

# **Ventura County Grand Jury 2009 - 2010**



## **Final Report Getting Better on the Way to Excellence**

**June 7 , 2010**

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## Getting Better on the Way to Excellence

### Summary

The 2008–2009 Ventura County Grand Jury issued a report concerning Ventura County's (County) effort to improve the responsiveness of the discretionary land use permitting process. That report, *Land Use Permitting Process: Get to Excellence Plan*, recommended that the Ventura County Board of Supervisors (BOS) and the County Executive Officer (CEO) continue efforts to assure that the Land Use Permitting Get to Excellence (GTE) Plan is completed. The 2009–2010 Ventura County Grand Jury (Grand Jury) performed a follow-up inquiry one year later to evaluate the County's progress with the GTE Plan.

The Grand Jury found that many steps taken by the Resource Management Agency (RMA) were effective and were viewed positively by permittees, users, the public, and County planning personnel, collectively referred to as "stakeholders" (Stakeholders). The Grand Jury also found that progress on the GTE Plan is losing momentum due, in part, to the slow completion of a complex, multi-agency task. Completion of the GTE Plan is now scheduled to be delayed a year from the original completion date.

The Grand Jury recommends that the BOS and the CEO resume regular, in-depth reviews of the GTE Plan progress and that they should re-organize the GTE Plan Management Oversight Committee. The CEO and RMA should continue regular meetings with Stakeholders. The Grand Jury also recommends that the BOS and the CEO should facilitate the acquisition of an automated, multi-department, permitting data and status software system for efficiency and visibility. Finally, the Grand Jury recommends that the CEO should review the methods for determining costs and charging users for planning and permitting fees.

### Background

The 2008–2009 Grand Jury reported that as a result of multiple, continued, well-founded complaints on the part of land-use permit applicants, the BOS and CEO sponsored a study of the permitting process. The resulting "Tom Berg Report" became the basis of a GTE Plan established late in 2008. The GTE Plan identified 23 projects for improvement of the County discretionary land-use permitting process, of which nine had been completed as of the 2008–2009 Grand Jury Report. The County anticipated completion of all the projects by Fall of 2009, subject to budget availability. The 2008–2009 Grand Jury Report recommended continued pursuit of the GTE Plan with close involvement by the BOS and the CEO, continued progress meetings with Stakeholders, a permanent land-use permitting oversight committee, and individual personnel changes if required to achieve the goals of the GTE Plan.

As a coastal county in California with significant (and often competing) agricultural, mineral, hydrologic, maritime, ecological, scenic, and suburban resources (each with attendant constituencies), the County has some of the

most complex land-use regulations and restrictions in the State of California (State). The State land-use rules were created or applied in a haphazard, accumulative manner, often without input from the administering agencies or County government. The County's system for managing a land-use permitting process, therefore, became inefficient and non-responsive to individual applicants. The GTE Plan represents an attempt by the County to attend to some of the egregious aspects of the discretionary permitting process.<sup>1</sup>

The Grand Jury chose to do a follow-up inquiry into the status of the GTE Plan a year later and to assess the quality of the progress being made by the County.

## **Methodology**

Members of the Grand Jury met with employees and managers of the RMA and an Assistant CEO. The Grand Jury attended a Stakeholder meeting and monitored BOS meetings at which relevant topics were presented. The Grand Jury reviewed the report of the 2008-2009 Ventura County Grand Jury, *Land Use Permitting Process*, County websites hosted by the RMA and the Planning Division, and progress reports presented by the RMA. [Ref-01] (Att-01)

## **Findings**

- F-01.** The GTE Plan is structured as an "Action Plan" according to the County's Lean Six Sigma Program, in which 23 specific action projects are identified, each with a priority, a schedule, and one or more identified leaders. In May 2009, some nine projects were described as "Complete." In the past year, an additional five projects were completed, leaving nine yet to finish.
- F-02.** Both public and County Stakeholders report satisfaction with the most visible and early implemented GTE Plan element: the "one stop" application coordinator located in the Planning Department of the RMA.
- F-03.** The County has adopted a single land-use permit application form, accessible and downloadable at the County RMA website. [Ref-02 ]
- F-04.** RMA provides website access to a list of active discretionary permit applications (backlog) and to a list of applications approved during the last six months. [Ref-03]

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<sup>1</sup> Land use permits are generally one of two types: ministerial or discretionary, as described in the RMA Planning Department web page: A ministerial permit is a permit or permit modification that is granted based upon determinations that the proposed project complies with established standards set forth in either the Coastal or Non-Coastal Zoning Ordinances. The determinations are arrived at objectively, involve little or no personal judgment, and are issued by the Planning Director or his/her designee. This type of permit is commonly referred to as an "over the counter" approval.

A discretionary permit is a permit or permit modification granted following determinations that require the exercise of judgment and deliberation, as opposed to merely determining that the permit request complies with a set of standards. Examples of discretionary permits include: Conditional Use Permits, Zone Changes, Variances, Subdivisions, and General Plan Amendments. Most discretionary permit applications require an analysis by the Planning Division and various County Departments and Agencies, as well as a public hearing prior to any decision being made. A decision to approve or deny a permit application is based on the findings of fact contained in either the Ventura County Coastal or Non-Coastal Zoning Ordinances.

