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Development Services
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MEMORANDUM

To: David Ramsay, City Manager

From: Tom Phillips, Building Services Manager
Rob Jammerman, Development Engineering Manager
Nancy Cox, Development Review Manager

Date: September 1, 2009

Subject: DEVELOPMENT SERVICES PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS SUMMARY REPORT

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the City Council review this report outlining the many process improvements that have been implemented during the last 18 months by Development Services (Building, Fire, Planning, and Public Works Departments), and the attached Executive Summary from the Latimore Company regarding their work on Kirkland's Subdivision and Land Surface Modification Permit processes (the entire report from the Latimore Company can be viewed at:

<http://www.ci.kirkland.wa.us/Assets/Public+Works/Public+Works+PDFs/Dev+Group/Development+-+Latimore+Report.pdf>

Mr. Latimore will provide a presentation to the City Council covering his study of our permitting process.

Background Discussion:

Development Services has been working with the Latimore Company on permit process improvements since 2007. Their first project was to review the single-family Building Permit process and identify and implement improvements to this process. This project was completed in 2008 and most of the identified improvements have been implemented. The second project was to identify land surface modification and subdivision permit process improvements. This second project is now complete and an executive summary from the Latimore Company is attached.

Below is a description of all of the process improvements that have been implemented or are underway. Some of the process improvements were identified by the Latimore Company and some were identified and implemented by staff independent of the Latimore study.

PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS

Building Permits

Residential Review Team – A plan is in place and office space has been dedicated for a Residential Review Team. Once the number of new single-family permits begins to increase, the team consisting of staff from each development services department, will begin to meet on a weekly basis to coordinate and prioritize the review of single family residences as well as meeting with customers.

Electronic Plan Submittal – Staff has been exploring ways to accommodate the submittal of plans electronically. We participated in a Request for Proposal (RFP) with the eCityGov Alliance to find a vendor that will provide the online resources. As a result of the RFP process, it was decided that the eCityGov Alliance will provide this service instead of an outside vendor. While we are waiting for eCityGov Alliance program to start, we have initiated a pilot program to test software and review procedures. A review station has been set up in the Building Department that is being shared by the three departments.

Wireless Field Computers – Building Inspectors, Public Works Inspectors, and Planning Code Enforcement Officers have been assigned wireless computers that allow real time access and updating to permit information and communication with City Hall. We are also developing a correction writing program that will allow correction notices to be easily created and automatically entered into Advantage. They can also be printed in the field then printed or emailed to the customer.

Residential Cover Sheet – A common cover sheet for permit plans submittals is being finalized. The cover sheet organizes all city submittal requirements into a simplified format for the applicant and the city reviewer. The eCityGov Alliance is also reviewing our cover sheet and plans to create a regionally shared version of it. Our goal is to have the electronic permit application linked to the cover sheet and automatically create the cover sheet for each permit.

Combined Plan Review Letter – A joint plan review correction letter has been developed that lists all city comment/corrections in one document. The letter also provides a space for the applicant's response to each item, which allows the letter to be used as a checklist when the applicant submits their revised plans. By insuring that the applicant has responded to all of the revisions, the number of incomplete permit re-submittals is reduced.

New Review Checklists – Each department has reviewed and revised the checklists they use to review plans. Reviewers in each department are using the same checklist for better consistency.

Survey Policy – Development Services adopted a survey policy about a year ago. The policy describes when property line and topographic surveys are required and what must be included in permit applications. The purpose of the policy was to clarify for applicants and staff what is needed to ensure consistent and accurate plan reviews because many construction projects are designed to the minimum setbacks and maximum heights.

Revised Height Calculations - As a result of a code amendment passed in 2008, there are two methods to calculate Average Building Elevation (ABE). The new method is a simplified version of the existing method and is a time-saver for applicants and staff.

Floor Area Ratio (FAR) Clarification – Planning staff has discussed the fine points of FAR calculations to improve consistency during plan review. A handout is being prepared to assist customers.

Single Family Air Conditioner and Generator Permits – To expedite review of these permits, the Planning Department checks for setbacks and sensitive areas at the counter instead of requiring a formal plan review. Most of the permits are cleared this way with no further Planning review.

