City of Dallas

Evaluation of a Web-Based Solar Permitting Platform-SolarAPP+ for the City of Dallas

Environmental Commission
May 7, 2025

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Background

- Slower than the municipal average review times for solar in the City were reported
- We had not reassessed our solar permitting process as we had our other processes
- We were asked to review SolarAPP+ as an alternative review process

Purpose

Compare our current processes to the SolarAPP+ processes and review our own internal processes for possible improvements.

Solar App Findings

Positives

- Promises instant plan review approval
- When integrated properly also handles all financial transactions
- Works with all currently adopted codes
- Can be altered to meet local and state amendments
- Would lower staff workload

Solar App Findings

Negatives

- No plans are submitted
- It is only a checklist
- Multiple common issues in a plan review would not be able to be reviewed prior to permit issuance
- Integration costs would be on the City
- Additional field inspections may be required

City of Houston

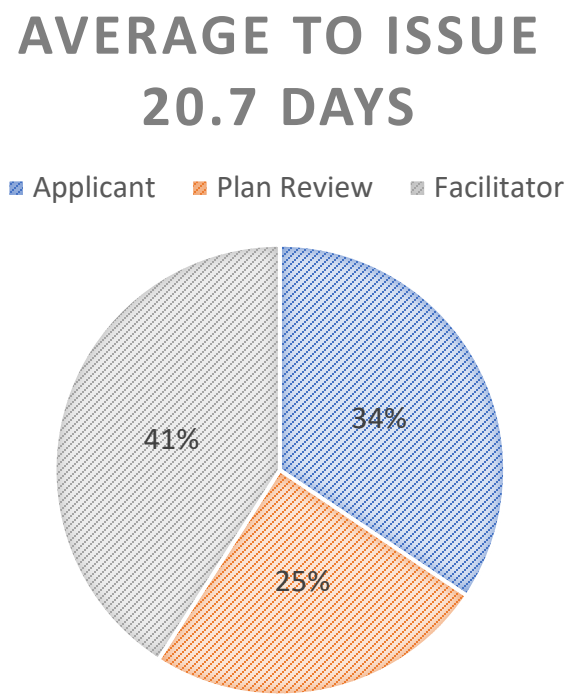
- Adopted at the request of their council members
- Have done solar only
- Roughly half of their solar permits go through SolarAPP+
- Working on a pilot program for solar+storage
- An electrical contractor is the primary there, whereas ours is a building contractor
- Have had issues with contractors faking submissions to gain instant approval
- They have almost no zoning requirements

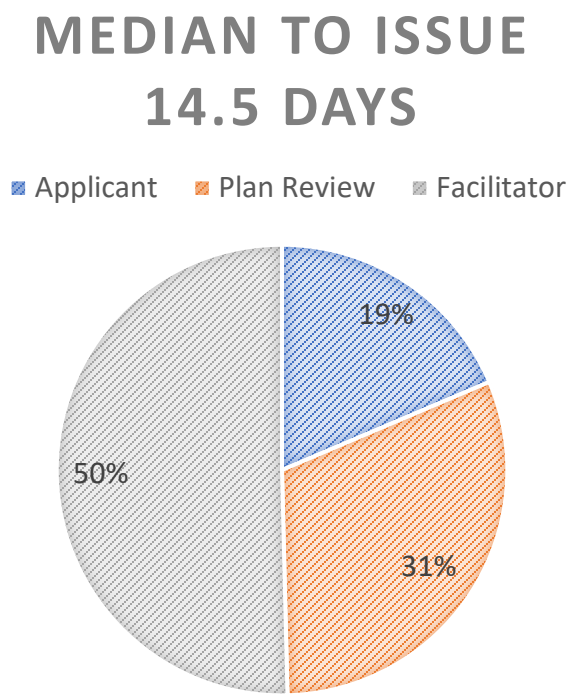
City of San Antonio

- Adopted on a pilot due to staff workload
- Workload is shrinking ad they are looking to back away from it
- Found that it adds more work for the field staff
- Have had the same issues with contractors faking submissions
- They do have more complex zoning, but not as detailed as Dallas

Internal Findings

Review of our own turnaround times from the last fiscal year netted these results:





Internal Findings

- These times are too long for a standard solar only permit on dwellings
- We feel we can drastically reduce the solar only processing times

Corrective Actions

- Applicant time can be reduced by cutting the number of cycles they have
- Intake staff are now performing intake at the same time as the building/zoning reviews
- 24-hour clocks are being placed on the electrical reviews

Internal Conclusion

After customer payment, we feel we can lower review times well under three days and possibly within 24 hours.

Future Proposals

- Dallas now will go live on May 5th
- We are too late into its implementation
- SolarAPP+ may be able to be integrated
- Proposed legislation at the state level may make any discussions moot
- We would not look to adopt solar+storage approvals on SolarAPP+

Staff Recommendation

- Staff recommends the newly implemented changes as we move into our new land management program
- Reevaluation can occur once the first phase of Dallas now has concluded

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