

Memorandum



CITY OF DALLAS

DATE February 14, 2022

TO Honorable members of the Dallas City Council

SUBJECT Mayor's Working Group on Permitting

Dear Colleagues:

Over the past two years, we have been inundated with complaints and concerns about the increasingly slow and byzantine nature of our city's permitting processes.

The ability to issue permits in a timely manner is critical to our city's economic growth and vibrancy. Permitting is a basic operational function of our city government that is meant to serve our residents and members of our business community who want to build and rebuild in the City of Dallas. And as I said in my State of the City Address last year, the problems with permitting should have been addressed long before the Dallas City Council had to get involved.

The Dallas City Council has taken action on this issue in the manner that our city's form of government prescribes. We repeatedly have made clear to the city manager that fixing what ails the permitting office is a top priority for us. We have supported policies and budget requests to shore up the permitting office. We have given time and grace to our city staff while also doing our job as policymakers by asking tough questions, demanding data, exercising oversight, holding committee hearings, and approving the resources requested.

I have no doubt that people like Will Munding, our Executive-in-Residence, and the staff in the permitting office are working hard. But even so, we have not seen the operational and systemic change that is needed, and problems have persisted.

Enough is enough. Dallas deserves better.

It is clear that we must now intervene with a new approach. Therefore, I am hereby creating the Mayor's Working Group on Permitting, and I have asked our colleague, Chairwoman Paula Blackmon, to lead this effort.

Chairwoman Blackmon has demonstrated the drive and know-how necessary to address difficult, complex issues with decisive action. Last year, through the Ad Hoc Committee on General Investigating and Ethics, she teamed with Chairwoman Cara Mendelsohn and led the blocking-and-tackling efforts to pass our historic, comprehensive ethics reforms. Chairwoman Blackmon also has extensive experience in local government, working under two mayors and helping to guide previous efforts to improve permitting processes under Mayor Tom Leppert.

To help her in this undertaking, Chairwoman Blackmon has asked Macey Small Davis to serve as the co-chair of the Mayor's Working Group on Permitting. Many of you are likely familiar with Ms. Davis, who currently represents District 13 on the Dallas Arts and Culture Advisory Commission and previously served as the president of The Davis Advocates, a local public policy and planning firm that she founded. Prior to running her own consulting business, Ms. Davis worked as the Executive Vice President of Government Affairs for The Real Estate Council in Dallas and as the first Tax Counsel of Federal Public Policy for the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB), the nation's leading small business association.

I appreciate both co-chairs' willingness to take on this monumental challenge on behalf of our city. The Mayor's Working Group on Permitting will be responsible for seeking input, researching solutions, monitoring progress, holding city staff accountable, breaking down silos in city government, assessing potential budgetary impacts, and returning to the relevant City Council committees with any policy proposals deemed necessary to fix this problem.

Dallas should be the best major city for business in Texas and in our region. Let's break this logjam and move forward together to grow our booming city.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Johnson', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Eric Johnson
Mayor

Cc: T.C. Broadnax, City Manager
Chris Caso, City Attorney
Biliera Johnson, City Secretary
Mark Swann, City Auditor