



County of Los Angeles CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICE

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SACHI A. HAMAI
Chief Executive Officer

Board of Supervisors
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First District

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Third District

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Fifth District

May 20, 2016

To: Supervisor Hilda L. Solis, Chair
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
Supervisor Sheila Kuehl
Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: Sachi A. Hamai
Chief Executive Office

REPORT BACK ON PLAN TO ENHANCE FIELD OFFICE SERVICES IN THE PUBLIC WORKS DISTRICT OFFICES (ITEM NO. 2, AGENDA OF MAY 10, 2016)

On May 10, 2016, the Board of Supervisors (Board), directed the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), in conjunction with the Directors of Public Works (DPW) and Regional Planning (DRP), Fire Department, Public Health, Treasurer-Tax Collector, and Department of Consumer and Business Affairs, to report back to the Board in two weeks at its meeting of May 24, 2016 for discussion on a plan to expand and provide additional Field Office Services in the ten existing Public Works Building and Safety District Offices, and to develop additional Local One Stop Centers, as needed, in order to create convenient Local One Stop Centers for Countywide constituents, including expedited plan check and premium fee services, e-filing and same day services, with performance metrics and zoning enforcement services, as well as other "public counter" services provided by the County that could be brought to neighborhood scale, including a comparison of budget scenarios for Local One Stop Center expansion and the development of a Regional One Stop Center; and a plan to improve existing and future space utilization, including restacking existing space for efficiency, developing additional space, as feasible, accommodating additional DRP staff with space to co-locate at each Local District Office, accommodating other Departments with co-location space needs at the Local One Stop Center, and implementation in conjunction with EPIC-LA web-based portal and e-filing program to ensure seamless, enhanced local service delivery.

"To Enrich Lives Through Effective And Caring Service"

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Intra-County Correspondence Sent Electronically Only**

Background

There are ten existing Building and Safety District Offices (Field Offices) located throughout the County. The City of Carson is not a Field Office since its purpose is to serve the City of Carson, but it does provide services to a small County unincorporated area.

DPW maintains staff in each Field Office. DRP maintains staff in eight of the Field Offices, and the remaining departments provide staffing and services at varied levels. Past efforts to provide greater services in the Field Offices have resulted in several of the offices being enhanced with greater service (three or more departments present in the office resulting in more services provided). The services for each Field Office are listed on the Departmental Services by Field Office (Attachment I). Today, the Antelope Valley, Calabasas, and East Los Angeles Field Offices are considered enhanced in that they provide a wider range of services than the standard Field Offices (two or fewer departments present in the office). Opportunities to further enhance these offices do exist, as well as the possibility of creating new enhanced Field Offices at the South Whittier and/or La Puente, Southwest, and San Gabriel offices. The Santa Clarita office should be considered for enhancement, but as a secondary priority.

With respect to land development services, the Field Offices are unique from the DPW and DRP headquarters offices in that they typically provide services only for ministerial, or over-the-counter permit types that do not require the more complex level of review and public hearings that typically occur with discretionary cases, although some simpler discretionary cases may also be processed in select field offices. Discretionary cases include subdivisions, conditional use permits, zone changes, specific plans, general plan amendments, and an appropriate California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) document and Mitigation Monitoring Plan.

Existing Local Field Office Services - DPW

Building and Safety Division provides the following services at the Field Offices:

- Building plan review (mechanical/plumbing and electrical plan review services are provided at headquarters)
- Building Inspection
- Property rehabilitation and code enforcement
- Single lot drainage and grading plan review

- Issuance of all ministerial building permits (except those for County Capital Projects)

In addition, Land Development Division has five small local permit offices staffed with Construction Inspectors who inspect public road and flood infrastructure under encroachment permits issued to private contractors and utility companies. They are primarily located within Road Maintenance District yards in Baldwin Park, Downey, Westchester, and Palmdale. The fifth Permit Office is located in the Santa Clarita Building & Safety District Field Office. A portion of the public infrastructure construction inspection work is done in conjunction with subdivision, commercial, industrial, and multifamily residential development permits.

DPW Development Services provides a wide range of highly specialized services from the following divisions at the Alhambra Headquarters Office: Building and Safety, Land Development, Traffic and Lighting, Survey Mapping and Property Management, Environmental Programs, Waterworks, Sewer Maintenance, and Geotechnical and Materials Engineering. The services by each division are listed on the Service Matrix (Attachment II).

