



**CITY OF KIRKLAND**  
City Manager's Office  
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www.kirklandwa.gov

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## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Kurt Triplett, City Manager  
**From:** Marilynne Beard, Deputy City Manager  
**Date:** March 7, 2013  
**Subject:** DEVELOPMENT SERVICES STUDY

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

City Council receives the Development Services Organizational Review from Zucker Systems and provides feedback to staff regarding the proposed process for review and implementation.

### **BACKGROUND DISCUSSION:**

The Development Services Study is the second in a series of organizational studies intended to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of City services. These studies will provide observations about the current organization, identify opportunities for improvement and inform the City Council's budget process and resource allocation for the future.

Management of the study was coordinated by the Deputy City Manager and involved a steering committee composed of representatives from each of the departments under review:

- Eric Shields, Director of Planning and Community Development
- Nancy Cox, Development Review Manager
- Paul Stewart, Deputy Director of Planning and Community Development
- David Barnes, Planner
- Pam Bissonnette, Public Works Director
- Ray Steiger, Deputy Public Works Director
- Rob Jammerman, Development Engineering Manager
- Kevin Nalder, Director of Fire and Building Services
- Tom Phillips, Building Services Manager
- Angela Haupt, Plans Examiner

### **Project Approach**

A request for qualifications was developed by the steering committee (see Attachment A). Thirteen consulting firms submitted proposals and four firms were interviewed. Zucker Systems was selected based on their experience with similar studies across the United States, their proposed approach and positive references.

The scope of the study included a review of the development services functions related to land use planning, permitting, inspection and code enforcement as it functions across the three departments. The consultants were asked to conduct a review of current conditions, an analysis of future service demands and an analysis of opportunities for organizational changes and process improvements that can enhance customer service and achieve efficiencies.

Zucker Systems brought a team of consultants to conduct the study. The team requested and was provided a number of records such as official records (e.g. Kirkland Zoning Code, Comprehensive Plan, City Budget), internal documents (e.g. policies and procedures, job descriptions) and data (e.g. permit volumes for the past five years, average review times and review time standards). The team also conducted two employee surveys, individual and group meetings with development services staff, the City Council, board and commission members and City executive staff. The team also conducted three focus groups consisting of development services customers and community representatives and administered and evaluated results from a customer survey. The team worked continuously with the City steering team to refine and clarify information.

## **Major Findings**

The report contains a total of 218 recommendations. Zucker Systems approach is to provide very detailed recommendations for their customers to provide clarity and ease of implementation planning. The level of detail creates a larger number of recommendations. Thus, the content of the recommendations is more important than the number of recommendations. The major findings and priority recommendations are contained in the Executive Summary and include:

- Kirkland already employs a number of best practices and is “one of the better organizations we reviewed.”
- Slow processing times for plan review was noted as the primary concern of customers. Although Kirkland’s review times were similar to surrounding jurisdictions for commercial permits, comparisons on a national scale indicate that Kirkland could improve turnaround times, especially on single family permits. Closer monitoring of review times and use of outside consultants were recommended along with a more aggressive expedited review program.
- Although the City’s development review functions are not organized in one department, the interdepartmental coordination provided by the Develop Review Committees is effective. Zucker Systems does not recommend a major departmental consolidation but does suggest that front counter services would benefit from being consolidated in one location.
- Workload has been impacted by both changes in economic conditions and the annexation of the Juanita, Evergreen Hill and Finn Hill neighborhoods. These fluctuations created challenges in analyzing the data on permit volumes. The recent uptick in permit volumes may require additional staffing to meet established performance standards. A fee study that is planned for later this year will provide greater insight to workload levels and how they can be supported through fees.

- Zucker recommends a more formalized project manager approach to the development review process whereby one staff person would be the main point of contact and coordinator for each project.
- The length and complexity of the City's Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code should be evaluated with a goal of making the documents easier to use and to assure consistency between the two documents.
- The report compliments the City on its use of technology to support development services but noted that the implementation of the new permitting system (EnerGov) was a challenge for the departments and the system has not performed per the specifications. Understanding that implementing a new software system takes time, the report offers a number of suggestions for deploying EnerGov that will assist the departments in meeting other recommendations. Greater use of on-line applications was also encouraged.

As was mentioned during the Fire Strategic Plan process, it is important to note that the report reflects the consultant's best professional judgment about Kirkland's current development services functions and their recommendations for improving and enhancing services in Kirkland. Now that the City has received the report, a process of review, response and recommended implementation is being undertaken by the departments in cooperation with the City Manager's Office. The development services team began making some of the recommended changes before the consultant team departed from their on-site work in Kirkland and have continued to make progress based on the draft report. Of the 218 recommendations, at this time there are:

- 28 recommendations that have been implemented
- 62 recommendations that are the process of being implemented
- 10 recommendations that are ongoing (consultant recommended continuing an existing practice)
- 6 recommendations will be part of the City Hall remodel
- 106 recommendations will require a response and recommendation from staff regarding implementation feasibility, cost and timing

A number of the recommendations involve the investment of resources, have significant policy implications or require collective bargaining. Although department staff were kept abreast of the process by the steering team, their full involvement in the review and response to the report and in developing a plan to move forward is critical. Communication with stakeholders will be needed, especially to those who participated in focus groups and surveys so that they can see how their input is reflected in the recommendations. In short, the receipt of the report is just the beginning of a process of change and improvement.

**The following section describes recommended process elements.**

1. **Staff Analysis and Response of Findings and Recommendations** – The recommendations provided in the report represent Zucker Systems' perspective about opportunities for improvement. The steering team, working in cooperation with all development services staff and supporting departments as well as the City Manager, will prepare a recommended implementation plan. Part of the response will involve looking even more closely at some of the consultant's observations and recommendations to

provide context and options for the City Council's consideration.

2. **City Council Involvement** – Staff recommends that the report be forwarded to the Community Planning, Housing and Economic Development Committee for an initial review and recommended priorities for implementation. Some elements of the plan may be more appropriately referred to other committees, such as the Finance and Administration Committee once the fee study is underway. An implementation plan will be presented to the full Council.

## SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Zucker Systems' report presents very positive findings about the City's development services functions. The number of recommendations is less an indication of problems, but a reflection of the consultant's approach to analyze the organization at a detailed level and to provide recommendations that are specific. The study's recommendations will be the basis for a long-term plan aimed at improving the customer's experience and the departments' delivery of efficient and effective services.

