



## KERN COUNTY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES AGENCY December, 2010

### From the Agency Director.....

Hello everyone,

Welcome to the Fall/Winter edition of the DSA News. This quarter's newsletter has many interesting articles to help inform you of the many programs and activities that involve the Development Services Agency. Spotlighting the Roads Permits Section, providing an update on the implementation January 1, 2011 of the new Green Building Codes, highlighting Housing Program Services and a report on the large influx of renewable energy projects are some of the many items you will read about in this newsletter.

Agency staff continue to work on development application process improvements so that our programs are customer friendly. In these tough economic times, we need to do everything possible to simplify government and be responsive. The current economic climate is an impetus for us to do everything possible to make positive changes in our programs and examine the role and value of government in facilitating economic growth. As always our commitment is to provide our customers responsive and quality service and we welcome your comments and suggestions about how we may better serve you.

As the year draws to a close, I want to express my thanks to you. To my fellow Agency employees: I know you sincerely care about your work and I am grateful for your contributions this past year. To colleagues, fellow departments, and customers: thank you for your support, your encouragement, and the opportunity to work with you. I wish each of you Happy Holidays and a Happy New Year!

Ted James, Development Services Agency Director

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# Happy Holidays!

## Spotlight on the Roads Permits Section

This publication continues to highlight the efforts of the many helpful and dedicated people who work in the DSA. In this newsletter we are spotlighting the Roads Permits Section which provides a variety of permitting services involving the use and protection of over over 3,300 miles of county maintained roads.

Tim Douhan, Permit Engineer, oversees the section which includes Engineer Aides Nancy Crabtree and Damon Taylor, Plan Checker Bruce Gray and Permit Inspectors Erik Webb and Frank Lane. These hardworking staff have their hands full overseeing one of the largest county maintained road systems in the State. Did you know that any curb and gutter work and driveway installation, utility crossings and repair and road widening requires an Encroachment Permit? The permit process ensures that the public's investment in its road network is protected and that traffic safety problems do not arise from maintenance and access work. The Roads Permits Section is busy issuing approximately 1,500 permits per year. In addition to road and related work in the right-of-way, an average of 4,000 Transportation Permits are issued annually for moving over-sized loads on County roadways. These permits are issued for moving houses, large pieces of equipment on oversized trailers and, especially now, moving the large parts of 400 foot tall wind energy towers and blades to their assembly sites in eastern Kern County.

In addition to the road's purpose of moving traffic, there are groups that want to temporarily close a road for car shows, community fairs and other events. Thus, approximately 20 special event-related Road Closure Permits are issued each year.

The Roads Permits Section is also actively involved with the film industry due to the County's unique natural settings and proximity to Southern California. Filming for movies, television shows and commercials on County roads is a common occurrence with Film Permits being issued on a regular basis. Some of the many requests involving Film Permits include Extreme Makeover-Home Edition, Jericho and movies such as Oceans 13, Star Trek, American Son with Tome Sizemore, Lucky You with Drew Barrymore, Van Helsing with Hugh Jackman, Herbie-Fully Loaded with Lindsay Lohan and Faster with Billy Bob Thorton and the Rock.

Besides dealing with films and television requests, the Permits Section manages data collection for the road system, performs regular traffic counts and manages the County's Adopt-a-Road Program where volunteer groups help keep road right-of-ways litter free.

The Roads Permits Section performs many important functions and ensures the safety and well-being of the County's extensive roads system. We all appreciate the efforts and work done by these dedicated staff.



**ROADS PERMITS SECTION**  
(From L to R: Tim Douhan, Nancy Crabtree, Damon Taylor, Pat Ebel and Erik Webb)

## Reminder: New State Green Building Codes and Other Building Standard Changes Become Effective January 1, 2011



California is the first state in the nation to adopt mandatory Green Building Standards (CAL Green) which takes effect January 1, 2011. These standards require all new buildings to be more energy efficient. Green Building is a “whole-system approach” for designing and constructing buildings that conserve energy, water and material resources. Among the new requirements under CAL Green are standards to reduce water consumption and use low volatile organic compound construction materials. Fire sprinkler system requirements for one and two family dwellings also take effect in the new year as part of the Fire Code.

