



# The Story of DPIE

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*Synergy through Consolidation and Co-location*

Daniel L. Dornan, P.E.

The paper tells the story of the creation and evolution of Prince George's County, Maryland's Department of Permitting, Inspections & Enforcement during its first two years of operation.

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# THE STORY OF DPIE

## *SYNERGY THROUGH CONSOLIDATION AND CO-LOCATION*

By Daniel L. Dornan, Special Assistant to the Director

### SUMMARY

The Department of Permitting, Inspections and Enforcement (commonly known as DPIE) is the newest department in Prince George's County (County), which is located just east of the District of Columbia. DPIE was originally conceived as a response to continuing criticism of the County's permitting and licensing processes lodged by representatives of the economic development community in Prince George's County. For many years this had been a sore point for those trying to build in the County.

DPIE is the keynote initiative in the Baker\* Administration's strategy for improving the County's capacity to meet the needs of developers and businesses seeking permits and licenses from the County in a timely and proficient manner. DPIE brings together staff from nine County, bi-County, and State agencies under one-roof so that customers can access related services required for issuing a permit or license.

DPIE has achieved dramatic improvements in various service measures through organizational transformation, process improvement, technology enhancement, staffing optimization, office space rehabilitation, performance monitoring and reporting and staff recognition. This includes a 31 percent increase in revenues processed by DPIE's Cashier's Office from Fiscal Year 2014 to Fiscal Year 2015 and a 63-95 percent reduction in the processing time for processing permits and licenses. These are perhaps the most significant measures of accomplishment for this relatively new agency and are consistent with the Baker Mission Statement which calls for "providing excellent services that achieve high levels of customer satisfaction."

This paper chronicles the many interrelated activities which went into the creation of DPIE. The paper:

- Provides a biographical account of the development and implementation of DPIE – the vision, the organization, the people, the struggles, and the triumphs.
- Traces the development and implementation of DPIE from its 2012 inception to its current manifestation.
- Describes the many players and many steps which were required to launch this bold initiative.
- Discusses further steps that are needed to fulfill County Executive Rushern L. Baker, III's vision for the agency.



\* Rushern L. Baker, III – Prince George's County Executive

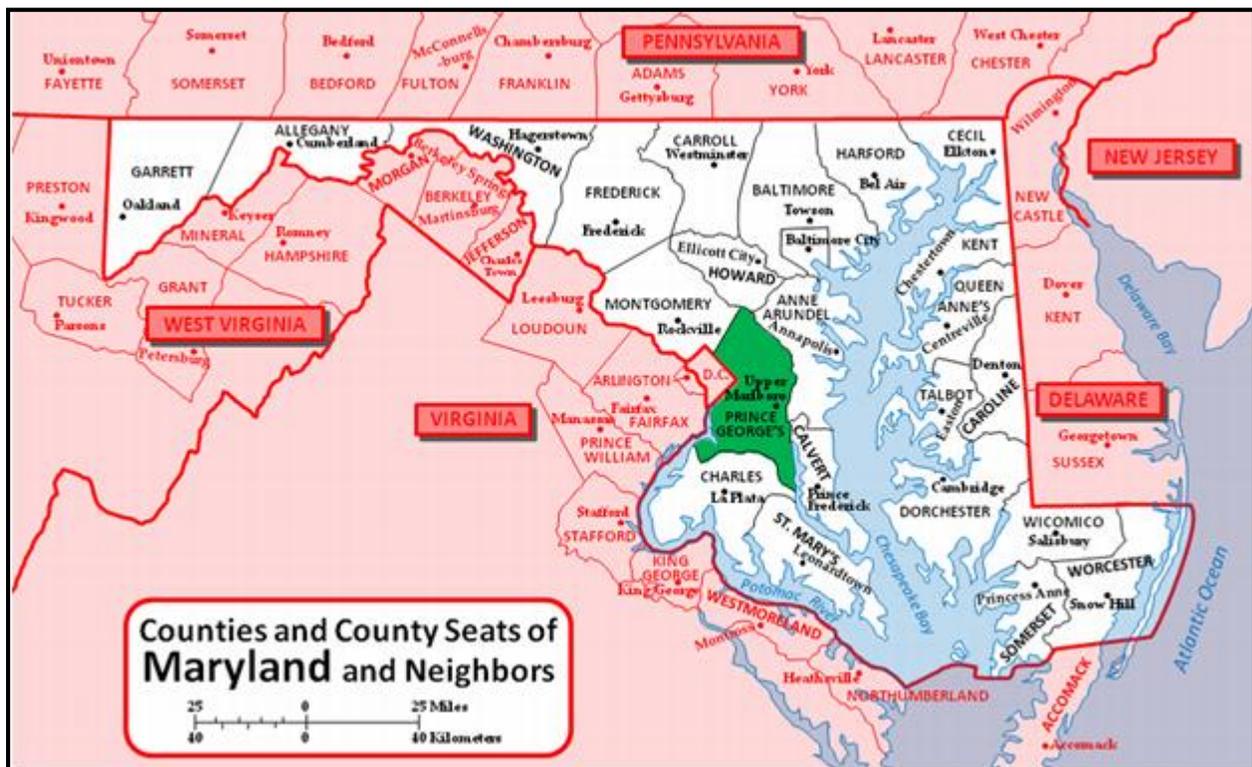
## 1. BACKGROUND

This chapter provides insight into the geographic, socioeconomic, political, and historical context for the development of DPIE. It also describes how the concept for DPIE was developed and the major changes which needed to occur for the concept to become reality.

### Geographic and Socioeconomic Context

DPIE is the newest department in Prince George's County, Maryland, which is located adjacent to and east of Washington, D.C. (see Exhibit 1). The County is the second most populous in the state of Maryland, with nearly 900,000 residents representing approximately 15% of Maryland's total population of just over 5.8 million residents. Prince George's County is immediately north, east, and south of Washington, D.C., comprising a total land area of 500 square miles. According to the U.S. Census, the median income for a household in the county for 2011 was \$73,447, compared to a U.S. median household income of \$50,100. Prince George's County is also one of the largest counties in the U.S. with a majority of residents classified as Black or African American. Almost twenty percent of County residents are foreign born.

Exhibit 1 – Geographic Location of Prince George's County, Maryland



### Efforts by Prior Administrations

For many years stretching back into the 1970s, various administrations in Prince George's County attempted to address broad-based criticism of the County's permitting processes by making modest changes to the organization and location of these functions which spread across multiple agencies located in widely-dispersed

buildings. The most recent effort involved establishing a One-Stop Permitting Center on the top floor of the Peppercorn Building which housed both the former Department of Environmental Resources (DER) and the Department of Public Works & Transportation (DPW&T). This earlier attempt put resources from these two County agencies and a bi-County agency, the Maryland-National Capital Park & Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) together on the sixth floor Permitting Center. These earlier efforts paved the way for the ultimate solution – **DPIE**.

### **New Administration with Bold Vision**

The 2012 election of a new County Executive, Rushern L. Baker III, created the opportunity for the County to revisit the many serious challenges facing the County, develop positive strategies to address these challenges, and apply the necessary resources to implement these strategies. During the period following the election and prior to the installation of the new administration a number of outreach efforts were made to identify and prioritize the most pressing problems holding the County back from achieving its full potential. Those participating in these efforts included:

- Baker Transition Team members
- Other elected officials
- Community, environmental, and business leaders
- County public employee union representatives
- Process Transformation Team (PT2) comprised of building industry representatives
- Staffs of affected County agencies
- Officials from neighboring jurisdictions and leading-edge counties and cities (such as Montgomery County, District of Columbia, Fairfax County, Arlington County, and Chicago)
- Site visits to Montgomery County, District of Columbia, and Anne Arundel County to observe first-hand their permit processing office arrangements, use of advanced technology, and workflow

Before and after taking office as County Executive, Mr. Baker also participated in a number of town meetings intended to solicit the views of constituents regarding services that needed to be improved. Among the functions deemed most in need of improvement was the entire entitlement and permitting process. Many complained that the land use and zoning approval (entitlement) process was exceedingly cumbersome, slow and subject to involvement by elected officials acting on behalf of constituents seeking approval of zoning changes, particularly zoning exceptions. While streamlining this set of processes had long been an objective of prior administrations, making substantive progress had been limited since the entitlement process remained primarily the responsibility of the semi-autonomous Maryland-National Capital Park & Planning Commission.

### **Stakeholder Feedback**

The result of these outreach efforts was a prioritized list of improvement strategies grouped under the following four core areas:

- Economic Development
- Health Care
- Public Education
- Public Safety

The first area was selected because of its importance to overall County efforts to develop and sustain the tax base needed to adequately support programs in all four areas. With little commercial development and an overabundance of residential housing, the costs of County government have traditionally been shouldered by residential property owners. County stakeholders noted that achieving greater economic development to take some of the tax burden off the shoulders of residents would require the County to become a more attractive place to do business. This meant quality education, high public safety, and superior health care.

When asked about the County's past performance in serving the building community, stakeholders frequently noted the following concerns:

- Lengthy time to process permits
- Numerous disparate locations of responsible agencies
- Fragmented authorities/responsibilities among multiple agencies
- Functional redundancy and duplication of effort
- Inconsistent plan reviews and resulting rework
- Inefficient manual and paper-based processes
- Weak code enforcement of property standards
- Long time to resolve property standards code violations

These were viewed to be impediments to economic development and neighborhood revitalization and served as the basis for creating DPIE.

