



next street

Stanislaus 2030

Streamlined Permitting

Recommendations & Implementation Plan

March 13, 2026





Meeting Objectives + Agenda

Meeting Objectives

- **Recap** of key findings from Streamlined Permitting Assessment
- **Outline** priority solutions to pursue in 2026, grounded in impact and feasibility
- **Discuss** what comes next, including sequencing, ownership

Agenda

- | | |
|--|--------|
| • Welcome and Project Context | 5 min |
| • Recap: Permitting Assessment Findings | 5 min |
| • Streamlined Permitting Recommendations | 20 min |
| • Discussion: Implementation & Ownership | 25 min |
| • Next Steps | 5 min |



Stan 2030 Overview

Vision By 2030, any person who wants to **start, sustain, or scale** a business in Stanislaus County will have the support they need to be successful.

Support Main Street entrepreneurs—particularly those underserved—in starting up + sustaining their businesses

Develop capabilities and opportunities for Supplier businesses to scale

- Key Initiatives**
- ✓ **One-Stop Shop:** Create a centralized resource for small businesses to access support and financing
 - ✓ **Loan Fund:** Establish a revolving Loan Fund that provides flexible loan products for small businesses
 - ✓ **Supplier Readiness (TA and capital):** Provide supplier TA and financing via programs and partnerships
 - ✓ **Anchor Collaboration:** Promote small business procurement practices and commitments, coupled with matchmaking and tailored support

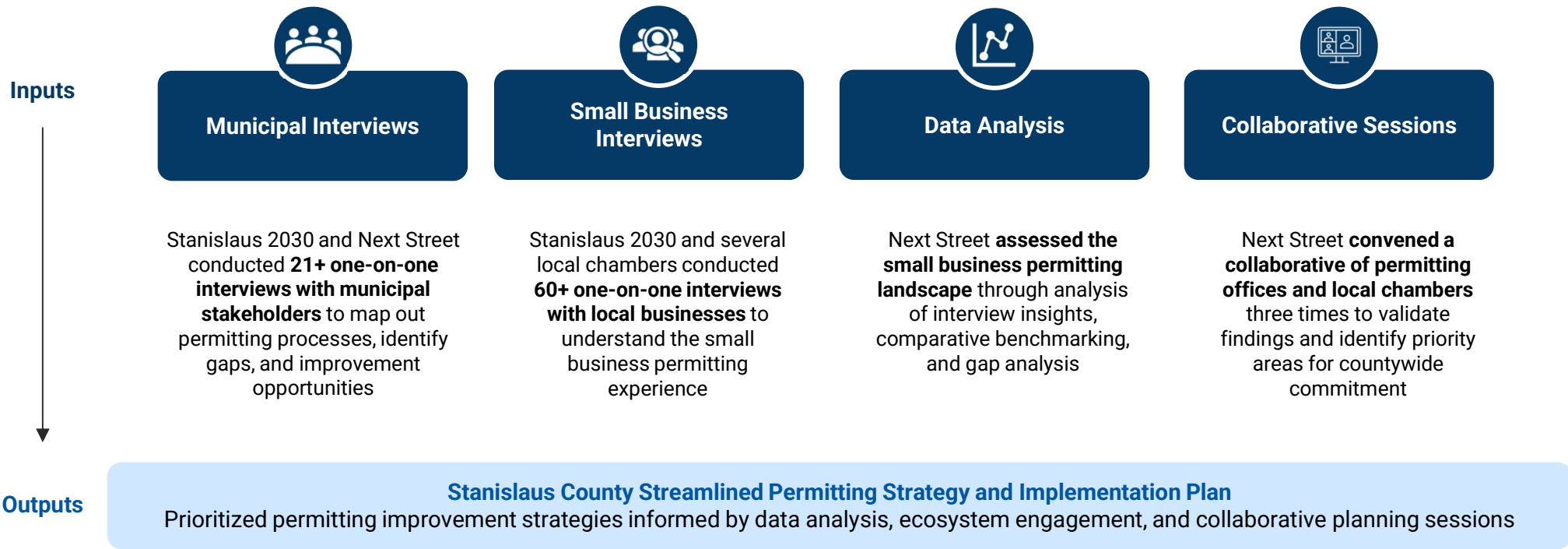
Create an enabling environment that encourages business growth and serves entrepreneurs across their journeys

- Key Initiatives**
- ✓ **Streamlined Permitting:** Provide resources for and advocate for streamlined licensing and permitting regulations
 - ✓ **Capacity Building:** Provide capacity building grants for partners implementing strategies

Key ✓ Initiative funded by County or City and prioritized for implementation

Permitting Assessment: Our Process

Our approach involved synthesis of research, additional data collection, facilitation of stakeholders through 1:1 interviews, and collection of feedback from small businesses through listening sessions



Permitting Assessment: Gaps & Challenges

Our research highlighted key gaps in the small business permitting ecosystem...

