*City of Pittsburgh, PA*

# BUREAU OF BUILDING INSPECTIONS: A PROGRESS REVIEW

## FINAL REPORT

December 31, 2012

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# PROJECT SUMMARY AND KEY FINDINGS

In July 2008, a study of Pittsburgh's Bureau of Building Inspections (BBI) was conducted by TriData for the Intergovernmental Cooperation Authority (ICA). The purpose of the review was to identify the critical issues within the Bureau and its operation and suggest solutions. TriData, a Division of System Planning Corporation, is located in Arlington, VA.

At the request of the ICA, TriData conducted a follow-up review to assess the progress made by BBI since the 2008 study. For this 'progress review' TriData created a series of questions relative to the significant findings contained in the 2008 report and submitted them to BBI staff for comment. TriData also conducted a series of meetings on site with BBI staff and inspectors to ascertain progress, since there seemed to be conflict in the responses of BBI to the questionnaire and the opinion of those familiar with the situation.

The most critical issues identified by TriData during the 2008 study involved:

- A need to appoint a new BBI Chief
- Leadership voids within BBI
- Absence of inspector accountability
- A need for additional vehicles for inspectors
- Process issues with violation notices
- Absentee property owners and abatement of blighted areas
- Overburdened 3-1-1 system
- Need for improved technology including on-line permitting
- Lack of funding
- Space and accessibility problems at BBI's Ross Street offices

As part of this review, TriData also conducted a telephone interview with Michael Lamb, Pittsburgh's elected Controller. The Controller's office conducted a review of BBI in 2008 and followed up with another assessment in 2011, to determine BBI's progress. It was the opinion of the Controller's office that BBI has been unable to make significant progress on improving its operation. Paramount among the concerns expressed by the Controller is the absence of leadership within BBI to "follow through" on initiatives and see them to completion. Data collection using available technology and not using vehicles that were purchased to improve the efficiency of inspectors were also problems, according to the Controller.

However, a 2011 report by the Controller of BBI progress does show that progress was made in many areas. The inability of citizens and contractors to apply for permits on-line and

having incorrect information on file about the ownership of properties was a major concern of the Controller and these areas remain in need of improvement.

It is notable that the responses provided by BBI to TriData as part of this review reflect that BBI did make significant progress since the TriData study. This is counter to the opinion of the City Controller, which looked at BBI in 2011. For this study we reviewed the study of the Controller's 2011 review. The Executive Summary of the Controller's report can be found in Appendix A.

Following the interview of the City Controller and the review of written responses by BBI staff to the inquiry, it was requested that TriData conduct on-site interviews with BBI staff to determine the extent of progress, if any. On-site interviews with BBI senior staff were conducted on October 17 and 18. TriData also conducted interviews of BBI inspectors.

Following is the summary of TriData's 2012 on-site review:

There were several areas in which Pittsburgh's Bureau of Building Inspections (BBI) had made significant progress:

- Technical supervision for major construction code enforcement was improved with the hiring of a third Project Chief who is certified to supervise electrical as well as building, fire and mechanical inspectors.
  - The span of control for Project Chiefs has improved from a ratio of 1 Project Chief to 22 Senior Inspectors in 2008 to a ratio of 1 to 9 in 2012.
- All Senior Inspectors have the required UCC or ICC certifications or are in training:
  - Seventeen (17) Senior Inspectors responsible for enforcing the construction codes have the required UCC or ICC certifications and 1 is in training. Several inspectors have more certifications than the minimum. Four (4) Senior Inspectors are being hired so (21) of the 22 Senior Inspector positions are filled.
  - All 7 Electrical Inspectors are certified as UCC Electrical Inspectors. Three (3) Electrical Inspectors are on medical leave.
  - The 3 Fire Prevention Inspectors are certified as UCC Building Inspectors and UCC Fire Inspectors.
- All newly hired Code and Demo Inspectors are required to be certified as ICC Property Maintenance Inspectors even though Pennsylvania UCC does not have a requirement for Property Maintenance Inspector.
  - All 12 Property Maintenance Code Inspectors positions are filled, two of which are in training.

  - Five (5) Code Inspectors are grandfathered and are not certified, 5 are certified and 2 are in training.

- Forty-eight (48) cars were purchased; GPS systems were installed, and are in use by the BBI field inspectors. In 2008, there were only four vehicles assigned to the department.
- The use of technology was significantly improved for BBI permitting and licensing and property maintenance code field inspection reporting with the implementation of a purchased software product, Accela, which is also used by other city departments including Planning, Public Works and others as well as BBI.
  - BBI has not been able to implement the on-line permit application process. Applicants can download the application, but still must print the form and take the form to BBI. The on-line application is provided in Appendix B.
  - More progress is needed in both BBI and City Information Systems before web-based permitting; field inspection reporting for construction code inspectors and interfacing of 3-1-1 calls can be implemented.
- Good progress has been made in filling vacant positions for inspectors since 2008
  - Several other positions remained unfilled, the most notable of which are the BBI Bureau Chief and the Business Technology Analyst.
- Considerable progress has been made in demolishing blighted buildings. Since 2008, an average of $3.6 million has been budgeted for demolition with 2,471 buildings being razed. The number of abandoned properties is now beginning to recede to the point where demolitions could probably decrease each year. The City has budgeted another $3.0 million for demolition in 2013.

In other areas, BBI made less progress, in some cases due to circumstances outside BBI control:

- A permanent BBI Chief was appointed, only to resign after serving about one year in the position to accept a position in the private sector. Subsequently, an Acting Bureau Chief was assigned and is currently serving.
- The Business Technology Analyst vacancy, required for implementing software in BBI, was not filled since 2008; however, a city employee applicant has been identified.
  - Process improvements in violations and other areas are dependent upon this analyst.

- A rental property registration program was defeated in the court system.
- The operating budget for BBI has remained relatively constant since 2008 with an increase of 4% over the four years and the budget for demolitions decreased 16%.
  - Since 2008, revenue collected decreased 17% more than likely due to the severe downturn in construction experienced nation-wide.
  - The City has not changed the financial model for BBI from a general fund department to an enterprise fund

# BBI STUDY: MAJOR FINDINGS, PROGRESS QUESTIONS, AND RESPONSES FROM BBI

Following are the more specific findings of this study. For ease of reference we begin by showing each of the major findings identified as "Problem X." Following the problem is a summary of the findings related to the problem in the 2008 study. We then follow by showing the findings of this 'progress review", followed by the actual answers provided by BBI to the questions prepared by TriData and submitted to BBI that are related to the particular problem. The responses by BBI are italicized.

**Problem 1:** The number one problem facing BBI is the absence of effective leadership and management ability at the top.

***2008 Report Findings*** – BBI has had several changes in the Bureau Chief's position in the past several years. Ideally the Bureau Chief would possess a mix of proven skills including:

- A vision of how to change the culture of BBI into a highly skilled professional code enforcement bureau,
- Strong code enforcement management experience in 'getting the job done' and managing a highly effective code enforcement department,
- Technical expertise based on experience and a high level of professional certification,
- Proven ability to motivate staff, to require a high level of professional certification and to aggressively advocate for employees,
- Dedication to customer service,
- Knowledge of how web-based technology can be effectively used to streamline processes and maximize code enforcement staff efficiency and effectiveness,
- Ideally, experienced with a community-based multi-departmental approach to neighborhood turnaround (i.e., criminal/code enforcement/deteriorating housing stock/development problem solving).

***2012 TriData On-Site Review*** – During four of the last five years, BBI has been managed by Acting Bureau Chiefs. Presently, and for about the last three years, the Assistant Chief of Engineering has functioned as the Acting BBI Bureau Chief as well as performing the duties of his former position. The current Acting Chief of BBI is a registered architect with thirty five years of staff, building code and project management experience and a certified Building Code Official.

Typically, managers appointed in an acting capacity serve as 'caretakers' and, therefore, are reluctant to make significant changes or initiate new organizational directions. Essentially, BBI has operated without a stated vision, a long-term strategy, or performance and customer service goals for achieving the vision for the past five years. Weekly staff meetings of the top BBI management are not routinely held to set goals, review progress, resolve problems and assign tasks.

Seemingly, the problem of vacancies at the department head level exists in other city departments as well as BBI:

- The City Information Systems (CIS) currently is without a department head.
- The Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority has engaged an external firm to manage the authority.
- The Neighborhood Initiatives Director apparently is vacant.
- The EMS Bureau Chief is vacant with an Acting Chief appointed.

Two major impediments may explain the difficulty in recruiting qualified department heads for various functions:

- By city ordinance, a manager may not make more than the Mayor, that is, more than $105,494.
- All city employees must live within the boundaries of the City of Pittsburgh.

By definition, these requirements limit the pool of available, technically qualified resources from which vacancies can be filled.

Consideration could be given to either:

- Appointing a permanent BBI Bureau Chief from current City employees.
- Waving the city residency requirement.
- Providing non-cash incentives or a performance-based bonus in addition to salary for achieving contractual benchmarks, if not prohibited by city ordinance.
- Hiring an independent contractor or a firm to manage BBI.
- Privatizing parts or all of BBI.

The BBI Chief position remains open as shown in the job announcement listed on its website as of August 2012 (Appendix C).

### *BBI Responses to Problem 1*

**1. How has BBI addressed the issue of leadership and management ability?**

*The Acting Chief of BBI is a registered architect with thirty five years of staff, building code and project management experience. He is also a certified Building Code Official. All budget approved managerial positions are filled with experienced and certified staff with the exception of the Business Technology Analyst. A new set of applications and résumés have been forwarded to BBI and interviews for this position are currently being scheduled. The position will be filled with the selection of the best candidate.*

2. **What personnel changes have occurred within senior management since the 2008 study?**

   *The third and final project chief position has been filled.*

3. **Has BBI embraced the "community-based multi-departmental approach to neighborhood turnaround (i.e., criminal/code enforcement/deteriorating housing stock/development problem solving" approach for code enforcement? Explain why or why not.**

   *Yes. BBI participates with other public safety departments, the City Law Department and Allegheny County's Law Department in the Disruptive Property Ordinance. BBI also works with the city's real-estate department, Urban Redevelopment Authority, City Council members and individual community groups to review the current condition of buildings and structures throughout the city. BBI inspects the sites and then determines the need for city condemnation of a deteriorating property or the desire of a property owner or group to rehabilitate the structure for preservation and continued use. The BBI engineering staff makes themselves available for preliminary code reviews with design professionals, developers, and contractors. At this time they review and resolve code discrepancies and problems prior to the project's design completion to avoid delays and revisions during the plan review process. BBI also participates in the Mayor's Civic Leadership Academy when twice a year a one and one half hour presentation is made to a select group of citizens on the operations of the bureau. At this time BBI answers questions and concerns regarding neighborhood situations. BBI also attends community and neighborhood meetings to identify and resolve issues in specific areas.*

**Problem 2:** There is insufficient technical supervision for major code enforcement functions.

### *2008 Report Findings*

- There is no direct supervisory position (Project Chief) for the Property Maintenance Code enforcement function or the 10 Code Inspectors assigned to this function. This function reports to the Field Operations Manager to whom all new construction and electrical inspectors report.