- F-05.** The County has established a Development Review Committee, composed of senior land-use planning staff and related County department and agency representatives, to provide preliminary interagency feedback to potential applicants prior to filing a formal discretionary land-use permit application.
- F-06.** RMA has led several Stakeholder meetings for the purposes of reporting progress on the GTE Plan and for receiving feedback from the public regarding the discretionary land-use permitting process.
- F-07.** The County formed a Management (Inter-Agency) Oversight Committee, which includes the Assistant CEO and Chief of Staff, the Fire Chief, the Director of the RMA, the Director of the Public Works Agency, and the Agricultural Commissioner. There are no public (non-County employee) members. The committee is charged with meeting “regularly” to track the GTE Plan progress and to monitor the discretionary permitting process. [Ref-04]
- F-08.** The Management Oversight Committee is not currently meeting on a regular basis.
- F-09.** On April 6, 2010, the RMA provided an interim GTE Plan progress report to the BOS. The status report showed improvement in time to process permit applications, while cautioning that a one-year period is too short for measurement of sustained results. (Att-02)
- F-10.** The recent progress report showed results (metrics) comparing processing times for completed projects. There were no reports of application backlog.
- F-11.** The single most important driver of time and cost to process a discretionary land-use permit application is the decision whether, under the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act, the applicant’s project may be subject to an Environmental Impact Report (EIR), a Mitigated Negative Declaration, or a Negative Declaration.
- F-12.** The County maintains Initial Study Assessment Guidelines (ISAG) to assist each reviewing agency in making its input to the EIR decision. The ISAG is a document in excess of 120 pages which contains advice and criteria applicable to each reviewing agency and department. The ISAG also serves as a reference for users in preparing applications for discretionary land-use permits.
- F-13.** The County’s current ISAG is outdated and inconsistent. Update of the ISAG by all departments and agencies is currently the most difficult step in the GTE Plan. It requires participation by a multitude of organizations with widely varying laws, rules, objectives, and standards to apply to potential land-use permits.
- F-14.** The RMA’s April 6, 2010 progress report to the BOS estimated completion of the updated ISAG project in May 2010. (Att-01)

- F-15.** The County now estimates completion of the GTE Plan in Fall 2010, a year later than reported to the 2008-2009 Ventura County Grand Jury. [Ref-01]
- F-16.** The GTE Plan update submitted to the BOS showed four of the nine remaining GTE projects dependent upon the ISAG update. (Att-01)
- F-17.** Six of the nine active GTE projects reported no activity since December 2009, including three of the ISAG-dependent projects. (Att-01)
- F-18.** On January 12, 2010, with the support of the Management Oversight Committee (MOC), four County agencies presented a proposal to the BOS for acquisition of an upgraded computer software system to manage and track land-use permit applications. The BOS deferred action, recommending that the \$4.3 million acquisition be folded into the County 2010-2011 budget proposal, together with the estimated \$635,000 annual maintenance cost and the one added staff position. Among the purported advantages of the upgraded system are:  
[Ref-05]
- citizen and applicant access to application status
  - on-line scheduling of inspections and appointments
  - common database for all agencies
  - wireless access by field inspectors
  - progress and activity data
  - on-line visibility of status and metrics by management
- F-19.** Stakeholders continue to express emphatic concerns regarding two issues only indirectly addressed by the GTE Plan:
- the inability of the County to reasonably estimate in advance the cost to the applicant for processing discretionary land- use permit applications
  - the perception of inconsistency regarding treatment of applications by County agencies
- F-20.** Several County departments, including the RMA Planning Division, are partially supported by "enterprise funds," whereby a user of County services pays for the cost of services performed.

## **Conclusions**

- C-01.** Implementation of the GTE Plan is showing beneficial effects both upon the County land-use permitting process and, to a lesser extent, upon the perceptions of the Stakeholders. (F-01 through F-06)
- C-02.** GTE Plan projects susceptible to being implemented by a single department have proven the quickest to implement. Multi-agency activities are taking longer. (F-01)

- C-03.** The RMA lists of “in process” and “approved” applications provide basic workload visibility information. (F-04)
- C-04.** Members of the MOC are closely involved with their own organizations’ implementation of the GTE Plan, which may inhibit objective committee oversight. (F-07, F-08)
- C-05.** With substantial contribution from the GTE actions, the time for RMA to process approved permits shows improvements in all categories. (F-09)
- C-06.** Lack of reported backlog metrics makes assessment of overall progress more difficult. (F-09, F-10)
- C-07.** The ISAG update is proving slow and difficult, a reflection of the multitude of organizations and requirements to be integrated. (F-11)
- C-08.** Implementation of the GTE Plan is losing momentum while the ISAG project is being resolved. (F-11 through F-17)
- C-09.** The need for an upgraded permits data and status system, such as that proposed to the BOS, is well-supported. The Grand Jury is not able to independently judge whether the proposed system will achieve its objectives, or whether the price is reasonable. (F-18)
- C-10.** When costs billed to applicants are based on the time spent on their projects, and when those billed costs represent a substantial part of a departmental budget, there is potential for a perceived conflict of interest on the part of the performing organization. (F-19, F-20)