<p>Support is person-dependent: Current process relies heavily on staff knowledge and availability, not standardized tools or processes</p>	<p>Cross-jurisdictional process complexity can create navigation challenges and cities may have limited ability, or visibility to intervene</p>	<p>Clarity around permitting requirements varies across jurisdictions highlighting need for well-defined checklists, timelines, and expectations</p>	<p>Digital permitting capabilities vary across jurisdictions and uneven digital capacity may contribute to inconsistent permitting experiences</p>
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... which create coordination and capacity challenges for permitting agencies and complexity and delays for small businesses

“Every person tells you something different. **I just want one place or person who can explain exactly what to do.**” – Small business owner

“I operate across several jurisdictions and each one has its own application and requirements **and it’s like they don’t speak to each other or it’s hard finding what’s the next step in the process, it makes the things confusing and slow**” – Small business owner

“**First-time business owners are often confused by the requirements, and some have language needs.** We don’t always have the capacity to support them or direct them to help” – Permitting Manager

“The right connections makes all the difference, **but getting access to these connections is expensive and not always feasible**” – Small business owner

“We have 1–2 staff covering permitting, planning, and enforcement. That works today, **but any scale up in applications would be challenging**” – Permitting Manager

Streamlined Permitting Solutions

The permitting assessment findings point to two coordinated actions needed to build a more predictable, transparent, and regionally aligned permitting system

Goal

A county-wide permitting operating model that:

1. Reduces friction for businesses
2. Improves the customer experience
3. Promotes clarity & coordination



1 City-County Coordination

Establish a framework for City-County Coordination

- Countywide permitting technology adoption
- Shared municipal directories and liaisons
- Cross-jurisdiction process tracking and visibility
- Shared best practices and data reporting

2 Information Hub

Create a single regional source of truth for permitting information

- Business-type permitting pathways
- Plain language permitting requirements
- Standardized checklists and documentation
- Timeline and review cycles

Solutions Overview: 90-Day Implementation Plan

Solution	Key Actions	Key Outputs	Timeline
Coordination Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish ad-hoc committee Align stakeholders on roles & priorities Identify priority coordination areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Committee structure & meeting cadence Define roadmap for countywide permitting platform Compile permitting checklists across municipalities Create centralized municipal contact directory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0–30 days: Committee structure 30–60 days: Municipal checklists + contact directory 60–90+ days: Countywide permitting platform implementation
Permitting Information Hub	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish working group Define SCWD oversight and governance Align on hub scope and priority features Develop core content & components Define functionality and integrations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working group structure & meeting cadence Hub scope, core features, and governance framework defined Initial hub content and integration plan with overall One-Stop Shop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0-30 days: Governance + working group + scope 30-90 days: Hub design + content + integration planning

Solutions Overview: City/County Coordination (1 of 2)

Solution Description: Establish a formal coordination framework to align city and county permitting agencies, standardize practices, and drive continuous system improvements

Illustrative Coordination Areas

Roles & Responsibilities	Communication Protocols	Data & Best Practices	Joint Improvements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document city vs. county roles Identify decision rights Clarify responsibilities for multi-jurisdictional processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shared directory of city and county permitting contacts Designated coordination liaisons within departments Clear escalation pathways and problem-solving mechanisms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Best practices sharing Gaps & opportunities reporting processes Data tracking and reporting procedures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permitting modernization Performance measurement Innovation innovations Coordinated investments in technology, tools, etc.

Key Outcome: Clear roles, stronger coordination, and better aligned permitting processes across jurisdictions

Solutions Overview: City/County Coordination (2 of 2)

Solution Description: Establish a formal coordination framework to align city and county permitting agencies, standardize practices, and drive continuous system improvements

Success Factors

- **Value proposition:** Jurisdictions recognize the benefits of clearer coordination and ways of working
- **Commitment:** To developing and implementing the coordination framework
- **Governance:** Designated coordinating body to lead the framework and ensure jurisdictional alignment
- **Transparency:** Open and collaborative sharing of information, challenges, and lessons learned

Activities for Launch

- **Ad Hoc Committee:** Coordinate the development and implementation of the framework
- **Define the framework:** Align jurisdictions on coordination mechanisms and implementation opportunities
- **Program design:** Identify shared tools, systems, and resources to support coordination (*e.g., reference materials, directories, potential Accela rollout*)

Recommended Stakeholders / Committee Representation

- County planning and permitting leadership
- City planning and permitting departments
- Environmental, Health and other reviewing agencies
- Chambers of Commerce



City/County Coordination: Case Study

Orange County, FL created a Regulatory Streamlining Task Force to review and improve the county's permitting regulations, processes, and ways of working

Challenge

The County's permitting and development-review workflows were **lengthy, complex, and unpredictable**

Solution

The Task Force identified a comprehensive approach, including:

- **Creating a “project manager role”** – single point of contact for the applicant
- **Major overhaul of codes and policy**
- **Advanced use of technology** (e.g., interactive application forms, status tracking)
- **Emphasis on customer service and internal staff culture** – empowering staff, enhancing collaboration, improving communication
- **Strengthen county-wide communication** – foster information sharing, formal ways of working, and more frequent coordination among stakeholders