- There is a vacant supervisor position, Project Chief, of the electrical code enforcement section to which 7 Electrical Inspectors report.
- There are only two supervisor positions (Project Chiefs) for 22 building code inspectors and Senior Inspectors, and one of the two positions is vacant due to a long-term absence.
- The Fire Prevention Administrator's position is vacant as he is the Acting Chief of the Bureau.
- ICC certifications required of the Project Chief exempt positions are determined by the Bureau Chief.

It is important to have working supervisors technically certified by UCC/ICC at the highest levels for that function. This creates a professional expert in each functional area (housing, building, electrical, fire, and possibly mechanical if needed) who is capable of:

- Resolving disputes over code interpretations,
- Conducting field training, and
- Insuring consistency of inspections across inspectors by conducting re-inspections and re-training. Consistency in applying construction codes is a hallmark of an outstanding code enforcement bureau.

***2012 TriData On-Site Review*** – The number of technical supervisors has been reduced as positions that were previously vacant have been eliminated or unfunded:

- Project Chief for Electrical Inspections was eliminated.
- Fire Prevention Administrator is unfunded.

A third Project Chief was hired who supervises all electrical inspectors as well as building, fire and mechanical inspectors in the geographical area for which he is responsible.

With the hiring of a third Project Chief, the span of control for Project Chiefs has improved from a ratio of 1 Project Chief to 22 Senior Inspectors in 2008 to 3 Project Chiefs to 28 inspectors in 2012, or an average of 9 inspectors reporting to one Project Chief (18 Senior Inspectors for building and mechanical inspections, 7 Electrical Inspectors, 3 Fire Inspectors).

There was no change in the reporting relationship of the 10 Property Maintenance Code enforcement inspectors and the 2 trainees as they still report to the Field Operations Manager, who in turn reports to the Assistant Chief of Code Enforcement.

The three Project Chiefs have the required certifications including the following: Pennsylvania Uniform Construction Code (UCC), Building Inspector, and Building Code Official. The third Project Chief, recently hired, also is certified as a Residential Electrical

Inspector, Fire Inspector, Commercial Plumbing Inspector, and ICC Property Maintenance Code Inspector.

Consideration could be given to requiring all Project Chiefs to be certified as Fire Inspectors as the separate Fire Prevention Division was eliminated and those inspection functions assigned to the New Construction and Enforcement Division.

### *BBI Responses to Problem 2*

1. **Is the Project Chief for Property Maintenance Code enforcement function and the 10 Code Inspectors currently filled?**

   *The Code Inspectors remain under the supervision of the Field Operations Manager. Interviews to fill Code Inspector vacancies are currently taking place. One qualified candidate has recently been hired and is now a bureau employee.*

2. **Has a Project Chief been hired for electrical code enforcement?**

   *All currently budgeted Project Chief Positions have been filled. Each Project Chief shares the overseeing and management of the Electrical Inspectors.*

3. **Is the Fire Prevention Administrator's position currently filled?**

   *The Fire Prevention Administrator is currently an unfunded position.*

4. **Have organizational changes been made to eliminate any of these positions? If so, how?**

   *One Project Chief Position was eliminated from the current budget. The three funded Project Chief positions have had equal work load and responsibilities divided amongst the three position.*

**Problem 3:** The organization chart of BBI depicts unclear chains of supervision and responsibilities, assigns similar functions to multiple supervisors and does not reflect all of the basic functions being performed.

### *2008 Report Findings*

- Supervisory lines of responsibility are unclear.
- The Fire Prevention Administrator, the Field Operations Manager, and possibly the Demolition Manager appear to report jointly to both the Assistant Chief of Engineering and the Assistant Chief of Code Enforcement.
- The Code Enforcement Section in actuality reports to both the Field Operations Manager and the Assistant Chief of Code Enforcement.
- Clerical staff responsible for electrical permits, demolition, and engineering report to the Chief Clerk.

***2012 TriData On-Site Review*** – Changes have been made to clarify the chain of supervision such as:

- Three Project Chiefs have been assigned the new construction and enforcement responsibility for three geographical districts with fire, building and mechanical inspectors reporting to each Project Chief.
- One Project Chief, who is certified as an electrical inspector, is assigned responsibility for enforcement of the electrical code and all electrical inspectors report to him.
- The Property Maintenance Code inspectors are assigned to the Field Operations Manager who in turn is the only employee reporting to the Assistance Chief of Code Enforcement.
- The Assistant Chief of Engineering, who is also serving as the Acting Bureau Chief, manages the demolition manager and the plan review engineers.

A current organizational chart was created when one was requested. An organizational chart should be updated when changes are made so that responsibility, and thereby accountability, is clearly delineated and performance and customer service goals can be measured. An approach of shared responsibility for functional areas does not facilitate accountability and problem solving.

### *BBI Responses to Problem 3*

1. **The study recommended an improved table of organization to delineate cleaner lines of responsibility and assignment of similar functions. Has this been done?**

   *The operational organization remains unchanged.*

**Problem 4:** BBI may be understaffed to perform the permitting and inspection responsibilities it has.

### *2008 Report Findings*

- Five (5) of the 22 Senior Inspector positions responsible for building codes enforcement are vacant.
- Two (2) of the 3 Project Chief positions responsible for supervising building code and electrical code enforcement are vacant.
- Two (2) of the 4 fire prevention positions are vacant, 1 Fire Inspector I, and 1 Fire Prevention Plan Examiner.

- Three new ordinances have been adopted that will impact the workload of BBI. Estimates of the additional workload for each ordinance should be made to determine the number of and type of additional inspectors needed to enforce these ordinances.
  - November 11, 2007, the City adopted a Storm Water Management ordinance without additional inspectors being added to BBI. BBI does not have an inspector specifically certified for this purpose so Third Party Inspectors are used which results in loss revenue to the City. Potentially, this ordinance should be analyzed to the best agency for enforcing it, Zoning, BBI or Public Works.
  - January 9, 2008, the City adopted a "Disruptive Properties' ordinance without additional inspectors added to BBI.[1]
  - January 9, 2008, the City adopted a "Residential Housing Rental Permit" ordinance without additional inspectors or permitting staff added to BBI.

***2012 TriData On-Site Review*** – Good progress has been made in filling vacant positions for inspectors since 2008; however, several other positions remained unfilled, the most notable of which are the BBI Bureau Chief and the Business Technology Analyst.

In addition, no inspectors were hired for the "Storm Water Management, Disruptive Properties, and residential Housing Rental Permit" programs. Two clerical positions were hired to process the rental registrations; however, the rental registration ordinance was defeated in court.

- Four (4) of the 22 Senior Inspection positions responsible for building codes enforcement are vacant; however, starting dates for 3 new employees are being set and interviews are beginning for the other position.
  - Of the 18 Senior Inspectors current employed, 1 is in training and 1 is on medical leave, but plans to retire in the next month.
- Three (3) of the 7 electrical inspectors are on extended medical leave, one of whom may retire by the end of the year.
- All of the 3 fire prevention inspector positions are filled.
- Two (2) Property Maintenance Code Inspector positions are in training.
- Three (3) clerical positions are currently vacant: 1 full time Clerical Assistant 2, vacant since May 2012; 1 part time Clerical Assistant 2, vacant since August 2009; and 1 Account Clerk, vacant since November 2011.

[1] In their review of this report, the city advised that "Disruptive Properties" would be addressed at the Public Safety Director level, not BBI inspectors.

### *BBI Responses to Problem 4*

1. **Do personnel vacancies exist within BBI? If so, what positions and how long vacant?**

   *Yes.*

   *1 full time Clerical Assistant 2 – Vacant since 05-2012*

   *1 part time Clerical Assistant 2 – Vacant since 08-2009*

   *2 Code Inspectors – Vacant since 08-2010 & 04-2011*

   *3 Senior Inspectors –Vacant since 07-2011, 01-2012 & 04-2012*

   *1 Business Technology Analyst – Vacant since 09-2011*

   *1 Account Clerk – Vacant since 11-2011*

   *1 Chief – Vacant since 10-2008*

2. **Does BBI anticipate hiring any new staff with the next 3-6 months?**

   *Yes. BBI is currently interviewing for all the unfilled positions.*

3. **Were additional inspectors hired for the "Storm Water Management, Disruptive Properties, and residential Housing Rental Permit" programs? If, so how many? How many inspectors are available for these programs now?**

   *No additional inspectors were hired for the listed programs. However, two clericals were hired to process the rental registrations. (Note: Rental registration ordinance was defeated in court.)*

4. **What improvements in technology have been made that resulted in fewer inspectors or staff? Explain.**

   *Code enforcement software has expedited the notice process and assigned vehicles with GPS tracking of inspectors have made them more accountable and efficient with their scheduling of daily field inspections and pick-up inspections.*

**Problem 5:** Many inspectors do not have the minimum certifications required by either the Pennsylvania Uniform Construction Code or the International Code Council.

### *2008 Report Findings*

- Of the current 18 Senior Inspectors II, only 1 has both the UCC Accessibility Inspector/Plans Examiner Certification and the UCC Commercial Energy Inspector Certification and only 1 other inspector has the UCC Residential Energy Inspector Certification.
  - All Senior Inspectors II should be certified as UCC Residential Energy Inspectors (a step toward commercial energy certification) in order to be qualified to perform complete building inspections of one and two- family residential properties.

  - All Senior Inspectors II assigned to commercial property inspections should be certified as both UCC Commercial Energy Inspectors and UCC Accessibility Inspector/Plans Examiners in order to be qualified to perform complete commercial building inspections.
  - Additional pay should be given for each certification obtained until various positions are created which provide hierarchical promotional opportunities based on certifications achieved.
  - Currently, BBI must use the 1 residential energy qualified inspector to perform all residential energy inspections and the 1 commercial energy qualified inspector to perform all commercial energy inspections. All accessibility inspections must be done by the one qualified inspector. This is inefficient as it adds 1 additional inspection trip to all structures requiring energy inspections or the use of Third Party Inspectors which results in lost revenue to the City.
  - To develop greater flexibility in workload assignment for multi-family residential inspections, consideration could be given to certifying more inspectors, perhaps all, as UCC Commercial Energy Inspectors and possibly as UCC Accessibility Inspector/Plans Examiners. The number trained should be based on the number of permits issued for other than 1 and 2 family dwellings that require one or both of these inspections. Inspection efficiency may dictate that all building inspectors become certified as fully qualified commercial inspectors.

