


Office of the City Manager

September 18, 2014

To: Honorable Mayor and City Councilmembers
From: Christine Daniel, City Manager 
Subject: Customer Service Upgrade: Zoning Certificates Online

Starting today, the City allows community members to research planning permits or to apply and pay for some simple planning permits through the [Online Service Center](#). Navigate to cityofberkeley.info/onlineservicecenter and, under the banner of "Building & Zoning," clicking on "Zoning Permits: Apply, Pay or Research."

BACKGROUND

The first permits available through this new feature are zoning certificates for low-impact home occupations and zoning certificates for business licenses. On average, the City processes approximately 700 zoning certificates per year. Previously, a customer seeking zoning clearance for a new business would apply in-person at the Permit Service Center. Now, the customer has the option of applying online and submitting payment quickly and securely from the comfort of home. This will not only save time for customers, but it will also help increase the efficiency of the Permit Service Center. Additionally, the new online research function allows people to look up property information and zoning permit history on any property in Berkeley.

This upgrade is part of a series of technological improvements that will eventually provide customers access to an array of City services and information. It is a feature of Accela, a software suite the City has been using to streamline various processes. Last fall, the Land Use Planning Division of the Planning and Development Department started using Accela to create permits, invoice fees, collect payment, and track workflow progress. This spring and summer, Land Use Planning worked closely with the Finance and Information Technology Departments to implement Accela's online component (i.e. the Online Service Center's new feature). This effort was a direct response to staff and community member requests for a way to obtain simple permits and to research zoning permits and land use history online.

cc: Beth Pollard, Interim Deputy City Manager
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