Result

Implemented amendments and approved acceleration of technology updates

City/County Coordination: Accela Implementation

Emerging coordination opportunity: countywide implementation of Accela, a cloud-based e-permitting platform to modernize permitting processes across the county

Description	A cloud-based platform that manages permitting, licensing, and code enforcement processes
Value Proposition	A unified digital platform that modernizes permitting, streamlines workflows, and improves transparency
Opportunity	The County could support regional expansion of Accela to enable more consistent and modern digital permitting
Implementation Considerations	Only two jurisdictions use Accela; regional adoption would require coordinated needs assessment and onboarding
Funding Considerations	Accela quotes in progress; if within budget, Stanislaus 2030 will support a significant portion of implementation costs
Implementation Plan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Accela Demo 2. Needs assessments + voluntary MOUs with cities 3. Jurisdiction onboarding 4. Education and outreach/marketing



City/County Coordination: Accela Case Study

Charlotte County, FL implemented an open data platform to modernize permitting and improve transparency across its unincorporated communities

Challenge

The County's mix of year-round and seasonal residents created unique challenges, including **growing demand for electronic records and easily accessible public information** with increased pressure from elected officials and advocacy groups to be **more transparent and to provide more ready access to metrics**

Solution

To improve transparency and simplify the application process, the County implemented Accela's CivicData to provide open access to permitting datasets, including decisions, timelines, and requirements

Platform



Result

By implementing Accela, the County improved transparency and drove digital permitting adoption, with **80% of permits now issued online**

Accela Value-add: Reduced administrative burdens, improved process clarity, and increased digital permitting adoption

Solutions Overview: Information Hub (1 of 2)

Solution Description: Collaborate with Stanislaus County Workforce Development to centralize permitting information and support services on the One-Stop Shop currently in development

Features	Description	Illustrative Services Examples
<p>1. Standardized Information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce uncertainty and increase business confidence by clearly defining what they need to know at the start of the process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business-type permitting pathways • Clear summaries of permitting requirements • Standardized checklists and documentation • Timelines and review cycles
<p>2. Guidance & Support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve application quality and reduces delays by connecting businesses to helpful resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-application technical guidance • Application reviews and validation • Permitting education materials • Referrals to vetted architects, consultants, etc.
<p>3. Process Navigation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance business experience by clarifying status, sequencing, and agency interactions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step-by-step process maps • Clear agency handoffs and interaction points • Application stage / sequencing visibility

Solutions Overview: Information Hub (2 of 2)

Solution Description: Collaborate with Stanislaus County Workforce Development to centralize permitting information and support services on the One-Stop Shop currently in development

Success Factors

- **Value proposition:** Clearly define how the Permitting One-Stop Shop segment will address key permitting challenges
- **Partnerships:** Formalize stakeholder collaboration to ensure ownership and ongoing deliver
- **Governance:** Establish processes to collect, review, and maintain resources
- **User experience:** Design a clear, accessible experience using plain language and intuitive structure

Activities for Launch

- **Sponsor organization:** Stanislaus County Workforce Development will sponsor the One-Stop Shop and oversee set-up and governance
- **Coordination body:** Establish a stakeholder working group to guide design, governance, and coordination
- **Program design:** Use ecosystem input to develop core content, priority features, and integration with the broader One-Stop Shop initiative

Recommended Stakeholders / Working Group Representation

- County planning and permitting leadership
- City planning and permitting departments
- Stanislaus County Workforce Development, Stanislaus 2030
- Business support organizations (Chambers, SBDCs, technical experts)
- Small business owners



Implementation: Discussion

We have discussed three priority solutions to improve the permitting experience for businesses. The next step is mobilizing this group of stakeholders to begin implementation

Instructions:

- We will break into two groups, each with a Next Street and Stan2030 facilitator
- **Step 1: Review solution overviews (5 minutes)**
 - Slides 8-9: City/County Coordination
 - Slides 13-14: Permitting Information Hub
- **Step 2: Small group implementation discussion (15 minutes)**
- **Step 3: Large group debrief (5 minutes)**

Step 1: Identify solutions your organization could support

- Add a sticky note with your **organization name** under the solution(s) where you see an opportunity to contribute

Step 2: Indicate the role your organization could play

- On your sticky note, note the role(s) your organization could take
 - *Working group participant / lead*
 - *Service provider*
 - *Funder*
 - *Resource partner*
 - *Connector organization*

Thank You!