## **Recommendations**

- R-01.** Both the BOS and the CEO should conduct regular, in-depth reviews of the Land-Use Permitting GTE Plan progress, and should strongly support the Plan to its completion. (C-01 through C-08)
- R-02.** The CEO should continue to hold Stakeholder meetings until all parties agree that they are no longer needed. (C-01)
- R-03.** The CEO should re-organize the internal Management Oversight Committee to include at least one County employee from a department external to the permitting process. The CEO should insist on regular meetings, as often as semi-monthly, until the ISAG is updated and approved. (C-04)
- R-04.** As the agency collecting and reporting GTE Plan progress statistics, the RMA should also collect and report aged backlog metrics at the level of the responsible agency, or lower. (C-06)
- R-05.** The BOS and the CEO should ensure that a suitable automated permits data and status system is approved for acquisition and implementation in the County’s 2010-2011 budget. (C-09)
- R-06.** The CEO should perform an in-depth review of the methods for charging planning and permitting fees to users, with the objective of achieving a system which supports defined estimates of cost to applicants. (C-10)

## **Responses**

### Responses Required From:

Board of Supervisors, County of Ventura (R-01 through R-06)

### Responses Requested From:

County Executive Officer, County of Ventura (R-01 through R-06)

## **References**

- Ref-01.** 2008-2009 Ventura County Grand Jury Land Use Permitting Process  
*Get to Excellence Plan*  
[http://portal.countyofventura.org/portal/page/portal/Grand\\_Jury/Reports/TAB4579372/14LandUsePermittingProcess.pdf](http://portal.countyofventura.org/portal/page/portal/Grand_Jury/Reports/TAB4579372/14LandUsePermittingProcess.pdf)
- Ref-02.** RMA Web Page-Discretionary Permit Application Form:  
[http://www.ventura.org/rma/planning/pdf/permits/Disc\\_Application\\_Packet.pdf](http://www.ventura.org/rma/planning/pdf/permits/Disc_Application_Packet.pdf)
- Ref-03.** RMA Planning Division Web Page-Recently Approved and Pending Projects  
<http://www.ventura.org/rma/planning/Permits/projects.html>
- Ref-04.** Letter—CEO-BOS Response to 2008-2009 Report  
[http://portal.countyofventura.org/portal/page/portal/Grand\\_Jury/Reports/TAB4579372/20091216081533.pdf](http://portal.countyofventura.org/portal/page/portal/Grand_Jury/Reports/TAB4579372/20091216081533.pdf)
- Ref-05.** County of Ventura Resource Management Agency Letter January 12, 2010, Subject: *Award of Contract to Accela Corporation for Upgrade of the Current Land Records Management & Permit Processing/Tracking System*  
<http://bosagenda.countyofventura.org/sirepub/agdocs.aspx?doctype=agenda&itemid=28422>

## **Attachments**

- Att-01.** County of Ventura Resource Management Agency Letter, April 6, 2010, to Board of Supervisors, County of Ventura, Subject: *Status Report on the Discretionary Land Use Permitting Process Improvement Program and Related Metrics/Performance*
- Att-02.** Get to Excellence Plan Action Plan , update 04-Mar-10



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**ATT-01**

**County of Ventura Resource Management Agency Letter, April 6, 2010, to Board of Supervisors, County of Ventura, Subject: *Status Report on the Discretionary Land Use Permitting Process Improvement Program and Related Metrics/Performance***

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# county of ventura

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April 6, 2010

Board of Supervisors  
County of Ventura  
800 South Victoria Avenue  
Ventura, CA 93009

**SUBJECT: Status Report on the Discretionary Land Use Permitting Process  
Improvement Program and Related Metrics/Performance Measures**

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

**Receive & File** a report on the status and performance of the on-going Discretionary Land Use Permit Process Improvement Program.

## **FISCAL/MANDATES IMPACTS:**

There is no fiscal impact associated with the recommended action.

## **BACKGROUND:**

In April 2008, the Board of Supervisors requested and received a consultant's report regarding the County's Discretionary Land Use Permitting Process. The report made a number of recommendations for improving the County's discretionary land use permitting process. The recommendations in that report were referred to a County management committee for further review and recommendation. In June 2008, a core group of key County staff from the 10 departments involved in the discretionary land use permitting process conducted a *Value Stream Analysis*, wherein they mapped out the permitting process, identified inefficiencies, and developed 23 recommended improvements using Lean 6 Sigma methodology. These improvements were summarized in a *Get-To-Excellence Plan* (GTEP), which was subsequently approved by your Board in September 2008. Exhibit "1" is a copy of the GTEP, which includes the



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status and latest schedules for each recommendation. To date, 14 of the 23 (61%) GTEP projects have been fully completed and implemented.