Expedited plan review services are currently provided within available staffing and budgets on a case-by-case basis with no additional fees. Providing increased expedited plan check services would likely require a fee study to determine a fee structure that would cover the premium portion of overtime likely required to meet customer demand. "Red Team" meeting opportunities are also available at the local Field Offices and Alhambra headquarters upon the request. These meetings bring together department staff, constituents, and project proponents to address issues early on and answer questions usually before detailed plans are submitted for review. The results of these meetings are usually higher quality plans, greater efficiency, and quicker plan review.

It is essential that DPW continue to provide decentralized ministerial permit services and building code enforcement through its local Field Offices in order to serve the many unincorporated areas geographically disbursed throughout the County. Even with the advent of EPIC-LA, which will ultimately move all permit and plan review processes online, inspection, property rehabilitation, and code enforcement services will continue to be provided by Field Offices because of the geographical location of the projects and issues in the communities.

The following table shows the number of permits issued for all the Field Offices and the cities served under contract with the County.

Permits Issued by DPW						
Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Total
Permits	40,514	42,801	45,389	45,640	50,719	225,063

Land Development and Environmental Programs Division inspection staff are located in one or more Building & Safety Field Offices, but their role is not to provide plan review and permit issuance services. They provide infrastructure and environmental inspection services within the local communities.

Existing Field Office Services – DRP

DRP also handles ministerial and discretionary projects. Ministerial projects are generally initiated by residents and business owners to improve their properties. Review and approval of these types of permits involve verifying development standards, such as structure heights and setbacks, and is completed by DRP staff in the field offices, as well as the DRP headquarters.

There are two types of discretionary permits: those involving a public hearing process, and those processed administratively. Review of these permits is done at DRP headquarters and the final decision is made by a Hearing Officer, or the Regional Planning Commission, after the matter is heard and public testimony is provided. The administrative discretionary permits are reviewed and processed by DRP staff and do not involve a public hearing process. They do, however, include public notification and analysis of public comments, even though they are small in scale and generally non-controversial in nature. The following table shows a comparison of the number of different case types processed by DRP over the last five years:

Permits Issued by DRP						
Type of Permit	Year					Total
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	
Ministerial	3,507	3,656	4,288	4,525	5,222	21,198
Discretionary Non-Public Hearing	336	379	402	403	343	1,863
Discretionary Public Hearing	247	255	302	346	315	1,465
Total	4,090	4,290	4,992	5,274	5,880	24,526

DRP must provide planning services to all unincorporated communities, and services should be locally accessible because planning is fundamentally geographically oriented. However, complete decentralization of DRP is not feasible due to its size, budget, and the interconnectivity of its various functions. For this reason, a significant need exists for both the Regional One Stop as well as the district field offices. Most of DRP's customers utilize its Field Offices and the ministerial functions of its Land Development Coordinating Center, but a vast majority of its case processing staff time is used to process discretionary cases. The Regional One Stop is perhaps even more critical than enhancement of the Field Offices because there is no multi-departmental facility to serve discretionary customers today.

DRP Improved Its Field Office Services

In 2004, DRP's field operations consisted of one full-time planner traveling to different Building and Safety Field Offices and increased over time. In 2007, DRP significantly expanded its field operation, housed in eight DPW Building and Safety Field Offices, by nearly doubling the number of staff from seven to thirteen well-qualified veteran planners with various planning expertise. These planners have worked in, or live near, the communities they serve, and have the skills necessary to "assist" applicants to navigate through the County's often-complex multi-agency permitting process. The Field Offices process over 40 percent of all DRP ministerial permits.

DRP's Field Offices operation has significantly enhanced customer service for property and business owners for the following reasons:

- Designated Planner: DRP planners were consistently assigned to specific field offices improving continuity and obtaining local expertise. The same planner is also available to applicants and other County agencies over the entire course of a project.
- Cradle-to-Grave Service: Due to the schedule and consistent office assignment, small project applicants are able have a planner who provides single point of contact for ministerial permits from initial counseling to final approval. With consistency and continuity in both schedule and staffing, project review time has been significantly reduced.
- Approvals of Permits: DRP Field Offices operation has expanded services to provide consultation, review, and approval of small-scale discretionary permits that do not require public hearings. Because these permits are small in scale,

the need to quickly convene multi-department consultation and complete the required notification at the Field Offices is critical in order to render a final decision.