Your insights helped shape practical solutions to improve the permitting experience for small businesses across the county



Next Steps

Join implementation Working Groups & Ad Hoc Committee

- Confirm your participation to help guide the implementation of solutions presented today
- Look out for a follow-up email within the next week with next steps

Reister to attend the Accela Platform demonstration

- Participate in an upcoming demo to evaluate the potential for countywide digital permitting capabilities
- Workforce development will be in touch with next steps

Provide your feedback

- Provide any additional feedback or implementation guidance via email to the Next Street team (mpunnette@nextstreet.com) and Stanislaus 2030 team (ymeraz@stanislaus2030.com)

With your continued partnership, we can turn these ideas into real improvements for businesses navigating permitting across the County

Appendix

Business Archetypes + Pain-Points



Business Archetypes	Main Street			Supplier	High-Growth
	Service-Based Operators	Food and Hospitality	Downtown and Storefront	Local Contractors and Manufacturers	Emerging Businesses
	<i>Home-based/personal services, e.g., childcare</i>	<i>Restaurants, cafes, coffee carts, food trucks</i>	<i>Retailers, boutiques, repair shops, florists</i>	<i>General contractors, manufacturers</i>	<i>Multi-site firms, growth-stage local chains</i>
Common Pain-Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unclear starting point for licensing • Lack of guidance and conflicting information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City-County coordination gaps across multiple agencies • Long and unclear timelines particularly with County agencies • Inconsistent information across departments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inconsistent information and enforcement • Multiple sign-offs for modifications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different processes and standards per city • Cumulative friction with duplication plans and paperwork 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timeline uncertainty • Lengthy, multi-step process, often not fitting cleanly into existing permitting



Permitting Challenges: Takeaways

Discussions with Chambers and Cities highlighted that small businesses face different experiences depending on where they locate

1. Support is person-dependent, not system-dependent

Current process relies heavily on staff knowledge and availability, not standardized tools or processes

2. County touchpoints are a universal pain-point

Health / Environmental Health is consistently cited as difficult to navigate and slow; cities have limited ability to intervene or explain requirements clearly

3. No shared baseline for “what good looks like”

No countywide checklist, standard timelines, etc., creating inequity by geography

4. Modernized digital systems drops off outside larger cities

While systems are in place cities such as Modesto and Ceres, these systems—and the capacity to implement them—do not exist in smaller cities



Permitting Gaps across Jurisdictions

Permitting support varies widely by city, with the gaps concentrated in navigation, coordination, and systems

Capability / Practice	County*	Modesto	Turlock	Oakdale	Newman	Hughson	Ceres	Riverbank	Patterson	Waterford
Clarity and Navigation	Pre-application / pre-consultation meetings	Exists and well-established	Exists and well-established	Exists and well-established	Exists in some form (informal or limited)	Does not exist / very limited	Does not exist / very limited	Exists and well-established	Exists in some form (informal or limited)	Exists and well-established
	Business concierge / "white glove" support	Does not exist / very limited	Exists and well-established	Exists in some form (informal or limited)	Does not exist / very limited	Does not exist / very limited	Does not exist / very limited	Exists in some form (informal or limited)	Does not exist / very limited	Exists in some form (informal or limited)
	Clear online "How to Start a Business" guide	Exists in some form (informal or limited)	Exists and well-established	Exists and well-established	Exists in some form (informal or limited)	Exists in some form (informal or limited)	Exists in some form (informal or limited)	Exists in some form (informal or limited)	Exists in some form (informal or limited)	Exists and well-established
	Standardized checklist by business type (e.g., restaurant, salon)	Does not exist / very limited	Exists in some form (informal or limited)	Does not exist / very limited	Does not exist / very limited	Does not exist / very limited	Does not exist / very limited	Does not exist / very limited	Does not exist / very limited	Does not exist / very limited
	Published timelines / service-level expectations	Does not exist / very limited	Exists in some form (informal or limited)	Does not exist / very limited	Does not exist / very limited	Does not exist / very limited	Does not exist / very limited	Does not exist / very limited	Does not exist / very limited	Does not exist / very limited
	Templates, sample plans, standardized forms	Exists in some form (informal or limited)	Exists in some form (informal or limited)	Does not exist / very limited	Does not exist / very limited	Does not exist / very limited	Does not exist / very limited	Does not exist / very limited	Does not exist / very limited	Exists in some form (informal or limited)
	Multilingual guidance / translated materials	Exists in some form (informal or limited)	Does not exist / very limited	Does not exist / very limited	Does not exist / very limited	Does not exist / very limited	Does not exist / very limited	Does not exist / very limited	Exists and well-established	Does not exist / very limited
Coordination	Cross-department internal routing handled by City	N/A	Exists and well-established	Exists and well-established	Exists and well-established	Exists and well-established	Exists and well-established	Exists and well-established	Exists and well-established	Exists and well-established
	Coordination support with County departments (Health, Env. Health)	Exists and well-established	Exists in some form (informal or limited)	Exists in some form (informal or limited)	Exists in some form (informal or limited)	Exists in some form (informal or limited)	Exists in some form (informal or limited)	Exists in some form (informal or limited)	Exists in some form (informal or limited)	Exists in some form (informal or limited)
	Formalized city-county coordination expectations (MOUs, protocols)	Does not exist / very limited	Does not exist / very limited	Does not exist / very limited	Does not exist / very limited	Does not exist / very limited	Does not exist / very limited	Does not exist / very limited	Does not exist / very limited	Does not exist / very limited
System	Online permit or business license intake with ability to track status online	Exists in some form (informal or limited)	Exists and well-established	Exists in some form (informal or limited)	Does not exist / very limited	Does not exist / very limited	Exists in some form (informal or limited)	Does not exist / very limited	Does not exist / very limited	Does not exist / very limited
	Modernized permitting technology and systems	Exists in some form (informal or limited)	Exists and well-established	Exists and well-established	Does not exist / very limited	Does not exist / very limited	Does not exist / very limited	Exists and well-established	Does not exist / very limited	Does not exist / very limited

