



BUILDING AND ZONING ENFORCEMENT AUDIT PRESENTATION TO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND HUMAN SERVICES, JANUARY 25, 2021

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OBJECTIVES

- Are procedures for the Office of Buildings' Inspections and Enforcement Division consistent with industry best practices, comparable to peer cities, and does its practices align with its mission of safe buildings, attentive customer service and public engagement?
- Did the Office of Buildings' Inspections and Enforcement Division meet its service level agreements and performance targets consistently between calendar years 2017-2020?
- Does the Office of Buildings' Inspections and Enforcement Division's practices comply with its internal procedures?

FINDINGS OVERVIEW

- Moving Enforcement Functions to Police Could Improve Effectiveness
 - Accela Complaint Data is Unreliable; Additional Supervisors May Help
 - Improving Accela Data Would Provide Information to Assess Resource Needs
 - Current Organizational Structure is Ineffective

ACCELA DATA IS UNRELIABLE; ADDITIONAL SUPERVISORS MAY HELP

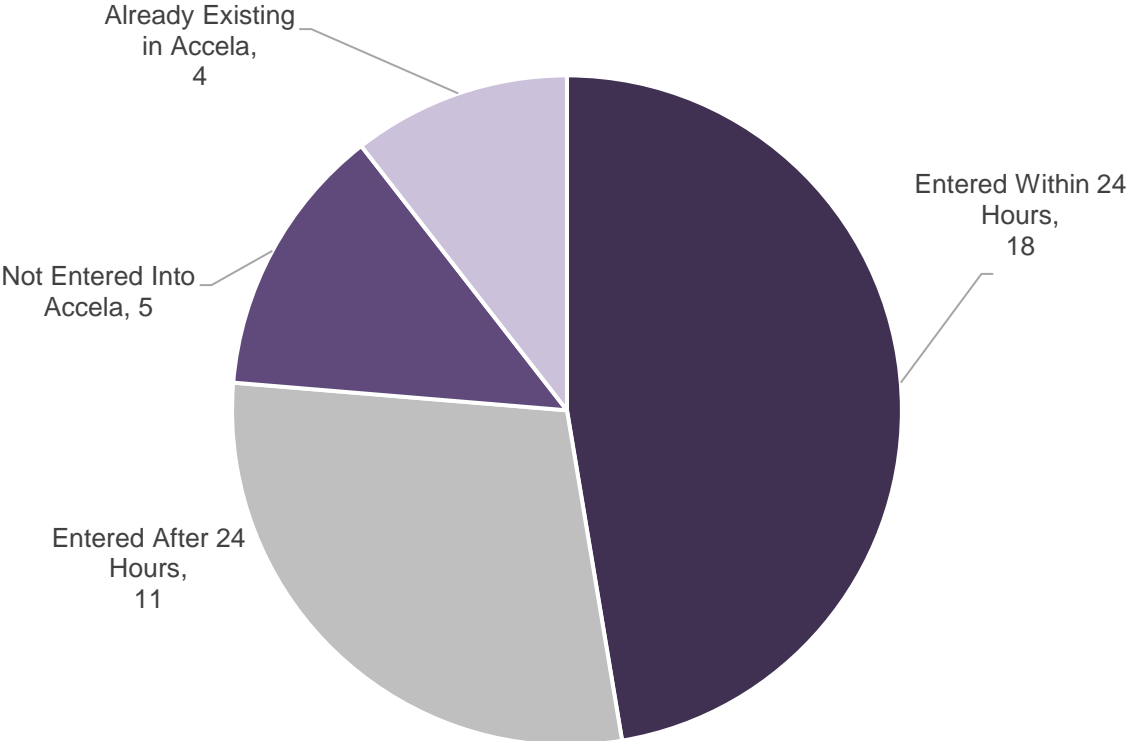
Exhibit 6: Accela Complaint Data Indicates Complaints Decreased in CY20

Calendar Year	Total Complaints
2020	747
2019	1,434
2018	1,237
2017	1,315
Total	4,733

Source: Accela Ad-Hoc reports

ACCELA DATA IS UNRELIABLE; ADDITIONAL SUPERVISORS MAY HELP (CONT.)