A cost-benefit study performed by DRP in the Year 2012 estimated that the field office operation saved 20,000 customers close to \$2 million annually in gas, parking fees, traveling time, project delay, and coordination time.

Plan to Create Additional Enhanced Field Offices

Workload data suggests that it would be beneficial to provide additional resources to the Antelope Valley, Calabasas, and East Los Angeles offices, and establish additional Enhanced Field Offices at the South Whittier and/or La Puente, Southwest and San Gabriel offices. The permits issued between 2011 and 2015 are listed on the Permit Distribution (Attachment III).

Expanding services at the remaining field office locations is not recommended at this time, as it would create a loss of productivity and efficiency due to insufficient case volumes to support the additional resources required to sustain an enhanced facility.

Budget Comparison – Regional One Stop and Enhanced Field Offices

At this time, it is not possible to compare costs for the proposed Regional One Stop (Regional Center) to a plan to provide additional Enhanced Field Offices. Departments must first identify the resources needed to implement the Enhanced Field Office plan. These resources include staffing, space, technology, and other resources needed to support the Field Office. Once these factors are known, each office can be inventoried, costs developed, and an implementation timeline created. While we cannot quantify the cost for the Field Offices at this time, we believe these costs would be minor due to the limited renovation, and utilization of existing space. If the departments needed to add additional staff to the Field offices, these new costs may result in increased fees.

The estimated annual costs for the proposed Regional Center are \$5,954,000. These proposed costs will be offset by existing costs from the departments, with the exception of \$1,388,000 in new net County costs (NCC) for DRP, TTC, and DBCA. This additional NCC is included in the Fiscal Year 2016-17 Recommended Budget. Current plan check and permitting fees are not planned to be increased to offset these costs.

Technology Solutions

The EPIC-LA web-based and e-filing system is implemented at DRP and will be in service at DPW in the next 12 to 18 months. Currently, DPW offers electronic submittal and review services for building, land development, soils and geology, and survey documents based on an in-house developed IT solution. It is highly encouraged that other departments that have a role in the development process also implement EPIC-LA to ensure a seamless and enhanced service delivery to the constituents that the County serves.

This system may have a positive impact on staffing of the Field Offices since plan review services and permit issuance could be done in the near future on-line without the need for customers visiting the field offices. This means that multiple plan checkers and planners do not need to be in a decentralized location. They can be located where space is available in any Field Office or at headquarters.

Many customers will continue to use traditional methods to file cases by visiting offices in person and/or producing non-electronic application materials. This is a customer service question for the County. Electronic case filing could be made mandatory, but this would negatively impact smaller or less technologically well informed customers who may not have the financial resources to design their project in a digital design format.

All offices should be evaluated to inventory their current queuing systems and employ consistent technologies necessary to enhance the customer service experience. Solutions exist that message personal mobile phones alerting the customer that it is their turn to receive services. Other similar solutions are available. An online appointment system should also be considered to enhance the experience.

Enhanced videoconferencing solutions are utilized extensively today and should be considered standard for all offices. Applications, such as GoToWebinar, are very popular, easy to use and require little in terms of hardware. Such applications would allow meetings to take place between offices, headquarters, and with customers in a relatively easy manner without people having the need to leave their offices. The departments will also explore expanding these services to include options such as Skype.

Each Supervisor
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Conclusion

These options, along with the information requested by the Board in a related motion on April 26, 2016, will be presented to the Board at the May 24, 2016 meeting. The departments remain committed to working through any operational issues associated with whichever option the Board selects, and will continue to strive for greater inter-departmental collaboration and enhanced customer service.