The Engineering, Surveying and Permit Services Department has been conducting training workshops to inform architects, engineers and builders of the new code requirements as well as local amendments. The text of the new code may be viewed at the Building Inspection Division’s website ([www.co.kern.ca.us/bid](http://www.co.kern.ca.us/bid)), the California Building Standards Commission’s website ([www.bsc.ca.gov](http://www.bsc.ca.gov)) and from the CAL Green website (<http://www.CCBSC.ca.gov/CALGreen/default.htm>).

## TEAMS AT WORK: Improving Development Review Procedures for our Customers

As reported in the previous newsletter, the DSA is coordinating process improvement teams consisting of staff from development-related departments who meet in order to rethink and improve the permit application process, from the pre-submittal stage to the issuance and tracking of building permits. The goal of this effort is to provide responsive and efficient service to our customers.

Currently, multiple teams involved in development review are:

- evaluating the preliminary application review process;
- updating standard conditions for development projects;
- creating a development application handbook;
- removing “chokepoints” in the development permit review process;
- enhancing the tracking of plan check and building permit applications through the review process; and
- other improvements.

The results of the process improvement team efforts will be reported to you in a future newsletter.

## Building a Better Tomorrow: Kern County's Housing Programs

The DSA and its departments provide many important services for our communities. One of these services is to assist and promote the availability and accessibility of decent and affordable housing for income qualified residents. This is even more important in the current economy where housing foreclosures and affordability issues have been prevalent.

The Housing Division of the Planning and Community Development Department administers several federally funded programs designed to promote adequate housing for income qualified households, including those with special needs and help revive the housing stock in selected neighborhoods in unincorporated areas and participating cities.

Ongoing annual programs include the Home Investment Partnerships Program (HOME), the Emergency Shelter Grant Program (ESG), and the Housing Rehabilitation Program, Home Access Program, and Fair Housing Program as follows:

### HOME Program

The HOME Program provides approximately \$2 million each year that is used to assist with the preservation and/or construction of affordable rental housing, as well as to assist qualified homeowners with needed home repairs;

### ESG Program

ESG funding of slightly more than \$200,000 annually is allocated to homeless shelters and domestic violence shelters to assist with operational costs;

### Housing Rehabilitation

Housing Rehabilitation loans are provided to eligible homeowners to pay for needed home repairs and renovations;

### Home Access Grants

Home Access Grants of up to \$3,000 are provided using CDBG funds to qualified Residents with a permanent disability to increase the accessibility of their residence with grab bars, doorway modifications, ramps, and other improvements; and

### Fair Housing

Fair Housing assistance is provided to individuals and families that may be Experiencing types of housing discrimination specifically prohibited by Federal law.

In addition to these annually funded programs, the Federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act has provided one time funds to help stabilize and revive local neighborhoods impacted by foreclosures, and assist households and individuals facing or experiencing homelessness. Locally administered programs involving these recovery funds include:

**Kern County’s Housing Programs (continued)**

**Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP)**

NSP funding of \$11.2 million has been awarded to the County, and another \$5 million has been allocated for the stabilization of selected neighborhoods impacted by the foreclosure crisis through the purchase of foreclosed properties and the redevelopment of vacant properties.

**Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP)**

Slightly more than \$2 million in HPRP funds has been allocated locally for assistance to qualified persons and families for the prevention of homelessness and to assist in the rapid rehousing those experiencing homelessness to assist them in their return to self-sufficiency.