#### **DISCUSSION:**

One of the GTEP recommendations was to develop baseline metrics for measuring key aspects of the discretionary permit process and then review them over time as the process improvements are implemented. The purpose of these metrics, or performance measures, is to assess the land use permitting process on an on-going basis to ensure that process improvements are being realized. Baseline metrics were generated in June 2008 and have in part been presented to the Board at various points over the past year. Now that a number of the GTEP recommendations have been implemented and in place for one year, the Planning Division has prepared this report which provides a snapshot of the metrics after one year of implementation and compares them to the originally generated baseline metrics.

Before presenting and discussing the metrics/performance measures in some detail, it is important to note that even with an entire year of "post-implementation" land use permitting, there is still a limited amount of data to analyze and compare. Thus, these results should be treated less as a set of statistical data and more as a set of indicators to be used to assess whether the County is moving in the right direction. Over time, as we have more permits to compare to the baseline, the "statistical validity" of the metrics will be far greater than it is today.

#### **Metrics/Performance Measures**

The two-year baseline period for the discretionary land use permit process metrics began on January 1, 2006, and ran through December 31, 2007. The one year comparison period summarized in this report begins March 1, 2009 and runs through February 28, 2010. This timeframe was selected in order to capture as much change in the discretionary land use permit process as possible. March 1, 2009, was the launch date for several improvements to the discretionary land use permit process implemented from the GTEP. These improvements included a new comprehensive permit application, Development Review Committee input on complex projects, and the date the new Discretionary Permit Coordinator began to meet with applicants and assist them with project submittals.

The metrics below provide a comparison between this initial post-implementation year and the baseline metrics for 2006 and 2007.

#### **Discretionary Land Use Permit Applications - Volume and Current Status:**

There were 159 discretionary land use permit applications submitted between March 1, 2009 and February 28, 2010. The current status of these permits is shown below:

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Approved and Completed Processing	90
Denied and Completed Processing	1
Withdrawn by the Applicant	5
Still in Process	<u>63</u>
	159 Applications

It is worth noting that discretionary permits represent only a fraction of the land use permitting activities within the Planning Division. On average, the Planning Division processes almost 2,000 land use permits each year. Of these, less than 20% (< 400) are discretionary land use permits which is the subject of this report.

#### **Average Number of Days for Applications to Reach "Complete" Stage<sup>1</sup>:**

One of the goals of the GTEP was to reduce both the length of time it takes for a discretionary land use permit application to be deemed complete and the number of times a permit application is deemed incomplete. Table 1 includes the 84 permits with completeness dates for this analysis. Some of these permit applications have reached the completeness stage, but are still in process and/or have not been approved or denied. Thus, not all of the 159 discretionary land use permit applications submitted during the comparison period can be evaluated to determine the average (mean) number of days to reach the "complete" stage. The remaining 75 discretionary land use permits submitted during the comparison period were either withdrawn, were inadequate to process, or remain incomplete and cannot be represented in Table 1.

Unless an extended timeframe is agreed to by a land use permit applicant, the California Permit Streamlining Act (Gov't Code § 65920 et seq.) requires the Planning Division to send a letter to the applicant within 30 days of submittal that spells out incompleteness items (i.e., information needed by the permit processing staff to accurately and fairly analyze the proposed project) or deems an application "complete". Thus, if all projects were deemed complete on their initial review, the average timeframe would be approximately 30 days.

Although the data for some permit types is based on a small sample size, it is notable that in every discretionary land use permit type, the new metrics reveal an improvement in processing time of 50% or more. While this illustrates that some number of projects continue to be deemed incomplete at least once, it does show a substantial increase in the number of applications which are deemed complete, and therefore ready for permit processing, on their initial application submittal.

<sup>1</sup> This is the length of time, expressed in days, from the date the initial application is formally submitted to the County for processing to the date the application is "deemed complete" in terms of the disclosure of relevant information for County land use processing. Formal processing of the permit application, including the determination of the appropriate environmental documentation, cannot begin until an application has been "deemed complete".

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**TABLE 1**  
**MEAN NUMBER OF DAYS FOR A DISCRETIONARY LAND USE**  
**PERMIT APPLICATION**  
**TO BE DEEMED COMPLETE<sup>2</sup>**

<b>Permit Type</b>	<b>Baseline Metric: January 2006- December 2007 (No. of Permits in Sample)</b>	<b>New Metric: March 2009 – February 2010 (No. of Permits in Sample)</b>	<b>Change in Processing Time</b>
Planned Development Permit	217 days (37)	42 days (12)	81%
Minor Modification Permit	159 days (26)	47 days (22)	70%
Major Modification Permit	302 days (6)	60 days (1)	80%
Permit Adjustment	73 days (57)	35 days (22)	52%
Site Plan Adjustment	83 days (6)	27 days (4)	67%
Conditional Use Permit	145 days (62)	43 days (10)	70%
Parcel Map Waiver/Lot Line Adjustment	162 days (47)	64 days (6)	60%
Parcel Map Waiver/Subdivision	295 days (12)	No Data (0)	N/A
Parcel Map Waiver Merger	132 days (22)	45 days (5)	66%
Variance	229 (3)	36 (2)	84%

<sup>2</sup> The time when the applicant is formulating a response and gathering new reports and materials for a resubmittal to the County was subtracted from the processing time before calculating the mean shown in the New Metric column. The number of days the applicant was working on the application was not previously tracked by the Permits Plus database prior to implementation of discretionary permit improvements and, therefore, is not reflected in the Baseline Metric column.