- Only one of the 18 Senior Inspectors II are qualified as UCC Mechanical Inspectors qualified to inspect HVAC installations.
  - Determine how many inspectors need to be certified as UCC Residential Mechanical Inspectors and how many as UCC Commercial Mechanical Inspectors based on the number of mechanical permits issued.

The acting BBI Chief proposed in the *Bureau of Building Inspection 2009 Budget and Restructuring* document to bring BBI into compliance with "Federal regulations, State law and City ordinances it is charged with enforcing."

The Pennsylvania Code Act (Act 45 of 1999) and the UCC regulations establish training and certification requirements for all construction code officials in Pennsylvania. Included in the acting BBI Chief's restructuring document is the recommendation "that every individual performing inspections is certified by the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry (L & I) in the category for which they are inspecting. These certification categories include; Commercial and Residential Building Inspector, Accessibility Inspector, Commercial and Residential Energy Inspector, Commercial and Residential Mechanical Inspector, Commercial and Residential Electrical Inspector, and Fire Inspector."

It is essential that the City immediately establish series of job classifications that require various UCC certifications for building inspectors, electrical inspectors and fire inspectors. The acting Chief recommended the creation of two new job titles and series: Construction Specialist I, II, III, and IV, and a Mechanical Inspector I and II. He recommended that the entry level position for Construction Specialist should require, as a minimum, building, energy and accessibility UCC residential certifications and preferably UCC commercial certification.

Inspectors with multiple certifications or 'combination' certifications will provide better flexibility and allow better distribution of the workload. The acting BBI Chief's proposal to assign inspectors to geographical districts is a good approach and will decentralize the operation. This approach should improve accountability but training costs for inspectors may be higher initially; however, over the long haul, efficiency will be better.

An alternate approach to the acting Chief's proposed method of position classifications based on a 'combination' of UCC certifications as Construction Specialist and Mechanical Inspector is to establish a hierarchy of classifications based on certifications and field experience with built-in career paths within and across series of position classifications. Often there are a series of residential inspectors and another series of commercial inspectors which allow progression into more complex structures as field experience and additional certifications are acquired.

Other combinations of certifications might achieve similar outcomes possibly more rapidly for less cost per inspector. However, the right combination of certification should be based on the various types of permits issued and inspection workloads. The selection of the approach to be used should be made by the BBI Chief in consultation with the Field Operations Manager and the Project Chiefs.

The acting BBI Chief does not have authority to implement his proposed changes and the severity created by vacancies in the building inspector ranks, so he elected to move forward by posting a job opening for 'Senior Inspector I'. This position only requires considerable knowledge of the Building and Zoning Codes and Ordinances (ICC, Pittsburgh Business Licensing Code, etc.), considerable knowledge of the Construction of building including materials and some knowledge of street locations and relevant health codes. The person hired is allowed 6 months to obtain UCC Commercial Building Inspector Certification, 12 months to obtain the UCC Accessibility Inspector/Plans Examiner Certification and 2 years to obtain the UCC Commercial Energy Inspector Certification. This translates into a 2-year lag before a newly hired inspector can perform all the inspections required on a commercial structure.

***2012 TriData On-Site Review*** – All Senior Inspectors responsible for enforcing the construction codes have the required UCC or ICC certifications for the positions they hold with the exception of the 1 Senior Inspector who is in training. The Acting BBI Chief added, "All recently hired Senior Inspectors are required to obtain the UCC commercial inspector, accessibility, and energy certifications in the time as per the application instructions. BBI currently has 5 certified accessibility inspectors and 4 energy inspectors on staff."

This is an outstanding accomplishment and is institutionalized as requirements for employment with BBI.

- Seventeen (17) of the Senior Inspectors are certified as UCC Building Inspectors and 1 is in training.
  - Six (6) of the 17 Senior Inspectors are also certified as UCC Accessibility Inspectors.
  - Six (6) of the 17 Senior Inspectors are also certified as UCC Energy Inspectors.
  - Three (3) of the 17 Senior Inspectors are also certified as UCC Commercial Mechanical Inspectors.
  - Two (2) of the 17 Senior Inspectors are also certified UCC Residential Mechanical Inspectors.
  - Five (5) of the 17 Senior Inspectors are also certified as UCC Building Code Officials.
  - One (1) of the 17 Senior Inspectors are also certified as a UCC Residential Building Inspector.
  - One (1) of the 17 Senior Inspectors are also certified as an ICC Property Maintenance Inspector.
- All 7 Electrical Inspectors are certified as UCC Electrical Inspectors.
  - Three (3) of the 7 Electrical Inspectors are also certified as UCC Building Code Officials
  - One (1) of the 7 Electrical Inspectors is also certified as a UCC Electrical Plan Examiner.
- The 3 Fire Prevention Inspectors are certified as UCC Building Inspectors and UCC Fire Inspectors.
  - One (1) of the 3 Fire Inspectors is also certified as a UCC Building Plans Examiner.

### *BBI Responses to Problem 5*

1. **Do all inspectors now meet the minimum certification levels for their particular assignment? If not, how many inspectors do not meet the minimum and what are their positions?**

   *Yes*

2. **Have salary pay premiums for inspectors that achieve additional certifications been implemented?**

   *No*

3. **In 2008, the acting BBI Chief recommended the creation of two new job titles and series: Construction Specialist I, II, III, and IV, and a Mechanical Inspector I and II. He also recommended that the entry level position for Construction Specialist should require, as a minimum, building, energy and accessibility UCC residential certifications and preferably UCC commercial certification. Have these recommendations been implemented?**

   *The proposed positions have not been implemented. All recently hired Senior Inspectors are required to obtain the UCC commercial inspector, accessibility, and energy certifications in the time as per the application instructions. BBI currently has 5 certified accessibility inspectors and 4 energy inspectors on staff.*

**Problem 6:** Most of the current 'Code Inspectors' (7 of 10) responsible for enforcement of the Pittsburgh Property Maintenance Code are not certified inspectors.

***2008 Report Findings*** – Employees who were 'Code Inspectors' prior to the City's adoption of the Property Maintenance Code in 2006 were allowed the opportunity but were not required to pass the minimum certification test for ICC Property Maintenance and Housing Inspector. Apparently, Pennsylvania does not have a state-wide Property Maintenance Code and therefore does not require state certification for these inspectors. Only three (3) 'Code Inspectors II' are certified as ICC Property Maintenance and Housing Inspectors, a nationally recognized certification.

All Property Maintenance Code inspectors should be required to be certified as ICC Property Maintenance and Housing Inspectors. Current employees should be allowed sufficient opportunity (perhaps 2 to 3 times) to pass the test. Failure to successfully pass the test should be grounds for demotion and/or transfer to another department, or termination. In general, when state certifications are not required, the city should require ICC certifications.

***2012 TriData On-Site Review*** – All newly hired Code and Demo Inspectors, not grandfathered, are required to be certified as ICC Property Maintenance Inspectors as Pennsylvania UCC does not have a requirement for Property Maintenance Inspector.

- Five (5) of the 10 Code and Demo Inspectors are certified as ICC Property Maintenance Inspectors.
- Five (5) of the 10 Code and Demo Inspectors were grandfathered and are not required to be ICC certified.
- Two (2) other Code and Demo Inspectors are in training and are studying for ICC Property Maintenance Inspector certification.

### *BBI Responses to Problem 6*

1. **Does BBI now require all inspectors to meet the ICC Property Maintenance and Housing Code Inspector certification?**

   *All newly hire Code Inspectors are required to pass the ICC Property Maintenance certification exam within six months of their start date. All certified Senior Inspectors may cite for property maintenance issues if required.*

2. **What action, if any, has been taken to allow inspectors who do not pass the certification process to do so again?**

   *All study materials and study time are provided to the inspector to pass the certification exam with as many attempts possible to sit for the exam given within the time frame to become certified.*

**Problem 7:** There are major impediments to professional development for new construction inspectors.

### *2008 Report Findings*

- Professional certifications above the minimum UCC Building Inspector requirement results in more work without higher pay.
- There are only two position classifications for building inspectors, Senior Inspector I and Senior Inspector II. In actuality, Senior Inspectors I are trainees who have not been certified and are not qualified or certified to do field inspections.
- Code Inspectors responsible for enforcing the Property Maintenance Code were not required to pass the ICC Property Maintenance and Housing Inspector to retain employment. This limits the possibility using 'Code Inspectors' as an entry career pathway into an entry level residential building inspector position.

Consideration could be given to establishing a series of classifications for Residential Building Inspector and Commercial Building Inspector. This delineation could provide paths for building inspector new hires to proceed from 1 and 2 family building inspections to multi-family low rise residential inspection to commercial building inspector. The downside to this approach compared to the one proposed by the BBI acting Chief is that multi-inspectors would cover the same territory thus creating some inefficiency and higher travel costs. The primary benefits are

reduced time for initial certification, increased field experience prior to moving into inspecting more complex structures, improved career advancement opportunities within BBI, improved pay with each progressive achievement of additional certification and the potential for inspectors to achieve higher levels of certifications prior to hire/promotion into the next higher level position.

For example, an entry level inspector could be UCC certified as residential building/energy inspectors capable of inspecting 1 and 2 family dwellings moving to multi-family residential low rise structures as experience is gained and additional certifications (e.g., energy, mechanical, and possibly fire and electrical) are obtained. Senior residential building inspectors could include UCC certifications for Residential Energy Plans Examiner/Inspector and possibly Building Plans Examiner or ICC Residential Combination Inspector. Experienced residential inspectors then could have a career path into commercial inspection where a similar certification and field experience progression could be established within a series of classifications for commercial inspectors potentially culminating in an ICC Commercial Combination Inspector who is certified in all 4 construction inspector disciplines as a commercial building, electrical, mechanical and plumbing inspector. Finally, an ICC Certified Code Official for Building, Electrical, Fire or Housing could be required for the working supervisor, 'Project Chief', over each functional area (building, electrical, mechanical). Historically, specialist inspectors have been organized into functional areas (building, electrical, plumbing, fire, plans examiners).

With the new energy and accessibility codes, specialized certifications in structural steel and concrete masonry inspections, there is a need for inspectors to be generalists and specialists at the same time. The primary benefits of generalization and combination certifications in inspectors is flexibility on assignments, reduction in total inspection costs, reduction in total travel time and maximization of inspection time on the project. (Total costs include all inspection trips required to finalize the construction project,) The primary risk involved in generalization is the loss of expertise in highly technical areas such as electrical, mechanical, fire alarms, and fire sprinkler systems.