Exhibit 7: Not All Complaints Were Entered Into Accela Within 24 Hours



Source: CodeBusters emails and Accela.

Exhibit 8: Inspections May Be Delayed if Complaints Are Not Entered into Accela Timely



Source: Auditors' creation based on interviews with staff

ACCELA DATA IS UNRELIABLE; ADDITIONAL SUPERVISORS MAY HELP (CONT.)

Exhibit 9: Cases As Far Back As 2017 Are Not Assigned to an Inspector in Accela

Calendar Year	Total Complaints	Unassigned Complaints	Percent Unassigned
2020	747	530	71%
2019	1,434	557	39%
2018	1,237	629	51%
2017	1,315	1,020	78%
Total	4,733	2,736	58%

Source: Developed by auditors based on a random sample of files provided by the License and Permits Unit

IMPROVING ACCELA DATA WOULD PROVIDE INFORMATION TO ASSESS RESOURCE NEEDS

- The Inspections and Enforcement Division developed an action plan to address perceived staffing shortages, but the basis for the new positions is unclear
- Inspections and Enforcement Division staff told us that there are approximately 500 complaints currently in their backlog.

CURRENT ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE IS INEFFECTIVE

- Unclear delineation between Planning's Inspections and Enforcement Division's and Police's Code Enforcement Section's enforcement responsibilities creates confusion for the public and city staff.
- Incorporating zoning enforcement into the city's current Code Enforcement Academy training program could help citizens clarify responsibilities.

SHIFTING RESPONSIBILITIES COULD ALLEVIATE CONFUSION

- Moving the zoning enforcement function (and its resources) to Police's Code Enforcement Section would align with peer city practices and centralize most enforcement responsibilities, which should reduce citizen confusion and improve effectiveness.
- Centralizing the complaint intake process through ATL311 would help reduce the likelihood that complaints would fall through the cracks.
- The permitting function would remain in the Office of Buildings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To centralize zoning enforcement responsibilities, we recommend the Commissioner of City Planning work with the Police Chief to:

1. Transfer zoning enforcement responsibilities to Police's Code Enforcement Section

To centralize the complaint intake process, the Commissioner of City Planning should:

2. route all zoning complaints to ATL311 and provide ATL311 staff with training on entering complaints in Accela

To promote public engagement and education, the Commissioner of City Planning should:

3. continue encouraging staff to participate in the city's Code Enforcement Academy to educate citizens on all the division enforcement responsibilities

RECOMMENDATIONS (CONT.)

Until the zoning enforcement function moves to the Code Enforcement Section, the Commissioner of City Planning should:

4. update complaint information in Accela to ensure that all cases are entered and update the status of cases
5. create additional supervisor positions to ensure that complaints are properly assigned and reviewed prior to closure
6. ensure that supervisors enter all information related to complaints into Accela according to established procedures
7. direct staff to enter the backlog of complaints into Accela and work with Police to obtain the status of each complaint referred to the department and update the status in Accela
8. ensure that procedures for handling stop-work complaints are documented and consistently followed
9. ensure that all complaints received through the CodeBusters email are entered into Accela within 24 hours, consistent with the division's procedures

RECOMMENDATIONS (CONT.)

Until the zoning enforcement function moves to the Code Enforcement Section, the Commissioner of City Planning should:

10. develop a performance target for resolving customer complaints and track metrics for each step of the process (from the time the complaint is received until the issue is resolved) and monitor compliance with the performance targets
11. ensure that supervisors promptly assign cases to inspectors in Accela in order to meet the performance target of conducting inspections within 72 hours after the complaint is entered into the system
12. ensure that complaint inspection and closure dates are consistently entered into Accela
13. update procedures to require supervisors to review cases, at least on a spot-check basis, before they are closed in the system and ensure that the procedure is followed
14. work with the Accela System Administrator to reduce the inspectors' access in Accela to only those permissions needed to perform their specific functions

QUESTIONS?

Full Report:

<http://www.atlaudit.org/building-and-zoning-enforcement---january-2022.html>