I want to express my appreciation to the steering team for their hard work on this project. The study required a significant commitment of time for the steering team and, in particular, the members of the Development Review Committee II (DRC II) composed of Rob Jammerman, Nancy Cox and Tom Phillips. The level of collaboration and responsiveness shown by department staff in this study and their genuine commitment to their customers and the City was clear throughout the process. Their proactive approach to implementing the recommendations presented in the report is evidence of their commitment to quality services.

**CITY OF KIRKLAND  
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES  
Request for Proposals**

**ORGANIZATIONAL REVIEW  
Organizational Evaluation of Development Services Functions**

The City of Kirkland, Washington is seeking a qualified consultant to conduct an organizational and operational analysis of the City’s development services functions and to assist the City in refining its staffing and service delivery model.

**Background**

The City of Kirkland provides development services from three departments that coordinate internally through a Development Services Team composed of division managers from the Planning and Community Development Department, the Public Works Department and the Fire and Building Services Department.

- **Planning and Community Development** provides long range and current planning services through the review and issuance of land use permits and the review of building permits for zoning code compliance. The department is also responsible for code enforcement services.
- **Public Works Development Services Division** provides review, permitting and inspection services for public and private street and utility improvements related to building, land surface modification, projects and right-of-way permits. The Public Works Division is also responsible for all traffic impact review as well as providing general day to day customer service and public information for all Public Works issues.
- **The Fire and Building Department’s Building Division** provides permit processing, plan review and inspection services for building, mechanical, electrical and plumbing permits.
- **The Fire and Building Department’s Fire Prevention Division** provides permit processing, plan review and inspection services for building, land use, fire suppression and alarm permits. These functions were reviewed in a recent fire department study so the scope of this study will be limited to how this division interacts with the other development services divisions.

On June 1, 2011, the City of Kirkland annexed an area of approximately 31,000 new residents, bringing the total city population to 81,000. Additional staffing was added in all development services departments to address the increased workload associated with development in the larger City. At the same time, the current recession has caused a significant slow down in development activity resulting in the addition of fewer staff

than had been anticipated. Over the past year, the City has also been implementing a new permit system which went "live" on April 1, 2012.

The development services departments commissioned two permit process improvement studies between 2007-2009 that resulted in operational changes and code amendments intended to improve permit processing times and customer satisfaction.

An upcoming remodel of City Hall will provide an opportunity to optimize the City's development services customer interface and interdepartmental coordination by relocating and/or co-locating selected functions. A City Hall space planning and renovation project will run concurrent with the Development Services Organizational Study.

### **Scope of Work**

The consultant work will include a review of current conditions, an evaluation of future service demands, and an analysis of opportunities for organizational changes and process improvements that can further enhance customer service and achieve efficiencies.

The selected consulting firm will interview key stakeholders in the departments and in other departments of the City, the Kirkland City Council, a variety of external customers, appropriate community decision makers and others that the project team deems necessary. From these interviews, the consultants will obtain additional perspective on operational, economic, and policy issues facing the City. The consultant will also include comparisons with and examples of service delivery models and performance standards with other similar agencies.

#### **I. Review and Evaluation of the Current Service Demand and Organization**

The consultant will complete a comprehensive review of Kirkland's development services functions including organizational and service delivery configuration. The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the agency's operations in comparison to industry standards and best practices. The study shall focus on a baseline assessment of the current conditions and current service delivery performance.

#### Analysis of Current Service Demand

The Consultant will evaluate historical and current service demands and how staff resources are applied to meet customer service demands and regulatory requirements. Analysis of service levels will be applied to:

1. Permit processing
2. Long range planning projects
3. Code enforcement
4. Customer inquiries

5. Field inspection
6. Plan review

### Analysis of Current Operations

An in-depth review of the organization will be conducted including an evaluation of:

1. Organizational configuration
2. Staffing levels
3. Department management and administrative support functions and lines of authority
4. Interdepartment coordination and planning practices
5. Data collection systems, record keeping, reporting and performance metrics
6. Human resource management practices and systems
7. Public outreach and education
8. Operating budget and funding sources
9. Impact of current laws and regulations that drive staffing and permit processing
10. Permit processing efficiency and effectiveness

## **II. Future Service Demand and Delivery Options**

### Analysis of Future Service Demand

Conduct an assessment of the future service delivery needs and projected service demand including:

1. Service area characteristics
2. Projected population growth
3. Future service demand as it relates to increasing density and redevelopment patterns

### Analysis of Future Delivery System Models

The consultant will develop alternatives and strategies for meeting future service delivery needs, develop and analyze options for models by which services may be delivered with increased effectiveness and efficiency. Analysis shall include, at a minimum:

- Review and analysis of permit processing standards and development of revised standards as appropriate
- Review of customer service facilities and physical adjacencies as they relate to maximizing customer responsiveness and interdepartmental coordination
- Analysis and recommended changes to code provisions as they relate to work flow, cost/benefit and customer service
- Review and analysis of staff resource allocation between permitting and other departmental work

- Recommendations for long, mid and short-term strategies and alternative service delivery models that will enhance customer service and staff productivity
- Financial analysis and cost projections relating to recommended strategies including consideration of the impact of any changes to the organizational structure on the current cost of service model and fee structure

### **III. Implementation Planning**

The consultant will develop a report detailing organizational capabilities and challenges, goals and objectives for maintaining and improving services and development of performance measures to quantify progress.

The report will outline an implementation plan addressing each of the areas discussed in previous sections with particular focus on processing development permits. Key components include:

1. Development of departmental/functional goals and target objectives for moving forward
2. Description of recommended actions to achieve goals and objectives including, organizational changes, relocation or co-location of functions, investments and new or modified laws or regulations
3. Cost or savings of proposed changes and enhancements to the current system
4. Establishment of performance measures relative to goals and objectives
5. Identification of the process needed to implement recommendations including actions needed by the City Council

## **Proposal Submission and Consultant Selection**

### **Submission Requirements**

1. A summary of the firm's qualifications as they relate to the scope of work.
2. A description of similar projects performed.
3. A description of your firm's proposed approach to this project.
4. A list of personnel who would be assigned to this project and resumes and references for each especially related to the scope of work.
5. Proposed not-to-exceed fee and any related costs over and above the contract fee.
6. A list of references knowledgeable of your firm's work. Please include telephone numbers and email addresses.