## **2. GENESIS OF DPIE CONCEPT**

There were two driving forces behind the development of DPIE. The first was a need to make the permitting process *more Simple, more Timely, and more Predictable* (or STP for short) so the regulatory review and inspection processes could be performed more cost-effectively for the economic development community. STP became an early catchphrase for the objectives of DPIE and its central mission of *Serving The Public*. The second impetus for change was the perception that the County's permitting and inspection functions were highly fragmented, both organizationally and geographically. There were major permitting and inspection functions in the Department of Environmental Resources (DER - now known as the Department of the Environment or DoE), the Department of Public Works & Transportation (DPW&T), and the Health Department. This created delays and redundancies in the permitting and inspection services, thereby reducing the attractiveness of the County to developers and builders with other neighboring counties and cities to site their projects.

### **Development of the DPIE Concept**

The election of County Executive Baker ushered in a new era for the County to take a fresh approach in how it regulates and serves the development community. Early in its first term, the Baker Administration pledged to make economic development one of four focus areas for the County. Guided by inputs provided by various internal and external stakeholders at meetings held in mid-2012 and the results of a survey of leading jurisdictions providing permit and license processing services, County Executive Baker issued an executive order on August 21, 2012 calling for the creation of a new department that would combine the resources and functions of permitting (including cashing, licensing, and plan review), inspections, and enforcement of property standards.

The new department was intended to serve as evidence of the Baker Administration’s commitment to its mission:

***The Baker Mission:***

***To transform the quality of life for our residents, visitors and businesses by providing excellent services that achieve high levels of customer satisfaction through integrity, accountability and convenience.***

The Baker Team laid out a broad framework for the new department and a short-term schedule for its implementation with little consideration for how many things needed to be developed and implemented. The new department was to encompass the many functions associated with the issuance of permits and licenses relating to economic development whether existing or proposed. Hence the chosen name for the agency became: the Department of Permitting, Inspections and Enforcement (DPIE) - with an underlying objective of better serving its many diverse customers. The relationships of the core functions of DPIE are portrayed in the following exhibit.

**Exhibit 2 - Key Functions of DPIE**



All of the County’s fee-based services associated with permit and business license processing were to be either combined or co-located under one roof. This meant carving out these functions and their staffs from several County agencies and somehow reassembling the pieces into an organization structure that did not yet exist. In addition, other County, bi-County, and State agencies involved in these functions were to have staff co-located in the same building. The various agencies that were to become aligned with DPIE are shown in Exhibit 3.

**Exhibit 3 - Agencies Aligned with DPIE**



## **Legal Basis for DPIE**

The legal framework for DPIE included subtitles of the County Code which were formerly applied to the host agencies from which the Department derived most of its functionality and staff resources (DER, DPW&T and Health). The key subtitles of the County Code which provided the legal basis for DPIE's major responsibilities included:

- Subtitle 4 – Building
- Subtitle 5 – Business and Licensing
- Subtitle 5B – Chesapeake Bay Critical Area
- Subtitle 13 – Housing and Property Standards
- Subtitle 24 – Subdivisions
- Subtitle 27 – Zoning
- Subtitle 30 – Agriculture (Enforcement)
- Subtitle 32 – Water Resources Protection and Grading

## **Timeframe for Establishing DPIE**

This new department was to open in ten months following issuance of the Executive Order calling for the establishment of DPIE. The sequence of events leading up to the opening of DPIE included the following:

- July 2012 – County Executive Announced Establishment of DPIE
- August 2012 – Executive Order Calling for Creation of DPIE Transmitted to Council
- September 2012 – Interagency Working Group Formed - including representatives of all County, Bi-County, and State agencies to be included or co-located with DPIE
- September 2012 – DPIE Core Working Groups Formed - with group leaders assigned to each from among key managers of core functional areas
- October 2012 – Council Approved Executive Order
- January 2013 – Proposed Changes Discussed with Public Employee Unions
- January 2013 – Enabling Legislation Submitted and subsequently passed
- **July 2013 – DPIE Launched**

The details for how this new department would be set up and operated were left to representatives from the various agencies that were participating on working groups assigned to develop DPIE. The short timeframe for getting DPIE designed, developed, and implemented was made even more difficult by having to consolidate staffs and functions from three County agencies (DER, DPW&T, and Health) and co-locate with six County, Bi-County, and State agencies, including:

- Office of Law (OOL)
- Fire Department
- Maryland-National Capital Park & Planning Commission (M-NCPPC)
- Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC)

- Prince George’s Soil Conservation District (SCD)
- State Highway Administration (SHA)

### **Locating DPIE Building and Functions**

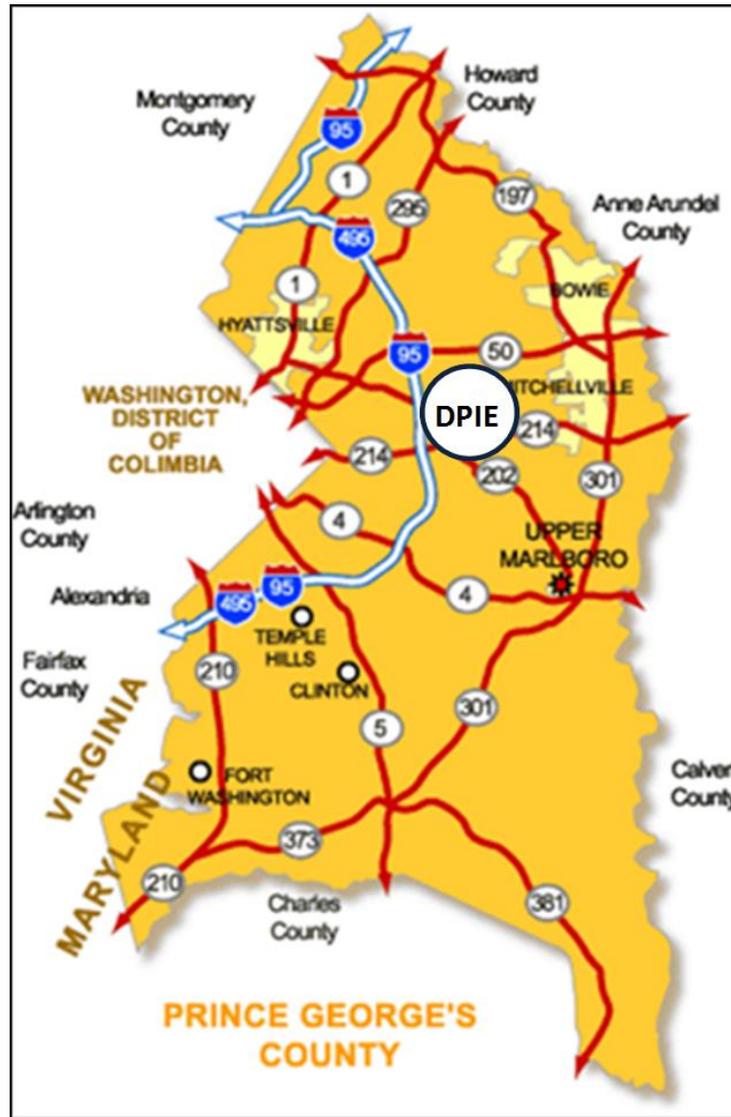
Recognizing the condensed timeframe to set up DPIE, it was decided early in the planning process to house the new department in the 27-year old Peppercorn Building where two of the three key source agencies (DER and DPW&T) were already located (pictured in Exhibit 4).

**Exhibit 4 – DPIE Building at 9400 Peppercorn Place, Largo, Maryland**



As shown in Exhibit 5, the Peppercorn Building was centrally located in the Largo government campus, along with buildings that housed a number of other County agencies. The area was served by major interstate, primary and secondary roads, the regional transit system (Metrorail), and the County’s transit service (The Bus). Having a central location was essential to making it convenient for customers to apply, obtain, and pay for permits and business licenses by going to one building instead of multiple buildings spread around the County. DPIE has been moving to on-line permitting and payment to reduce or eliminate customers from having to come to the DPIE Building. This is a gradual process since DPIE is constrained by an outdated application which currently serves as the backbone for the Department’s permitting and licensing processing.

Exhibit 5 – Location of DPIE in Prince George’s County, Maryland



The first major hurdle facing the transition PMO Team was the absence of space in the building for DPIE. Given the expected size of DPIE, it was determined that at least 4-5 floors of the building would be required for DPIE and its co-located agency staffs. The only solution was to move out of the building several of the current occupants, including the Department of Housing & Community Development from the first and second floors and ultimately the Department of Environmental Resources from the 5<sup>th</sup> floor. The first floor would need to be gutted and reconstructed to accommodate the many customer-facing functions that would be located there, including the Permit Center, License Center, Cashier’s Office, and Homeowners & Mega Projects Suite. Hence the focus of one of the major working groups was on the space needs of DPIE and how to reconstruct the first floor in time for the DPIE opening.

The decision to alter the traditional pattern of having all permit applicants go to the first floor instead of the top sixth floor of the Peppercorn Building was intended to make customers' visits to obtain services less burdensome and counterproductive. The second floor was designed to house the plan review staffs of the new department, given their related functionality to the permitting processes to be located on the first floor. To pay for these improvements, the County chose to use its Capital Improvement Program (CIP) funds. The reconstructed first floor was opened to DPIE on July 1, 2013 while the second floor was opened in February 2014.