The primary benefit of the traditional functional specialization is a potentially higher level of expertise obtained from actual performance of the function (i.e., electrician, fire alarm installer, HVAC installer, construction tradesman). The primary disadvantages of functional specialization from a code enforcement perspective are increase in total travel time, decreased efficiency because multiple inspectors are required for the same structure, increased costs because multiple inspectors to travel to the same location, etc.

With a generalized approach to code enforcement and training however, a point can be reached where the technical expertise necessary is insufficient for the task.

***2012 TriData On-Site Review*** – Changes have not been made to either establish new job classifications for Construction Specialist I, II, III, and IV, and a Mechanical Inspector I and II or a series of classifications for Residential Building Inspector and Commercial Building Inspector. This delineation could provide paths for building inspector new hires to proceed from 1 and 2 family building inspections to multi-family low rise residential inspection to commercial building inspector. The Acting BBI Chief's response follows:

> "*A new uncertified hire begins as a Senior Inspector I. Once successfully completing the three required certifications, the Senior Inspector I automatically becomes a Senior Inspector II and is able to perform both residential and commercial inspections.*

### *BBI Responses to Problem 7*

1. **Is BBI still using the Senior Inspector I and II certifications? If not, explain.**

   *Yes*

2. **The study suggested "establishing a series of classifications for Residential Building Inspector and Commercial Building Inspector. This delineation could provide paths for building inspector new hires to proceed from 1 and 2 family building inspections to multi-family low rise residential inspection to commercial building inspector." Has this or some other certification process of progression been implemented?**

   *A new uncertified hire begins as a Senior Inspector I. Once successfully completing the three required certifications, the Senior Inspector I automatically becomes a Senior Inspector II and is able to perform both residential and commercial inspections.*

**Problem 8:** The cost of training newly hired building inspectors is high and the city is not recouping their expense when the employee does not pass the test or quickly leaves city employment.

***2008 Report Findings*** – There is a minimum 6-month lag time for newly hired Senior Inspectors I to obtain the minimum certification required to perform construction inspections, the UCC Commercial Building Inspector, and a minimum of 1year to obtain the UCC Inspector/Plans Examiner Certification, and a minimum 2years to obtain the Commercial Energy Inspector Certification.

Two recent new hires were trained and left the city for other employment; one because his house outside of the city did not sell and one for a job with a third party inspection company.

Consider hiring only certified UCC Residential Building Inspectors. This may require an unusual approach such as sponsoring a certification class, waving the requirement of living within the city limits when it excludes hiring qualified inspectors, providing low interest property

loans for purchase in the city or any number of other innovative approached to encourage certification prior to employment.

Alternatively, consider establishing a trainee position that is a temporary position or contact employee rather than a permanent employee position. This reduces the cost for benefits during training and it minimizes the risk of permanent employee not passing the minimum qualification tests.

A training contract should also be required of all trainees mandating reimbursement for training costs if they fail to become certified or if they leave city employment within a specified period of time. The period of time should be determined by how long the employee must be a fully functional field inspector to cover the cost of the training and the cost of a subsequent replacement, possibly a year or two. We suggest a rule of thumb for a fully functional field inspection is about two years for an entry level commercial inspectors and possibly one year for entry level 1 and 2 family residential inspectors.

***2012 TriData On-Site Review*** – Due to the down turn in construction since October 2008, the hiring and retention of qualified building inspectors has become easier and the turnover is low. No changes have been made to institute a contractual obligation for new hires to repay training costs if they do not remain employed with the City for a contracted period of time.

### *BBI Responses to Problem 8*

1. **What steps have been taken to avoid the situation where BBI hires and trains new inspectors only to have them leave city employment for positions elsewhere? If this situation still occurs, how many inspectors have been trained (and then terminated city employment) since 2008?**

   *BBI cannot control the decisions of employees as to their career paths. We encourage staff to remain in the bureau to the best of our ability. No Senior Inspectors have resigned from BBI to pursue a position in the private sector since 2008.*

2. **Has a contract for new employees needing training been implemented? If so, is it being enforced?**

   *BBI provides all training material and schedules available seminars to educate the new hire.*

**Problem 9:** BBI does not fully utilize the current computer system.

***2008 Report Findings*** – The software system currently used by BBI is used by many other large city code enforcement departments throughout the nation. It should be capable of supporting BBI needs for permitting; recording plans review comments, inspection results, and violations; invoicing and recording payments. However, it is only used currently for zoning and building permitting, and recording permit payments.

When this system was first installed its use was not encouraged. Since then, when a need for automation was recognized, independent stand-alone solutions were developed rather than analyzing how the BBI software system could provide the solution. Over time this has resulted in increased unnecessary manual effort, suboptimal use of the BBI software system and creation of unconnected special-use databases which are available to only a few staff members.

- Inspection results are not entered into the current BBI software system. Therefore inspection activity cannot be viewed or tracked during the construction process by BBI management, contractors or other BBI, Zoning, Public Works staff members. The assigned inspector maintains a hardcopy of the permit on which he writes inspection notes which are verbally communicated to someone on the construction site in-person or over the phone. Only when the final inspection is approved is the status of the permit changed in the system from issued to final. This situation cannot be changed until either inspectors are provided with computers or clerical staff is used to enter inspection results. Currently, there is only one desktop computer for four inspectors.
- Electronic signature could be used for Certificate of Occupancy approval which would:
  - Eliminate the need for the BBI Chief to personally sign Certificates of Occupancy
  - Eliminate filing of the hardcopy Certificate of Occupancy
  - Provide on-line access to the Certificate of Occupancy information for those with access to the current system.
- Demolitions could be entered into the current system, which would:
  - Eliminate the Logging File and Access database currently used to record demolitions,
  - Eliminate the Demolition Card File maintained by the File Room,
  - Eliminate the need for manual verification that the property has not been identified for demolition prior to issuing a building permit,
  - Potentially, eliminate the need for manual generation of invoices relating to the demolition process (It should be verified that the current system can generated the required invoices).
  - Provide access to the demolition information for those with access to the current system.

- Violations could be entered into the current system which would:
  - Eliminate the need for maintaining the Violation Property Files by the File Room,
  - Eliminate the need for manual verification that the property violations are not outstanding against the property prior to issuing a building permit, and would
  - Provide access to the violations for those with access to the current system.
- The current system is not used as the central repository of the historical record for structures (i.e., zoning, permitting, code enforcement activities, legal actions, etc.).
  - A decision should be made on whether this system or some other system will be the important central repository so that future efforts can be coordinated toward that ultimate goal.
  - Consideration could be giving to updating the central repository with complaints and inspection results from the 3-1-1 system.
  - Property Maintenance Inspection results should be entered or fed into the central repository.

***2012 TriData On-Site Review*** – On 14 February 2011, the Accela software product, which is used successfully by other cities, was implemented for use by several city departments including Planning and Zoning, BBI, Public Works, Water and Sewerage Authority, and potentially others. Thus far, the county plumbing inspection function has not decided to use Accela.

BBI has implemented the Accela software and is using it for issuing licenses and permits.

Unfortunately, the data conversion of the permitting database did not go as smoothly as it could have as not all data from the old software, Permits Plus, was converted. Therefore, BBI still uses Permits Plus to issue Certificates of Occupancy permits for those permits applied for prior to the implementation of Accela. Over time, this problem will be resolved.

Incomplete data conversion is unacceptable and should not be repeated during the implementation of the inspection functions without risking confusion and complications for field inspectors. Unfortunately, too often governmental as well as industry information technology organizations does not use control totals and systems testing during file conversions to ensure that all data from old systems are converted completely and correctly. CIS must take the responsibility for mapping each data element from the old file structures to the new file structures and for system testing the file conversion results until no inconsistencies are found between the data in the old system and the data in the new system. The BBI business technical analyst should assist in these efforts and CIS and BBI management should approve the results prior to running the conversion update to the live Accela system.

Major system implementation projects are difficult; require dedicated, experienced and knowledgeable resources from both CIS and BBI as well as the software vendor, Accela, to develop and coordinate implementation plans for both CIS and BBI and to manage the implementation against those plans. If an experienced information technology project manager is not available in CIS to dedicate to the implementation of Accela in BBI, a contract IT project manager with proven large system data conversion and implementation should be employed to perform this technical management function. Otherwise, further business interruptions can be expected and full implementation could take several years. Employees with day-to-day CIS and BBI responsibilities cannot be expected to 'find time' to document the existing business processes, modify those processes as needed, conduct system and field testing, train employees on the use of the software and implement a 'roll out' of the system to field inspectors.

### *BBI Responses to Problem 9*

1. **Has BBI expanded the use of inspection reporting technology beyond that of zoning and building permits? Are inspectors using computers to complete inspection forms?**

   *Yes. Code inspectors are currently entering their field inspection information into handheld computers. Addition handheld computers are being programmed for use in the field by the Senior Inspectors.*

2. **Is the same software still being used or has another inspection software program been installed?**

   *New Accela automated permitting software is being implemented in BBI and various other departments and agencies for the sharing of information.*

3. **Are electronic signatures permitted on inspection forms?**

   *No.*

4. **Are inspections, demolition notices and inspections, zoning requests/ changes, and other BBI services saved to a central and secure electronic repository? If so, briefly explain.**

   *All counter log systems, code inspection log systems and permitting systems are electronically recorded and stored on the city's mainframe with back-up systems. All paper documents are scanned to disk and are stored in secured files at BBI.*

**Problem 10:** BBI does not have a designated software support analyst.

***2008 Report Findings*** – A software support person in BBI should be an addition to the funded positions. Paid for by increasing some of the inspection fees, this person would:

- Be the expert knowledge base of and promoter for the use of software systems to support BBI and BBI business processes

- Analyze how BBI business processes can use software capabilities
- Analyze business process flows to improve efficiency and customer service
- Be the primary software support analyst who uses the scripting language provided by the software vendor to serve BBI specific needs and report writer(s) to provide management with data requests
- Be the implementation analyst/manager for new processes being automated and for systems being implemented
- Potentially to function as the network administrator assigning access privileges
- Serve as liaison to the CIS for BBI software

Whether this analyst is a BBI or CIS employee is not an issue so long as BBI has approval/rejection authority over the employee, BBI establishes or approves his/her work priorities and he/she is located at BBI. We believe it is essential that this employee be closely linked to BBI as the knowledge expert for its business processes. In order to maintain professional competency, the analyst should be treated as CIS staff, provided with technical management and directional support, included in CIS staff meetings and responsible for maintaining the indispensable two-way communication link. CIS would continue to be responsible for supporting BBI future needs and providing operational support (e.g., supporting the server(s), operating systems, networking, software updates/upgrades) and additional software support as required.