All proposal submissions must be prepared in accordance with the requirements set forth in this RFP. The Submittal shall not exceed twenty (20) pages (10 double-sided sheets of paper). The front cover, the back cover, and a maximum two-page cover letter, may be in addition to the twenty (20)-page limit.

### **Evaluation Criteria**

Proposals will be evaluated according to the following criteria, listed in order of importance:

1. Specialized experience and technical competence of the firm and its personnel considering the scope of work.
2. Recent experience and expertise with similar projects.
3. Proposed approach to accomplish the work required.
4. Proposed cost to perform the work.
5. Capacity to perform the work (including any specialized services) within the time limitations, considering the firm's current and planned workload.
6. Past record of performance on contracts with Kirkland, other governmental agencies or public bodies, and with private industry, including such factors as control of costs, quality of work, ability to adhere to schedules, cooperation, responsiveness and ability to communicate with a range of participants including elected officials, staff, members of the public and bargaining unit representatives.
7. Familiarity with types of challenges applicable to the project.

### **Selection Process**

An evaluation team shall review the proposals, discuss, assess and rank the proposals according to the evaluation criteria. These rankings will be used to determine which firms should be contacted for an interview by the team. It is pointed out that nothing in these procedures shall be interpreted to require Kirkland to award a contract to the lowest cost proposer.

Selected firms will be invited for an interview with the evaluation team to discuss the proposal and to answer specific questions. The purpose of the interviews will be to evaluate the experience and fit of the firms and to clarify and assure understanding of the requirements of the contract.

Following interviews, references will be checked on one or more finalist firm.

The City of Kirkland reserves the right to accept or reject proposals submitted and to waive informational and minor irregularities and to request additional information required to fully evaluate a proposal.

Proposals will not be publicly opened and will be kept strictly confidential during this process. All aspects of the evaluations and any negotiations, including documentation, correspondence and meetings, will be kept confidential by the Evaluation Committee. No information regarding any proposal or its evaluation will be discussed with other companies.

Confidentiality of proposals is considered by Kirkland as an essential element of maintaining fairness during the evaluation process. However, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed under the State Public Disclosure Act, Chapter 42.17 RCW.

If a member of the public demands in writing to review portions of proposals which have been marked or identified as confidential, proprietary or business secrets, Kirkland will notify the affected proposer prior to releasing such portions. The proposer shall take such legal actions as it deems necessary to protect its interests. If the proposer has not commenced such actions within five (5) calendar days after receipt of the notice from Kirkland of a demand to review such portions of its proposal and provided Kirkland written notice of the actions, Kirkland may make such portions available for review and copying by the public as Kirkland deems necessary to comply with state law.

The proposer asserting that portions of its proposal are legally protectable shall bear all costs of defending such assertion, including indemnifying and reimbursing Kirkland for its administrative, expert and legal costs and judgments involved in defending itself in actions arising from such assertions by the proposer including (without limitation) any assessments under RCW 42.17.340(3). By submitting a proposal with portions marked confidential, proprietary, business secrets or the like, the proposer has thereby agreed to the provisions of this section, including the defense and reimbursement obligations.

### **Contract Requirements**

The City of Kirkland Plans to use the attached City of Kirkland Professional Services Agreement. Firms with significant concerns about the sample agreement should not submit on this RFP.

The top ranked firm will be notified in writing and will be asked to meet and submit its prospective scope of services and refine its fee (to be broken down by phases). If, after negotiation and consideration, the City is unable to reach an acceptable agreement with the top-ranked firm, it will terminate negotiations with the top ranked firm and, at its sole discretion, may: enter into negotiations with the second ranked firm; withhold the award for any reason; elect not to proceed with any of the proponents; or re-solicit new Proposals.

### **Questions**

Questions regarding the RFP process should be addressed to Barry Scott, Purchasing Agent, by email to [bscott@kirklandwa.gov](mailto:bscott@kirklandwa.gov).

Questions regarding the scope of work, timeframe or deliverables should be addressed to Marilynne Beard, Assistant City Manager, by email to [mbeard@kirklandwa.gov](mailto:mbeard@kirklandwa.gov).

### **Proposed Timeline**

<u>Task</u>	<u>Date</u>
RFP issued	6/28/12
Questions submitted by noon	7/6/12
Proposals due by 4:00 pm	7/19/12

Interviews	Week of	8/6/12
Consultant Selection Completed		8/17/12
Contract Execution		9/7/12
Draft Report		3/1/13
Final Report		5/1/13



## PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AGREEMENT

Job Name and Number

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The City of Kirkland, Washington, a municipal corporation (hereinafter the "City") and \_\_\_\_\_, whose address is \_\_\_\_\_ (hereinafter the "consultant"), agree and contract as follows:

### I. SERVICES BY CONSULTANT

- A. The Consultant agrees to perform the services described in Attachment \_\_\_\_\_ to this Agreement, which attachment is incorporated herein by reference.
- B. All services, and all duties incidental or necessary thereto, shall be conducted and performed diligently and completely and in accordance with professional standards of conduct and performance.

### II. COMPENSATION

- A. The total compensation to be paid to Consultant for these services shall not exceed \$\_\_\_\_\_, as detailed in Attachment \_\_\_\_\_.
- B. Payment to Consultant by the City in accordance with the payment ceiling specified above shall be the total compensation for all work performed under this Agreement and supporting documents hereto as well as all subcontractors' fees and expenses, supervision, labor, supplies, materials, equipment or the use thereof, reimbursable expenses, and other necessary incidentals.
- C. The Consultant shall be paid monthly on the basis of invoices submitted. Invoicing will be on the basis of percentage complete or on the basis of time, whichever is applicable in accordance with the terms of this Agreement.
- D. The City shall have the right to withhold payment to Consultant for any work not completed in a satisfactory manner until such time as consultant modifies such work to the satisfaction of the City.
- E. Unless otherwise specified in this Agreement, any payment shall be considered timely if a warrant is mailed or is available within 45 days of the date of actual receipt by the City of an invoice conforming in all respects to the terms of this Agreement.