### **Components of Change for Developing DPIE**

In developing DPIE, the County embarked on a multi-year transition plan that would impact every aspect of the Department. The plan's concurrent change elements included:

- Establishing a unique **culture** for the new agency, created out of the distinct cultures of the three departments contributing significant functionality and staff to DPIE.
- Creating an **organization** structure for the new agency, drawing primarily on the functional alignment of the three contributing departments.
- Determining the **staffing** complement for each office, division, section and unit of the new agency, including position assignments and responsibilities for all staff being reclassified as DPIE employees.
- Reconfiguring the interior space of the **building** where the new agency would be housed, including complete reconstruction of the first two floors of the building selected to house DPIE, including the Permit Center, License Center, and Cashier's Office on the first floor and building and site/road plan review on the second floor.
- Updating **policies** and streamlining **procedures** transferred to DPIE from DER and DPW&T to improve efficiency and customer service, as measured by a monthly performance tracking system.
- Making greater use of **technology** to automate selected processes, such as queue management in the Permit Center, electronic plan review for concurrent access and processing, and on-line access to permit and license applications and issuance.
- Setting up the **budget** structure for the new agency based on how the sections transferred from DER and DPW&T were budgeted.

By implementing DPIE the County expected to achieve the following results:

- Greater process efficiencies
- More timely resolution of issues between multiple agencies co-located in one building
- Predecessor agencies able to focus on their core services
- Expedited permitting processes which reduce:
  - Redundancies and duplication of effort
  - Frequency of customers trips between numerous locations to obtain a permit
  - Inconsistencies between agencies and resulting conflicts, re-work, and lost time
- Placement of all DPIE staff under one roof to reduce the cost and time to comply with permitting requirements across functions

These results were expected to facilitate economic development, redevelopment, and neighborhood revitalization.

### 3. MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK FOR CREATING DPIE

In August 2012, the County Executive appointed Dr. Haitham Hijazi, Director of DPW&T, to lead the DPIE development effort by. That meant he would be responsible for assembling and guiding the internal and external resources needed to create and launch DPIE – all within a ten-month timeframe. DER contributed one of their Deputy Directors, Gary Cunningham, to assist in the development of DPIE and coordinate these efforts with the other major department (DER) contributing resources to the new agency.

#### DPIE Project Management Office

The first step taken by Dr. Hijazi was the creation of a Project Management Office (PMO) to guide the creation and implementation of DPIE. The PMO consisted of senior-level staff from the Office of the County Executive, DPW&T, DER, the Office of Information Technology, and an external IT consultant. This group met on a weekly basis to develop and execute strategies for creating DPIE and to coordinate with various working groups charged with carrying out the implementation of these strategies.

#### Project Charter

Among the first products of the PMO was a project charter that included:

- **Business Case** – project description and purpose, business need, benefits, assumptions/dependencies, constraints, milestones, acceptance criteria, and funding/budget information;
- **Project Control Information** – describing the roles and responsibilities of the project sponsor project director, and project manager, and participants from the various stakeholder groups contributing to the effort to create DPIE; and
- **Review and Approval** – authorizations required to proceed and implement the various elements of DPIE.

#### DPIE Vision, Mission, and Goal Statements

After the Project Charter was created, the PMO set about drafting DPIE’s vision statement, mission statement, and set of goals to provide a common understanding of what DPIE was and what it was intended to accomplish. These are presented below.

- **DPIE Vision Statement:** *To consolidate at a single location the various functions associated with the County’s regulation and approval of economic development and redevelopment projects within the County and position the County as a national model for permit processing, code enforcement, and business licensing.*

- **DPIE Mission Statement:** *To promote economic development and redevelopment in Prince George’s County and protect the health and safety of County residents, businesses and visitors through highly integrated and efficient permitting, inspection and licensing services that ensure compliance with established building codes and property standards.*

- ***DPIE Goals:***

- *Establish a one-stop, high-quality, customer-friendly experience for permit applicants, licensees and property owners.*
- *Deploy more fully-integrated, technology-enabled and streamlined processes to more efficiently and effectively perform project permitting, construction inspection, code enforcement and business licensing functions.*
- *Simplify the permitting, inspection and licensing functions and make them more timely and predictable for all stakeholders.*

These statements reflect a strong emphasis on supporting efforts by the economic development community to comply with the regulations and standards pertaining to the design, construction, and maintenance of physical structures throughout the County. The PMO also developed a detailed work schedule to guide the contributors' activities during the period leading up to the launch date. This schedule was organized by major functional area of the new department and key areas of change in creating DPIE.

### **Core Working Groups**

In September 2012, Dr. Hijazi and the PMO established a number of core working groups composed of personnel from each of the functional groups forming DPIE. Each group focused on a particular component of the change process outlined above. These included:

- Organization and Staffing Working Group
- Human Resources Working Group
- Building and Space Working Group
- Process Improvement Working Groups
  - Permitting and Plan Review Group
  - Inspections and Enforcement Group
- Technology Working Group
- Budget Working Group

Each of the core functional working groups met at least weekly to lay out, discuss, and carry out the development requirements for the new agency. Members of the PMO participated in selected working groups to provide coverage, coordination, and integration across the groups. Through these meetings and the background activities of the working group members the structure and fabric of the new agency evolved from its predecessor agencies.

## **4. CORE WORKING GROUP ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTS**

The following lists the activities and products of each core working group operating concurrently to meet the opening day deadline for DPIE.

### **Organization and Staff Planning Working Group**

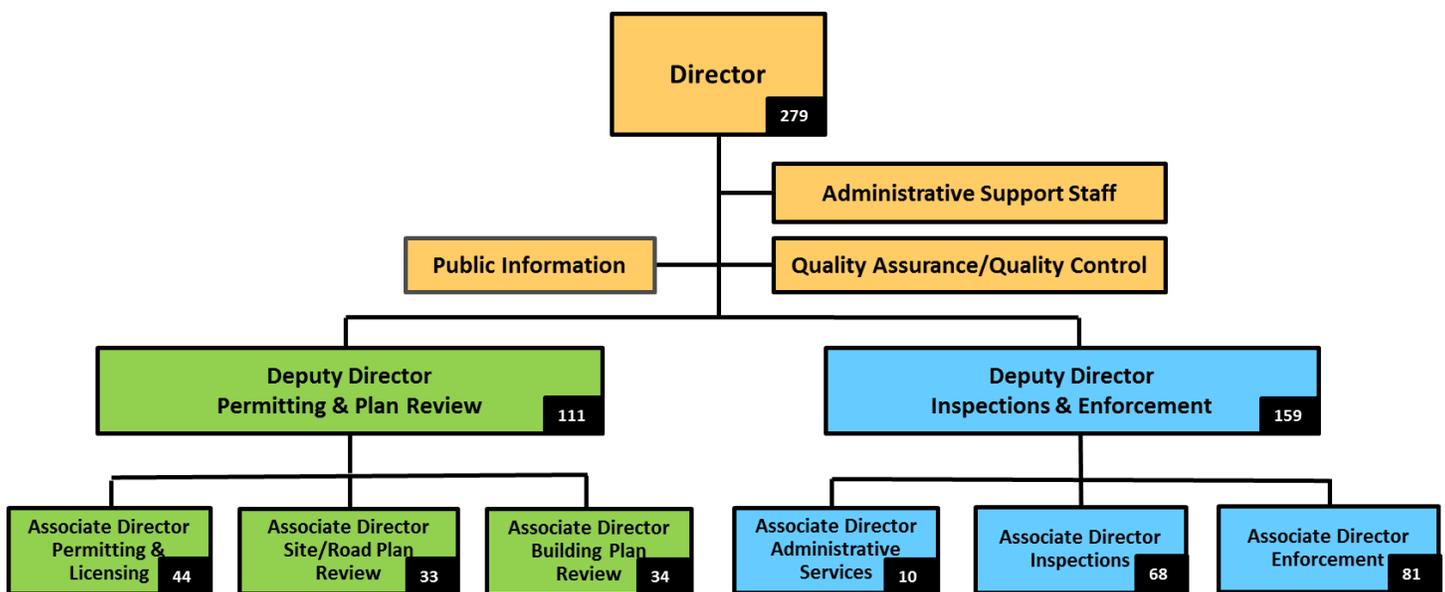
Creating DPIE's organization structure and staffing plan required more than just reshuffling the divisions, sections and units from the predecessor agencies being moved to DPIE. To achieve a one-stop shop that encompassed all of the functions of the new department, DPIE needed to recognize the many functional

responsibilities of all of the units making up DPIE or co-locating in the same building. The following summarizes the key components of this formative process:

- Develop and Refine Organization Structure based on Core Functional Responsibilities
- Consolidate Functional Divisions from Predecessor Departments
- Invite Selected Agencies to Co-Locate Staff and Related Functions at DPIE
- Develop Staffing Structure based on Staffing of Predecessor Units and Willingness of Co-Located Agencies to Commit Staff
- Work with Office of Human Resource Management (OHRM) to Align Staff Positions with Staff Classifications and Responsibilities

