



## Legislation Text

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### Report to Mayor and City Council

Tuesday, June 20, 2023

Consent

#### **SUBJECT:**

**CONSIDER AWARDING A CONTRACT SERVICES AGREEMENT WITH TRANSTECH ENGINEERS, INC. TO PROVIDE BUILDING AND SAFETY SERVICES FOR THE CITY OF CARSON (CITY COUNCIL)**

#### **I. SUMMARY**

LA County has been providing Building and Safety services to the City of Carson since its incorporation in 1968. LA County provides plan check services and inspections, and issues permits to contractors which are required for the construction and occupancy of structures.

Currently LA County has nine full-time staff in City Hall including three Permit Technicians, two Building Plan Check Engineers (architectural and structural), three Building Inspectors (combination inspectors) and one Building Official (office manager). In addition to the staff provided on-site, there is access to and part-time utilization of Electrical Engineers, Mechanical/Plumbing Engineers, Geotechnical Engineers, Soils Engineers, Methane Gas Mitigation Engineers and Drainage and Grading Engineers. The cost to provide these services to the City is approximately \$1,870,000 per year. In order to provide the same services by City staff, the City would have to hire at least nine full time staff members. In addition, the City would have to have access to approximately six part time City staff members (or on-call technical specialists) in the technical specialties indicated above. Staff estimates the nine full-time staff and six part-time-equivalent staff members to cost the City approximately \$2,130,000 per year.

Alternatively, many contract cities provide building and safety services through service agreements with private consultants specializing in municipal building and safety disciplines. Staff has determined that this strategy will improve the overall service for residents and businesses in the City. As such, staff has completed a competitive bidding process through a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the City of Carson's building and safety services in efforts to reduce costs, improve efficiency and control, and expedite permit and plan check processes.

## II. RECOMMENDATION

1. APPROVE a contract services agreement with Transtech Engineers, Inc. to provide building and safety services for the City of Carson, in and initial not to exceed amount of \$3,900,000 for the three year term, and an additional \$1,300,000 for each additional optional renewal year, for a total of \$6,500,000 over five years.
2. AUTHORIZE the Mayor to execute the agreement, following approval as to form by the City Attorney.

## III. ALTERNATIVES

TAKE any other action the City Council deems appropriate.

## IV. BACKGROUND

Los Angeles County Building and Safety, managed by LA County Public Works, has been providing services to ensure safe building design, construction, approval of completed building projects and providing code enforcement since the adoption of County building codes and standards in March 1933.

Building services are provided to unincorporated communities at the Public Works headquarters, at one of the 11 Building and Safety District Offices serving unincorporated communities, and at the 14 Contract City Offices serving incorporated cities, including Carson. These offices are staffed by highly professional, knowledgeable and customer service-oriented staff.

### **Various Processes**

The building and safety process can be categorized in the following three processes:

#### Plan Check

Plan Check is a review of plans, drawings, and documents by the Building Official for compliance with the building codes. An accurate and detailed set of plans, specifications and supporting documents is required for most construction projects. Typical projects can be reviewed during a visit to a Building and Safety office, either at the counter or by appointment for more complex projects, or electronically via the EPIC-LA website (for unincorporated areas) or at the BSOP Web Application (for contract cities). Plan check may be required before a permit can be issued.

#### Building Permit

A building permit is permission to begin construction - a legal document that provides a permanent construction record to certify a building project met the current building code requirements and, when necessary, conformed to approved plans and specifications.

Permits also form a record of completed inspections and final approval. Some minor home improvement projects may not require a permit.

### Inspection

The Building Official will review permitted work for compliance with the requirements of the Building Code, the approved plan and specifications, and that the work matches the permit's scope of work. Generally, all work will need to be inspected in various stages of construction before completion and occupancy.

## **Various Areas of Expertise**

The following provides a brief explanation of the areas of expertise for a few of the services provided by the Building and Safety Division:

### Building Plan Check

This Section is responsible for the administration and supervision of the permit application/building plan review processes; Building plan check engineers; hearings conducted by the Building Board of Appeals; and compliance with the Building Codes and applicable Federal, State, and County laws and regulations for all buildings and structures within the unincorporated County and 14 Contract Cities.

### Electrical

This Section is responsible for the administration and supervision of the electrical plan review processes; Electrical plan check engineers; and compliance with the Electrical Code and applicable Federal, State, and County laws and regulations for all electrical systems and equipment installed within the unincorporated County and 14 Contract Cities.

### Grading & Drainage

This Section is responsible for the administration and supervision of the grading/drainage/erosion control plan review processes; Grading and Drainage plan check engineers; and compliance with the grading and drainage provisions of the Building Code and applicable Federal, State, and County laws and regulations for all grading, drainage, and erosion control projects within the unincorporated County and 14 Contract Cities.

### Mechanical & Plumbing

This Section is responsible for the administration and supervision of the: mechanical/plumbing plan review processes; Mechanical and Plumbing plan check engineers; and compliance with the Mechanical/Plumbing Codes and applicable Federal, State, and County laws and regulations for all mechanical and plumbing systems and equipment installed within the unincorporated County and 14 Contract Cities.