### III. TERMINATION OF AGREEMENT

The City reserves the right to terminate or suspend this Agreement at any time, with or without cause, by giving ten (10) days notice to Consultant in writing. In the event of termination, all finished or unfinished reports, or other material prepared by the Consultant pursuant to this Agreement, shall be provided to the City. In the event the City terminates prior to completion without cause, consultant may

complete such analyses and records as may be necessary to place its files in order. Consultant shall be entitled to receive just and equitable compensation for any satisfactory work completed on the project prior to the date of suspension or termination, not to exceed the payment ceiling set forth above.

**IV. OWNERSHIP OF WORK PRODUCT**

A. Ownership of the originals of any reports, data, studies, surveys, charts, maps, drawings, specifications, figures, photographs, memoranda, and any other documents which are developed, compiled or produced as a result of this Agreement, whether or not completed, shall be vested in the City. Any reuse of these materials by the City for projects or purposes other than those which fall within the scope of this contract or the project to which it relates, without written concurrence by the Consultant will be at the sole risk of the City.

The City acknowledges the Consultant's plans and specifications as instruments of professional service. Nevertheless, the plans and specifications prepared under this Agreement shall become the property of the City upon completion of the work. The City agrees to hold harmless and indemnify consultant against all claims made against Consultant for damage or injury, including defense costs, arising out of any reuse of such plans and specifications by any third party without the written authorization of the Consultant.

B. Methodology, materials, software, logic, and systems developed under this contract are the property of the consultant and the City, and may be used as either the consultant or the City sees fit, including the right to revise or publish the same without limitation.

**V. GENERAL ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT**

The \_\_\_\_\_ for the City of Kirkland shall review and approve the Consultant's invoices to the City under this Agreement, shall have primary responsibility for overseeing and approving services to be performed by the Consultant, and shall coordinate all communications with the Consultant from the City.

**VI. COMPLETION DATE**

The estimated completion date for the consultant's performance of the services specified in Section I is \_\_\_\_\_.

Consultant will diligently proceed with the work contracted for, but consultant shall not be held responsible for delays occasioned by factors beyond its control which could not reasonably have been foreseen at the time of the execution of this Agreement. If such a delay arises, Consultant shall forthwith notify the City.

**VII. SUCCESSORS AND ASSIGNS**

The Consultant shall not assign, transfer, convey, pledge, or otherwise dispose of this Agreement or any part of this Agreement without prior written consent of the City.

**VIII. NONDISCRIMINATION**

Contractor shall, in employment made possible or resulting from this Agreement, ensure that there shall be no unlawful discrimination against any employee or applicant for employment in violation of RCW 49.60.180, as currently written or hereafter amended, or other applicable law prohibiting discrimination, unless based upon a bona fide occupational qualification as provided in RCW 49.60.180 or as otherwise permitted by other applicable law. Further, no person shall be denied or subjected to discrimination in receipt of the benefit of any services or activities made possible by or resulting from this Agreement in violation of RCW 49.60.215 or other applicable law prohibiting discrimination.

**IX. HOLD HARMLESS/INDEMNIFICATION**

Consultant shall defend, indemnify and hold the City, its officers, officials, employees and volunteers harmless from any and all claims, injuries, damages, losses or suits including attorney fees, arising out of or resulting from its negligence or breach of any of its obligations in performance of this Agreement, except for injuries and damages caused by the sole negligence of the City.

**X. LIABILITY INSURANCE COVERAGE**

The Consultant shall procure and maintain for the duration of the Agreement, insurance against claims for injuries to persons or damage to property which may arise from or in connection with the performance of the work hereunder by the Consultant, its agents, representatives, or employees. A failure to obtain and maintain such insurance or to file required certificates and endorsements shall be a material breach of this Agreement.

**A. *Minimum Scope of Insurance***

Consultant shall obtain insurance of the types described below:

1. Automobile Liability insurance covering all owned, non-owned, hired and leased vehicles. Coverage shall be written on Insurance Services Office (ISO) form CA 00 01 or a substitute form providing equivalent liability coverage. If necessary, the policy shall be endorsed to provide contractual liability coverage.
2. Commercial General Liability insurance shall be written on ISO occurrence form CG 00 01 and shall cover liability arising from premises, operations, independent contractors and personal injury and advertising injury. The City shall be named as an additional insured under the Consultant's Commercial General Liability insurance policy with respect to the work performed for the City.

3. Workers' Compensation coverage as required by the Industrial Insurance laws of the State of Washington.
4. Professional Liability insurance appropriate to the Consultant's profession.

***B. Minimum Amounts of Insurance***

Consultant shall maintain the following insurance limits:

1. Automobile Liability insurance with a minimum combined single limit for bodily injury and property damage of \$1,000,000 per accident.
2. Commercial General Liability insurance shall be written with limits no less than \$1,000,000 each occurrence, \$2,000,000 general aggregate.
3. Professional Liability insurance shall be written with limits no less than \$1,000,000 per claim and \$1,000,000 policy aggregate limit

***C. Other Insurance Provisions***

The insurance policies are to contain, or be endorsed to contain, the following provisions for Automobile Liability, Professional Liability and Commercial General Liability insurance:

1. The Consultant's insurance coverage shall be primary insurance as respects the City. Any insurance, self-insurance, or insurance pool coverage maintained by the City shall be excess of the Consultant's insurance and shall not contribute with it.
2. The Consultant's insurance shall be endorsed to state that coverage shall not be cancelled by either party, except after thirty (30) days prior written notice by certified mail, return receipt requested, has been given to the City.

***D. Acceptability of Insurers***

Insurance is to be placed with insurers with a current A.M. Best rating of not less than A:VII.

***E. Verification of Coverage***

Consultant shall furnish the City with original certificates and a copy of the amendatory endorsements, including but not necessarily limited to the additional insured endorsement, evidencing the insurance requirements of the Consultant before commencement of the work.

***F. Claims-made Coverage***

Any policy of required insurance written on a claims-made basis shall provide coverage as to all claims arising out of the services

performed under the contract and filed within three (3) years following completion of the services so to be performed.

**XI. COMPLIANCE WITH LAWS/BUSINESS LICENSE**

The Consultant shall comply with all applicable State, Federal, and City laws, ordinances, regulations, and codes. Contractor must obtain a City of Kirkland business license or otherwise comply with Kirkland Municipal Code Chapter 7.02.

**XII. FUTURE SUPPORT**

The City makes no commitment and assumes no obligations for the support of Consultant activities except as set forth in this Agreement.