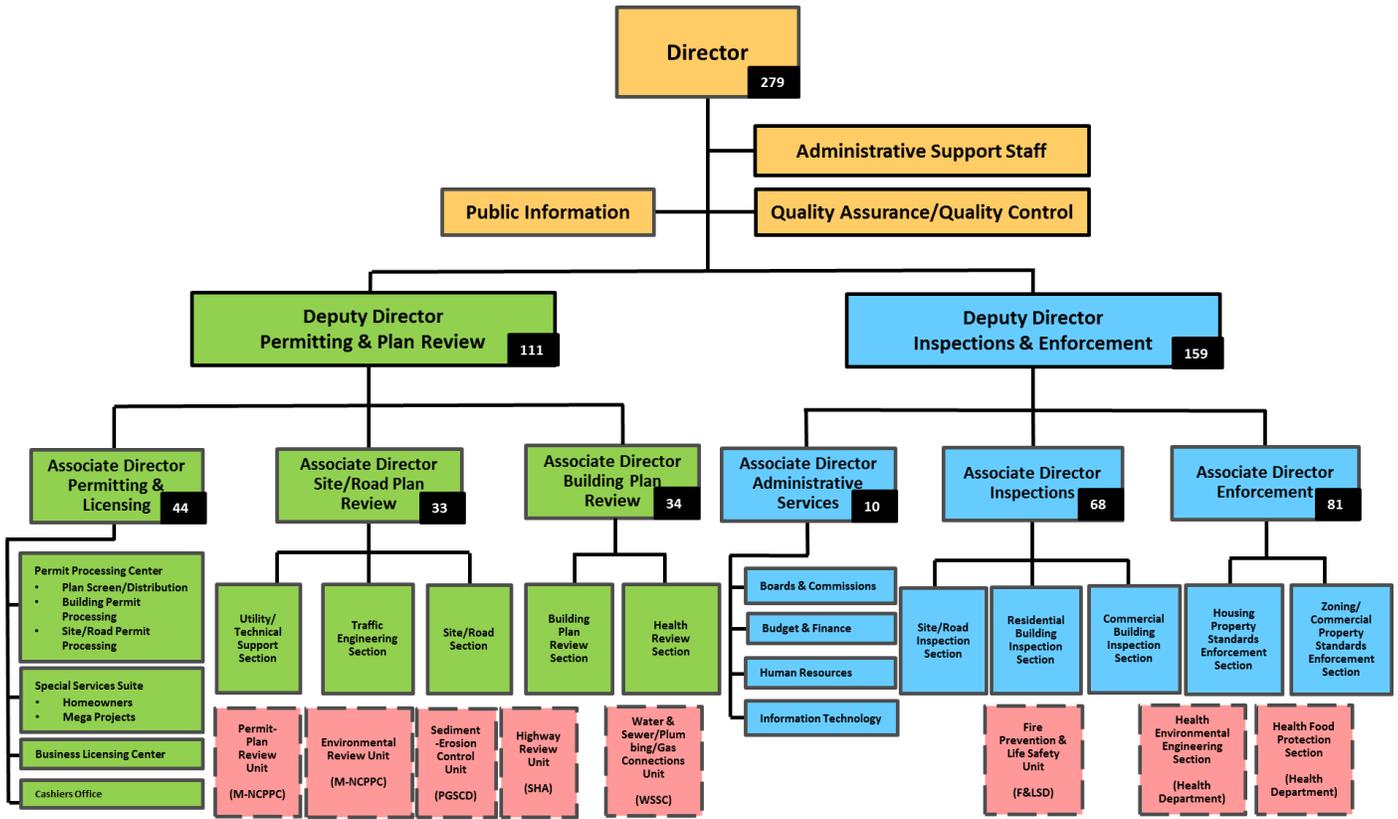
The organization structure that resulted from this group’s efforts is shown in Exhibit 6.

**Exhibit 6 - DPIE Management Organization Structure**



As shown in Exhibit 6, DPIE was organized into two major groups, each led by a deputy director (one of which has remained unfilled due to budget constraints). One group consists of the office-based Permitting & Licensing Division and the two Plan Review divisions. The second group consists of the field-based Inspections Division and Enforcement Division. A more detailed functional organization and staffing chart is shown in Exhibit 7 below, including DPIE’s operating divisions and various groups representing agencies which agreed to co-locate with DPIE.

## Exhibit 7 - DPIE Functional Organization Structure and Staffing



Co-located units from other county, bi-county, and state agencies

As shown above, DPIE’s functional organization structure consists of the following divisions, sections and units:

- Office of the Director, consisting of the Director, Deputy Director, Public Information Officer, Quality Assurance/Quality Control unit, and administrative support staff.
- Six divisions, including:
  - Administrative Services Division, including Human Resources, Budget, and Information Technology
  - Permitting & Licensing Division, including Permit Processing, Business Licensing, Cashier’s Office and Homeowners & Mega Projects Suite
  - Site/Road Plan Review Division
  - Building Plan Review Division, including Health Plan Review
  - Inspections Division, including Building Inspections and Site/Road Inspections
  - Enforcement Division, including Single-Family, Multi-Family, and Commercial/Zoning Inspections for Property Standards Compliance

- Ten co-located units from eight aligned agencies, including:
  - DPW&T Director's Office and Traffic/Transportation Engineering Section
  - Health Department Environmental Section (planned)
  - Health Department Food Protection Section (planned)
  - MDSHA Highway Review Unit
  - M-NCPPC Plan Review Unit
  - M-NCPPC Environmental Review Unit
  - Office of Law Unit
  - PGSCD Sediment & Erosion Control Unit
  - F&LSD Fire Protection & Life Safety Unit (planned)
  - WSSC Water & Sewer/Plumbing/Gas Connections Unit

DPIE's staffing levels are also listed in the charts shown on the prior pages. The total staffing complement of 279 positions was initially based on the number of staff in those divisions and sections which transferred into DPIE from DPW&T, DER, and Health Department. In addition, it was estimated that there would be approximately 80 positions associated with the co-located units and sections once DPIE was fully built out.

DPIE's maximum complement of 279 positions has remained unchanged since DPIE opened due to County budget constraints. This has made it challenging to properly serve DPIE's customers, particularly as the workload has increased. Within this total there are typically about 50 lapsed/unfilled vacancies which enable DPIE to remain within its constrained operating budget. It is a testament to the perseverance and resiliency of DPIE's staff that they have been able to improve performance in many areas despite the staffing constraints and the many changes imposed on them since DPIE was launched, as demonstrated by the performance improvement results shown chart in Exhibit 13.

### **Building and Space Planning Working Group**

Major changes were undertaken to transform the County building at 9400 Peppercorn Place into space suitable for housing DPIE's many functions. This working group developed a space plan to accommodate in the same building the functions and staff of DPIE and its co-located agencies. The initial space plan and its current status are summarized below on a floor-by-floor basis:

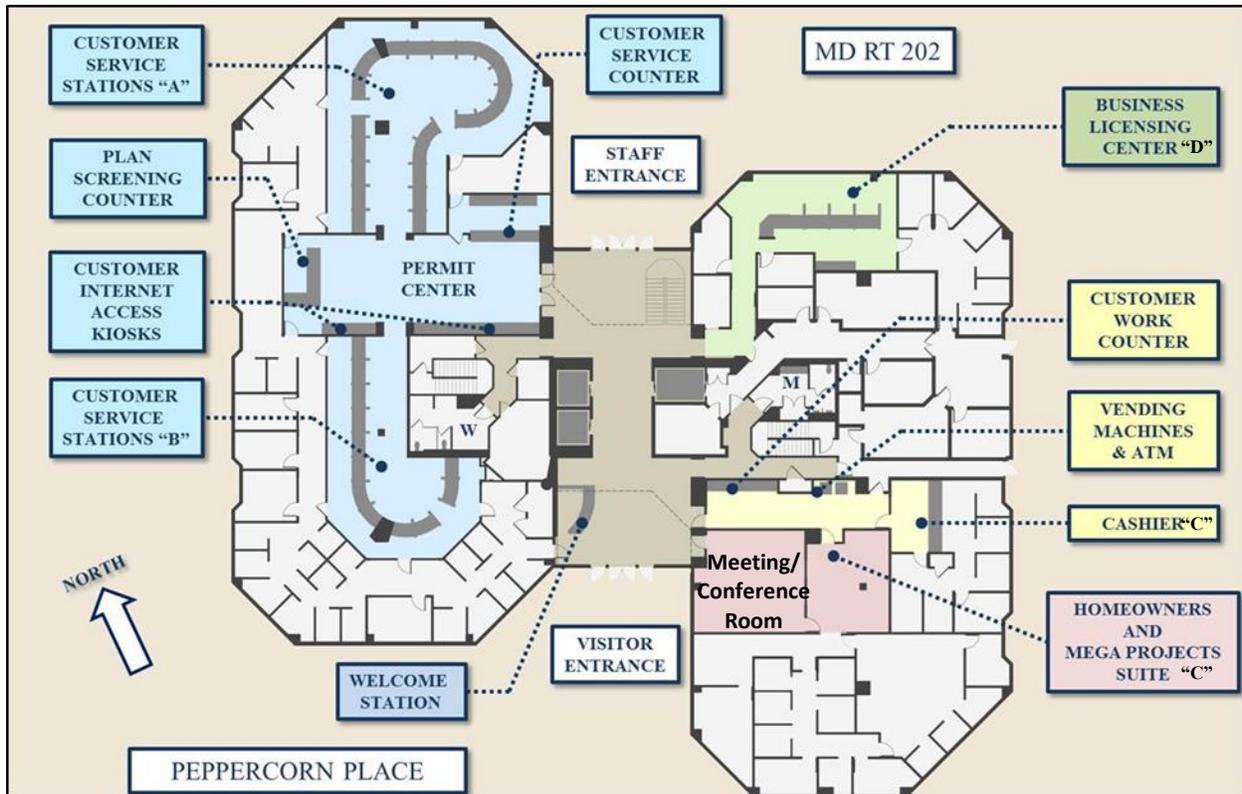
- Reconstruct First Floor for Permit, License, and Cashier Functions (opened July 1, 2013)
- Reconstruct Second Floor for Plan Review Functions (opened February 10, 2014)
- Rehabilitate most of Fourth Floor for Inspection Functions (on hold)
- Rehabilitate Fifth Floor for Director's Office and Third-Party Plan Review Teams (on hold)
- Rehabilitate Sixth Floor for Enforcement Functions (opened September 1, 2014)

From the beginning, the concept for DPIE was based on co-locating, under one roof, all staff responsible for functions involved in the regulation of economic development across Prince George's County. This meant all 279 DPIE staff and 80 staff slated to come from related agencies would co-locate in the DPIE Building and be able to interact on a first-hand basis with their counterparts in other divisions and agencies and customers. This also meant that customers would be able to obtain advice and assistance regarding the permitting and

licensing process, requirements, and costs from various responsible agencies without having to drive from agency to agency. The first step in this transformation process was to reconstruct the first floor so it could accommodate most of DPIE's customer-facing functions.

