficiency in the review of the dozens of types of permit applications submitted to the Department are **staff recruitment, training, and retention**.

In addition, as I have discussed with various Council committees throughout my tenure, our zoning code is outdated which significantly adds to inefficiency. Until such time as either individual code amendments are made or the code is comprehensively revised, the Department is constantly reviewing its procedures with the goal of improving efficiency. This mindset has resulted in customer-service improvements, such as the consolidation of application forms that have been made available on the County website.

Your second and third questions referenced month-to-month statistical trends. Because of the wide variety of work engaged in by the Department, I would respectfully caution against reaching firm conclusions purely based on statistics. Some months simply bring to the Department more time-consuming and challenging sets of work than others. Nonetheless, I do note that the apparent increase in the Department's productivity for the review of permits in the second quarter of Fiscal Year 2017 corresponds to the employment and training of especially well-qualified staff members. The downward trends you referenced were prior to the placement of those staffers.

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Finally, you asked about the Department's view on an "acceptable . . . compliance percentage" and "the Department's consequences for not reviewing a permit within the allotted 30 days." Whenever a permit review lasts longer than 30 days, it can be fairly regarded as a defect that hurts the Department's standing in the community. That is why, as stated in its annual report, the Department's top priority is to "improve customer service and streamline permit applications procedures." In addition to the critical role of personnel, technological advancements can help achieve this goal. The Department is of course playing a major role in the development of Maui's Automated Planning and Permitting System, which promises to dramatically streamline the permit-review process.

In addition, the Department is proposing legislation to allow for the approval of an official digital zoning map. The legislation will be taken to the Lanai, Maui, and Molokai Planning Commissions next month and the Council shortly thereafter. Allowing residents to quickly determine zoning designations should eventually allow Department staff to devote more time to reviewing permit applications. The Department currently provides more than 2,000 zoning conformations each year.

As you know, this item is pending before the Committee based on a recommendation of the Temporary Investigative Group on policies relating to increasing the County's housing inventory, convened in the prior Council's Planning Committee. The Department was an active participant in that process. The Department looks forward to continuing work on these issues with this Committee.

I hope this is helpful. If you have further questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

  
WILLIAM SPENCE  
Planning Director

xc: John Rapacz, Planning Program Administrator (PDF)  
David Raatz, Administrative Planning Officer (PDF)

WRS:DMR:atw  
Project File  
General File

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