Early Submittal of Land Surface Modification (LSM) Permits – Applicants applying for a subdivision may choose to apply for their LSM permit while their subdivision is being reviewed. The benefit to the applicants that choose to do this is that they can be ready to start construction shortly after their project receives subdivision approval. Previously, applicants could not apply for an LSM permit until after they received subdivision approval. About 25% of our subdivision customers take advantage of this process improvement.

Green Building Program – Staff has developed a program to encourage green building. New Single-Family Building Permits that meet green building standards receive expedited review. In addition, the Public Works Department has worked with several developers to encourage the use of Low Impact Development (LID) techniques. In one particular case the Public Works Department expedited the review of a land surface modification permit for a 25-lot plat in exchange for the voluntary use of LID techniques such as rain gardens, pervious sidewalks, and individual lot infiltration systems.

Land Use Permits

Integrated Development Plan (IDP) – A new process for subdivision, LSM and building permit review and approval has been developed by the Latimore Company. The IDP offers three review options depending on the customer's ability to provide information early. For example, if the customer can commit to building footprints and tree removal at the time of subdivision application then the process will be accelerated. It can even be further accelerated if this information is presented during the pre-submittal stage. The IDP documents the development plan for the customer and City and is the blueprint used in subsequent LSM and building permit reviews. When an IDP is used, the number of tree plan submittals can be reduced from 3 to 1.

Streamlined Staff Report – Preparation of a streamlined short plat staff report is planned. It will be checklist-style which is similar to the Administrative Design Review staff report template.

Public Notice Changes – Staff has completed code amendments that change the way public notice is provided. Public notice signs will contain a single laminated notice throughout the life of the permit. A website that will enable customers to easily find the most current notice will be painted on the boards. Notices, decisions and reports will be distributed by email when possible.

Code Changes

Consolidated Code Enforcement – A project is underway to review all code enforcement rules in the Municipal Code and consolidate these to the greatest extent possible. At the same time, staff is exploring enforcement methods used by other cities and considering recommending changes to the Council.

Updating Tree Regulations – Another project is underway to reorganize KZC Chapter 95. The amendments will include some new ideas like the IDP noted above as well as clarifications that are needed.

New Land Surface Modification (LSM) Rules – Development Services has completed a consolidation of LSM rules used by the three departments into one new Kirkland Municipal Code chapter.

Relaxed Permit Expiration Timelines – In June, 2007 the permit expiration deadlines for LSM and building permit applications were relaxed to reduce the number of extension requests.

One Year Permit Extensions - In March 2009, the Municipal Code was revised to allow one year extensions on most Building and LSM permits or applications. This revision, which expires at the end of 2009, was requested by developers to help keep their projects active during the economic slowdown.

Monitoring Performance

Activity Reports – Each Development Services department prepares regular permit reports comparing current year's activities with previous year's activities. These are posted on Kirklandpermits.net.

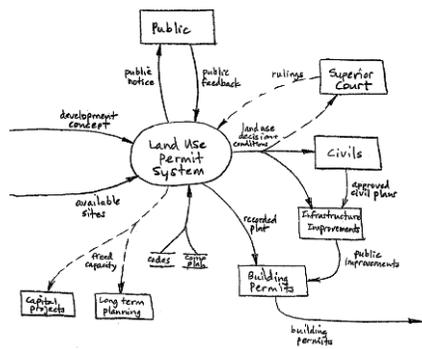
Dashboard Report – Development Services is implementing a recommendation from Kurt Latimore called the Dashboard Report. This detailed Excel report tracks all permit applications from submittal to issuance and enables reviewers and supervisors to see the status of a permit or workloads at a glance. It also places a priority on each permit based on assigned goals per permit type.

Online Resources

Advantage Replacement – Development Services is working with the eCityGov Alliance and five other cities to develop an RFP for the joint purchasing of a new permit tracking software. We have already hired a consultant to develop high level needs and a cost assessment. We are now starting Phase II which will include the creation and issuance of an RFP as well as the selection of a vendor.