Exhibit 8 portrays the key parts of the first floor which were situated to facilitate a smooth transition between customer service functions including permitting, licensing, cashiering, walk-thru plan review, and homeowners & mega projects support. In addition, the first floor provided a variety of customer amenities, including Welcome Station, Internet Service Counter, On-Line Payment Kiosks, WI-Fi, ATM, and vending machines.

**Exhibit 8 - First Floor of the DPIE Building**



**Homeowners & Mega Projects Suite** – This special set of offices, located on the first floor, was established to provide specialized support services tailored to two market groups: homeowners seeking to navigate the County's permit system for the first time and developers of very large commercial projects seeking to get their projects moved through the regulatory process in an expedited manner. These large-scale projects include the current \$12 billion backlog of mega projects planned or proposed in the County.

The large-scale projects listed in Exhibit 9 reflect the economic vitality of the County and foretell significant increases in workload likely to face DPIE in the coming years.

**Exhibit 9 – Mega Projects Built or Planned in Prince George’s County (as of September 2015)**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Harbor Buildout (continuing)</li> <li>• MGM Entertainment Complex →</li> <li>• Tanger Outlets Buildout (continuing)</li> <li>• Cafritz – Whole Foods Market</li> <li>• Regional Medical Center</li> <li>• MedStar Surgical Center</li> <li>• Southern Maryland Hospital Expansion</li> <li>• Doctors Community Hospital Expansion</li> <li>• Konterra Mixed Use Development</li> <li>• Westphalia Business Center</li> <li>• FBI Headquarters (potential)</li> <li>• Purple Line →</li> <li>• Transit Oriented Developments</li> <li>• Capital College Student Housing</li> <li>• MD Department of Housing &amp; Community Development Headquarters</li> </ul>	 
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Exhibit 10 contains images of various locations on the reconstructed first and second floors of the DPIE Building, including the first floor Permit Center, Homeowners & Mega Projects Suite, and Welcome Station and the second floor Plan Review areas.

**Unimproved Building Floors** - While the first, second, and sixth floors were either reconstructed or rehabilitated, the fifth floor remained unimproved from the conditions left by the prior tenant (DER). The third floor continues to be occupied by several sections of DPW&T, including the DPW&T Director’s Office. DPW&T plans to use the fourth floor to relocate operations staff from the DPW&T Operations Center eight miles away. Currently there are less than a dozen DPW&T traffic and transportation engineering staff located on the fourth floor, which remains largely unoccupied.

Due to the lack of available space in the DPIE Building, owing to the assignment of the fourth floor to DPW&T, DPIE’s Inspections Division was relocated to a County building several blocks away in September 2014. As a result, Building inspectors are not able to intermingle with their counterparts in the Permit Center and the Plan Review divisions who deal with many of the same customers and issues. This has also hampered the County’s efforts to establish DPIE as a one-stop shop.

## Exhibit 10 – DPIE Building Spaces



**Permit Center**



**Customer Service Counter**



**Internet Service Counter**



**Permit Processing Station Suite**



**Plan Screening Counter**



**Homeowners & Mega Projects**



**Plan Review Reception**



**Plan Review File Room**



**Welcome Station**

### Process and Procedure Improvement Working Group

One of the major themes of the calls to create DPIE was the need to significantly improve the performance of DPIE customer service functions. This meant looking closely at the work processes of operational units, particularly those with direct customer service responsibilities. This working group consisted of two subgroups – one for the future permitting and plan review divisions and the other for the future inspections and enforcement divisions. Each subgroup focused on understanding and documenting current processes and seeking ways to streamline those processes to be performed by their respective divisions.

These efforts are summarized below:

- Direct Functional Teams to Document their Processes
- Request Functional Teams to Identify Ways to Streamline their Processes and Reduce Turnaround Time for Service Requests
- Consolidate Large Number of Permit and License Case Types

DPIE inherited an assortment of policies, procedures, and directives from the three major departments which contributed staff to it. Recognizing the lack of adequate time and resources to carry out proper Business Process Re-Engineering (BPR) efforts to quantify and streamline current processes, the subgroups responsible for this portion of DPIE's creation asked their respective operating divisions to review/update the standard operating procedures and suggest ways to streamline them. These suggestions were reviewed and adjustments were made where appropriate. The most important part of these exercises was the effort to document the processes which would be used at the startup of DPIE and guide implementation of a digital plan review system adopted by the County for DPIE.

This top-down BPR approach enabled the process improvement subgroups to document current processes, incorporate selective process improvements, and establish the basis for subsequent initiatives that would involve BPR efforts, such as the imminent replacement of DPIE's electronic permitting system.

Early on in the formation of DPIE the process improvement working group reviewed the various permit case types to search for redundancies or discontinued permits. These included the following case types considered redundant to other residential case types which remained:

- New Senior Living (Deleted)
- New Residential Condominium (Deleted)
- New Apartment (Deleted)
- New Commercial Condominium (Deleted)
- New Cottage (Deleted)
- New Residential Triples (Deleted)
- Multifamily Permit (Deleted)

After eliminating redundant or inactive case types, the number of case types fell by one-third. This helped to streamline the permitting process for DPIE and simplified the agency's fee schedule.

To expedite the plan review process, DPIE encouraged applicants to use *Peer Review* and *Third-Party Review* approaches to supplement the Department's limited plan review staff, especially for large commercial projects. These programs are summarized below:

- **Peer Review Program** – In 2015, DPIE reconstituted its Peer Review Program. This program allows owners and applicants to select DPIE-certified peer reviewers at their own cost to expedite the plan review process in lieu of County staff. Peer reviewers can be retained for various types of building and site development projects. The results of their efforts are reviewed and approved by County staff. Using peer reviewers can reduce the plan review and approval timeframe by up to 50%. The recently updated Peer Review Manual documents the program and describes the certification requirements for prospective candidates, peer reviewer responsibilities, steps in the peer review process, documentation requirements, performance criteria, disciplinary actions, and various forms.

- **Third-Party Review Program** - DPIE also instituted a third-party review process that enables owners and developers of large-scale commercial projects to retain an outside third-party individual or team to complete reviews of their project plans. Third-party reviews are limited to vertical construction only. Unlike peer-reviews, no County reviews are utilized in third-party reviews. It is estimated that third-party reviews can save up to 75% of the typical plan processing time. A Third-Party Review Program Manual, similar to the Peer Review Program Manual, is being developed and will be issued by the end of 2015.
- **Plans-on-File Program** – For residential projects DPIE has encouraged the use of this program, which encourages residential builders producing multiple homes with the same model design to submit the representative design for approval on a proactive basis. As a result, subsequent reviews of plans already approved and on file can be done in a 1-2 week turnaround time. This program applies primarily to single family structural reviews and reviews of sprinkler systems.
- **Express Plan Review Method** – Using a preformatted calculation sheet and stricter design standards, this expedited plan review process can be completed on a same day turnaround basis. Its use is limited to residential sprinkler systems.

DPIE implemented while-you-wait plan screening for building projects to ensure only complete plan sets are accepted for review and a plan log-in and log-out system to improve tracking of submitted plans.

### **Technology Working Group**

Those responsible for creating DPIE understood that the performance improvements being sought from process streamlining alone would not be adequate without supporting technology. This was driven in part by the fact that the new department's key technology system, ePermits, was already seven years old and limited in terms of the number and complexity of enhancements that could be made to it without jeopardizing performance. The key elements of DPIE's technology improvement plan are summarized below:

- Automate Business Licensing Process for Walk-in Customers
- Develop On-line Applications for Building Permits, Electrical Permits, and Special Utility Permits
- Install ePlan to Automate Plan Review Functions on a Concurrent Basis
- Replace ePermits System with a Robust Enterprise System for Permitting, Licensing, Plan Review, and Inspections

From the very beginning of DPIE's genesis, automation was viewed as a critical component of making the agency successful in serving its customers. This meant using technology to reduce unnecessary activities and paperwork, expedite processing, and increase service convenience for DPIE's customers. This was consistent with the long-term goals of:

- Eliminating the need for customers to come to the DPIE Building to file applications for and receive permits and licenses;
- Enabling mobile processing of construction and property standards inspections; and
- Replacing all paper-based processes with on-line applications.