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Quasi-legislative actions like zone changes, ordinance amendments, and General Plan Amendments are not shown in Table 1 because there were no privately initiated legislative actions that have reached the complete stage. Although these quasi-legislative projects are exempt from the timeframes of the California Permit Streamlining Act, the Planning Division is tracking these and will include them in the metric/performance reports in the future when such applications are received and processed.

**Number of Times a Discretionary Land Use Permit Application was Deemed Incomplete:**

Since March, 2009, 22% (36 of 159) of the submitted permit applications were deemed incomplete at least once. Only five of those 36 applicants received a second incomplete letter. However, this percentage is not comprehensive, because applications submitted at the tail end of the one year reporting period may not have been in process long enough to determine whether they will be deemed incomplete. Likewise, there may be applications that are still incomplete yet are not reflected in this metric because they have not reached the stage where a specific number of days to "completeness" can be identified.

In contrast, the baseline metrics revealed that 42% of all applications were deemed "incomplete" and returned to the applicant at least once. During the baseline metrics period, the Planning Division permitting database did not contain a field for tracking multiple incompleteness determinations. Anecdotally, however, it was common for a discretionary land use permit application to be deemed incomplete more than once.

**Correlation Between Development Review Committee (DRC) project review and Permit Application Completeness Determination Phase:**

To date, the new Development Review Committee (composed of senior land use planning staff and related County department and agency representatives) has reviewed four proposed projects. Each of these projects received extensive interagency review and feedback on potential fatal flaws. Subsequently, only one of four projects reviewed resulted in the filing of a discretionary land use permit application, which is currently being processed. Based on this scant data, it is premature to make generalizations regarding the correlation between the DRC's presubmittal review and both the number of times the application was deemed incomplete and the length of time it remained incomplete. However, it should be noted that prospective discretionary land use permit applicants have verbally expressed satisfaction with the ability to receive comprehensive comments on their project from all participating departments prior to formal submittal.



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**Average Length of Time to Process Discretionary Land Use Permit Applications<sup>3</sup>:**

In the one year comparison period there were no discretionary permit applications submitted after March 1, 2009 that were approved by the Board of Supervisors and only one approved by the Planning Commission prior to February 28, 2010. The single variance application that was submitted and ultimately approved by the Planning Commission required 118 days of processing time before that matter reached the final public hearing stage.

The average length of time (mean) from submittal to approval by the Planning Commission for all project types in the baseline metrics was 366 days. It is important to note that there are some discretionary projects still in process that were submitted between March 1, 2009 and February 28, 2010 that will require Planning Commission and/or Board of Supervisors approval. The length of processing time for these applications is simply unknown at this early date.

Virtually all of the discretionary land use permits in the current set of metrics were approved by the Planning Director, either after a public hearing or administratively per the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance. Table 2 illustrates the change in processing time for Planning Director approved permits that were submitted after March 1, 2009 and have completed processing.

Permit Adjustment and coastal Site Plan Adjustment permits do not require a formal Planning Director hearing, but are administratively approved by the Planning Director. Typically, these applications are very minor in scope. However, much like other discretionary applications, the Discretionary Permit Coordinator meets with applicants for Permit Adjustments and Site Plan Adjustments to review the permitting process and assist with application submittal. The application is then assigned to a Case Planner and key dates are entered into the permitting database so that improvements can be tracked and measured over time.

There were 60 Permit Adjustment and Coastal Site Plan Adjustment applications submitted between March 1, 2009 and February 28, 2010. 45 of those 60 applications have been approved and are shown in Table 3 below. Though there was less room for improvement, given the speed with which these permits were processed in the base period, both the mean processing time as well as the variation in processing time have improved over the baseline metrics collected.

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<sup>3</sup> This is the length of time, expressed in days, from the date the initial application was formally submitted to the County to the date the permit was approved or denied by the appropriate decision-making body.

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**TABLE 2**  
**MEAN NUMBER OF DAYS TO COMPLETE PROCESSING OF**  
**PLANNING DIRECTOR APPROVED PROJECTS**

<b>Permit Type</b>	<b>Baseline Metric: January 2006- December 2007 Processing Time in Days (No. of Permits in Sample)</b>	<b>New Metric: March 2009 – February 2010 Processing Time in Days (No. of Permits in Sample)</b>	<b>Percentage Improvement</b>
Planned Development Permit	291 (24) Range: 48-659 days	95 (7) Range: 74-167 days	71%
Minor Modification Permit	267 (18) Range: 88-561 days	114 (12) Range: 49-231 days	57%
Major Modification Permit	391 (1) Range: N/A	No Data (0)	No Data
Conditional Use Permit	189 (48) Range: 25- 738 days	234 (5) Range: 169-351 days	-24%
Parcel Map Waiver/Lot Line Adjustment	178 (24) Range: 42-583 days	77 (5) Range: 51-136 days	57%
Parcel Map Waiver/Subdivision	487 (3) Range: 324-672 days	No Data (0)	No Data
Parcel Map Waiver Merger	129 days (14) Range: 52-540 days	64 (5) Range: 16-136 days	50%