**XIII. INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR**

Consultant is and shall be at all times during the term of this Agreement an independent contractor and not an employee of the City. Consultant agrees that he is solely responsible for the payment of taxes applicable to the services performed under this Agreement and agrees to comply with all federal, state, and local laws regarding the reporting of taxes, maintenance of insurance and records, and all other requirements and obligations imposed on him as a result of his status as an independent contractor. The Consultant is responsible for providing the office space and clerical support necessary for the performance of services under this Agreement. The City shall not be responsible for withholding or otherwise deducting federal income tax or social security or for contributing to the state industrial insurance or unemployment compensation programs or otherwise assuming the duties of an employer with respect to the Consultant, or any employee of consultant.

**XIV. EXTENT OF AGREEMENT/MODIFICATION**

This Agreement, together with all attachments and addenda, represents the entire and integrated Agreement between the parties hereto and supersedes all prior negotiations, representations, or agreements, either written or oral. This Agreement may be amended, modified, or added to only by written instrument properly signed by both parties hereto.

**XV. ADDITIONAL WORK**

The City may desire to have the Consultant perform work or render services in connection with the project other than provided for by the express intent of this contract. Any such work or services shall be considered as additional work, supplemental to this contract. Such work may include, but shall not be limited to,

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Additional work shall not proceed unless so authorized in writing by the City.

Authorized additional work will be compensated for in accordance with a written supplemental contract between the Consultant and the City.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto have executed this Agreement on the dates written below:

CONSULTANT:

CITY OF KIRKLAND:

By: \_\_\_\_\_

By: \_\_\_\_\_

Marilynne Beard,  
Assistant City Manager

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Development Services Organizational Review

Kirkland, Washington

[kirklandwa.gov](http://kirklandwa.gov)

 ZUCKER SYSTEMS



# **Development Services Organization Review Kirkland, Washington**

*By*

Zucker Systems  
Paul Zucker, President  
Brad Remp, Senior Associate, CBO  
Mary Blais, Senior Associate, Planner  
Brent Muchow, Senior Associate, Engineer



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March, 2013



# Table of Contents

<b>I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>1</b>
A. BACKGROUND .....	1
B. KEY FINDINGS AND PRIORITY AREAS .....	1
1. Performance Standards/Plan Review Timelines.....	1
2. Organization.....	2
3. Staffing.....	2
4. Resources/Budgets/Fees .....	3
5. Project Managers .....	4
6. Policies and Regulations .....	4
7. Technology .....	4
<b>II. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>7</b>
A. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE .....	7
B. METHODOLOGY.....	7
C. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	8
Areas of Strength .....	8
Opportunities for Improvement .....	9
<b>III. ISSUES RELATED TO ENTIRE DEVELOPMENT SERVICES FUNCTIONS .....</b>	<b>21</b>
A. ORGANIZATION ISSUES.....	21
Key Features for All Alternatives .....	23
Recommendation .....	24
B. ANNEXATION.....	25
C. CUSTOMER SERVICE.....	25
Business Cards .....	25
Email Lists .....	26
Forms and Handouts .....	26
Personnel Issues .....	26
Phone Calls and Emails .....	26
D. DEVELOPMENT REVIEW COMMITTEE (DRC) .....	28
E. DEVELOPMENT REVIEW COMMITTEE II .....	30
F. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.....	31
G. FEES.....	31
Overview/Philosophy.....	31
Kirkland’s Approach.....	32

Conclusion .....	34
H. LEGAL ISSUES.....	34
I. OFFICE SPACE AND CUSTOMER SERVICE.....	35
Overview .....	35
Reception Function .....	35
Development Services Intake and Information Counters.....	36
Cashier Function .....	37
Customer Participation.....	37
Stand Up or Sit Down Counters .....	38
Technical Staff Backup.....	38
J. PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS .....	38
K. PERFORMANCE STANDARDS/TIMELINES .....	39
L. STAFFING ISSUES.....	42
Billable Hours .....	42
M. TECHNOLOGY .....	44
Geographical Information System (GIS).....	45
On-line Permitting .....	45
Website .....	47
<b>IV. FIRE AND BUILDING DEPARTMENT .....</b>	<b>53</b>
A. PROFILE .....	53
Overview .....	53
Authority .....	53
Basic Functions.....	53
Organization.....	54
B. POSITIVE FINDINGS/AREAS OF STRENGTH.....	57
C. ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES .....	58
Building Division Management.....	58
Business Cards .....	59
Communications .....	59
Customer Handouts.....	60
Department Administration .....	61
Fire Prevention Bureau Management .....	61
Job Descriptions.....	62
Organization.....	63
Records Management.....	63
Staff Coverage .....	64
Staffing/Activity Levels.....	64
Training.....	69

D.	POLICY AND REGULATION ISSUES.....	71
	Codes.....	71
E.	PROCESSING ISSUES.....	72
	Building/Fire Permits Counter.....	72
	Fire Prevention Bureau Activities.....	73
	Inspection Activities .....	74
	Plan Review .....	76
	Express Permits and Fast Track Permits.....	82
	Expedited Review and Priority Reviews .....	82
	Plans Examination .....	85
<b>V.</b>	<b>ORGANIZATIONS.....</b>	<b>89</b>
A.	DESIGN REVIEW BOARD AND PROCESSES.....	89
	Overview .....	89
B.	HEARING EXAMINER .....	95
	Overview .....	95
C.	HOUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL .....	97
	Overview .....	97
	Joint Study Sessions with City Council.....	98
D.	PLANNING COMMISSION.....	98
	Overview .....	98
	Joint Study Sessions with City Council.....	99
	New Member Orientation .....	99
	Staff Support .....	99
<b>VI.</b>	<b>PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT ..</b>	<b>101</b>
A.	PROFILE .....	101
	Authority .....	101
B.	POSITIVE FINDINGS .....	105
C.	ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES .....	106
	Education and Outreach.....	108
D.	ADMINISTRATION .....	118
E.	CODE ENFORCEMENT .....	121
	Activity .....	121
F.	LAND USE MANAGEMENT (CURRENT PLANNING).....	126
	Activity .....	127
	Decision Authority.....	132
	Building Permit Plan Review .....	135
	Building Plan Reviews.....	135