During the first two years of operation, DPIE accomplished the following technology initiatives:

- Established DPIE website to provide customers convenient access to DPIE policies, procedures, forms, checklists, and fee schedules for permits and licenses: [dpi.e.mypgc.us](http://dpi.e.mypgc.us)
- Eliminated need for customers to manually complete paper permit applications which formerly were then re-keyed into ePermits by DPIE staff
- Enhanced existing ePermits system to enable on-line permit application, plan review, and payment for electrical permits and utility permits; and on-line building and site/road permit applications
- Enabled customers to make multiple permit payments in one transaction, reducing their out-of-pocket costs
- Implemented ePlan system for on-line submission, distribution, review, revision and approval of electronic architectural/engineering plans for building, site/road, and utility plans
- Implemented automated customer queue management system – Q-Nomy
- Provided DPIE permit tracking service on Mobile Prince George’s app
- Applied digital technology to process the following:
  - Floodplain information requests, study reviews, and delineation reviews
  - Electronic CADD plan data for addressing National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) reporting requirements
  - Processing CADD and GIS data from developers to promptly update road inventory and expedite service delivery to new communities
  - After-Hours Convenience Store on-line registration and reporting application

### **DPIE Budget Working Group**

Drafting a budget for a new agency posed a major challenge for this working group. Instead of starting from scratch, the working group transferred pieces of the budgets from the predecessor agencies for those portions relating to the functions to be transferred to DPIE. The following list summarizes the primary objectives of this working group:

- Consolidate Portions of Budgets from Departments Contributing most Staff to DPIE
- Reduce DPIE’s Initial Operating Budget due to County Fiscal Constraints
- Develop and Issue Comprehensive Permit and License Fee Schedule

The development of DPIE’s initial operating budget essentially combined the relevant portions of budgets for functional units that merged into DPIE from DER and DPW&T. This meant that whatever was budgeted for these units was transferred over to DPIE. The budget for staffing was based on the number and classification of staff moving to DPIE. Due to County budget constraints, the initial operating budget was reduced to come in line with the 279-staff complement allowed for DPIE and requested reductions in certain line items. This has been the practice for the last two budget cycles. Despite these constraints, DPIE has continued to improve its performance and productivity.

One of the greatest challenges in managing DPIE’s operating budget is its focus on the operating costs without consideration of operating revenues. Because DPIE is funded by the General Fund, all of its revenues earned through the issuance of permit and license fees are absorbed into the General Fund. The uncertainty regarding the allocation of General Fund revenues leaves DPIE unable to budget adequate resources to fully serve its

customers. This issue can be resolved if DPIE became an Enterprise Funded agency. This would require additional fee revenues to fully cover the agency's direct and indirect costs, as well as an adequate rainy-day reserve.

## **5. DPIE OPENING AND POST-OPENING INITIATIVES**

Following ten months of intensive effort by many members of management and staff from the predecessor agencies and the many agencies to be co-located in the DPIE Building, the opening day arrived on July 1, 2013. Customer services were suspended for the morning during the festivities, which included numerous speakers from the County Executive's Office, County Council, key business stakeholders, and leaders from other departments set to collaborate with DPIE. During the morning ceremony, the County Executive and other County elected and appointed officials spoke about the significance of DPIE and their high expectations for the fledgling department. In the afternoon, DPIE commenced operations and began serving customers.

In the months following DPIE's opening, a number of initiatives were undertaken to further enhance DPIE's ability to offer increased customer service, collaborate with co-located agencies, track agency-wide performance, measure customer satisfaction with DPIE's services, and gauge employee satisfaction working at DPIE. These initiatives are discussed below.

### **Customer Service Expansion**

A number of changes were initiated during the first year of DPIE's operations to improve and expand the availability of customer services. Several of these enhancements are summarized below:

- Open the Permit Center, License Center, and Cashier's Office Counters during the Noon Lunch Hour
- Open the Permit Center, License Center, and Cashier's Office Counters 30 minutes earlier each day
- Expand Walk-Thru Plan Review Days from two to four days each week
- Institute policy requiring staff to respond to customer inquiries within 24 hours

When combined, these modest increases in service availability produced dramatic impacts on the backlog of customers waiting to be served by spreading out customer demands for service. As a customer service-focused organization, these scheduling adjustments have enabled DPIE to better serve its patrons with a fixed staff complement.

### **Memoranda of Understanding with Bi-County Agencies**

DPIE entered into a series of Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with several co-locating agencies to define their roles, responsibilities, staffing commitment, and space requirements in co-locating with DPIE.

The first MOU was between DPIE and the M-NCPPC. This MOU, signed on August 6, 2014, defined the roles, responsibilities, staffing commitment and space requirements of M-NCPPC for establishing and maintaining an on-site staffed presence in the DPIE Building in support of the environmental review of plans and approval of permits. There had been a long tradition of M-NCPPC staff being co-located with DPIE and its predecessor agencies for the purpose of handling site and building permit applications requiring entitlement and zoning-related review and approval. In addition, M-NCPPC agreed to co-locate with DPIE up to seven staff from its Development Review Section and up to six staff from its Environmental Planning Section to coordinate plan reviews related to the environmental concerns of M-NCPPC.

The second MOU was between DPIE and WSSC. It was also signed on August 6, 2014 and defined the roles, responsibilities, staffing commitment and space requirements of WSSC for establishing and maintaining an on-site staffed presence within the DPIE Building. WSSC committed to have up to four WSSC staff assigned to a

secure office suite to be provided by the County for the purpose of coordinating WSSC approvals for building permit issuance, reviewing water and/or sewer related plan submittals and participating in pre-planning meetings for mega project developments.

These MOUs reflected the County's efforts to improve the timeliness and quality of permitting and inspection services through the co-location of staffs from various County, bi-County, and State agencies involved in the regulation of economic development within the County. Exhibit 11 shows the signing ceremony for these two MOUs, held in front of the DPIE Building.

**Exhibit 11 - Signing Ceremony for Memoranda of Understanding  
Between DPIE and M-NCPPC and WSSC**



**Continuous Improvement Initiatives**

A number of initiatives aimed at continuously improving DPIE were instituted during the first two years after DPIE opened. These are described below.

- **Established a Comprehensive Performance Measurement and Tracking System (PMTS)**
  - Monthly tracking system fed largely by automated permitting systems – launched July 2014
  - Performance Indicators include input, output, efficiency, quality, and outcome measures relating to the functions of the six DPIE divisions
- **Conducted Annual Employee Satisfaction Survey (ESS) – On-Line**
  - Created an on-line anonymous survey that inquired about employees perspectives on their jobs, working for DPIE, division management, and senior Department leadership

- Asked all DPIE employees respond to the survey between the months of April and June in 2014 and again in 2015:
  - o 2014 Survey – 226 respondents or 90% of total staff
  - o 2015 Survey – 178 respondents or 71% of total staff
- Requested respondents rate the Department according to the following criteria:
  - o Performance feedback
  - o Salary
  - o Benefits
  - o Work environment
  - o Work schedule
  - o Feeling of belonging
  - o Training
- Requested respondents rate DPIE’s management and senior leadership according to the following criteria:
  - o Provides equitable treatment of staff
  - o Provides recognition
  - o Quickly resolves issues
  - o Follows policies and SOPs
  - o Keeps staff informed
  - o Seeks staff input
  - o Knows own job
  - o Knows jobs of subordinates
  - o Gives clear instructions
  - o Develops cooperation
  - o Demonstrates integrity
  - o Fosters teamwork
  - o Shares knowledge
  - o Performance based on work
  - o Is approachable
  - o Promotes a positive workplace environment
  - o Creates a nurturing environment
- Developed valuable insights into what the staff values and dislikes the most about working at DPIE to serve as a basis for improving the environment for employees
- Produced a report on actions taken by DPIE leadership to address major concerns raised by employees
- **Conducted Continuous Customer Satisfaction Survey (CSS) – On-Line**
  - Created a short on-line anonymous survey that provided an on-going opportunity for customers to rate DPIE services across a number of performance criteria
  - Requested customers to go on-line to take the 2-minute CSS survey and rate the performance of the Department during the fiscal year
    - o FY 2015 Survey – 157 responses in first 12 months
    - o FY 2016 Survey – 60 responses in first two months
  - Produced a report on the FY 2015 survey results and the noteworthy comments provided by customers regarding how to improve DPIE’s performance, which generated a set of strategies designed to address these comments

These performance tracking and survey tools were built on the Department’s first-year achievements.

## Employee Recognition Programs

The three most significant findings of DPIE's Employee Satisfaction Survey in both fiscal year 2014 and 2015 were:

- The low level of salaries and the lack of cost-of-living increases over the past seven years
- The lack of promotional opportunities
- The lack of recognition of staff performance by managers and senior leadership of the Department

Given the budget constraints of the County, it was recognized that little could be done to increase salaries or promote staff. However, it was decided to develop several low cost employee recognition programs to help address the third finding. These are described below.



- **DPIE Ambassador Program**

The Ambassador Program recognizes staff who exemplify the spirit of DPIE and demonstrate high levels of performance and customer service. Every four months, Associate Directors select up to one candidate from their respective divisions, based on nominations submitted by their staffs. Each nominee is cited by their respective Associate Director and supervisor at an awards ceremony. During the ceremony, the DPIE Director presents each recipient with a silver-coated DPIE lapel pin. Each recipient is asked to continue their outstanding performance on behalf of DPIE and to wear the lapel pin in recognition of that performance.

- **DPIE Gold Club**

An extension of the DPIE Ambassador Program is the DPIE Gold Club. This second program recognizes individuals who have demonstrated truly exceptional performance in serving DPIE and its customers. Nominations can come from any staff member in DPIE or from among its customers and are forwarded to the Director for approval. There is no specific timeframe or frequency for awarding the DPIE Gold Club lapel pins.