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**TABLE 3**  
**MEAN NUMBER OF DAYS TO COMPLETE PROCESSING OF**  
**ADMINISTRATIVELY APPROVED PERMIT ADJUSTMENTS**

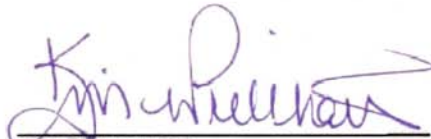
<b>Permit Type</b>	<b>Baseline Metric:</b> January 2006 - December 2007 <b>Processing Time</b> <b>in Days</b> (No. of Permits in Sample)	<b>New Metric:</b> March 2009 – February 2010 <b>Processing Time</b> <b>in Days</b> (No. of Permits in Sample)	<b>Percentage</b> <b>Improvement</b>
Site Plan Adjustment	71 days (18) Range: 0-452 days	50 days (6) Range: 1-185 days	30%
Permit Adjustment	69 days (67) Range: 2-431 days	43 days (39) Range: 1-194 days	38%

### **CONCLUSION**

The metrics/performance measures evaluated since March 2009 indicate there has been much progress made in the discretionary land use permitting process. Many of the GTEP recommendations that have been implemented to date were directed toward improving the application completeness phase of the process. And the metrics point to a high level of success in this area. Two of the GTEP projects currently being worked on, the *Initial Study Assessment Guidelines* and the *Standard Conditions/Mitigations* projects, are directed toward the post-completeness phase of permit processing. With the implementation of those projects later this year, we are hopeful that we will see results similar to those shown to date in the completeness phase of the process.

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This letter has been reviewed by the County Executive Office, Auditor-Controller's Office and the County Counsel's Office. If you have any questions concerning this item, please contact either Kim Prillhart at 654-2481, or Chris Stephens at (805) 654-2661.



**KIM PRILLHART**  
PLANNING DIVISION



**CHRIS STEPHENS, DIRECTOR**  
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AGENCY

Attachment:           Exhibit "1" - Discretionary Permit Process Get-To-Excellence Plan

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**Att-2**

**Get to Excellence Plan Action Plan, update 04-Mar-10**

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Action Plan						Get-To-Excellence Plan						
04-Mar-10												
KAIZEN	PROJECT	IMPLEMENT NOW	PRIORITY	VSA - DISCRETIONARY PERMIT PROCESS								
				Recommendation	Team Lead/Belt	Plan Dates		Problem Statement	Status	Date Edited	Additional Comments	Charter
Start	Finish											
7	x		1	Update Initial Study Assessment Guidelines (Each Agency/Department Responsible for Updating Their Section)	Bruce Smith/BB Sean Payne,GB Rosa Cenicerros	1-Sep-2008	May-10	Address problem of outdated Initial Study Assessment Guidelines and improve policy coordination between agencies.	In Process	04-Mar-10	Public review period ends 1/15; Modifications and responses to public comments due in Feb; EQAC approval in early Mar; Board hearing late April.	X
8	x		1	Standardize Mitigation Measures and the Conditions of Approval Used by Each Agency/Division for Development Projects	Winston Wright/BB Sean Payne, GB Rosa Cenicerros	15-Sep-2009	Apr-10	The standardization of CEQA mitigation measures and conditions of approval for all land use entitlements will minimize the potential for inconsistent application of regulations and mitigation measures from like or similar projects.	In Process Linked to GTEP #7	11-Dec-09	Team members met on December 1, 2009 to get guidance on from County Counsel on the tone and content of standard conditions and mitigation measures. Format was also discussed. Team members were directed to compile a thorough list of conditions and mitigation measures by January 15, 2010.	X
9	x		1	Update Individual Agency/Division Website Information Related to the Discretionary Permit Process	Tricia Maier BB Sean Payne, GB Jose Moreno	1-Feb-2010	Jun-10	Much of the information available to applicants on individual department websitesdoes not reflect current regulations and standards.	Dependent on GTEP #10.	08-Dec-09	Individual agencies/departments would be responsible for updating and maintaining permitting information to be linked to the centralized website (above).	X
10	x		1	Create a Customer Friendly One-Stop Website for Discretionary Permit Applicants	Kim Rodriguez BB Sean Payne, Joe Clark, GB	1-Oct-2009	Apr-10	Permitting information on the internet is found on many different webpages for various agencies and departments, is often outdated, and sometimes unavailable. This would be a centralized, agency-neutral website that would incorporate pertinent information from all agencies/departments.	Dependent on other Items Conceptual work underway	08-Dec-09	This project is scheduled for a later timeline as it is dependent upon Initial Study Guidelines and other documents to be updated.	X
11	x		1	Identify Discretionary Uses That May Lend Themselves to Being Processed Ministerially with Adopted Development Standards	Bruce Smith BB Sean Payne, GB Lisa Yoshimura	1-Jan-2010	Jul-10	Review existing NCZO Use Matrix to identify uses that might qualify for being approved over-the-counter (ministerially) rather than through the longer discretionary review process.	Delayed due to other assignments and Staff Retirements	02-Mar-10	Recommend assigning Team Lead to Bruce Smith, Manager of Plans & Ordinances Section. Requires obtaining ordinances from other jurisdictions. Requires half-day (or series of) team meetinga(s) by Planning Division Management and other technical staff. Requires County Counsel pre-input and post-review. Need to decide how information is to be conveyed to Board of Supervisors, along with recommended bugetary adjustments for subsequent ordinance amendments.	X



