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### **IGO Offers Department of Buildings Recommendations to Improve Enforcement of Certificate of Occupancy Requirements**

The City of Chicago Office of Inspector General (IGO) has released recommendations it made to the Chicago Department of Buildings (DOB) to improve DOB's enforcement of Certificate of Occupancy (C of O) requirements. Those recommendations, and the full DOB response, can be found on the IGO website [here](#).

A City of Chicago Inspector General's Office (IGO) inquiry into the DOB's certificate of occupancy acquisition process found that in recent years as many as 48% of the properties that received building permits failed to subsequently obtain a C of O.

"The Certificate of Occupancy check is critical in assuring that buildings are safe and in compliance with the City's building code," said Inspector General Joe Ferguson. "If the City is unable to monitor or enforce C of O requirements, Chicagoans are potentially at risk of fraud or even physical injury from unsavory property owners selling or renting buildings not suitable for occupancy."

To address this problem, the IGO recommended that DOB:

- Run regular, periodic inactive building permit queries and disseminate the resultant reports to inspectors for property checks.
- Consider conducting an audit of the properties that received building permits in the last five years but never obtained C of Os, in order to determine how many of those properties are being occupied in violation of City ordinance.
- Advise building permit holders when their permit has been inactive for at least six months. Such a notice would remind permit holders of their obligations under City ordinance and demonstrate to property owners that DOB closely monitors property developments, thus encouraging compliance with pertinent rules and regulations.
- Consult with the City's Department of Innovation and Technology (DoIT) to explore the creation of a searchable, public database for C of Os so that members of the public considering buying a property could confirm that the building had been certified as suitable for occupancy.

DOB was immediately responsive to the IGO recommendations and has already begun to take action. Specifically, the DOB response to the IGO states that DOB:

- DOB has met with DoIT preliminarily to determine how to create a report that notifies all DOB bureaus when a building permit has not had an inspection after six months.
- DOB will conduct an audit of properties issued permits from 2006-2011 to determine which of those have no permit inspection on record. This will allow DOB to determine whether work has been performed and if those buildings are occupied.
- Although the DOB does not currently have a Director of Information Systems, the DOB's response indicated that this position would be responsible for determining whether a searchable website for C of Os is feasible.

The recommendations, as well as the DOB response, can be found online at the IGO website: [www.chicagoinspectorgeneral.org](http://www.chicagoinspectorgeneral.org). Follow the IGO on Twitter @ChicagoIGO for the latest information on how the IGO continues to fight waste, fraud, abuse, and inefficiency in Chicago government.

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