



Date: September 29, 2023

To: Thomas B. Modica, City Manager 

From: Christopher Koontz, Director of Development Services 

For: Mayor and Members of the City Council

Subject: **Long Beach Renewable Energy Permitting Program**

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On [November 15, 2022](#), the City Council adopted a motion by Councilmember Allen requesting that the City Manager and Development Services Department (Department) report back on how to update and streamline solar installation, permitting and inspection processes. Subsequently the Department applied for, and was awarded, funds from the California Automated Permit Processing Program grant and on [February 7, 2023](#), the City Council authorized the Department to utilize these funds in an effort to streamline this process. Since then, the Department's Building and Safety Bureau, in conjunction with the City of Long Beach's (City) Technology and Innovation Department, has developed an online permit system, Renewable Energy Permits, to comply with the Senate Bill 379 (SB 379) mandate. This permit system enables applicants of residential renewable energy systems (e.g., solar, energy storage, and electrical vehicle charging stations) to submit projects up to 38.4 kilowatts capacity, complete the application and checklist, pay the associated fees and obtain the permit online. This new Renewable Energy Permits system is currently undergoing beta testing and is anticipated to become available for use by October 2, 2023. The City's Building and Safety website will be updated to announce the program by late-September 2023.

SB 379 requires cities to expedite renewable energy projects. Through the new SB 379-compliant online permit system, applicants can provide the City with necessary technical and relevant project information to obtain permits for their projects. The goal is to fully automate the process for most solar and related permit applications.

Online automated Renewable Energy Permits were developed to integrate with the City's existing permit software, INFOR, in an attempt to avoid duplicate permit entries associated with third-party software, such as the State recommended Energy APP system. Additionally, the new system ensures the maximum fee thresholds specified by the State are not exceeded, and applicants are not charged extra fees.

If an applicant submits a project that does not fully comply with the associated checklist requirements, or simply needs further assistance, City staff will contact the applicant to assist with bringing their project into compliance, eventually leading to issuing a permit. As the permit issuance is automated, full code compliance verification is still conducted albeit in the inspection phase of the projects. Code violations will be discussed with the applicant in the field and, as necessary, sent back as a revision to the original permit submittal by the project applicants.

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While portions of the process are automated, inspections and revision submittals are not automated and require trained Permit Technicians and other City staff to assist applicants through revision, review, and approval. The Department continues to work with the Civil Service and Human Resources Departments to address acute and critical staffing shortages particularly among Inspection and Permit Center staff. The ultimate success of the renewable energy program depends not on technology but on the staff needed to operate that technology and assist customers. The Department will only be able to further expand this renewable energy permit streamlining effort beyond the current phase when staffing levels improve.

Should you have any questions regarding this memorandum, please contact David Khorram, Superintendent of Building and Safety, Building Official, at [David.Khorram@longbeach.gov](mailto:David.Khorram@longbeach.gov) or (562) 570-7713.

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