In summary, to achieve the desired outcomes supporting the Board priorities in the areas of economic development, new affordable and equitable housing, sustainable resilient communities, job creation, operational effectiveness, and improved customer service, it is our collective recommendation that a two-pronged approach is necessary. The first being establishment of a collocated Regional One Stop Center to serve our customer base processing discretionary development permits at a location most desirable to the Board; and secondly, developing a program to enhance services at additional Field Offices to improve customer service for those customers seeking ministerial building permits in their local communities.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact David Howard, Assistant Chief Executive Officer at (213) 893-2477, or e-mail at dhoward@ceo.lacounty.gov

SAH:JJ:DPH
BMB:MDS:mds

Attachments

c: Executive Office, Board of Supervisors
County Counsel
Consumer and Business Affairs
Fire
Public Health
Public Works
Regional Planning
Treasurer and Tax Collector

Department of Public Works Development Services
 Services provided at Department of Public Works Headquarters

Building and Safety	Land Development	Traffic & Lighting	Survey Mapping & Property Management	Environmental Program	Waterworks	Sewer Maintenance	Geotechnical & Materials Engineering
Mechanic/Plumbing and electrical plan review	Street Plans	Street Lighting Plans and Annexations	Record of Surveys	Underground Tanks	Water Systems Inspection	Consolidation Sewer Maintenance District Annexations	Geology report review
Solar photovoltaic plan review	Sewer Plans	Traffic Signal Plans	Corner Records	Methane Gas Mitigation Plans	Water system infrastructure plan review	Sewer system transfer plan check	Soils report review
County Capital Projects plan review and permit issuance	Water Plans	Traffic Studies	Survey Records	Storm Water Treatment	Issuance of Will Serve Letters	Second Unit Certifications	Geologic site inspection
	Subdivision Grading Permits	Landscaping Maintenance District management	Street Vacations		Issuance of connection fees	Tap and Saddle permits	
	Storm Drain Plans		Certification of Compliance Offers of Dedication		Fire Flow Availability		
	Hydrology, Hydraulics and Drainage Studies				Occupancy sign-off		
	Bridge & Major Thoroughfare management						
	Tract and Parcel Map						
	CEQA document review						
	Signing & Striping Plans						

County of Los Angeles
 Service Matrix for the Departments of Regional Planning, Public Works, Fire, Public Health, Consumer and Business Affairs, and Treasurer and Tax Collector
 At Existing Field Offices

DEPARTMENT/SERVICES	DRP Headquarters	Enhanced Field Offices			Standard Field Offices					Specialized or Contract City		
		SD5	SD3	SD1	SD2	SD4	SD5	SD 4	SD 5	Carson	Universal	Lomita
		Antelope Valley	Calabasas	East Los Angeles	Southwest	South Whittier	Santa Clarita	La Puente	San Gabriel			
Regional Planning												
Services												
Case Intake - Ministerial	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Approval - Ministerial	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Case Intake - Discretionary	X	X		No	No	No	X	X	X	X		
Approval - Discretionary public hearing	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No		
Approval - Discretionary non-public hearing	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Multi-Dept Consultation	X	X	X	X	No	No	No	No	No	No		
Zoning Enforcement	X	X	X	X	X	No	X	No	No	No		
Staffing												
FO Planner		1	1	1	1	0.5	1	1	1.5			
Clerk		1	0	0	0.25	0	0	1	0.75			
ZE Planner				4								
Public Works												
Building & Safety Non-Discretionary Permits												
Building	X*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Electrical	X*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Mechanical	X*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Plumbing	X*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Drainage/Grading	X*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Building & Safety Plan Review												
Building	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Electrical	X											
Mechanical	X											
Plumbing	X											
Drainage/Grading	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Building & Safety Other Services												
Inspection		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Code Enforcement/Property Rehabilitation	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
* Only for County Projects												
Waterworks Districts												
Water system infrastructure plan review	X											
Inspection										X	X	
Issuance of Will Serve letters	X									X	X	
Issuance of connection fees	X									X	X	
Fire Flow Availability	X									X	X	
Occupancy sign off										X		
Sewer Maintenance												
Plan Check	X											
Second Unit Certificates	X											
Tap and Saddle	X											
Environmental Programs												
Industrial Waste Pretreatment Program Plan Review/Permitting/Annual Permitting Renewal	X											
Industrial Waste Pretreatment Program Public Records	X											

