

Permitting System Options Analysis

Comparison of three options against the county’s requirements, estimated cost, and implementation capacity.

Client Alder County Office of Development Review	Practice Technology & Digital Advisory	Duration 8 weeks	Decision requested Approve Option B for the budget request
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CONTEXT

The Month 3 dashboard reports a median of 24 days from submission to decision, against a baseline of 41 days. The process continues to rely on a shared tracking log, weekly exports from the legacy database, and email. The steering committee requested system requirements and an options assessment to support the next budget request.

REQUIREMENTS

We gathered requirements from 18 staff across planning, engineering, IT, and finance, and from 9 frequent applicants. Each requirement is linked to a step in the redesigned process.

The result is 46 prioritized requirements: 21 must have, 15 should have, and 10 could have.

AREA	REPRESENTATIVE MUST-HAVE REQUIREMENTS
Intake	Online submission with type-specific completeness checks; service-standard clock starts only when an application is complete
Routing and review	Configurable Express, Standard, and Complex lanes; parallel routing with one consolidated comment letter
Applicant status	Self-service status lookup and automatic notifications at each milestone
Reporting	Median days from submission to decision by lane, backlog, completeness, and review rounds without manual exports
Integration	County parcel and mapping data; county financial system for fee collection and reconciliation
Records and security	Retention schedules that meet county policy; role-based access and an audit trail

OPTIONS CONSIDERED

OPTION	DESCRIPTION	MUST-HAVES MET	EST. 5-YEAR COST
A. Enhance current tools	Extend the legacy database with online forms and scheduled reports	11 of 21	\$310,000
B. Configurable permitting platform	Subscribe to a cloud permitting platform configured to the redesigned process	21 of 21	\$540,000
C. Join a regional platform	Join a neighboring county's existing platform contract and shared configuration	19 of 21	\$420,000

Five-year cost covers licensing or development, implementation, migration, training, and support. Planning estimates, not vendor quotes.

EVALUATION

CRITERION	WEIGHT	A	B	C
Fit to requirements	35%	2	5	4
Five-year cost	25%	5	3	4
Implementation risk (higher score = lower risk)	20%	3	4	2
Staff time required (higher score = less staff time)	10%	3	3	4
Vendor viability and support	10%	2	4	3
Weighted score (out of 5)		3.05	4.00	3.50

Option A has the lowest estimated five-year cost and meets 11 of the 21 must-have requirements. It would retain manual reporting. Option C has a lower estimated cost than Option B, but it requires changes to fee integration and review lanes that the partner county has not agreed to. These dependencies increase implementation risk.

RECOMMENDATION

Pursue Option B, a configurable permitting platform, through a competitive request for proposals. Based on this options assessment, it is the only option expected to meet all 21 must-have requirements. Confirm that fit through proposal evaluation and scripted demonstrations before contract award.

- Implement in two releases: road opening permits first, then site plans and subdivisions.
- Migrate 24 months of application history so performance trends remain continuous.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

WINDOW	MILESTONES	OWNER
Months 1-2	Request for proposals drafted from the 46 requirements; evaluation committee named	IT Director, process owner
Months 3-5	Proposals scored; scripted demonstrations; contract award and implementation plan	Evaluation committee, Director of Planning
Months 6-10	Release 1: road opening permits, online submission, applicant status	Vendor, process owner
Months 11-14	Release 2: site plans and subdivisions, fee integration, retirement of the legacy database	Vendor, IT Director

RISKS TO MANAGE

- **Configuration drift:** the redesigned process is the specification; changes need process owner approval.
- **Data migration quality:** complete a data-cleanup work period before Release 1 and use reconciliation reports at cutover.
- **Staff capacity:** backfill hours for two subject matter experts during configuration and testing.