***2012 TriData On-Site Review*** – The Business Technical Analyst which was vacant in October 2008 remains vacant; however, an applicant, a current city employee, has been proposed for hire which may be concluded within the next month. However, this one resource is not enough to implement the new Accela software for field inspections. Other CIS resources for Project Management and database conversion should be dedicated to BBI.

Ostensibly, the CIS database analyst who has worked with BBI may be leaving the city soon which probably will create a knowledge gap of BBI in CIS.

Prior to the implementation of the Accela software for BBI field inspections, BBI is dependent upon CIS to convert and system test the results for at least two possibly three databases:

- The 'B3' database of the custom-developed software currently used by Property Maintenance Code inspectors,
- The Access database currently used by building, electrical, mechanical and fire inspectors, and

- Possibly the 3-1-1 data for citizen complaints which may have had conversion programs written, but system testing, quality assurance of conversion results and the actual data conversion have not been performed. This cannot be done until the field inspection functions are ready to implement or a throw away interface to the old systems is created.

### *BBI Responses to Problem 10*

1. **Does BBI now have a designated software support analyst? Is the individual assigned specifically to BBI?**

   *No. BBI is currently interviewing candidates for the Business Technology Analyst position. Software support is included in this positions description. The individual hired for this position will be assigned exclusively to BBI.*

**Problem 11:** The absence of computers for inspectors in the field and not taking full advantage of IT overall is a serious issue.

***2008 Report Findings*** – The future direction for BBI IT system(s) should be determined as soon as possible and its implementation should be 'fast tracked'. If necessary, fees should be raised to cover the costs. The use of the best available information technology could greatly improve the efficiency, effectiveness, accountability, and service provided by BBI. Hopefully, this would translate into better enforcement, compliance, and stabilization of neighborhoods.

A transition from hand written to web-based technology will be a huge cultural change and should be expected to require significant 'hand holding' and implementation support for considerable time, possibly one to two years during and after new technology introduction. This implementation support probably will require additional CIS designated employees, temporary employees and/or contractors. The ultimate outcome should reduce the number of clerical employees needed and possibly field employees. However, any reduction in staff should not be considered until after the system(s) are operational and the new processes can be evaluated. Important factors with IT as related to BBI operations include:

- Management does not have the data or tools necessary to manage BBI functions. Most of the functions are still manual and data is not entered into the current system.
- Web-based technology that allows customer friendly access to BBI business processes (permit application, permitting, paying, scheduling inspections, viewing inspection results, etc.) is not available. Most processes are manual and require citizens and contractors to physically travel downtown to BBI.
- Wireless field entry and printing of inspection results, violations, etc. is not available. As noted earlier, inspection results are recorded on the hardcopy permits, are available to the inspector only and inspection deficiencies are verbally

communicated. Oklahoma City's building and fire inspection departments have successfully implemented wireless field entry for their inspections functions using a newer version of the same system used by BBI.

- Credit cards cannot be used as payment for permits. Only cash and checks may be used.
- Cell phones or access to voice over Internet capability should be provided to all field personnel and managers of field personnel.
- Digital cameras should be used by field inspectors to document violations and inspection review findings.
- In as much as possible, field technology units should be easy to carry, resistant to damage and easy to use in construction environments. Inspectors cannot be expected to carry and deal with multiple technologies. Ideally, field inspectors would be involved in evaluating different technology platforms to determine what works best. Also check with other cities that use various technology platforms to see what is working well.
- Interactive Voice Recognition systems (IVR) are used by many cities such as Jacksonville, Florida, to improve inspection scheduling and customer service. Contractors call, at their convenience, and request inspections at convenient times. The IVR system communicates to the building codes system which schedules the inspector's workflow.

***2012 TriData On-Site Review*** – BBI has made great strides implementing a web-based software product, Accela, for issuing all permits and licenses, with the exception of a small function, sign certification for bill boards and sign, and by purchasing 50 tough book computers, ten (10) of which are currently used of the Property Code Inspectors. Recently, Building Code enforcement inspectors have begun using 10 other tough books for testing the Accela software for their use in the field.

The Acting BBI Chief added, "Managers are provided with spreadsheets showing individual inspector's work volume and performance, plan approval and signoff analysis information is available to track project movement through the bureau and live time vehicle GPS tacking is provide to monitor each inspector's location and movement through his daily inspections."

BBI cannot be expected to move forward with the field implementation of the Accela software without dedicated information system and business knowledgeable resources in both CIS and BBI. The BBI Business Technical Analyst must work with inspection personnel to define and refine all inspection processes to the Accela software and CIS database analysts must

map data from existing databases, perform system testing until the database conversions have proven results and coordinate the final database conversions with the implementation plans.

Inspectors are not provided with cell phones which could improve communication with contractors and supervisors and could help to minimize office time. The Acting BBI Chief stated, "Digital cameras are available for the inspector's use. Narrow band radios are being ordered for the inspection staff to be in compliance with the remaining public safety bureaus."

### *BBI Responses to Problem 11*

1. **What steps have been taken to provide managers with the tools and technology needed to manage the system?**

   *Managers are provided with spreadsheets showing individual inspector's work volume and performance, plan approval and signoff analysis information is available to track project movement through the bureau and live time vehicle GPS tacking is provide to monitor each inspector's location and movement through his daily inspections.*

2. **Is BBI using web-based technology for any of its services?**

   *Yes. Accela web-based permitting software as well as code enforcement software is now being utilized.*

3. **Are cell phones and digital cameras provided to inspectors? If not, what steps are being taken to do so?**

   *Digital cameras are available for the inspector's use. Narrow band radios are being ordered for the inspection staff to be in compliance with the remaining public safety bureaus.*

**Problem 12:** Inspectors do not have vehicles. A maximum monthly reimbursement of $225 is available to each inspector to cover the use of personal vehicles.

***2008 Report Findings*** – This practice potentially puts BBI employees at risk because the purpose of their presence is not readily visible even though they wear uniforms. Use of personal cars also minimizes the deterrent effect of BBI enforcement presence in the field. Having a cap on the reimbursement is not a good practice since employees are going to avoid spending their own money to subsidize the city's operation. There are also safety issues because cars are unmarked.

Inspectors could improve their effectiveness if the city was divided into districts and inspectors were assigned vehicles, which essentially become their office. As it stands, inspectors report to the central office each day then leave for their inspections. A nucleus of the Project Chief along with Senior Inspectors and Code Inspectors assigned to districts and provided a vehicle makes sense operationally.

***2012 TriData On-Site Review*** – Great success has been achieved, as, with the support of the Director of Public Safety, forty-four (48) cars have been purchased; GPS systems were installed, and are in use by the BBI field inspectors. In 2008, there were only four vehicles assigned to the department.

The use of marked cars provide BBI visibility throughout the city, improved accessibility of inspectors to citizens, greater accountability of inspectors, improved safety for inspectors and present a more professional image.

Plans are underway to hire a vendor to install docking stations in the cars for the hard book computers which will make them easier to manage and thereby easier to use in the field.

Inspectors are required to come to the office every morning for two and a half hours to plan their day, communicate with contractors and the public, access the property files and complete paperwork. Inspectors also must drive to central locations where the City cars are parked in secure lots as they are not allowed to drive City cars home.

Over time, new methods should be implemented to minimize office time as inspector productive in directly tied to the amount of time spent conducting field inspections. New methods could include the use of cell phones and minimizing the need for inspectors to access the property files, e.g. to confirm whether notices have been returned in the mail as undeliverable, which should be updated in the system by a clerical employee.

### *BBI Responses to Problem 12*

1. **Are city vehicles provided to each inspector, or is a "vehicle reimbursement" allotment still provided?**

   *All field staff employees are issued a marked city vehicle.*

2. **How many vehicles does BBI now operate? How many in 2008?**

   *48 vehicles. 4 vehicles in 2008.*

3. **Has BBI implemented a 'district system' with inspectors assigned to districts and working out of their cars?**

   *Yes.*

4. **Do inspectors still report to the office each morning/ evening?**

   *Inspectors report to the office in the morning.*

**Problem 13:** The location of BBI, including all of the inspectors' downtown, is not working because of parking problems. It is also difficult for citizens and contractors to access BBI to obtain permits.

### *2008 Report Findings*

- BBI should be decentralized into several districts with a Project Chief in-charge of each district
- Consider decentralizing BBI into police stations, fire stations or other city-owned locations.
- Leasing storefront office space is also be a possibility

***2012 TriData On-Site Review*** – To facilitate citizens and contractors obtaining permits, BBI has assigned inspectors, two mornings a week, to two field offices in Police stations in Zone 3, the Arlington neighborhood, and in Zone 5, the East Liberty/Homewood neighborhood. This has not resulted in the anticipated ease of access for citizens and contractors; therefore, we suggest discontinuing this practice until it is re-evaluated at some future time.

Implementing a citizen's access function to the Accela permitting system would be the best way to improve citizen and contractor access and would significantly reduce the volume of permits handled by the permitting staff. This would provide the capability for web access to apply for permits which do not require plans and to pay via the use of debit or credit cards. Resources should be directed toward accomplishing this as soon as feasible, yet in a fully tested manner.

### *BBI Responses to Problem 13*

1. **Do all BBI inspectors still work out of the downtown office?**

   *Yes for two and one half hours each morning.*

2. **What steps, if any, has BBI taken to decentralize its operation?**

   *BBI has opened an additional field office for the inspector to man on scheduled days. Additional field offices are planned pending the coordination of available space in various police zone locations.*

**Problem 14:** The Commercial Building Permit process is a cumbersome four-step process that should be streamlined.

### *2008 Report Findings*

- Zoning Counter staff determines if an occupancy permit is required, then issues the Zoning approval and collects zoning fees.

- BBI File Room staff determines if there are outstanding code violation notices on the property. (This step would be eliminated if Violations and Demolitions are entered into the current BBI computer system as the BBI permit clerk could pull up the structure record to determine if the structure is marked for demolitions or if there are outstanding violations against the structure.)
- BBI Engineer's Counter staff examines the Commercial Building Permit Application and determines if the required plans are included.
- BBI License & Cashier Counter receives the fee for the building permit. Combined Zoning/building fees could be collected at this point cutting out another step.

Considerations should be given to combining Zoning with BBI because the Master Plans and Development Plans approved by Zoning establish the fire, building, storm water and zoning code requirements that are subsequently enforced by BBI. Currently Zoning reviews Master Plans (including preliminary land development plans) for future potential development projects and Development Plans (including site plans, final land plans and project development plans). BBI plans examiners, fire plans examiners and storm water specialists should be involved, at a minimum, in the approval of Development Plans which is where fire hydrants placement, cul-de-sac dimensions, other fire access requirement, water control and runoff collection pools, and other fire, building and storm water code-related requirements are determined.