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		SD5	SD3	SD1	SD2	SD4	SD5	SD 4	SD 5	Carson	Universal	Lomita	
		Antelope Valley	Calabasas	East Los Angeles	Southwest	South Whittier	Santa Clarita	La Puente	San Gabriel				
Industrial Waste Pretreatment Program Inspections				X		X	X		X			X	
Industrial Waste Pretreatment Program Violation Notice Issuance/Enforcement	X			X		X	X		X			X	
Hazardous Substances Underground Storage Tank Program Plan Review/Permitting/Annual Permitting Renewal	X												
Hazardous Substances Underground Storage Tank Program Public Records	X												
Hazardous Substances Underground Storage Tank Program Inspections				X		X	X		X			X	
Hazardous Substances Underground Storage Tank Program Violation Notice Issuance/Enforcement	X			X		X	X		X			X	
Stormwater Registration/Certification	X												
Stormwater Certification Inspections				X		X	X		X			X	
Stormwater Certification Violation Notice Issuance/Enforcement	X			X		X	X		X			X	
Commercial/Industrial Plan Screening/Public Assistance	X			X		X	X		X			X	
		* 1st Wednesday											
Survey/Mapping & Property Management													
R/W Engineering Public Counter	X												
Survey Public Counter	X												
Records of Survey examinations	X												
Corner Record examinations	X												
Geotechnical and Materials Engineering													
Development Review (reports & plans)	X												
Land Development Permits													
Road	X												
Storm Drain	X												
Sewer	X												
Excavation	X												
Land Development Plan Review													
Road	X												
Storm Drain/Hydrology	X												
Grading	X												
Landscape	X												
Sewer	X												
Traffic and Lighting													
Street Lighting Plan Check	X												
Landscape Maintenance District Plan Check	X												
Traffic Impact Analysis Report Reviews	X												
					Fire								
Building Plan Check	X	X	X				X						
Fire Alarm Plan Reviews	X												
Fire Sprinkler Plan Reviews	X	X	X				X						

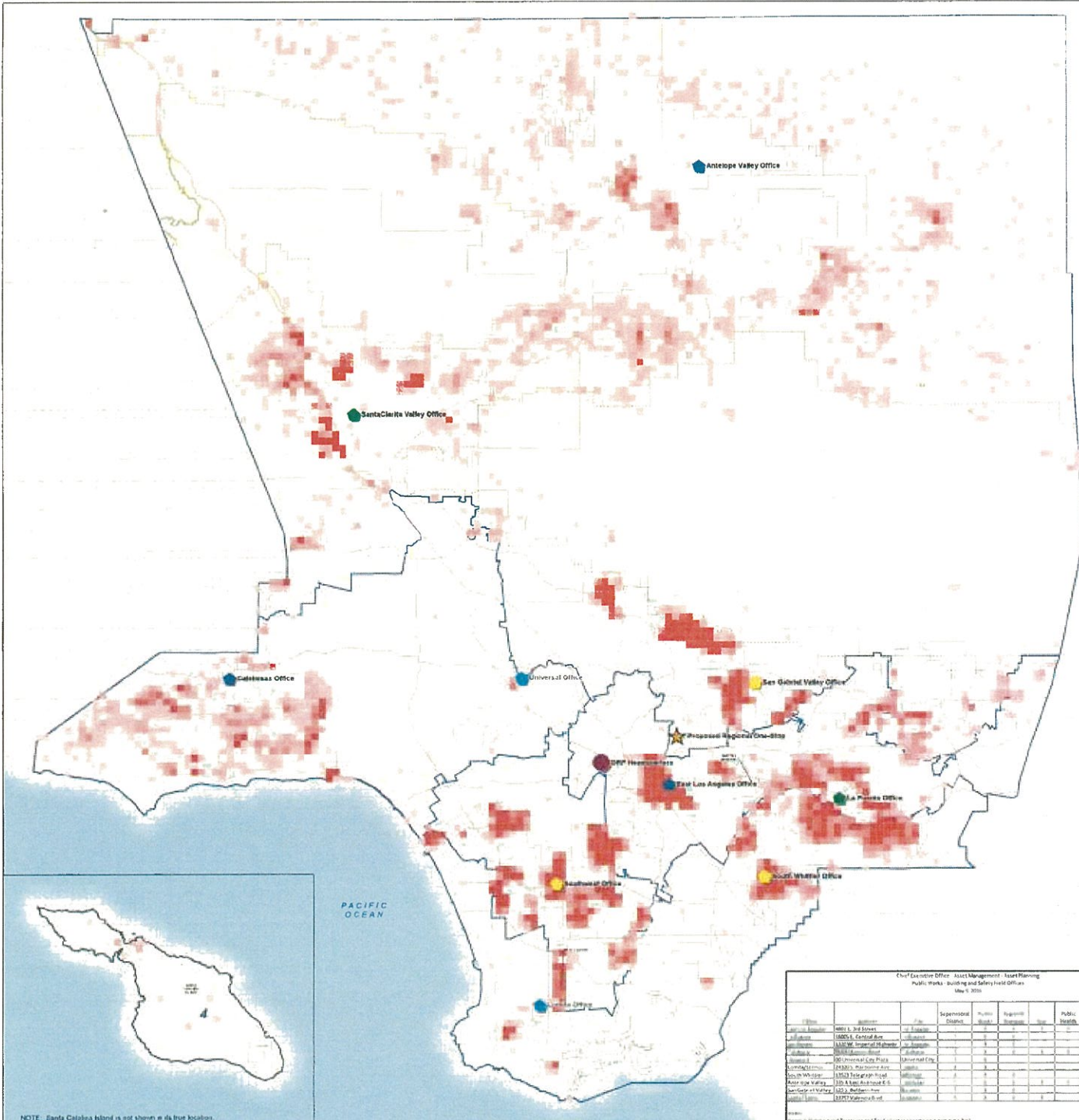
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		Antelope Valley	Calabasas	East Los Angeles	Southwest	South Whittier	Santa Clarita	La Puente	San Gabriel			
Conditional Use Permits	X											
Final Map Review	X											
Parcel Map Review	X											
Tract Maps	X											
Water Plans	X											
Permit and Plan Inspections		X	X	X			X		X	X	X	
Annual Inspections		X	X	X			X		X	X	X	
Code Enforcement		X	X	X			X		X	X	X	
Fire Code Permits		X	X	X			X		X	X	X	
Public Health												
Septic Review Program - Reviews and approves septic system plans		X	X									
Drinking Water Program - Reviews and approves plans for water wells and monitoring wells		X										
Plan Check Program - Reviews and approves plans for food facilities		X		X								
Cross Connection Program - Reviews and approves plans for recycled water and alternate water systems.			X									
DSE Program - Permit fee processing, administrative hearings, consultations. Staff inspect food facilities, housing, and public pools.		X		X								
Consumer and Business Affairs												
East LA County Hall Services Coordinator				X								
Treasurer and Tax Collector												
Application Intake/Public Service Enforcement	X X	X*					X*					
*Note: TTC operates on a part-time basis in these offices. Antelope Valley is open Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. Santa Clarita is open Monday and Wednesday.												