Action Plan						Get-To-Excellence Plan						
04-Mar-10												
KAIZEN	PROJECT	IMPLEMENT NOW	PRIORITY	VSA - DISCRETIONARY PERMIT PROCESS		Plan Dates		Problem Statement	Status	Date Edited	Additional Comments	Charter
				Recommendation	Team Lead/Belt	Start	Finish					
17	x		2	Identify and Address the Roadblocks to a Viable Condition Compliance Process	Tricia Maier/GB Jennie Pittman GB Gina Spoerlien, BB Sean Payne	1-May-2010	Jul-10	There is a notable lack of coordination between agencies when it comes to enforcement of permit conditions after a permit is issued.	Dependent on working copy of conditions from GTEP #8	02-Mar-10	Initial work being done as part of the drafting of standardized conditions (GTEP#8). However, in addition, this item would require a review of enforcement procedures and responsibilities by agency. Note: Preliminary organizational recommendations were made to the Board in this area at the July 1 interim status report presentation. Grading enforcement is also part of on-going PWA ordinance preparation. Recommendations coming from this GTEP project will need to be reconciled with these other activities.	X
20		x	3	Explore the Potential for Applicants to use Credit Cards or Paypal to Pay Permit Fees, Deposits and Monthly Bills	Chris Stephens, Matt Carroll	1-Jan-2009	Apr-09	Applicants often voice the desire to pay their bills by credit card.	In Process	11-Dec-09	Board approved credit card vendor. Joe Clark to meet with Rick Young to discuss implementation. May be affected by decision regarding Accela Automation	
21		x	3	Improve Existing Signage at the RMA and PWA Public Counters	Jennifer Padre	1-Dec-2009	May-10	There is a lack of customer-friendly signage to guide customers to the appropriate locations for permit processing.	Project Reassigned to New Lead Dec-2009	10-Dec-09	Team met to survey existing signage and brainstorm improvements; recommendations will be developed next to present to Champions for follow-up.	
22		x	3	Create Regular Public/Consultant Training Sessions on Topical Land Use Development Issues	Jim O'Tousa/GB Rosa Cenicerros, GB Liz Sandoval, BB Sean Payne	1-Dec-2009	Mar-10	Permitting materials submitted by applicants and consultants are often inadequate. Regular trainings would address this by clearly spelling out the requirements. Ideally, these workshops would also creates a feedback loop to provide more input from the "voice of the customer".	In Process	11-Dec-09	Training would not occur until the new permitting process and detailed application checklists are completed.	X
1	x		1	Create Application Checklists by Permit or Project Type	Dan Klemann/GB Elaine Crandall, GB Linda Le	1-Aug-2008	60 days Oct	Develop an intelligent, on-line questionnaire and create project type specific checklists for applicants, based on the permit type. Each checklist to include the requirements of all development review agencies (e.g. traffic, drainage, fire, etc. requirements).	COMPLETE	03-Mar-09	Although complete, the form content will be continuously reviewed and revised as needed to ensure it is functioning as needed.	X



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2	x		1	Create a Template for a Comprehensive Project Description and Comprehensive Site Plan (or Map) to Be Submitted with All New Applications	Dan Klemann/GB Elaine Crandall, GB Linda Le	1-Aug-2008	60 days Oct	Address existing problem of inadequate site plan and project description submittals that lead to predictable delays in permit processing. Often, the submitted project descriptions or site plans do not satisfy all agencies. This would be an attempt to define the requirements for all agencies at the outset of the process.	COMPLETE	03-Mar-09	Although complete, the form content will be continuously reviewed and revised as needed to ensure it is functioning as needed.	X	
3		x	1	Create New Positions for a "High-Level Intake Coordinator" and Assistant to Facilitate One-Stop Application Submittal	Chris Stephens, Matt Carroll	1-Aug-2008	90 days Nov	Delays in permit processing frequently occur due to the absence of someone familiar with the requirements from all of the agencies/departments involved in the discretionary review process. Many departments have no-one available to answer general questions or to make standards and regulations clear at the beginning of the process. Lack of face-to-face contact early in the review process has been cited as an issue by many customers.	COMPLETE	03-Mar-09	The new Permit Coordinator joined the County in January 2009. He began fully functioning in the role of Permit Coordinator on March 2, 2009.		
4		x	1	Draft a Written Procedure for How Other Agencies Should Respond to Requests by Applicants for Modifications to Permit Conditions and Mitigation Measures After Project Approval	Tricia Maier	1-Aug-2008	30 days Sept	Applicants frequently request individual agencies to modify project conditions and mitigation measures after the Board and Planning Commission have already approved the permit.	COMPLETE	03-Mar-09	The Planning Division prepared and distributed a memo to reviewing agencies restating the policy that any substantial revisions to an existing permit and its conditions require approval by the original decision making body.		
5		x	2	Draft a Written Procedure for How Other Agencies Should Respond to Requests by Applicants for Modifications to Permit Conditions and Mitigation Measures After Project Approval	Tricia Maier	2-Aug-2008	31 days Sept	Applicants frequently request individual agencies to modify project conditions and mitigation measures after the Board and Planning Commission have already approved the permit.	COMPLETE	04-Mar-09	The Planning Division prepared and distributed a memo to reviewing agencies restating the policy that any substantial revisions to an existing permit and its conditions require approval by the original decision making body.		
6		x	3	Draft a Written Procedure for How Other Agencies Should Respond to Requests by Applicants for Modifications to Permit Conditions and Mitigation Measures After Project Approval	Tricia Maier	3-Aug-2008	32 days Sept	Applicants frequently request individual agencies to modify project conditions and mitigation measures after the Board and Planning Commission have already approved the permit.	COMPLETE	05-Mar-09	The Planning Division prepared and distributed a memo to reviewing agencies restating the policy that any substantial revisions to an existing permit and its conditions require approval by the original decision making body.		