BBI should be involved as early as possible in the development approval process to avoid subsequent enforcement problems and potentially costly redesigns. Although neither the Zoning process nor BBI plans review processes were analyzed during this review; theoretically, the combination of Zoning and BBI review processes could produce synergies not currently experienced.

Minimally, zoning permitting and BBI permitting should be combined to streamline the current process to improve customer service. Eventually, web-based permit applications with web-based credit card payments should be the goal.

***2012 TriData On-Site Review*** – The recommendations made to streamline the four-step commercial building permitting process including entering violations and demolitions into the BBI computer system and having one cashier function to collect both zoning and building permit fees have not been implemented. After the Business Technical Analyst is hired, this as well as other BBI and Zoning work flow processes should be analyzed and changes made to streamline processes to improve customer service and to become more reliant on computerized systems.

The recommendation to combine the Zoning and BBI review processes is not considered feasible as "Zoning remains a division of the Department of City Planning." It was also noted that, "BBI's offices are housed adjacent to Zoning for the convenience of staff and public requirements."

Even though it is not customary practice for building plan examiners to be involved in the approval of Development Plans by the Zoning department, involvement of BBI at the Development Plans stage might result in improved customer service by potentially reducing changes as the project moves into the construction phase. However, this change should be left to the discretion of BBI and Zoning. BBI management noted that information will be exchanged "through the web-based Accela permitting system."

### *BBI Responses to Problem 14*

1. **The study suggested that "Zoning be combined with BBI because the Master Plans and Development Plans approved by Zoning establish the fire, building, storm water and zoning code requirements that are subsequently enforced by BBI.' Has this been done?**

   *Zoning remains a division of the Department of City Planning. BBI's offices are housed adjacent to Zoning for the convenience of staff and public requirements.*

2. **What other steps have been taken to make the zoning and BBI permitting process more user-friendly?**

   *Exchange of information through the web-based Accela permitting system.*

**Problem 15:** Zoning, fire and building plans examination are currently located in different locations.

***2008 Report Findings*** – Consideration should be made of co-locating all plan review functions (e.g., storm water, zoning, development, fire and building etc.) since BBI has an unusual number of highly qualified architects. As such there may be an opportunity to combine plan reviews performed by the city's licensed architects. If additional qualifications are needed to review of fire protection systems, storm water drainage, or other special plans, the same employees could be trained.

***2012 TriData On-Site Review*** – Fire and building plans review functions are combined and are now performed in one location with the Zoning office being located adjacent to BBI's engineering staff. Additionally, BBI management noted that, "Plan engineers are provided with training and are progressing through various code certifications."

Our recommendation to also consider co-locating Zoning with building and fire plans examiners is not considered feasible as BBI and Zoning are in separate departments, i.e., Zoning is a division of the Planning Department.

### *BBI Responses to Problem 15*

1. **Are the plans review sections still located at separate locations? If so, what steps are being taken to improve the efficiency of the review process?**

   *BBI plan engineers are housed together in one location and now perform all plan reviews with the exception of zoning. The zoning office is adjacent to BBI's engineering staff.*

2. **Are plan reviewers being trained to conduct other types of reviews?**

   *Plan engineers are provided with training and are progressing through various code certifications.*

**Problem 16:** BBI suffers from an overall lack of funding.

***2008 Report Findings*** – BBI is supported from the city's general operating budget at an annual amount of approximately $3.2M. BBI revenue generated in FY07 was $4.9M, or $1.7 more than its funded level. If BBI were operated as an enterprise model, it would have funds for better technology and for training and infrastructure needs. Salaries could also be adjusted based on the fee structure, which would probably help recruitment and retention. A negative for the city is that it would lose the extra revenue generated by BBI. Going forward the city should seriously consider changing the financial model for BBI.

***2012 TriData On-Site Review*** – The City has chosen not to change the financial model for BBI from a general fund department to an enterprise fund. In every year since 2008, the revenue collected by BBI has exceeded its costs, so it could operate under an enterprise model and have sufficient revue to make many of the changes needed. In so doing however, the City would not be able to use the excess funds in for other areas, as is current practice.

From 2008 to 2012, BBI operating budget has remained essentially flat, increasing 4% over four years. Over the same period, revenue collected decreased $1,107,731 or 17%, more than likely due to the poor economy late 2009.

**Table 1: BBI Budget, 2008-2012**

| | 2008 | 2009 | % | 2010 | % | 2011 | % | 2012 | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Operating Budget | 3,186,835 | 3,318,466 | 4 | 3,436,706 | 4 | 3,240,541 | (6) | 3,323,876 | 3 |
| Revenue Collected | 6,388,450 | 5,751,844 | (10) | 4,701,871 | (18) | 5,388,441 | 15 | 5,280,719 | (2) |

### *BBI Responses to Problem 16*

1. **What is the current level of funding for BBI? Current budget?**

   *Funding level - $3,323,876. .*

2. **Is funding still provided from the city's general fund account?**

   *Yes*

3. **Has the fee structure for BBI services changed from 2008? In what areas?**

   *All permit and license fees include a nominal annual increase.*

4. **Has the financial model of BBI changed since 2008, such as by implementing an enterprise model?**

   *No.*

**Problem 17:** There is a lack of adequate cross-training, which reduces efficiency.

### *2008 Report Findings*

- A high degree of task specialization leaves the department vulnerable in case of sickness or resignation.
  - Only one clerk is familiar with demolition processing and billing.
  - Only one clerk is familiar with issuing electrical permits.

The Chief Clerk is the only one in the department familiar with the operating and capital budgeting and control processes and payroll processes.

Recommendations were made to automate the demolition and electrical permits processing and billing. When processes cannot be automated, employees should be cross-trained to eliminate task specialization.

***2012 TriData On-Site Review*** – According to BBI management there has been cross-training of the clerical staff. However, the Chief Clerk remains the only employee knowledgeable on the operating and capital budgeting and control and payroll processes. Ideally, in order to develop management skills and accountability, the operating budgeting and control responsibility should be purchase down perhaps to the Project Chief level.

### *BBI Responses to Problem 17*

1. **What steps, if any, has BBI taken to reduce specialization?**

   *Additional and various code certification requirements for plan engineers and inspectors. Cross training of clerical staff.*

2. **In addition to the Chief Clerk, what other individuals are now familiar with the budget, control, and payroll processes?**

   *None.*

**Problem 18:** There is a lack of succession planning, which led to the gap in leadership when the chief and senior managers leave.

***2008 Report Findings*** – Frequent departures of key staff members and the inability to fill positions with qualified candidates internally hinder BBI's ability to achieve its mission.

***2012 TriData On-Site Review*** – Since 2008, BBI has encouraged personnel to "obtain additional and required certifications" so that they will be qualified "when a management position becomes available." Promotions from within are more important to BBI and the City of Pittsburgh as recruitment of non-City employees is difficult.

Good progress has been made within BBI and an external hire of a Project Chief with a broad range of certification has been made. However, a succession plan should be developed which could include obtaining certifications and experience across the major functions of the department, i.e., plans review, property maintenance code field inspections, construction field inspections, budget preparation and control, and possibly permitting and licensing management.

***BBI Responses to Problem 18***

1. **Has BBI developed a succession plan?**

   *Upon the notification from a departing senior manager, a comprehensive report is produced by outlining the status of current and ongoing projects and events under his supervision in the office, as well as any procedural instruction. This information is kept in a safe location for use by the remaining managers and his successor.*

2. **What steps are being taken to identify and prepare personnel for supervisor and/ or management responsibilities?**

   *Personnel are encouraged to train and obtain additional and required certifications in advance to be prepared for the time when a management position becomes available. This has occurred since 2008 and BBI has promoted from within its staff.*

## Abandoned Structures

A major problem faced by Pittsburgh has been the abundance of abandoned structures. The problem of abandoned structures was noted in a study of the City's fire department as a major reason for much of the demand. Since 2008, the City has made significant progress in attacking the problem, though more work is certainly needed.

From 2008 to 2012, the budget for demolitions decreased $657,500 (16 percent). In 2012, the number of current condemned buildings on the City's list is 1326, though is believed that the number of buildings being condemned annually is now less than the number being razed, so the need for demolitions may have reached an apex and may be declining.

Table 2 shows the budget and number of buildings razed since 2008.

**Table 3: BBI Demolition Budget & Number of Razed Buildings, 2008-2012**

| | 2008 | 2009 | % | 2010 | % | 2011 | % | 2012 | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Demolition Budget | 4,000,000 | 4,800,000 | 20 | 3,540,000 | (26) | 3,230,000 | (9) | 3,342,500 | 3 |
| # of Condemned Structures Razed | 500 | 453 | (9) | 570 | 26 | 456 | (20) | 492[2] | 8 |

In conversations with BBI officials responsible for the program, there two problems were noted that affect the City's ability to do more in razing blighted and abandoned buildings. One is the number of absentee landlords, which makes it difficult to to contact the legal owners. The second reason is the difficulty in getting qualified contractors to do the work. Many of the contractors rely on casual labor and the labor force is often unreliable.

One positive is the passage of recent legislation by the Pennsylvania assembly that makes it easier to raze blighted properties and repurpose the land (see Appendix D).

## Other Significant Issue Questions Posed to BBI

Relative to the significant issues being dealt with by BBI as found in the 2008 review, does BBI believe it has addressed the following areas sufficiently? Please explain.

1. **The appointment of a new BBI Chief** – The appointment of a new BBI Chief is dependent on the administration decision of when to do so.
2. **Leadership voids within BBI** – All budget approved management positions have been filed with the exception of the Chief and Business Technology Analyst. Interviews are currently being conducted for the Business Technology Analyst position.
3. **Absence of inspector accountability** – Inspector accountability has improved through implemented software and vehicle GPS tracking.
4. **The need for additional vehicles for inspectors** – All field inspectors and field managers has been issued assigned marked city vehicles.
5. **Process issues with violation notices** – The processing of violation notices has improved with software implementation.
6. **Absentee property owners and abatement of blighted areas** – A rental property registration program was defeated in the court system. Discussions are ongoing with regards to new ordinances relating to blighted properties.

[2] Buildings put out to bid as of October 2012.

7. **Overburdened 3-1-1 system** – To be addressed by the Mayor's 3-1-1 Center.
8. **Need for improved technology including on-line permitting** – The Accela permitting software is being installed in phases. On-line permitting is scheduled to be instituted in the next phase.
9. **Lack of funding** – BBI works within the approved annual budget.
10. **Space and accessibility problems at BBI's Ross Street offices** – BBI along with other departments, bureaus and agencies house at 200 Ross Street are schedule to move to a new location prior to the end of 2013. The new office layout will be designed to accommodate all of BBI's functions with required space to provide an efficient and manageable work area.