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

Distribution of Permits
(Ministerial and Discretionary)

January 2011 - December 2015 (5 years)



LEGEND:

- ◆ District Field Office
 - ◆ Other DPW Field Office
 - ◆ Existing Enhanced District Field Office
 - ◆ Potential Enhanced District Field Office
 - ★ Proposed Regional One Stop
 - DRP Headquarters
 - ▭ Supervisory District
 - ▭ National Forest
 - ▭ Incorporated City
 - ▭ Unincorporated Area (Shaded)
- Total Permits - Summarized by 1/2 Mile Grid
- 1 - 5
 - 6 - 10
 - 11 - 15
 - 16 - 20
 - 21 - 205

NOTES:

VICINITY MAP:



Chief Executive Officer - Asset Management - Asset Planning
Public Works - Building and Safety Field Offices
May 6, 2015

Office	Address	City	Supervisory District	Public Works	Regional	Other	Public Health	Traffic and Transportation	Community Affairs
Antelope Valley Office	4801 E. 2nd Street	Antelope Valley	14						
Castroville Office	1800 S. Central Ave	Castroville	1						
Chico Office	1435 W. Center St	Chico	2						
Chico Office	2000 E. Main St	Chico	2						
Chico Office	100 Central Ave	Chico	2						
Chico Office	14200 N. Main St	Chico	2						
Chico Office	15500 Telegraph Road	Chico	2						
Chico Office	170 N. Main St	Chico	2						
Chico Office	100 S. Main St	Chico	2						
Chico Office	1000 N. Main St	Chico	2						
Chico Office	1000 N. Main St	Chico	2						
Chico Office	1000 N. Main St	Chico	2						

NOTE: Santa Catalina Island is not shown in its true location.