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12			x	2	Provide Input to the VS Champions for one Countywide Permitting Database to Tie all Agencies Together	Joe Clark/Sean Payne	1-Aug-2008	90 days Nov	There are too many databases across the county that don't "talk" to each other. This hinders the ability of County agencies to easily share information during the permit process.	COMPLETE Results being foleded into Accela Automation work scope	07-Jul-09	There is a need to identify all agencies information databases related to the discretionary permitting process and to analyze the feasibility and costs associated in migrating all of the data into Permits Plus. This would ensure that all agencies have access to the same "real time" data and would eliminate the need for duplicate entries.		
13			x	2	Establish Future Benchmarking Based on Current Metrics For On-Going Evaluation of the Discretionary Permit Process	Tricia Maier	1-Aug-2008	15 days Sept	Currently there is no on-going feedback loop for evaluation of the permitting process.	COMPLETE	11-Mar-09	The new entries to Permits Plus by project planners will, over time, allow a comparison and evaluation of permit processing efficiency.		
14			x	2	Review Existing Customer Service Survey for Potential Improvements	Massoud Araghi / Tricia Maier	1-Sep-2008	30 days Oct	Generate a Customer Service Survey that Allows for Public Comments on All Agencies Involved in Development Review.	COMPLETE	05-Oct-09	Collecting electronic versions of existing forms. Project needs to follow initiation of new consolidated application process.		
15			x	2	Assess the Need for a Public Kiosk with Web Access for Applicants in Various Locations	Ben Emami	1-Sep-2008	30 days Oct	Currently, it's nearly impossible for an applicant to collect the necessary information to file for a permit without driving to the Government Center. A public kiosk with web access in Simi Valley or the Fire Dept. headquarters in Camarillo might make it possible for applicants to gather and print information in more convenient locations.	COMPLETE	07-Jul-09	Future installation of kiosks dependent on the development of the new one-stop permitting website.		
16			x	2	Provide Routine Training on the County's General Plan Policies and CEQA Regulations to Staff in Other County Agencies/Divisions	Bruce Smith	1-Sep-2008	30 days Oct	Cross agency information and basic CEQA training for agencies outside of the Planning Division are lacking.	COMPLETE	03-Mar-09	Senior Planning staff, with assistance from County Counsel, could provide CEQA 101 and General Plan workshops to staff in other agencies involved in the development review process.		
18		x		3	Identify GIS Datalayers Currently Underutilized by Other Agencies and Facilitate Better Sharing of this Data	Debbie Millais/BB Sean Payne, GB Joe Clark	1-Aug-2008	180 days Feb	Existing, valuable GIS information is not available to all agencies.	COMPLETE work being done to upload	09-Jul-09	Identified layers are in process of being finalized and uploaded to common GIS respository.	X	



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19	x		3	Develop One Billing/ Deposit/ Fee Process for Applicants	Chris Stephens, Alec Pringle/GB Linda Le	1-Sep-2008	60 days Nov	Eliminate duplication of effort and streamline - customer pays at one location or receives one bill rather than three.	COMPLETE	03-Mar-09	Implemented March 2, 2009.	X
23	x		N/A	Improve the Environmental Impact Report Contract (EIR) Administration Process	Dan Klemann/GB Elaine Crandall	1-Jun-2008	45 days	No consistency in the procedures for contracting with outside firms for preparation of EIRs for projects that require them.	COMPLETE	27-Mar-09	Streamlining of the RFQ/RFP process to contract with consulting firms for preparation of project Environmental Impact Reports.	X

#### PRIORITY RATING

- 1 = ESSENTIAL/SHOWSTOPPER**  
**2 = HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**  
**3 = HIGHLY DESIREABLE**

#### STATUS LEGEND

- |                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>Preparation</b>    | Belt and Lead working together to design event |
| <b>In Process</b>     | Event has started                              |
| <b>Complete</b>       | Charter deliverables are complete              |
| <b>Implementation</b> | Lead is implementing change actions            |