# APPENDIX A: BBI PERFORMANCE AUDIT, NOVEMBER 2011

Following is the Executive Summary from the BBI performance audit completed by the Office of City Controller in 2011. The full report can be viewed on-line at:

http://apps.pittsburghpa.gov/co/PR_BBI_November2011.pdf

Performance Audit

# DEPARTMENT of PUBLIC SAFETY

# BUREAU of BUILDING INSPECTION

Report by the
Office of City Controller

**MICHAEL E. LAMB**
**CITY CONTROLLER**

Douglas W. Anderson, Deputy Controller

Anabell Kinney, Management Auditor

Gloria Novak, Assistant Management Auditor

William Vanselow, Performance Auditor

November 2011

November 17, 2011

To the Honorables: Mayor Luke Ravenstahl and
Members of Pittsburgh City Council:

The Office of City Controller is pleased to present this Performance Audit of ***Department of Public Safety Bureau of Building Inspection*** conducted pursuant to the Controller's powers under Section 404(c) of the Pittsburgh Home Rule Charter. This audit assesses Bureau compliance with previous audit recommendations, re-examines complaint abatement effectiveness and assesses the impact of decentralized adjudication in district justice courts on Bureau operations.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Bureau of Building Inspection regulates the construction, demolition and occupancy of all buildings and structures within the City of Pittsburgh. The Bureau reviews, approves and issues all permits required by code for new construction and for the repair, alteration or addition to all buildings and structures. Bureau inspectors ensure compliance with various City codes and ordinances.

### Findings and Recommendations

Compliance with Previous Audit Recommendations

**Finding:** Since the previous audit, BBI has made progress in upgrading its technological capabilities and improving its plan review process.

**Finding:** The Bureau is in the process of upgrading all BBI functions with Accela Software. Accela will permit interface with other City departments such as Public Works.

Electronic Permit Processing

**Finding:** On line permitting will be a feature of BBI's new permit system. The Accela software Citizen Access module will allow on line permitting for small jobs. Big projects such as new construction will continue to require approval by Bureau Plan Examiners or a qualified Third Party Agency before a permit can be issued.

Building Plan Review

**Finding:** BBI will require an upfront down payment for building plan reviews. This will reduce the number of speculators who submit building plans then decide not to proceed with the project.

Staffing

**Finding:** Pittsburgh BBI operates with a smaller budget than the cities of Buffalo, Cincinnati, St. Louis and Cleveland and with less total staff than Buffalo and Cleveland. Pittsburgh BBI has more budgeted inspectors than Cincinnati but less than Buffalo and Cleveland.

Code Enforcement

City Code Complaints

**Finding:** The Mayor 311 Service Center does not have updated property information from Allegheny County. October 2008 was the last time 311 received updated information.

**Finding:** Inspectors identified some complaints that are transferred over from the 311 service center have nothing typed in the location of the complaint or the 10 digit block numbers are typed in wrong on the complaint.

**Finding:** Having to search for property owner information through a variety of venues is an inefficient use of code inspector time and resources.

**Recommendation:** BBI administration should stress to City Administration the importance of accurate property ownership information in the 311 Center. Efforts should be made to have Allegheny County send updated property ownership information to 311 on a regular basis.

Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs)

**Finding:** MDTs allow inspectors to send complaint information electronically from the field. This greatly increases efficiency by eliminating the inspectors need to write up reports at a later time and allows more time in the field.

**Finding:** Mobile Data Terminals reduce the time to get a violation notice sent out.

**Finding:** The MDT software also provides a 'tickler system' that automatically notifies the inspector when a re-inspection of the property is due.

Current MDT Software

**Finding:** Code inspectors are using Code Enforcement software, an interim application developed by City Computer Information Systems and a private Information Technology company. According to BBI, the software has ongoing flaws which have not successfully been resolved.

**Finding:** Problems with Code Enforcement software include the inability to perform queries (only built in reports can be created), the inability to sort duplicate complaints and glitches that delay complaint transmission from 311 to BBI Code Inspectors.

**Recommendation:** BBI administration must insist that CIS develop a software application that will identify future malfunctions in a timely manner. Timely problem identification and resolution will prevent large complaint backlogs.

**Recommendation:** Before it is fully operative, BBI must ensure that Accela is customized to meet all of the Bureau enforcement needs.

2010 City Code Complaint Data

**Finding:** Code Enforcement software currently used by BBI City code inspectors provides fields for assignment date and due date but no field for complaint abated date. Without an abated date, the auditors could not determine complaint abatement time.

**Finding:** Code Enforcement software cannot eliminate or flag duplicate entries. A duplicate is defined as more than one complaint entry where all data fields are the same. Duplicate entries inflate the number of complaints and qualify any performance analysis.

**Recommendation:** Accela software must be customized to flag duplicate complaint entries so the duplicates can be readily eliminated from data analysis.

Resolved or Abated Complaints

**Finding:** The great majority (82.40%) of complaints made in 2010 were completed, i.e., the problem was abated; case was closed because no violations were found or the case was sent to the district justice for adjudication.

**Finding:** The next highest complaint category status (14.3%) was Re: Inspection Scheduled, i.e., the property was scheduled to be inspected again.

**Recommendation:** BBI should add "date abated", "date to district justice" and "appeal date" fields to the new Accela software database. These fields would better describe the status of each complaint as it progresses through the abatement process.

**Finding:** Weeds and debris top the list of code complaints, accounting for 77.7% of complaints made in 2010.

**Finding:** The 19$^{th}$ ward (Beechview, Brookline and part of Mt. Washington) had the most city code complaints (750) followed by the 13$^{th}$ ward (Homewood and Larimer) with 721 complaints.

**Finding:** The number of complaints does not indicate the actual number of properties with code violations. Neighborhoods with active community organizations and active citizens will have more involvement with the Mayor 311 Center than areas with less community involvement.

City Code Enforcement Field Offices

**Finding:** Auditors were told that very few residents ever came into the police station to file a complaint. The Inspector noted that residents like to remain anonymous when filing a report and prefer calling the 311 service center.

**Finding:** Zone 3 police station is located in the 18th ward but the inspector assigned to the Zone 3 field office does not enforce violations in that ward.

**Finding:** Walk in complaints about properties located in the 18th ward must be written on a complaint form that is taken to downtown BBI offices to be logged in.

**Recommendation:** BBI should reconsider the usefulness of the field offices before adding more of them in other areas. At the very least, the assigned inspector should also have responsibility for the ward that the field office is located in and have the ability to log in all walk in complaints.

2010 Building Code Complaints

Microsoft Access software is used by Building Code inspectors.

**Finding:** Almost 72% of the inspector complaints were residential after the duplicate entries were eliminated.

**Finding:** Demolition had almost 12% and commercial had 10% of complaints. All the rest made up 6% of the complaints.

**Finding:** The number of demolition complaints dropped from 768 to 501 (34%) after duplicates were taken out. Mostly due to number of different people seeing the same building on a street that they thought needed condemned.

**Finding:** Once the type of complaint is put into the database, it is not updated if reassigned to a different inspector or category. This could cause confusion on what proper building inspector should handle this case: Commercial, Residential, Demolition, Etc.

**Finding:** Duplicate entries are not always identified and are sometimes listed as separate complaints. This would affect the statistics in Tables 6.

**Finding:** Nearly twenty percent of the entries in the Building Inspector database were duplicate entries, i.e., complaints about the same violation at the property address.

**Finding:** The majority of the complaints in 2010 were resolved or abated. Eliminating the duplicate reports (20%), 70% of the complaints in 2010 were resolved.

**Recommendation:** BBI administrators must insist that Building Inspectors update the complaint database in a timely manner and consistently identify duplicate complaints.

Resolved or Abated Complaints

**Finding:** Three code complaints were included in the 2010 building complaint database.

**Finding:** Complaints about buildings needing demolition take longer to resolve because of the steps involved in obtaining a demolition.

**Finding:** The 19th ward (Beechview, Brookline and part of Mt. Washington) had the most building complaints (433) followed by the 20th ward (West End, Sheriden and Elliott) with 302 complaints.

Adjudication in Local District Justice Offices

**Finding:** Property owners have more time to abate the problem before the hearing date. If the violation is abated before the hearing, the complaint is dismissed at the hearing.

**Finding:** Code inspectors are assigned multiple city wards and must file unabated complaints in the district justice office that has jurisdiction over each ward. Seven of the eight City code inspectors must attend hearings in two district justice offices.

**Finding:** Taking a case to court is discretionary. An inspector can turn the case to the district justice or give the property owner more time to comply.

Continuances

**Finding:** The 2010 district justice court schedules support inspectors' allegations of excessive continuances. Nearly half of the hearings scheduled by district justices were continuances. Out of 2,281 court dates, 1,052 (or 46% of the total) were continuances.

**Finding:** The ward with the most court cases, the 20th ward, did not have the most complaints. The 20th ward had 278 court cases, 302 building complaints and 462 city code complaints.

Code Inspector and Building Inspector District Court Appearances

**Finding:** The need to attend Housing Court in two district justice offices does not appear to significantly reduce code inspector field time. In 2010, the number of court appearances per City code inspector ranged from 31 to 11. At the high end, 31 court appearances is less than 3 times a month. At the low end, 11 court appearances is less than one per month.

**Finding:** Attending Housing Court in multiple district justice offices does not appear to significantly impact building inspector field time. In 2010, the total number of court appearances per building inspector ranged from 1 to 39. One inspector had 39 court appearances and 4 inspectors only had 1 court day all year.

Building Permit Issuance Time

**Finding:** In 2010, the average commercial building permit issuance time did meet the 30 day or less benchmark and significantly improved since 2007.

**Finding:** In 2010, commercial building permits average issuance time was 24.41 days. This was a 29.65 average day decrease from the data that was collected for 2007 permits. In 2007, the average time was 54.06 days. Residential building permits saw an average time decrease from 6.49 days in 2007 to under one day in 2010.

**CONCLUSION:** Recurring software glitches and outdated property ownership information are hampering BBI code inspector effectiveness. A fully operational, integrated and upgraded software system with accurate data will increase the effectiveness of Bureau operations.

We are pleased that the Bureau of Building Inspection agrees with the audit findings and recommendations.

Sincerely,

Michael E. Lamb
City Controller

# APPENDIX B: BBI APPLICATION PROCESS FOR RESIDENTIAL BUILDING PERMITS

Following are screenshot's of the city's BBI website showing the application process for residential building permits, including links to the application and Table of Permit Fees. [3]

Pittsburgh Bureau of Building Inspection

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## Residential (One & Two Family) Building Permits

### New Construction and Renovations

**When You Need A Residential Building Permit:**

A building permit is required prior to the construction, enlargement, alteration, or repair of any building, structure, or part thereof.