## Key Program Documentation

In Fiscal Year 2015, DPIE embarked on several initiatives to document agency directives, standard operating procedures, and a variety of emergency preparedness programs. These are described below:

- **Directives**

Written directives communicate formal instructions to staff regarding certain administrative, management, and operational requirements of the Department. This involved updating the various directives inherited from the predecessor agencies which contributed functions and staff to DPIE.

- **Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)**

SOPs describe the procedures for performing certain functions and provide information on the basis/background, purpose, scope, authority, responsibility, underlying policy, and process descriptions for standard procedures. These SOPs cover the full range of functions for each of the six divisions comprising DPIE and are based in part on the SOPs developed in prior years by the predecessor agencies, updated for DPIE.

- **Emergency Response Plan (ERP)**

The ERP describes how designated DPIE managers and selected subordinates are to prepare for and weather any kind of natural or man-made threats. The plan lays out the procedures for safely and effectively managing an emergency event so that employees and visitors are protected from any further harm during an emergency situation. The Plan establishes specific responsibilities and outlines emergency actions that should be taken to ensure the safety of employees and visitors.

- **Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)**

The DPIE COOP provides the framework to restore essential functions in the event of an emergency that affects operations of DPIE. It establishes the procedures for addressing loss of access to a facility, loss of services caused by a reduced workforce, and loss of services caused by equipment or system failure. The Plan also details procedures to implement actions to continue essential functions for up to 30 days.

- **Sidewalk Ice and Snow Removal Inspection Program**

This new program description and plan implements the requirements of the County Road Ordinance regarding the timely removal of snow and ice from paved sidewalks throughout the County by residents and businesses which abut public sidewalks. Snow removal is an annual challenge for Prince George’s County, businesses, and residents. This is evidenced by the snow drift shown in Exhibit 12, which accumulated on a balcony of the DPIE Building. DPIE enforces the provisions of the County Road Program pertaining to abutter responsibilities for sidewalk snow and ice clearance. The plan describes the program, the responsible agencies (DPIE’s Inspections Division and Enforcement Division), procedures, management structure, and reporting requirements.

**Exhibit 12 – Snow Drift at DPIE Building**



## Revised Permit and License Fee Schedule

One of the most critical undertakings of the new department was the development of a comprehensive fee schedule covering the many permits and licenses issued by DPIE. Such a schedule was needed to enable the Department to understand what it was charging its customers, how these fees compared to those charged by neighboring jurisdictions, how much revenue was earned by these various fees, and to what extent the revenues generated by fees covered the operating costs of the department. It was recognized that this information would be needed to determine what fee increases would be required to enable DPIE to become self-supporting and eventually attain *Enterprise Status*.

It is only through *Enterprise Status* that DPIE can ensure that the level of resources (staffing, vehicles, etc.) comprising the Department will be adequate to provide the level of service expected by its customers in return for the fees paid for these services, instead of merely being sent to the General Fund.

To move DPIE towards *Enterprise Status*, the following steps were put into action starting shortly after DPIE was launched:

- Developed initial permit and license fee schedule in 2013
- Expanded permit and license fee schedule to include all permit and license types in 2014
- Developed fee increase options to produce varying levels of revenue and position DPIE for eventual *Enterprise Status*, self-sustaining and separate from the General Fund
- Reviewed OMB proposal for DPIE permit and license fees which focused on the lowest revenue option, which was only one-third of what had been proposed by DPIE
- Assisted the County Board in developing a fee increase schedule that was implemented in July 2015, the first comprehensive fee increase in over 20 years
- DPIE's fee increase schedule included a five percent adjustment for almost all DPIE fees to be dedicated to pay for technology enhancements for the Department, including software, hardware, and networks

The increase in fees was slated to generate about \$8 million in additional revenues in FY 2016. OMB provided only \$160,000 or about 2 percent of the amount generated by the new fees for DPIE to possibly add staff with the rest absorbed by the General Fund.

Having instituted fee increases to produce only about a third of the fee increases needed for DPIE to attain *Enterprise Status*, DPIE expects to seek further fee increases over the next two years to make up for the remaining two-thirds of the revenue sought to properly resource the Department. Ultimately as DPIE achieves greater fee parity with its neighboring jurisdictions, the Department will be in a position to establish a long-term fee strategy with recover sufficient revenues to cover all direct and indirect costs, account for inflation, and provide a sufficient reserve to cover costs in periods of economic slowdown.

## 6. PERFORMANCE RESULTS FOR DPIE

The results of the initiatives listed in the prior chapters over the first two years of operation were quite dramatic, particularly in terms of dwell time and process time. This was most apparent in the areas of permitting, licensing, and plan review. A concerted effort was made to shorten the length of time to wait before being served at the Permit Center counter and the length of time it took to process the

permit application. These were among the most frequent complaints of customers served by DPIE and its predecessors.

Exhibit 13 displays the before and after timeframes for several key processes performed by DPIE. These timeframes are based on average durations to complete the activities listed. In all cases the results show a dramatic shortening of the average timeframes to perform key processes. Among the greatest improvements in processing time shown above, bond review and processing time declined by 93% when the Office of Law (OOL) assigned staff to the DPIE Building on a rotating basis. The time to log-in, screen, and assign case numbers declined by 95%. And the time to issue business licenses dropped by 90% after the licensing function was included in the agency’s permit processing system, ePermits.

The time to issue utility permits was cut by 67% while the time to issue electrical permits dropped by 90% after these two categories of permits were put on-line for same-day application and issuance.

**Exhibit 13 - Two Year Performance Improvements by DPIE**

<b>Permitting and Licensing Activity</b>	<b>Pre-DPIE</b>	<b>DPIE</b>	<b>Average % Reduction in Process Time</b>
Bond Review and Processing	3–10 weeks	2–3 days	-93%
Plan Log-In, Screening and Case Number Assignment	3 weeks	1 day	-95%
Most Business Licenses	1–2 weeks	1 day	-90%
Special Utility Permits	3 weeks	1 week	-67%
Electrical Contractor Permits	1–3 days	1–2 hours	-90%
Building Plan Review (first cycle)	16 weeks	4 weeks Peer Plan Review - 2 weeks	-81%
Site/Road Plan Review (first cycle)	8 weeks	4 weeks Peer Plan Review - 2 weeks	-63%

The most challenging performance measure to change was the time to conduct plan reviews. However with tighter management of these processes, DPIE was able to cut the turnaround time of first-cycle plan reviews conducted by DPIE staff from 50% to 75%. The resulting timeframes could be cut a further 50% when the plan reviews were performed by outside engineers pre-certified by DPIE and retained by the project owner to carry out surrogate plan reviews in certain disciplines that are ultimately approved by DPIE.

DPIE continues to look for ways to improve its performance, particularly in serving customers, through such means as:

- Training staff on a more proactive basis
- Adopting new systems that provide remote/on-line capabilities
- Upgrading the web site for DPIE

As testament to DPIE's performance success, a representative of the MGM Resorts organization which is building a \$1.3 billion casino/entertainment complex (Exhibit 14) where the Potomac River meets I-95 made the following observation about DPIE services:

**“When MGM Resorts first came to Prince George’s County, we heard how difficult it was to deal with the County and get projects permitted and approved. However, since we started the project last year, we have been absolutely delighted with the services we have received from DPIE.”** Gordon Absher, Vice President of Corporate Communications/Public Affairs on July 15, 2015

#### **Exhibit 14 - MGM Entertainment Complex**



While DPIE remains very much a work in progress, even after two years of operations, DPIE's leadership recognizes that much can and still needs to be done to better serve DPIE's customers who pay its fees. A number of these items are briefly described in the following section.

#### **7. NEEDS FOR MOVING DPIE FORWARD**

As DPIE enters its third year of transition and operation, there are several items which are critical to helping the Department achieve its full potential. These include the following:

- **Adjust Fees to Eventually Become Financially Self-Sufficient** – The County Council should further raise the various fees charged by DPIE for permits and licenses to enable it to become financially self-sufficient.
- **Increase Accountability and Clarity of DPIE Budget and Revenues** – DPIE's financial reporting should recognize both operating expenses as well as operating revenues, unlike the current

situation where only operating expenses from DPIE are reported and managed. DPIE should produce both a *cash basis income statement* and a *cash flow statement* to show the sources and uses of cash by operating activities.

- **Prepare DPIE for Enterprise Status** – Attribute all fees earned by DPIE to a DPIE Enterprise Fund. This will demonstrate to the paying public that the fees are being properly used to fund DPIE development-related activities.
- **Provide the Necessary Staff Resources and Building Space to Effectively Serve DPIE’s Customers** – With more dedicated funding DPIE will be able to increase its staffing to meet the Department’s expanding workload. This will also require additional building space to accommodate all DPIE and co-located staff under one roof. The entire building floor space at 9400 Peppercorn Place may ultimately be needed to house the staffs of DPIE and its co-located agencies. With additional fee revenues these resource constraints can be resolved.
- **Relocate Inspections Division Back to the DPIE Building** – This will complete the transition to a one-stop shop under one roof for all DPIE-related services. Sufficient space now exists on the fourth floor to accommodate the entire Inspections Division.
- **Adopt Enterprise System for Permitting and Licensing** - DPIE and the many agencies with which it deals require a multi-function enterprise-wide system to support permitting, licensing, plan review, inspections, and enforcement of property standards. The current system, ePermits, is over eight years old and has reached its functional capacity to add more permitting and licensing applications. The County plans to eventually retain a major technology systems provider to develop and provide a new system to support permitting, licensing, plan review, and inspections. The scope, budget, and timeframe for this effort have yet to be determined.
- **Provide Additional Automation Capabilities to Expedite Services** – Technology is viewed as a critical part of improving the productivity and service quality to customers. This includes further leveraging current capabilities by:
  - Expanding ePlan electronic plan review to all disciplines, including Site/Road, Health, M-NCPPC, and SCD
  - Establishing on-line capability for permitting and licensing – as allowed by law
  - Implementing document management and screening capabilities to convert extensive paper files to digital format
- **Streamline Entitlement Process** – Obtaining a permit to build or redevelop anywhere in Prince George’s County has been viewed as a tortuous process taking not months but years to navigate. While DPIE has been the County’s primary initiative to reduce the complexity and duration of the permitting and approval process leading up to occupancy, much still needs to be done to streamline the front end of the process - known as the “entitlement” phase.