Note: Analysis based on interviews; requires full validation

*County column reflects County-controlled approval processes; not intended as a like-for-like comparison with cities

Key:

Exists and well-established	Exists in some form (informal or limited)	Does not exist / very limited
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Permitting Solutions: Evaluation Criteria

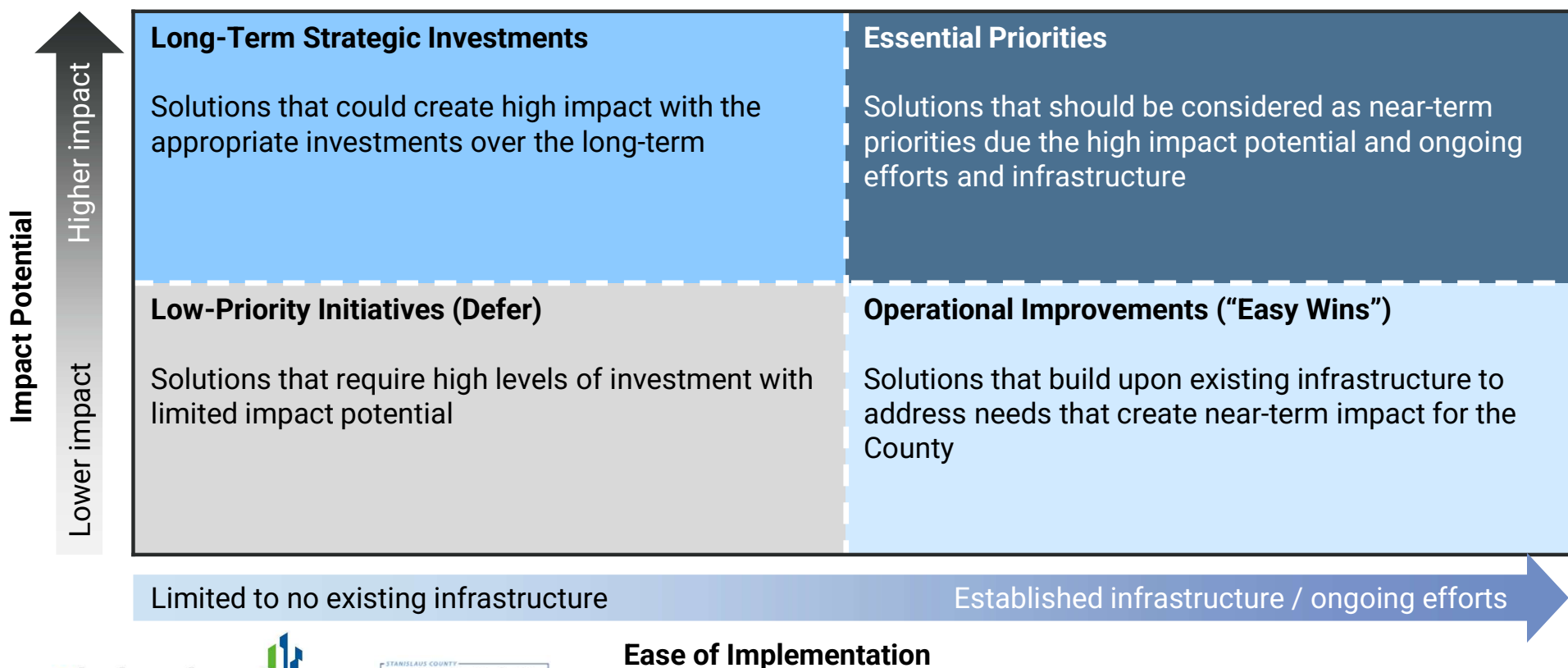
This criteria will help distinguish what practice is impactful for small businesses and most feasible to implement

Category	Evaluation Criteria	Key Questions
Impact Potential	1. Reduces confusion and friction	Will this make the process easier to understand or navigate for small businesses?
	2. Address priority pain points	Does this directly respond to the challenges identified as highest impact and urgency?
	3. Benefits a broad set of applicants	Will this help many businesses across jurisdictions, sectors, or use cases?
Implementation Considerations	4. Feasible within existing resources	Can this be implemented with current staff, budget, or modest support?
	5. Scalable across jurisdictions	Can this be applied consistently across cities or at the county level?
	6. Time to implement	Can this reasonable begin in the next 6-12 months?
	7. Level of coordination required	Does this require limited or significant cross-department or city-county coordination?