Enhanced Use of MyBuildingPermit.com (MBP) – We have been working closely with the eCityGov Alliance to expand the types of permits that are available through the MBP site. This means the Planning and Public Works departments will be playing a much larger role in the MBP portal.

Kirkland Developers Partnership Forum – The Kirkland Developers Partnership Forum was launched about 3 years ago. The forum was created to promote better communication between the City and development customers. The forum is a "list serve" that customers subscribe to and we now have over 220 members. We use the forum to send information to our customers regarding code amendments, permit review and inspection process changes, and invitations to meetings and training. Several meetings have been held with forum members to help staff better understand the challenges that the development community faces when they design, permit, and construct a project. Many members have also attended City-hosted Low Impact Development and Sustainability training. We have received many accolades from our customers for hosting this forum.



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Kirkland Subdivision and LSM Process Assessment Findings & Recommendations

Executive Summary

The Fire & Building, Planning & Community Development (PCD), and Public Works departments launched an initiative in 2007 to improve the predictability, efficiency and collaboration of the City’s single-family residential (SFR) building permit process to meet review timeline goals and to optimize procedures ahead of implementation of a next-generation permit tracking system. While subsequently implementing these improvements, the departments expanded their scope to include the residential subdivision and land surface modification process that creates the new parcels for these homes. This allows optimization of the process from subdivision inception all the way through home occupancy. The Latimore Company, the consulting firm that conducted the original process assessment in 2007 performed this expanded assessment, while guiding the implementation of the original SFR recommendations.

This expanded, 38-page assessment identified eight strengths of the overall residential development process, including a best-in-class rating for the City’s pre-submittal collaboration.

Sanitary Sewer Conditions:

1. The applicant shall extend the existing public sewer system to provide sanitary sewer service for each lot within the proposed project. Extend an 8" sewer main along 122nd Ave. NE from the north property line to the south property line of lot 2 and terminate the extension with a manhole.
2. From the sewer manhole, extend a 6 inch side sewer to serve lot 1 and to serve the lot to the south at 12056 NE 70th St. The side sewer will need to be encompassed in a 10 ft wide side sewer easement unless it is directly adjacent the ROW in which case it can be reduced to 5 ft in width.
3. Provide a 10 ft wide private sewer easement along the north property line of lot 2. At the northwest and northeast corner of the lot the easement shall be widened to approximately 15 ft in width so that a future side sewer can be installed without impacting the existing trees. The applicant shall contact the owner of the property address 12046 NE 70th St. to see if they would like to pay to have the side sewer installed at the time of construction in this subdivision.

Kirkland is particularly rigorous in the research done to foresee what the specific conditions of subdivision approval would be at the site the applicant is proposing to develop. For example, rather than stating that certain sewer improvements are required, or that sewer lines would have to be extended along a certain roadway, Kirkland takes it a level deeper to specify dimensions by lot

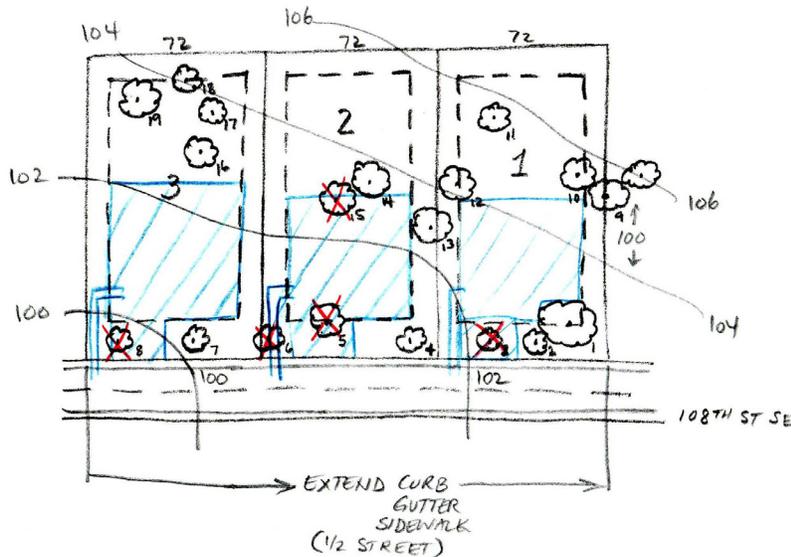
number as shown. Most jurisdictions would stop by Item 1 in the example. Several in the *Kirkland Developers Partnership*, who were asked for feedback and suggestions for the process, gave top marks to the Public Works Department for the depth of their pre-submittal scoping of infrastructure requirements, which are the most expensive unknowns for prospective applicants.