Additionally, there are functions that occur within the County offices that support the Carson operations such as information technology and web support, management and field support, research, etc.

## **Responsibility of Building and Safety Staff**

Currently at the City, LA County provides for three Permit Technicians, two Building Plan Check Engineers (architectural and structural), three Building Inspectors (combination inspectors) and one Building Official (office manager). In addition to the staff provided on-site, there is access to Electrical Engineers, Mechanical/Plumbing Engineers, Geotechnical Engineers, Soils Engineers, Methane Gas Mitigation Engineers, and Drainage and Grading Engineers.

On April 5, 2022 City Council directed staff to hire a consultant to further analyze all development-related services provided by Los Angeles County and make recommendations for the best course of action for the city to provide building and safety services. Subsequently, staff prepared and posted an RFP for the directed scope of work, but no qualified firms submitted bids. Staff followed up with plan holders who reviewed the RFP scope and was told that the proposed work plan was not practical for firms in the industry to complete. Instead, feedback suggested that most agencies complete an in-house cost analysis based on permit, plan check, and inspection frequency/volume, hours of review, and other metrics. As such, staff determined that outsourcing building and safety services has the potential to save the City significant costs while improving service delivery in the department.

### **Request for Proposals (RFP) for Building and Safety Services**

Staff prepared an RFP for building and safety services based on the range of services currently provided by LA County staff outlined above. The scope of work includes:

- Building Division Administration
- Building Plan Check Services
- Building Inspection Services
- Building Code Enforcement
- Building Counter Operations
- Performance Standards and Monitoring

Notable enhancements to existing services are to include:

- New large scale high density multi family and mixed use projects shall be completed within twenty (20) working days or less from the date of plan submittal.
- The initial check of building plans for new commercial, industrial and residential buildings shall be completed within ten (10) working days or less from the date of plan submittal.
- The initial check of building plans for commercial, industrial and residential remodels, renovations and additions shall be completed within five (5) working days or less from plan submittal.
- All rechecks of building plans shall be completed within five (5) working days or less from resubmittal.
- Online/Electronic plan check services
- Virtual meeting calendar via online counter services
- Initial service transition and assessment of Department's current operations with improvement recommendations and implementation
- Facilitated transition services to migrate applicant data and plan review tasks from LA County to

Transtech Engineering, Inc.

*\*\*Plan Check review for routine and simple structures and items shall be completed over the building counter.*

The RFP was posted on Monday May 29, 2023 with bids due and opened on June 8, 2023. A total of five qualified firms submitted bids for staff to evaluate. The evaluation of bids included the following criteria:

1. Clarity, completeness and presentation of proposal
2. Consultant's demonstrated understanding of the Scope of Services
3. Qualifications and experience of the firm
4. The resources, capacity and key personnel required to perform the required services

Proposals were reviewed and evaluated by staff from Community Development, Public Works, and City Manager's Department. Staff recommends the selection and award of contract to Transtech Engineers, Inc. based on responsiveness to the RFP's requirements and vendor experience, as illustrated below:

<b>Firm</b>	<b>Average Score (Points/100)</b>
4 Leaf, Inc.	62
CSG Consulting, Inc.	62
The Code Group Inc.	63
The Lightfoot Planning Group	21
Transtech Engineers, Inc.	76

Should the City Council approve the recommendation, the anticipated project timeline is as follows:

- Award of Contract - 6/20/2023
- Contract Execution and Notice to Proceed - 7/1/2023
- Begin Engagement - 7/1/2023
- All new plan check and inspection requests to selected firm effective 7/1/2023
- LA County staff transition to new consultant: 30-60 days

## **V. FISCAL IMPACT**

There is no anticipated fiscal impact as the cost of the contract services agreement has already been appropriated in the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Community Development Department expenditure budget in the following accounts, similar to the allocation adopted in the Fiscal Year 2022-2023 operating budget:

<b><u>GL Code</u></b>	<b><u>Account Name</u></b>	<b><u>Allocation</u></b>
101-70-785-100-6004-	CD Mgt&Contrl Pro Svcs	\$150,000
101-70-785-293-6004-	CD Inpsection Pro Svcs	\$690,000

101-70-785-296-6004-	CD Bldg Permt Pro Svcs	\$380,000
101-70-785-297-6004-	CD BldgPlanCk Pro Svcs	\$650,000
<b>Total:</b>		<b>\$1,870,000</b>

Contract costs for future years of service will be included in subsequent year two and year three of the agreement. It should be noted that prior fiscal year actual expenditures for LA County building and safety services totaled approximately \$1.87M annually. The proposed contract with Transtech Engineers, Inc. is recommended at \$1.3M per fiscal year, resulting in a \$570,000 annual savings to the City's General Fund.

## **VI. EXHIBITS**

1. Contract Services Agreement - Transtech Engineers, Inc. (pgs. 7-43)

2. Transtech Engineers, Inc. Proposal (pgs. 44-100)

3. RFP No. 23-021 -  
Building and Safety Services (pgs. 101-137)

Prepared by: City Manager's Office