Permitting Solutions: Evaluation Criteria

We will use this framework to begin to prioritize emerging solutions based on impact potential and implementation considerations







Permitting Solutions: Priority Recommendations

Based on this framework, the highest priority recommendations are those that improve clarity, navigation, and coordination – areas that are both high-impact for small businesses and feasible to implement in the near-term




Category	Opportunity	Impact	Feasibility	Recommendation
Essential Priorities	Centralized, county-aligned information hub	High	High	Recommended focus areas for near-term action
	Dedicated navigator / point of contact (concierge)	High	Med-High	
	Clear city-county coordination expectations (e.g., SLAs)	Med-High	Med-High	
Strategic Investments	Formalized city-county coordination (MOUs, protocols)	High	Med	Evaluate feasibility for long-term investment
	Streamlined workflows and bottleneck reduction	Med-High	Med	
	Modernized permitting technology and systems	Med-High	Med	
Operational Improvements	Improved transparency of fees and timelines	Med	Med-High	Delegate ownership for supporting actions
	Increased availability of translated guidance	Med	Med-High	
	Pre-application consultations / office hours	Med	Med	
Low-Priority Initiatives	Shared training / cross-training	Med	Med	Defer
	Statewide policy changes to permitting regulations	Med	Low-Med	

Key: Low Low-Med Med Med-High High



Municipal Interview Takeaways: Challenges

Theme	Current Status	Pain Point
 <p>Interagency Coordination</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal interagency coordination currently exists • In smaller cities, there is often a key person dependency for internal routing and communication • Only a few cities have more advanced and standardized processes which empower coordination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inconsistent hand-offs between departments lead to delays • Applicants may receive approval from one department only to be stalled by another • Lack of shared visibility across agencies limits accountability
 <p>Consistency across Jurisdictions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each jurisdiction maintains its own forms, processes, and interpretations of building codes • Some neighboring cities are attempting to align requirements but lack a regional framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Businesses operating in multiple cities encounter confusion over differing standards • Common refrain from applicants: <i>“Modesto does it this way; Ceres does it that way”</i> • Lack of alignment hinders predictability and deters regional investment

Municipal Interview Takeaways: Challenges

Theme	Current Status	Pain Point
 <p>Access & Guidance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Across jurisdictions, efforts have been made to improve visibility into to permitting requirements and guidance for applicants • E.g. Ceres, Oakdale and Modesto use online platforms to provide roadmaps and checklists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdated or incomplete websites make self-service difficult • No consistent checklists or roadmap across cities; few multilingual materials
 <p>Customer Experience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For simple, non-complex permits, turnaround can be fast • Businesses with established relationships or prior experience find navigation easier 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants—especially small or first-time businesses—report confusion over timelines and requirements • Communication varies widely between jurisdictions • Language access is limited, with gaps in Spanish and Punjabi support
 <p>Capacity & Staffing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffing shortages emerged as a significant constraint • Smaller cities often have only 1–2 staff covering planning, permitting, and code enforcement • Some cities fill gaps through contract staff or retirees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service delays when key staff are unavailable or overwhelmed • Reliance on temporary consultants adds cost and inconsistency • Reception counters often overwhelmed by applicant volume leading to increased workloads for staff

Municipal Interview Takeaways: Challenges

Theme	Current Status	Pain Point
 <p>Technology & Systems</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larger cities use digital systems such as eTRAKiT and Accela for permit intake and tracking • Several cities are still heavily reliant on paper and email • Full integration of technology is still limited across the region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manual processes slow turnaround times and decision-making • Applicants report having to re-enter the same data multiple times • Smaller cities face financial and technical barriers to adopting modern tools
 <p>Performance Management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only a few cities track formally performance • Cities rely on informal tracking or staff knowledge rather than trackable metrics • No shared county-level dashboard or benchmarking system exist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most jurisdictions lack data on timeliness, workload, or customer satisfaction • Without performance metrics, identifying process bottlenecks or resource needs is difficult



Small Business Interviews: Suggested Solutions

As part of our engagement with the Chambers, we interviewed 60+ small businesses – ranging from local Main Street businesses to high-growth firms – to gather insights on challenges, opportunities, and potential solutions

Suggested Solutions

- **Single point of contact:** A liaison or “business concierge” to coordinate city–county steps
- **Comprehensive online guide/checklist:** Centralized process maps by business type
- **Staff training:** Cross-train staff to ensure continuity and accurate information
- **Policy transparency:** Publish clear fee structures, insurance rules, and timelines
- **Pre-inspection/consultation services:** Let businesses know all compliance items before they invest
- **Simplify event and nonprofit permitting:** Lower insurance thresholds; standardize road closure and mural approvals
- **Digitize processes:** Expand online forms, status tracking, and automatic updates

Ideas for One-Stop Shop

- ▶ **Single, accurate source of truth:** A shared portal where all information—city, county, and state—lives in one place and stays up to date
- ▶ **Interactive “Start a Business” tools:** Allow users to enter their business type and get customized permitting guidance and checklists
- ▶ **Centralized templates and packets:** Downloadable forms and FAQs to reduce back-and-forth with staff
- ▶ **Customer-service culture:** Businesses emphasized wanting *human support*—someone who can explain the “why” behind requirements and guide them in plain language