The entitlement phase involves getting approval relative to a variety of considerations, including planning, zoning, site planning, traffic accessibility, historical preservation, and various environmental considerations. Many of these reviews are carried out by a separate bi-County agency, the Maryland-National Capital Park & Planning Commission. Because of the number of factors being considered, the multiple layers of decision-making by a Planning Board and planning staff, and the frequent involvement of various stakeholders in the deliberations, the approval process can take one to three years before the project even comes to DPIE for permitting.

There appears to be consensus that the Entitlement Process needs to be streamlined, with quicker concurrent reviews, greater automation of processes, and reduced opportunity for intervention by those acting on behalf of special interests. Specific opportunities for improvement include the following strategies.

- Overlap certain entitlement processes
  - Use form-based code versus detailed architecture for plan review
  - File building-only permit applications
  - Issue rough grading permits to accelerate project site work
  - Revise Sign and Use & Occupancy permitting processes
- **Streamline Hearing Process** – To expedite the adjudication process involving disputed property standards violations and fines, DPIE should obtain legislative authority to conduct administrative hearings instead of full court hearings. This will have the effect of reducing the time required to adjudicate these cases from months to weeks.

These are the most critical requirements to enable DPIE to fulfill its mission and the vision of County Executive Rushern L. Baker III.

## 8. CONCLUSIONS

DPIE is a bold experiment in applying business best practices to create and operate a major, multi-functional agency which regulates economic development and redevelopment projects through permitting, plan review, and inspection. In carrying out this role, DPIE charges fees whose revenues should be used to cover the costs of providing the resources necessary to serve its customers, not sent to the General Fund where they are disbursed elsewhere in County government.

In its first two years of operation, DPIE has made significant improvements in customer service times, quality, and satisfaction through a variety of initiatives. These are summarized in Appendix A following this section. DPIE will continue to implement ways to better serve its customers through re-engineered processes, wireless technology, and expanded outreach efforts.

To fulfill its mission and meet its full potential, DPIE requires additional staff, which should all be located at the DPIE Building. DPIE also needs more fee revenues to enable the Department to become financially self-sufficient and eventually achieve *Enterprise Status*.

By 2019, DPIE can be fully developed and implemented, standing on its own and providing outstanding services as a “best in class” enterprise-based agency. In doing so, DPIE would be in a position to fulfill its purported legacy, which is to become:

- More focused and forward thinking
- More customer friendly and convenient
- More predictable and consistent
- More efficient and responsive
- More attractive to residents, businesses, and the development community

This will in turn create additional jobs, tax revenues, and amenities for County residents and businesses.

## MAJOR TWO-YEAR ACHIEVEMENTS OF DPIE

- Created and opened DPIE within 10 months of authorization to proceed
- Merged resources/functions from several County agencies to form core of DPIE – DER, DPW&T and Health Department
- Secured commitments from all collaborating agencies involved in the County’s permitting processes to co-locate under one roof with DPIE – including OOL, M-NCPPC, PGSCD, SHA, WSSC, Health, and Fire Department
- Obtained signed Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) defining roles/responsibilities with M-NCPPC and WSSC
- Renovated three floors of 9400 Peppercorn Place to improve work environment for staff and service environment for customers of permitting, licensing, plan review and enforcement functions
- Moved Enforcement Division to the sixth floor of the DPIE Building – the first time in over 20 years this group has been housed in the same building as the host department
- Provided customer amenities on the first floor, including Welcome Station, Internet Service Counter, On-Line Payment Kiosks, WI-FI, ATM, and vending machines
- Accelerated the filling of staff vacancies despite impediments imposed by the budget and leveraged staff through training/cross-training
- Consolidated the Building Inspection Section and the Site/Road Inspection Section into the Inspections Division to facilitate cross-training and to improve responsiveness and accountability
- Combined the Business Licensing and Health Licensing sections into one section through staff and technology consolidation
- Instituted on-going cross-training of staff in the Permit Center, Licensing Center, and Cashier’s Office
- Changed agency culture by balancing the traditional compliance and control focus with an emphasis on customer service and support
- Required staff to respond to customer inquiries within 24 hours
- Extended customer service hours by opening 30 minutes earlier and staffing the Permit Center and Licensing Center customer service counters during the lunch hour, which had previously been closed
- Extended availability of Walk-Thru Plan Review services from Tuesday and Thursday to Monday through Thursday, resulting in a better distribution of those customers with smaller, less complicated projects during the week (representing about 80 percent of the number of projects reviewed by DPIE)
- Documented streamlined processes and consolidated permit and license case types
- Expanded use of Peer Plan Review, Third-Party Plan Review, and Third-Party Inspection services voluntarily paid for by applicants to expedite commercial projects and leverage DPIE plan review and inspection staff

## APPENDIX A - continued

### MAJOR TWO-YEAR ACHIEVEMENTS OF DPIE

- Offered customers the opportunity to have their plans reviewed through the Plans-on-File and Expedited Plan Review processes, applicable to standardized repetitive plans (such as fire protection systems)
- Implemented e-Plan digital plan review system and numerous on-line applications to automate permit and license application/issuance processes
- Increased permit and license fees, after a 20-25 year hiatus, by about one-third to raise an additional \$8 million annually. This included the introduction of a 5% surcharge on most fees and licenses to offset the costs of information technology systems and equipment used by DPIE.
- Instituted annual employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction surveys to gauge employee and customer perceptions of DPIE services as well as track performance trends by division and function
- Instituted the DPIE Performance Management and Tracking System (PMTS) to measure DPIE performance across divisions and performance criteria on a monthly basis
- Provided prompt attention to projects promoting economic development and neighborhood revitalization through Homeowners & Mega Projects Suite and use of Peer Review and Third-Party Plan Review
- Implemented periodic building industry meetings with representatives of selected segments of the industry (residential, commercial, fire/life safety) to discuss performance issues and strategies for addressing them
- Implemented weekly meetings with permit process expeditors to discuss process and technology issues and approaches
- Received positive response from building and economic development groups to progress made by DPIE in addressing long-standing performance issues
- Instituted a quarterly employee recognition program called the DPIE Ambassador Program, whereby candidates are nominated by their peers based on service excellence criteria and the selected individuals are awarded a silver-colored DPIE lapel pin in recognition of their service to DPIE and its customers
- Instituted the DPIE Gold Club whose members are issued a gold-colored DPIE lapel pin in recognition of truly exceptional performance in serving customers and/or fellow staff
- Updated Directives and Standard Operating Procedures to better reflect the new organization, its responsibilities, and available technology
- Developed operations plans for emergency response, providing for continuity of operations following an incident, Sidewalk Snow/Ice Removal Inspection Program, and Peer Review Program manual
- Conducted bi-monthly surveys to identify abandoned and unsafe properties and prioritize strategies to reduce blight
- Established dedicated Vacant Property Unit to track abandoned homes and instituted a 30-day demolition notice to expedite the removal of unsafe buildings

## **APPENDIX B**

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to acknowledge several individuals whose contributions were critical to the realization of the vision called DPIE. These include:

- Rushern L. Baker, III, County Executive (sponsor)
- Carla Reid, former Deputy County Administrator for Economic Development and Public Infrastructure (visionary)
- Lavinia Baxter, Special Assistant to the Deputy County Administrator for Economic Development and Public Infrastructure (change agent)
- Haitham Hijazi, Director of DPIE (change Leader)
- Gary Cunningham, Deputy Director of DPIE (Enforcement change agent)
- Dawit Abraham, Special Assistant to the DPIE Director (technical facilitator)
- Susan Hubbard, Public Information Special Assistant (outreach facilitator)
- Cynthia Manuel, Graphics Designer (DPIE logo and image developer)
- Mary Giles, Associate Director of DPIE's Site/Road Plan Review Division (Plan Review change agent)
- Behdad Kashanian, Associate Director of DPIE's Inspections Division (Inspections change agent)
- Margaret Hinds, Cashier's Office Manager (Cashiering change agent)
- Heidi Stearlings, Licensing Supervisor (Licensing change agent)
- Steve Darcey, District Manager, Prince George's Soil Conservation District
- Deborah Gallagher, Permit Services Manager, Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC change agent)
- Luis Tapia, Permit Services Coordinator, Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission, (WSSC change agent)
- Marullus Williams, President of Limbic Systems (technology change agent)

In addition many other individuals, too numerous to include here, contributed in their own way to DPIE's formation and continued implementation. This paper is dedicated to the entire staff of DPIE.