Express Permits and Fast Track Permits.....	135
Expedited Review and Priority Reviews .....	136
Permit Review.....	136
Planning Official and Planning Director Decision Processes.....	142
Process I Approval Process.....	145
G. POLICY AND PLANNING DIVISION (LONG RANGE PLANNING).....	160
Activity .....	161
Comprehensive Plan .....	167
Neighborhood Plans (Subarea Plans) .....	169
H. URBAN FORESTRY .....	181
<b>VII. PUBLIC WORKS.....</b>	<b>187</b>
A. PROFILE .....	187
Overview and Authority .....	187
B. POSITIVE FINDINGS .....	191
C. ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES .....	191
Project Managers .....	193
D. POLICY AND REGULATION ISSUES.....	199
E. PROCESS ISSUES .....	200
<b>VIII. EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS .....</b>	<b>205</b>
Building Division.....	206
Fire Division .....	207
Management.....	207
Public Works.....	208
<b>IX. CUSTOMER PERCEPTIONS.....</b>	<b>209</b>
A. MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL .....	209
Comprehensive Plan .....	209
Design Review .....	210
Downtown.....	210
Economic Development.....	210
Organization.....	210
Processes .....	210
Staff.....	211
Zoning .....	211
B. FOCUS GROUP – APPLICANTS.....	212
Appeals .....	212
Building.....	212
Conditions .....	212

Coordination .....	212
Density .....	212
Design Review Board .....	212
Developers .....	212
Duncan Milloy .....	212
Expedited Process .....	213
Fees .....	213
Forms .....	213
Height of Buildings.....	213
Land Surface Modification Permits (grading permits) .....	213
Neighbors .....	213
Other Communities .....	213
Planning .....	213
Pre-Submittal .....	213
Process .....	213
Progressive Review.....	214
Public Works Public Works in Kirkland is great. They use common sense and are pragmatic. Transportation can be difficult.....	214
Short Plats .....	214
Timelines.....	214
Trees.....	214
Website .....	214
Zoning/Comprehensive Plan.....	214
C. FOCUS GROUPS – CITIZENS .....	215
The Future .....	215
City Council .....	215
Notices .....	215
Planners.....	215
Public Works.....	215
Silos.....	216
This Report.....	216
Trees.....	216
D. CUSTOMER SURVEYS .....	216
Fire Division .....	222
Inspection Staff.....	222
Houghton Community Council.....	223
Information Technology .....	223
Planning Commission .....	223
Planning Department .....	223
Public Works.....	224

## List of Tables

Table 1 Table of Recommendations .....	10
Table 2 Cost Recovery Rationale, 2007 & Actual Recovery, 2011 .....	33
Table 3 Development Services Budgeted Staffing** .....	42
Table 4 Annual Billable Hour Analysis.....	43
Table 5 Planning & Community Development Department Proposed Web Features	48
Table 6 Building Division Staffing.....	56
Table 7 Fire Prevention Bureau Staffing .....	57
Table 8 Building Permit Activity.....	66
Table 9 Inspection Activity.....	67
Table 10 Review Timelines, March 2012.....	78
Table 11 Recommended Plan Check Times .....	80
Table 12 Suggested Expedited Plan Review Times .....	84
Table 13 Existing Planning & Community Development Department Staffing .....	103
Table 14 Public Assistance .....	105
Table 15 Land Use Management Division Code Enforcement Activities.....	121
Table 16 Land Use Management Code Enforcement Officers – Hours Required for Processing .....	125
Table 17 Land Use Management Division (Current Planning, Code Enforcement), Activities .....	128
Table 18 Land Use Management Planners – Hours Required for Processing by Permit Type .....	131
Table 19 Decision Making Authority for Planning (Current Planning) Applications .....	133
Table 20 Actual Current Planning Permits Processed.....	156
Table 21 Existing Performance Standards/Goals for Land Use Management Division Applications .....	158
Table 22 Existing & Recommended Performance Standards for Land Use Management Division Permits.....	160
Table 23 Policy and Planning (Long-Range) Division Activities .....	162
Table 24 Public Works Activity Levels Valuations .....	188
Table 25 Development Engineering Review Staff .....	190
Table 26 Public Works Review Times .....	202
Table 27 Number of Employees Responding to Questionnaires.....	205
Table 28 Responses to Customer Email Survey.....	218

## List of Figures

Figure 1 Methodology Overview .....	7
Figure 2 Development Services Organizations.....	21
Figure 3 Reception Sign.....	35
Figure 4 Pierce County Backlog Example Parkinson’s Law.....	40

Figure 5 Pierce County Base Building Staff Model .....	41
Figure 6 Staffing Variables .....	44
Figure 7 Fire and Building Department Organization .....	55
Figure 8 Existing DRB Basic Process Flow .....	90
Figure 9 Existing Planning & Community Development Department Functional Areas Organization .....	101
Figure 10 Existing Planning & Community Development Department Organization .....	102
Figure 12 Existing Zoning Code Enforcement Process .....	124
Figure 13 Land Use Management Division Organization Chart .....	127
Figure 14 Existing Initial Steps of Permit Approval Processes .....	139
Figure 15 Existing Planning Official Decision Process .....	143
Figure 16 Existing Planning Director Decision Process .....	143
Figure 17 Process I Approval Process .....	145
Figure 18 Process IIA Approval Process .....	148
Figure 19 Process IIB Approval Process .....	152
Figure 20 Policy Planning Division Organization .....	161
Figure 21 Kirkland Comprehensive Plan .....	169
Figure 22 Kirkland Zoning Code .....	172
Figure 23 Existing Process IVA Process Flow .....	178
Figure 24 Existing Tree Permit Review Process .....	182
Figure 25 Integrated Development Plan Review Process .....	185
Figure 26 Development Engineering Group Organization .....	189
Figure 27 City of Kirkland Building Employee Questionnaire .....	227
Figure 28 City of Kirkland Fire Employee Questionnaire .....	230
Figure 29 City of Kirkland Manager Employee Questionnaire .....	231
Figure 30 City of Kirkland Planning Employee Questionnaire .....	232
Figure 31 City of Kirkland Public Works Employee Questionnaire .....	233

## **List of Appendices**

Appendix A Persons Interviewed .....	221
Appendix B Employee Short Questionnaire .....	225
Appendix C Employee Long Questionnaire .....	235
Appendix D Customer Survey .....	243

# **I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

## **A. BACKGROUND**

This study was initiated by the City for an Organizational Evaluation of Development Services functions.