Small Business Interview Takeaways: Challenges

	Main-Street	Supplier	High-Growth
Key Pain Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clarity and consistency of information: Businesses often encounter fragmented or inconsistent guidance when navigating local regulations• Coordination challenges: Lack of coordination between city and county departments, unreturned phone calls and emails, and a general lack of proactive updates• Inconsistent enforcement: Business owners report that rules and enforcement standards can vary depending on staff, location, etc.• Significant costs: The permitting process is often burdened by high and sometimes arbitrary fees for permits, rezoning, etc.• Staffing shortages: Insufficient staffing and a lack of backup personnel mean that processes can stall entirely based on staffing availability• Discouraging environment: The complex and often intimidating nature of the processes, including public hearings and extensive red tape, can discourage businesses from pursuing improvements or even starting new ventures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complex, inconsistent processes: Unclear guidance, overlapping agency requirements, and varying interpretations of requirements and laws• Disjointed interdepartmental coordination: Must interact separately with planning, fire, health, and environmental agencies, leading to duplication, long timelines, and inefficiency• Limited understanding of business needs: City processes and staff are sometimes perceived as not attuned to the realities of operating a growing or complex business (e.g., multi-jurisdictional suppliers)• System appears to favor experienced or well-resourced applicants: Processes tend to be easier for those with prior experience or access to attorneys and consultants. New or first-time applicants without these resources face steeper learning curves and greater uncertainty	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fragmented permitting experience: Businesses interact with multiple city and county departments separately, with little coordination or clarity on sequencing• Excessive delays and unclear timelines: inconsistent turnaround times and lack visibility into processing status• Limited guidance and documentation: Many rely on word of mouth or personal networks because there's no consolidated source of truth outlining permit types, steps, and fees• High variability by jurisdiction: Requirements and processes differ significantly between cities creating confusion• Burden on small internal teams: Many high-growth entrepreneurs juggle multiple compliance steps with limited administrative capacity• Limited digital functionality: Online systems are incomplete, and businesses often must visit offices or make repeated phone calls to move applications forward



Small Business Interview Takeaways: Opportunities

	Main-Street	Supplier	High-Growth
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single point of contact / case manager: Guides applicants through all departments, ensuring continuity and accountability • Pre-permit consultations: Offer optional site or plan reviews before lease signing to prevent redesign costs • Documentation of progress: Ensure written approvals are honored even if staff or leadership changes • Improved customer service: Train staff to communicate timelines, next steps, and permit sequences clearly • Clearer requirements: Industry-specific permit guide with standard timelines and examples • Transparency and predictability: Publish timelines, average review durations, and detailed checklists online • Networking and Peer Support: Sharing experiences and asking questions can help overcome challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centralized permitting portal: A single digital entry point that consolidates all permits, forms, and agency communications to simplify navigation and improve transparency • Clarify jurisdictional boundaries and points of contact: Reduce confusion over whether permits fall under city or county authority. Establishing clear guidance on jurisdictional responsibility – including maps, contact directories, or routing tools • Clearer documentation and checklists: Publish plain-language, step-by-step guides with examples tailored to common supplier types (e.g., manufacturing, food production, construction) • Improved customer service and responsiveness: Businesses emphasized that courteous, well-informed, and proactive staff interactions can dramatically improve satisfaction and compliance outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unified online portal: Standardize and centralize all permits, licenses, and business registration processes • Step-by-step permit wizard: An interactive checklist or intake form could guide businesses through requirements specific to their industry and location • Predictable processing timelines: Publishing average review times for each permit type would help businesses plan openings and expansions • Permit Navigator or Concierge Service: A dedicated contact or hotline that provides real-time guidance and troubleshooting • Improved customer service and responsiveness: Consistent, courteous, and well-informed communication builds trust and reduces frustration • Ongoing feedback loop: Integrate short surveys after permit completion to identify pain points and measure satisfaction



Small Business Interview Takeaways: Opportunities

One Stop Shop Recommendation

Main-Street

- **“Access an expert”:** Provide direct access to mentors who are intimately familiar with permitting process such as past business owners, lawyers, business development experts

Supplier

- **Customer-centered design:** Build the One-stop Shop with service standards in mind; fast response times, clear instructions, and consistent follow-up
- **Build a business intelligence function:** Create a mechanism to analyze supplier business trends, common pain points, and emerging needs to help cities adapt permitting processes, streamline requirements, and proactively support the growth of local supplier businesses

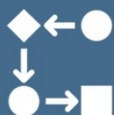
High-Growth

- **Centralized information hub:** A digital and physical one-stop shop should serve as the single-entry point for permits, licenses, and small business resources.
- **Collaboration with Local Chambers:** Establish a formal partnership to offer dedicated permitting assistance and connect small businesses to training, resources, and other technical support
- **Connection to post-permit resources:** Link the process to other business supports (e.g., financing, site selection, workforce programs) to help high-growth firms scale efficiently



Permitting Best Practices

Three pillars can guide permitting best practices that streamline and improve coordination, providing a framework for Stanislaus County to ultimately better support the small businesses in the region



Efficient Processes

Streamline and standardize the permit lifecycle – from application to issuance



Empowered People

Equip staff and applicants with clear guidance, communication, and feedback channels