Work that does not require a Residential Building Permit

**How To Obtain a Residential Building Permit:**

An application for a building permit must be made by a contractor licensed by the City of Pittsburgh unless the work is being performed by the owner and occupier of a one- or two-family dwelling and no employees are used. All applications must be made by the owner, contractor, or authorized agent.

***Step 1:*** *Zoning Counter:* To apply for a building permit, the applicant must start at the Zoning Counter on the 3rd floor, 200 Ross Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15219. Staff at the Zoning Counter will review the proposed work to determine if an occupancy permit is also required. If an occupancy permit is required, this approval must be obtained *before* further processing of a building permit.

**Zoning Counter Phone Number** - 412-255-2246 or 412-255-2235

***Step 2: File Room:*** Once zoning approval is received, the applicant will be instructed to proceed to the file room where a clerk will check for outstanding code violation notices.

BBI Home
Licenses
Permits
Permit Fees
Important Codes
Demolition Postings
Directions to BBI

Permit Forms

**Bureau of Building Inspection**
200 Ross Street - 3rd Floor
Pittsburgh, PA 15219
412-255-2175
E-mail

**Permit Plans Examining**
412-255-2181

**Business Licensing**
412-255-2858

**Electrical/Mech/HVAC**
412-255-2160

**Demolition**
412-255-2187

[3] http://www.city.pittsburgh.pa.us/bbi/html/building_permit_residential.html, last accessed December 17, 2012.

***Step 3: Engineer's Counter:*** The applicant will then be directed to the engineer's counter where a plan review engineer or technician will examine the application and any required plans. If the plans require additional review time, they will be placed into Plan Check for further review by a plan review engineer. This process typically takes 15 working days. Once the plans have been reviewed, the plan review engineer will contact the applicant as to the status of the plans.

***Step 4: License & Cashier Counter:*** Once the plans have been approved by the plan review engineers, the final stop is at the cashier, where payment is made by check or money order.

**What To Bring With You:**

- Correct address of the job site.
- Owner's name, address, and phone number.
- Residential Building Permit Application
- Complete the Deck Worksheet and attach it to the application if a deck is being installed as part of the building permit.
- A check or money order to pay for the permit. (Cash or credit cards are not accepted)
- If an occupancy permit is required, you may need a plot plan to obtain the prerequisite zoning approval.
- Any required construction plans. The drawings **may** be required to be *signed* and *sealed* by a professional (engineer or architect) registered with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in accordance with 49 Pa. Code § 9.141.
- Contractor Registration information if not previously registered for the year.

**The Fee**

See the Table of Permit Fees.

**Inspection**

It is the responsibility of the permit holder to arrange for all required inspections by contacting the appropriate inspector. The inspector's name and phone number may be found in bold print on the permit. Required inspections include:

1. **Footer inspection** - after trenches or ditches are evacuated, forms and reinforcement are in place and before footer is poured or constructed.
2. **Rough-in inspections** - after the completion and prior to the concealment of framing, fire blocking, and any other building component.
3. A **final** inspection when all work is complete. measured from the bottom of the footing to the top of the wall, unless supporting a surcharge.

Please call **412-255-2181** if you wish to verify the need for a building permit.

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# APPENDIX C: BBI CHIEF JOB ANNOUNCEMENT

Following is a screenshot of the city's website showing the job announcement for the Chief of the Bureau of Building Inspection position.[4]

pittsburgh.pa.us https://www.city.pittsburgh.pa.us/employmentcenter/JobListings.aspx

Most Visited | Getting Started | Customize Links | Free Hotmail | Suggested Sites | Web Slice Gallery | Windows Marketplace | Windows Media | Windows

City of Pittsburgh Web Site

Home | Mayor | Council | Departments | Jobs | Maps | Contact | Search

Main Employment Page | Current Job Openings | Jobs Accepting Interest Cards

Login | My Employment Profile

Printable Version

| Recruitment / Bid Job Title | Job Type | Who May Apply? | Last Day To Apply | Exam Prep Guide | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| BID FOR CLERK 2 | Full Time | ONLY City Employees | 12/26/2012 | | Apply now! | Job Announcement |
| CHIEF - BUREAU OF BUILDING INSPECTION | Full Time | All Applicants | | | Apply now! | Job Announcement |
| CLIENT APPLICATION DEVELOPER 1 (ORACLE PROGRAMMER) | Full Time | City of Pittsburgh Current RESIDENTS Only | | | Apply now! | Job Announcement |
| FOREMAN (FORESTRY) | Full Time | All Applicants | 1/7/2013 | | Apply now! | Job Announcement |
| LAND SURVEY ROD SPECIALIST | Full Time | All Applicants | 12/26/2012 | | Apply now! | Job Announcement |
| NETWORK ANALYST 2 | Full Time | City of Pittsburgh Current RESIDENTS Only | 12/24/2012 | | Apply now! | Job Announcement |
| POLICE OFFICER | Full Time | All Applicants | 4/1/2013 | | Apply now! | Job Announcement |
| RECREATION LEADER PT SENIORS | Temporary | City of Pittsburgh Current RESIDENTS Only | 11/27/2012 | | Apply now! | Job Announcement |
| SCHOOL CROSSING GUARD AS NEEDED | Part Time | City of Pittsburgh Current RESIDENTS Only | | | Apply now! | Job Announcement |
| TRUCK DRIVER | Full Time | All Applicants | 12/26/2012 | | Apply now! | Job Announcement |

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[4] https://www.city.pittsburgh.pa.us/employmentcenter/JobListings.aspx, last accessed December 17, 2012.

# APPENDIX D: ARTICLE ON PENNSYLVANIA LAW REGARDING BLIGHTED PROPERTIES

## New Pennsylvania law helps communities to overcome blight

*By: Jeremy Boren, Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*[5]

*Published: Saturday, November 10, 2012, 8:34pm (updated on Sunday, November 11, 2012)*

A new Pennsylvania law allows local governments to take control of blighted properties and cancel tax liens and bank foreclosures so the land can be sold to responsible owners or developers willing to improve hard-luck neighborhoods.

Gov. Tom Corbett late last month signed the Land Bank Act to streamline the cumbersome process of returning delinquent properties to tax rolls in towns struggling to boost their tax bases.

More than 300,000 vacant properties are scattered across the state, including about 40,000 in Philadelphia and 20,000 in Pittsburgh, where more than half are tax-delinquent. A 2010 report by the Philadelphia Association of Community Development Corporations said the properties cost taxpayers an estimated $20 million a year.

“This could really help us,” said Dennis Davin, director of the Allegheny County Economic Redevelopment Department. “We have a vacant property program, where we help municipalities redevelop vacant land when they ask, but it’s a very long process. This could not only shorten the process but reduce the cost of it.”

Davin said the county budgets about $100,000 a year to address legal obstacles of clearing tax liens and other claims against properties and absentee owners, who sometimes are difficult to find. Such challenges can take years to untangle, frustrating neighbors and redevelopment nonprofits eager to make change.

A key to attracting developers to once-blighted land is packaging parcels in a land bank into a tract large enough to host homes or businesses, Davin said.

Liz Hersh, executive director of the nonprofit Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania, said the law allows municipalities to designate a land banking authority that can repurpose vacant, delinquent parcels rather than leaving that to sheriff’s offices and redevelopment authorities.

It also updates antiquated laws that can create a legal labyrinth for municipalities trying to improve blighted areas.

“Our tax sale laws were written in 1923, all five of them, and Pennsylvania is a really different place today,” Hersh said. “Back then, it was still growing with new industries, and the idea then that someone would walk away from their property was unthinkable.”

Now it happens particularly in urban cores, where absentee landlords and poverty are more common.

Pittsburgh Mayor Luke Ravenstahl pushed for the law’s approval.

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5 http://triblive.com/news/allegheny/2877768-74/properties-law-bank-tax-vacant-homewood-blighted-delinquent-municipalities-pennsylvania#ixzz2C6Z6cj4b, last accessed on December 17, 2012.

In a speech to the Pennsylvania League of Cities and Municipalities, Ravenstahl said: "We determined that if we are going to build off of the gains we've made in turning our blighted properties into community assets, we must be able to repurpose vacant, abandoned and foreclosed properties through the use of land banks."

Municipalities that want to create an independent authority to handle land banks must have a population of at least 10,000, under the new law.

That's one reason the law likely wouldn't help the Westmoreland County community of Jeannette — with a population of 9,634 — deal with the abandoned, 100-bed Monsour Medical Center, which closed in 2006.

Jeannette officials condemned the dilapidated building, which has become a target for trespassers and arsonists, but they don't have the $250,000 to $1 million needed to tear it down, and the owners have neglected it. Jeannette's budget anticipates $5.1 million in revenues in 2012.

Through bulk purchasing power, Scott Avolio, Jeanette's solicitor, said the land bank law could help reduce red tape and costs associated with repurposing blighted residential properties spread over several communities, but it's not enough to deal with a major commercial eyesore.

"If there was a state super-fund that could loan money for this, that would help," Avolio said.

City Councilman Ricky Burgess of Homewood recently introduced legislation to establish a Pittsburgh Land Bank. He called it an "essential step to transform and rehabilitate the city's low- and moderate-income communities." City Council must vote to accept or reject the legislation.

Tax-delinquent properties, many of them vacant tracts, are prevalent in Pittsburgh's eastern neighborhoods such as Larimer, Homewood, Lincoln-Lemington and East Hills.

Similar properties also are concentrated in Hazelwood, New Homestead, Knoxville, Beltzhoover and Fairywood, according to an Urban Redevelopment Authority map. It shows more than 16,200 delinquent parcels, about 11 percent of parcels citywide.

One large blighted property, at Fleury Way and Collier Street in Homewood, is an eyesore that the past three mayors and many City Council members visited with the hope of drawing attention to it.

Pittsburgh Solicitor Dan Regan said the city last week ended a more than three-year struggle to acquire the property. The landlord, living in Israel, purposely avoided contact, Regan said. The city hired a private investigator to find him and serve court papers.

Homewood's rundown properties, including the parcel at Fleury Way and Collier Street, attracted drug users and violence.

"It's been an eyesore, and it also brings with it some bad history of gang violence and drug activity," said Jerome M. Jackson, executive director of Homewood-based Operation Better Block Inc. "The community itself has really disturbing memories of that area."

Jackson said Homewood has more than 2,000 delinquent properties, a mix of vacant lots and aging homes.

"Land banking for us could be used as a strategy to get rid of slumlords or take property away from slumlords," Jackson said.

It's not just for urban areas, Hersh said.

The law could help rural communities trying to accommodate an influx of Marcellus shale workers or make housing stock available to new residents.

"It allows people to capitalize on the existing resources that we have — the land — rather than always go out and build new houses," Hersh said.

Jeremy Boren is a staff writer for Trib Total Media. He can be reached at 412-320-7935 or jboren@tribweb.com.