## **B. KEY FINDINGS AND PRIORITY AREAS**

Kirkland's Development Services functions include many features that we consider Best Practices and is one of the better organizations we have reviewed. The functions can become even better by implementing the 218 recommendations in this study. These recommendations will serve to satisfy customer concerns and reinforce the City's emphasis on economic development. While all the recommendations are important, we believe there are seven key areas or groupings that need the highest priority as follows:

### **1. Performance Standards/Plan Review Timelines**

#### **Findings**

The number one complaint we heard from Development Services customers was slow plan review and processing of plans. Surveys indicate that Kirkland is similar to other communities in the region, except for review of single-family houses. However, in our experience, these comparative times are not audited and can be inaccurate. Records indicate that on the average, Kirkland meets many of its pre-set performance standards. Many projects require more than one review and that may be where some project review times break down. Irrespective of current performance standards and actual performance, we believe the current performance standards are too long. Kirkland has expressed a new interest in economic development. Reducing timelines can be an important part of an economic development strategy.

#### **Recommendations**

- Adopt new and shorter performance standards, Recommendation 26, 46, 89, 90, 91, 168, and 208.
- Hire contractors as necessary to meet performance standards, Recommendation 63, and 65.
- Adopt an aggressive Expedited Plan Check program, Recommendations 94 and 95.
- Develop an improved reporting system to monitor timelines, Recommendation 89, 115, and 116.

## **2. Organization**

### **Findings**

The City's Development Services functions are organized under the three departments of Fire & Building, Planning, and Public Works. The functions are often referred to as Development Services but there is no actual organization with this title. For the purposes of this report, planning includes both the current and long-range planning functions and zoning code enforcement. Fire & Building include the development related functions but no other functions of the Fire Department. Public Works includes the engineering function and Transportation Engineering but no other aspects of the Public Works function. There are many different ways to organize these functions and many communities have taken the step of merging them into one department. Kirkland's Development Services functions have a number of excellent features including a joint permitting system, joint performance standards, and coordinated development activities through a Development Review Committee I and Development Review Committee II structure. In spite of being in three separate departments, the functions work well together.

### **Recommendation**

We believe it would be counter-productive to undertake a major reorganization of Kirkland's development functions at this time. Instead we suggest a staged approach to be revisited at such time as one or more of the key managers retires or leaves and if a regional Fire Authority is created, Recommendations 2 and 58.

As an initial integration measure we suggest all three functions operate out of one integrated public counter, Recommendation, 21.

We also suggest tighter management of the DRC II Committee, Recommendations 15.

## **3. Staffing**

### **Findings**

Workload was very high during the 2005, 2006 period but was reduced substantially after that time. However, annexation along with increased development activity has increased workload with building permit activity approximately 22% above the levels reached in 2006. Staffing in 2006 was 49.09 positions. It is now 54.18 positions. It appears that workload is likely to continue to increase which will make it difficult to meet performance standards. Also, as noted in Item 1 above, we are recommending major reductions in approval timelines (performance standards), which will also have an impact on staffing needs.

### **Recommendations**

We recommend that the organizations be properly staffed to meet increased workloads and the new performance standards. However, rather than expanding to permanent staff we recommend the use of temporary staff and supplemental consultants. Specific recommendations include:

- Develop a staffing model as part of the proposed fee study, Recommendation 17.
- Pending the staffing study, adopt interim staffing factors for Planning Administration, Code Enforcement and Current Planning, Recommendations 136, 143, 145, and 146.
- Continue to contract for an inspector in Public Works, Recommendation 189.
- Add a Right-of-Way inspector in Public Works, Recommendation 190.
- Use contractors and necessary to meet performance goals in Building, Recommendation 63.
- Fill the vacant Plans Examiner position in Building, Recommendation 64.

#### **4. Resources/Budgets/Fees**

##### **Findings**

Kirkland, like many cities has been impacted by the recession with a reduction in revenue. For the Development Services functions, this issue has been addressed by keeping certain positions vacant and using Development Services reserve funds. Kirkland has had a sophisticated budgeting and fee approach with clear adopted City Council policies. Overall cost recovery for Building has been set at 91%, Fire Prevention at 88%, Planning at 55%, and Public Works at 72%, based on the weighted average of the cost recovery targets by function set by the City Council in 2007 and updated in 2009. The national trend for Development Services functions is full cost recovery. Most developers are more concerned with short timelines and good service than they are with processing fees. Most of Kirkland's processing fees are higher than most of seven comparison communities. However, in order to meet our suggested performance standards and if workload continues to increase, it will be necessary to either raise fees or increase support from the General Fund to support necessary staffing levels.

##### **Recommendations**

- Adjust fees to full cost over a five-year period, Recommendation 18.
- Use revenues that exceed budget projections to supplement staff or consultants, Recommendation 19.
- Adopt an aggressive Expedited Plan Check process, Recommendation 94.

## **5. Project Managers**

### **Findings**

Best Practice communities generally use project managers to manage each project. This becomes a single point of contact for the applicant. Kirkland has had this approach with a Planner being assigned as a project manager for planning applications and a Building Plans Examiner for building permits. Engineers serve as project managers for LSM permits. However, customers have not always found this system successful and there is a certain amount of confusion related to the responsibilities for these project managers.

### **Recommendations**

- Building Plan Examiners should be true project managers with an expanded role, Recommendation 92 and 93.
- Planners should be true project managers with an expanded role, Recommendation 144.
- Engineers should also use a project manager approach, Recommendation 197.

## **6. Policies and Regulations**

### **Findings**

In order for Development Services functions to operate successfully, there needs to be clear policy guidance. Although Kirkland has had a good Comprehensive Plan, it is in need of being up-dated. More importantly, Kirkland's Zoning Ordinance is recognized as being unwieldy with a poor format. Additionally, some suggest the Ordinance could do a better job of implementing the Comprehensive Plan.

### **Recommendation**

- Complete a Comprehensive Plan update in 12 to 18 months, Recommendation 173.
- Bring the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code into conformance, Recommendation 174.
- Conduct a Zoning Code diagnosis, Recommendation 177.
- Computerize the Zoning Code, Recommendation 178.
- Include a comprehensive review of the Zoning Code in annual work program, Recommendation 179.

