



CITY OF SALINAS

HOUSING AND LAND USE COMMITTEE

DATE: AUGUST 11, 2026

DEPARTMENT: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

FROM: LISA BRINTON, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

BY: ANGELINE ANZINI, CHIEF BUILDING OFFICIAL

TITLE: PLANNING AND PERMITTING UPDATE

RECOMMENDED MOTION:

No action required. Receive the report outlining improvements to Community Development Department Systems and Processes.

DISCUSSION:

The Community Development Department (CDD) continues to implement a series of staffing, process, and technology improvements aimed at strengthening service delivery, increasing internal capacity, and enhancing customer experience across Planning, Permit Services, and related operational functions. These improvements build upon work identified in the 2025 Permit Center Annual Report, which highlighted systemic barriers, such as staffing limitations, procedural inefficiencies, and challenges related to regulatory complexity. These concerns were presented to the Finance Committee in May 2025. Staff identified three primary categories of issues:

- **Staffing Capacity:** Limited availability of technically experienced candidates, dependence on consultants, and vacancies in critical positions slowed internal processing.
- **Efficiencies & Coordination:** Lack of clearly defined decision-making processes and inconsistent workflows across divisions created operational bottlenecks.
- **Regulatory Environment:** Complex and sometimes conflicting requirements—including zoning, building, engineering, CEQA, and fire codes—posed challenges for both applicants and reviewers.

Staffing Capacity

An additional Associate Planner position was added as part of the 2025-2026 Operational Budget to increase Current Planning capacity to process Future Growth Area Tentative Maps. In January 2026, the Associate Planner position was filled through a promotion, and an offer has been

extended to fill the Assistant Planner vacancy created through this promotion. Currently six tentative map applications are being processed. To ensure the timely packaging and processing of these map applications, staff are contracting with two planning firms. In March 2026 Current Planning filled the Management Analyst position. This position focuses on improving interdepartmental review coordination, developing planning procedures, standardizing processes and updating applications, checklists and forms and developing tracking tools and reports.

Permit Services hired two Plan Checker I and achieved full staffing in early 2026. This completed recruitment for all four Plan Checker I positions in April 2026. Although the new reviewers are early in their careers, they are supported through structured weekly internal training and guidance in studying for their required plans examiner certifications. Two additional positions were approved in the current fiscal year: an Administrative Analyst to serve as a front-counter greeter and assume responsibilities previously performed by temporary staff, and a Combination Inspector to help manage the increased inspection workload anticipated from new subdivisions in the Future Growth Area.

Efficiencies & Coordination: Workflow and Technology Improvements

Efforts to improve application review coordination, processes, procedures, and workflow is ongoing. Current efforts have focused on the following.

- 1) Began working on planning procedures, application checklists, process guides, and workflow documentation. Review of the Site Plan Review (SPR) process is underway with the creation of a flowchart. Updated workflows will be added to the City's website.
- 2) Begun developing project tracking tools and reports to assist with monitoring project milestones and deadlines to provide data for reporting, decision-making and to ensure projects are moving forward in a timely manner.
- 3) Continued regular Future Growth Area interdepartmental coordination meetings to facilitate review of six tentative map applications.
- 4) Established biweekly coordination meetings with the Police Department to develop procedures for concurrent Planning and Police Department review, update the Temporary Use of Land Permit (TULP) application to support a more efficient review process, and define review responsibilities and timelines to keep projects moving through the process.
- 5) Collaborated with the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce Board to address planning and permitting issues and roadblocks in the areas of Communication and Customer Service, Staff Training and Coverage, Processing and Workflow and Technology that were identified and provided through a stakeholder meeting. Current, near-term and long-term actions to address the identified issues and barriers were provided to the Chamber Board. Staff will continue to work with the Chamber to evaluate how changes at the Permit Center are improving the customer experience. This would include continued conversations with stakeholders and development of a survey to better capture the expectations and experiences of applicants and customers.

- 6) Executed contract with consultant Doug Yount to assist the City with developing the organizational and operational framework for a strategic development office to facilitate the review and processing of major development projects.

To improve our permitting and record keeping software, CDD initiated the formal procurement process for a new system by releasing a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to identify a consultant to manage Request for Proposal (RFP) development. The modernization effort will include a needs assessment to determine whether the City should implement a citywide Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system or a permitting and licensing solution best suited to operational needs. In addition, Permit Services updated its public-facing Inspections Page to provide clearer instructions for scheduling, preparing for inspections, virtual inspections and final department clearances. Additionally, staff are developing a new Residential Permit Application Guide to simplify submittal expectations and provide applicants with an easy-to-follow resource. Together, these improvements support more consistent communication and higher workflow efficiency between City staff and the public.

Regulatory Environment

The regulatory environment includes federal, state, and local laws and regulations, many of which are beyond the City's control. A city can guide and streamline development applications through its land use (General Plan) and development and design standards (Zoning). The City adopted a new Housing Element in December of 2023 and is in the process of completing a comprehensive General Plan Update (GPU). In addition, a multi-phase Zoning Code Update (ZCU) was launched in 2025. The last comprehensive update to the Zoning Code was adopted in 2006. Under ID#26-377 staff will provide an update on Phase 1 Zoning Code Update Ordinance (Phase 1 ordinance) which makes mandatory changes for compliance with state law prior to completion of the General Plan Update and addresses priority optional items that do not need to wait for the full overhaul. Completion of Phase 2, which will include bridge amendments to make the current Zoning Code consistent with the General Plan Update, once the latter is adopted, and objective design standards for residential development, is anticipated by mid-2027. Completion of a new and revised Zoning Code, Phase 3, is anticipated by the end of 2027. Both Phases 2 and 3 will include extensive public engagement and participation.

The Supervising Plan Checker and Inspections Manager completed a week-long training on California's accessibility standards, which often lead to construction delays when misunderstood by contractors. Strengthening staff expertise in these areas improves the accuracy of plan reviews and enhances staff's ability to clearly educate applicants on compliance expectations. In addition, Permit Services invested in training Building Plan Checkers on updated California Building Standards to support keeping ADU/JADU reviews in-house. These combined training efforts also improve coordination with other City divisions, resulting in clearer communication of regulatory requirements to the applicant.

ATTACHMENTS:

Planning and Permitting Update PowerPoint Presentation