Transparent Systems

Use technology, data, and transparency to improve consistency and accountability



Permitting Best Practices: Efficient Processes

	Practice Area	Detail
Permit Application Process	Application Submission	Clear, step-by-step instructions, including required forms, documentation, and fees
	Pre-Application Meetings	Optional pre-application meetings to discuss project scope and requirements
	Eligibility Criteria	Clear criteria outlining what types of projects require permits and what may be exempt
Review Process	Plan Review Procedures	Published timelines and steps for review stages
	Interdepartmental Coordination	Shared routing and communication protocols among different departments (e.g., Planning, Fire, Public Works)
Inspection Procedures	Scheduling Inspections	Clear timelines and notification standards for applicants
	Inspection Protocols	Standardized checklists for inspectors
	Inspection Reporting	Documented outcomes and communication back to applications
Permit Issuance	Approval Process	Clear criteria and procedures for issuing permits once all requirements have been met
	Conditions of Approval	Documented requirements tied to approvals
	Permit Expiration and Renewal	Standardized policies on duration and renewal
Fees and Payments	Fee Schedule	Transparent fee schedule and posted rates, including fees for expedited processing
	Payment Procedures	Clear instructions for accepted methods and deadlines



Business Interviews: Challenges + Opportunities

As part of our engagement with the Chambers, we interviewed 60+ small businesses – ranging from local Main Street businesses to high-growth firms – to gather insights on challenges, opportunities, and potential solutions

Challenges

- **Capacity gaps** – Small teams and turnover slow responses and erode institutional knowledge
- **Limited transparency** – Few step-by-step guides or published timelines; applicants rely on trial and error
- **Fragmented + inconsistent processes** – Conflicting guidance across city, county, and fire departments; unclear points of contact
- **Jurisdiction confusion** – City–county overlap (especially for food, health, and events) adds uncertainty
- **Uneven enforcement + fees** – Standards and costs vary by jurisdiction or reviewer; perceived unfairness
- **Manual + slow systems** – Paper-based routing and sequential reviews create long delays (up to 9–12 mo.)

“Every person tells you something different. I just want one place or person who can explain exactly what to do.”

– Local Main Street business owner, Modesto Chamber interview

Opportunities

- ▶ **Positive individual experiences:** Responsive staff or proactive communication dramatically improved satisfaction and trust
- ▶ **Business willingness to comply:** Owners expressed a strong desire to follow rules—if the process were clearer, faster, and more predictable
- ▶ **Examples of success:** Businesses frequently referenced neighboring cities like Tracy or Modesto as having fast, transparent permitting processes
- ▶ **Momentum for modernization:** Both applicants and local officials see the need for digital tools, standardized timelines, and concurrent reviews to improve efficiency

“If the process were clearer and faster, we’d be the first to follow it. We just need consistency and someone who can guide us through.”

– Small business owner, Ceres Chamber interview



Permitting Best Practices: Empowered People

	Practice Area	Detail
Training and Staff Development	Staff Training Programs	Guidelines for how staff should communicate with applicants, including response times for inquiries and updates on application status; Development of standard operating procedure manuals to support knowledge transfer
	Performance Evaluation	Guidelines for any conditions that may be attached to permits, including compliance with specific codes or regulations
Customer Service and Communication	Communication Protocols	Guidelines for how staff should communicate with applicants, including response times for inquiries and updates on application status
	Customer Feedback	Procedures for collecting and addressing feedback from applicants regarding the permitting process
Appeals	Appeal Process	Procedures for applicants to appeal decisions made by the Building and Planning Divisions, including timelines and required documentation



Permitting Best Practices: Transparent Systems

	Practice Area	Detail
Record Keeping and Documentation	Documentation Standards	Policies for maintaining records of all permit applications, approvals, inspections, and communications with applicants
	Data Management	Procedures for managing and storing electronic and physical documents related to the permitting process
Continuous Improvement	Review and Update Policies	Procedures for regularly reviewing and updating policies and procedures to reflect changes in regulations, technology, and community needs
	Performance Measurement	Reported metrics on timeliness, satisfaction, and outcomes
Technology Integration	Digital Permitting Systems	Leverage digital permitting systems (e.g., Accela, eTRAKiT) and explore shared or interoperable tools across jurisdictions



Early Best Practices Identified

Cities are building a strong foundation; with shared tools and coordination, the County has opportunities to deliver a more streamlined permitting experience for the small businesses it aims to support

City	Practice	Why It's Working
Turlock	▶ Free pre-development meetings for all new projects	▶ Encourages early coordination and clear expectations
Oakdale	▶ Some over-the-counter permits handled directly by staff	▶ Reduces wait time for simple approvals
Ceres	▶ Pre-planning meetings twice per month and use of Accela for building permits	▶ Promotes roadmap-style support and partial digitization
Modesto	▶ “White-glove” business concierge and interactive business license application	▶ Improves customer experience and self-navigation
County	▶ Free pre-development meetings across multiple departments	▶ Model for multi-department coordination