



Staff Report

TO: City Council
FROM: Pedro Rico, Chief Building Official
DATE: February 1, 2022
SUBJECT: Update of the Department of Building and Safety

Background and Analysis:

Building Permits

In the last four years, the Building and Safety Department has issued the following number of building permits:

2018: 2,704 permits,
2019: 2,229 permits,
2020: 1,555 permits, and
2021: 2,148 permits.

The permit totals shown for 2020 and 2021 do not include all of the residential solar photovoltaic (PV) permits that in prior years were issued separately for each tract home. For example, the number of permits for 2021 would have an additional 437 PV permits for the new tract homes. In 2020, homebuilders were requested to submit their master plans for the required 2019 Code updates to include the design of PVs and to have the PV included in each permit issued for each home. Now, each building permit of a new home includes the additional fees of its PV system and includes in the description the size of its PV system. This request was made to streamline the plan review, permitting, and inspection process.

Plan Reviews

In prior years, 100% of all plan submittals were sent out to the plan check services consultants. Now, most of the plan review is done in-house. Plan check services consultants are only used when City staff will not be able to turn around permits within 10 business days.

	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>
Plan check services consultants	219	96
In-house	884	1,451

Inspections

To prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus, most of the inspections in 2020 were conducted remotely through video conferencing with the use of smartphones or tablets. Virtual inspections take longer than in-person inspections, but the inspectors were able to do 9,685 inspections in 2020 without any missed or rolled over for another day.

Since 2021, inspections have been conducted virtually in occupied spaces to continue preventing the spread of the virus. Most of the inspections are now in-person since most projects are new construction and outdoors in existing construction. In total 15,657 inspections were completed in 2021.

Streamlining the Process

The City has launched the initial phase of the Citizen Self Service (CSS) portal to accept building permit applications, submittals of electronic construction drawings, and to accept payments. Once the CSS portal is fully implemented with all of its features, the Department of Building and Safety will be able to process more permits in less time, while maintaining the safety standards. It will allow the public to request building inspections, accept all types of building permit applications, and notify applicants of plan check status, permit issuance status, and building inspections.

Residential PV systems are now common and consistent on new homes, and on existing homes. There were 396 PV plan checks in 2020 and 674 in 2021.

To streamline the plan review and permitting process of residential PV systems, City staff has recently implemented the use of SolarAPP+. The software runs compliance plan checks and processes building permit approvals. After the automated review and approval of the PV design, it automatically produces a certified inspection checklist that the inspectors use in the field. For now, the software is limited to residential PV, roof-only systems with the exclusion of battery energy storage systems and main panel upgrades.

SolarAPP+ is provided to the City at no cost. The software was developed with grant funding from the Department of Energy (DOE) and in collaboration with the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL), Underwriters Laboratory (UL), International Code Council (ICC), International Association of Electrical Inspectors (IAEI), National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), other associations, and different cities and counties.

SolarAPP+ will soon be able to review and approve designs and permits for residential PV systems combined with battery energy storage, main panel upgrades, reroof, electric vehicle charging stations, and roofing integrated PV products.

Code Update

The national model codes are updated every three years. The 2022 California Building Standards Code has been approved by California State Agencies and by the California Building Standards Commission (CBSC). These updates will be published and available on July 1, 2022. The City of Beaumont will be adopting updated codes by the end of 2022, to be effective January 1, 2023.

Fiscal Impact:

City staff estimates the cost to prepare this report to be \$780.

Recommended Action:

Receive and file.