David Press, Housing Programs Manager, oversees the administration of these programs. The Housing Division has been instrumental in helping to promote neighborhood improvements and reinvestment which contributes toward economic recovery. Further information can be obtained by contacting (661) 862-5050 or [kerncd@co.kern.ca.us](mailto:kerncd@co.kern.ca.us)

**On-line, Not In Line**



*Do you have suggestions or ideas for future newsletter editions? Please let me know.*

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The Planning and Community Development Department Permit Assistance Center and the Building Inspection Division of the Engineering, Surveying and Permit Services Department have several web-based tools to help customers determine their zoning and apply for specified building permits without having to come to County offices. View these links for more information:

**Answer Zoning Questions:**

[www.co.kern.ca.us/planning/](http://www.co.kern.ca.us/planning/) links to the Zoning Ordinance and to the Guide to Accessing Zoning Via Kern County GIS Mapping

**Apply for specified building permits on-line and check the status of current building permits:**

[www.co.kern.ca.us/bid](http://www.co.kern.ca.us/bid)

**View and Print the Building Permit Application:**

[www.co.kern.ca.us/bid](http://www.co.kern.ca.us/bid)

**Did you know?** County employees serve an important role in disaster response. As a public employee in the State of California, you may be called upon as a disaster service worker in the event of fire, flood, earthquake or other natural or man-made disaster. This means that you may be called upon to perform disaster work even if the work is outside the scope of your regular employment without additional pay. If there is a significant emergency or disaster, you are expected to remain at work or to report for work as soon as possible. If you are at home when a disaster occurs, you should secure your family and home before reporting to work. You should also become familiar with the emergency procedures of your department and participate in any emergency training and exercises when offered. Lastly, take necessary steps to prepare yourself and your family for an emergency. Check out information about preparedness at [www.fema.gov/areyouready](http://www.fema.gov/areyouready) .



**Who has Ambitions to Win the Pulitzer?**

Do we have any staff out there who want to be reporters and provide articles for future newsletters? The publisher is looking for a small team of staff from different DSA Departments that, with the permission of their supervisor, can help be the eyes and ears and write news stories for the DSA Newsletter. If you're interested and have ambitions to get your Pulitzer Prize, please contact the publisher at [tedi@co.kern.ca.us](mailto:tedi@co.kern.ca.us).

# Kern County Cares!



December 14 kicks off the **Kern County Cares Canned Food Drive**. Last year, County employees generously donated the equivalent of 90,000 pounds of food to the Golden Empire Gleaners. Demand is even greater this year as the number of hungry families in our communities has grown. This year's drive runs through January 21, 2010. Employee donations are being collected in each county department and all contributions are appreciated!

### Code Enforcement Works!

The County's Code Enforcement Division has demonstrated many success stories throughout the County where neighborhoods are improved through actions by the Division to

ensure that property owners properly secure abandoned buildings and remove trash and debris. The Code Enforcement Division consists of five code enforcement officers, one supervisor and a clerical staff person. These hard-working staff receive over 3,000 complaints a year which have to be individually investigated and corrected primarily through Courtesy and Notice and Order letters and administrative actions including fines, or ultimately through abatement.

The "before" and "after" picture above demonstrates in a dramatic manner the benefits of the County's code enforcement program.

Before



After



### Boom-Time For Renewable Energy Solar Proposals

The rush is on to build commercial renewable energy solar projects in California. Kern County's abundant



sunshine in both its desert and San Joaquin Valley areas and its proactive approach toward permitting such projects is making the County a center for solar project development.

Applicants are currently proposing applications for solar photovoltaic projects in the desert and valley that would produce over 3,200 megawatts of energy.

The projects come in response to a State law that requires utilities to provide 20% of generated electricity from renewable sources and the Governor's Executive Order which calls for one-third of the State's electricity to come from renewable sources by 2020. Presently, about 12% of the State's power comes from renewable energy sources. Tax credits from the federal government which expire within the next several years are also stimulating applicants to submit solar project applications in the County.

Most of the projects are going through the environmental/permitting process with 15 EIRs being processed and another 8 EIRs under development. These projects have kept the Planning and Community Development Department busy in processing the requests for multiple applicants, coordinating consultants and processing the requests quickly so as not to jeopardize the applicants tax credits. Staff are to be commended for their efforts to keep the renewable energy projects moving forward.