The seven other strengths are:

1. A digital model of the City's water system for real-time fire flow prediction.
2. Nine-lot short plats, rather than triggering full plat provisions at only five lots.
3. Accessory dwelling unit provisions, that include depiction on the main house plans.
4. The interdepartmental development review committee that coordinates internal reviews.
5. A centralized building and LSM permit counter that frees a Public Works technician for plan review.
6. Performance bonding and incremental bond release that improves working capitalization for developers.
7. Kirklandpermits.net that provides online status and electronic public commenting.

To build on these strengths and improve the overall residential process, six enhancements are recommended. These improvements target the Planning and Forestry processes particularly, as analysis indicates and applicants confirm that the pacing aspect of the broader residential subdivision process is Planning/Forestry approval. This arises largely from the currently incremental tree preservation approach and the inherent project management responsibility of planners for land use actions.

Of particular value is adoption of an Integrated Development Plan (IDP), packaged with three new service options. This will allow prepared applicants to execute the residential development process faster and more efficiently. These same improvements ease and distribute the currently concentrated Forestry workload.



For an IDP, the applicant drafts a sketch that shows the proposed lot configuration, frontage improvement areas, utility service routings, topography, and existing trees. The applicant and City team would use this information to reach agreement on how to reasonably access and service the lots, and would use this as a basis for indicating trees that would need to be removed to install these services.

The applicant could elect to go further at this point, and specify building footprint locations. The team would then use these footprints (crosshatched in the figure) to identify any additional grading work and tree removal that would be needed to

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accomplish home construction in these locations. Alternative layouts and setback variances to improve tree retention could be discussed as well.

With agreement on the Integrated Development Plan (IDP), the applicant and review team have created the predictability that applicants are seeking and have built a tool for managing site trees throughout the process. Further, construction efficiency can be improved through greater use of the LSM to prepare the sites for home placement. Code changes are underway to provide for these improvements.

The four other improvements are:

1. A short plat staff-report template like currently used for administrative design reviews.
2. Peer review to improve consistency of planning reviews.
3. Expansion of new internal tracking reports to better manage all applications to the City's network of review timelines.
4. Increased urban forester capacity.

The next step is implementation of these recommendations, many of which are logical extensions of the improvements implemented for SFR building permit efficiency. The IDP process is developed and ready for first project use. The three new processing options are also ready to go. The Latimore Company can continue to work with the team to monitor and optimize these new high performance tools.

A short plat staff report template could be prepared in short order. The Latimore Company can produce this for the team. Peer review could begin immediately.

Expansion of the Latimore Dashboard[®] functionality to manage all applications to the City's various review timelines is a relatively straightforward extension of the logic the City IT crew has already built into Tidemark Advantage[®]. A small training effort, launched with an all-team briefing on how the new system works, should bring the rest of the team on board quickly.

Boosting Forestry review capacity is a more involved step that starts with cross-training of planners for a supporting role, but could be expanded to add arborist certifications for a full contribution. Greatest return on investment is likely to be forester-led cross training. This is best accomplished by increasing the current Forestry position to full time. Outside review options could also be explored to maintain performance during high demand periods.

Lastly, extending these improvements to commercial, multifamily and mixed-use developments is recommended. These subdivision and LSM improvements added to the SFR building permit improvements are scalable to the non-residential side of our process. They would be shaped to deliver best performance for these types of projects that tend to have more parallel activities, complex building and fire reviews, design review, intensified traffic, landscaping, and solid waste analysis, more involved occupancy punch lists, and other nuances. The Latimore Company is here to help, and thanks the City for this opportunity to work with the development services departments to improve the predictability, efficiency and collaboration of these services.