## **7. Technology**

### **Findings**

Kirkland has had a good technology approach to supporting Development Services activities. This has included an excellent GIS system, an integrated permitting system (Advantage), a web site, and extensive work with the MyBuilding Permit Alliance on selected joint building permit applications. It has also included electronic plans examination through the use of Bluebeam software. The national Best Practice is to allow all applications to be received over the Internet and to comprehensively move to electronic plans and electronic plan check. Kirkland should continue progress in this area. EnerGov is replacing the Advantage software permitting system because the vendor is no longer supporting Advantage. EnerGov has been a troubled installation due primarily to vendor software problems. City staff is working with the vendor to correct these problems.

## **Recommendations**

- We have numerous recommendations related to EnerGov to assist the City in full deployment of the software including Recommendations 28, 30, 31, 47, 61, 76, 82, 83, 157, 161, 163, 170, and 199.
- Expand permits to be issued by MyBuilding Permit, Recommendation 29.
- Allow all application online, Recommendation 105 and 181.
- Increase voice mail storage capacity for Code Enforcement, Recommendation 139.



## II. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

### A. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

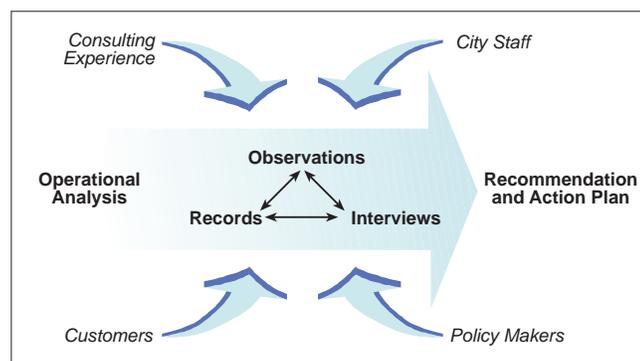
This study was initiated by the City for an Organizational Evaluation of the Development Services functions.

The RFP for the study was issued in June 2012 with proposals due July 19. Interviews were held August 8. Zucker Systems was selected for the contract with a contract dated September 28. Zucker Systems staff spent time in Kirkland October 9, 10, 29, 30, and 31.

### B. METHODOLOGY

Zucker Systems used a proprietary well-tested, integrated methodology for this study, as shown in Figure 1. We brought our extensive experience to the study, worked closely with City staff, and solicited input and observations from customers and policy makers. The methodology is built on interrelating records, observations, and interviews. Each is necessary for valid studies. National research has shown that each one of these three—if relied upon exclusively—can be subject to substantial error. For example, record systems are often found to be as high as 50% in error, or the wrong things are measured. We used observations and interviews to verify records. Records and observations were used to verify interviews. Each group of people, shown in Figure 1, was an important part of the process.

**Figure 1**  
**Methodology Overview**



Specific activities conducted for this study included the following:

- Two focus groups of 16 applicants.
- A focus group of 7 citizens.

- An email mail survey to 500 applicants for development approvals or permits.
- Individual interviews with the Mayor and members of the City Council.
- Interviews with the Planning Commission chairperson.
- Interviews with the Design Review Board chairperson.
- Interviews with two Houghton Community Council members.
- Group as well as many individual meetings with all relevant employees.
- A short anonymous questionnaire completed by 61 employees.
- A long confidential questionnaire completed by 49 employees.
- Numerous interviews as shown in Appendix A.
- Tour of office facilities.
- Observation of counter activities.
- Review of substantial reports, regulations and data files.

## **C. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This assessment found many exemplary features within the Development Services functions as well as a number of areas where improvement is possible.

### **Areas of Strength**

Some specific strengths are listed below and are expanded in various chapters of this report. We consider most of the strengths that have been listed as national Best Practices and Kirkland is more progressive in these areas than we see with many of our clients.

- Office spaces are up to date and well suited for the functions.
- The Public Works functions receive high positive remarks from everyone and are the best we have seen in our various studies.
- The related development functions have been using a joint permit system and will continue to do so with the new EnerGov system.
- Many approaches and processes that we consider Best Practices are in place in the functions.
- The functions are well underway with Internet permits and beginning to use electronic plan check.
- The development and planning related functions are all collocated in City Hall.
- Only complete plans are accepted.

- Development permits are handled by staff or a Hearing Examiner rather than the Planning Commission.
- Excellent long-range annual planning work program reviewed by the Planning Commission and adopted by the City Council.
- Staff does a good job of balancing development pressure with enhancing the community.

## **Opportunities for Improvement**

Problem areas and opportunities for improvement are described throughout this report. Note that in many cases the topics are organized alphabetically to assist in finding topics. What we consider to be seven key areas, or themes, are discussed in the Executive Summary, which is the first chapter in this report.

Table 1 summarizes the 218 recommendations and opportunities for improvement made throughout this study. To assist the reader, each summarized recommendation is cross-referenced to the page on which the supporting text appears. Although all of these recommendations are important, each was given a priority number in order to help the City with implementation. There are 48 priority number one recommendations, 96 priority number two recommendations and 74 priority number three recommendations. We assume that existing staff will implement many of the recommendations and the cost of implementation, except for new staffing, generally should be absorbed through greater efficiency.

To further help the City and departments in implementation, we have also coded all the recommendations. “Phase One Actions” are recommendations, which we believe should be completed in the first nine months. “Phase Two Actions” we believe should be completed within 18 months.

There are 138 Phase One Action recommendations. Some of these are given priority 1, 2 or 3. However, that does not mean that only the priority 1 recommendations should be addressed. There are 88 Phase Two Action recommendations. The departments should develop a detailed implementation plan with time targets for these recommendations.

For each recommendation, we also indicate a responsible party for implementation.

While the above priorities and action schedules should help the City with its implementation plan, it’s essential to initially focus on the seven key priorities discussed in the Executive Summary.

**Table 1  
Table of Recommendations**

#	Recommendation	Responsibility	Page	Priority	Phase One Actions	Phase Two Actions
1.	Agree on an implementation plan	City Manager, Assistant City Manager and Development Services Managers	19	1	X	
<b>ISSUES RELATED TO ENTIRE DEVELOPMENT SERVICES FUNCTION</b>						
<b>Organization Issue</b>						
2.	Use a staged approach to re-organizing	City Manager	25	1	X	
<b>Customer Service</b>						
3.	Give out business cards to all customers	Development Services Managers	26	3	X	
4.	Develop comprehensive customer service email lists	Development Services Managers	26	3		X
5.	Uniformly design handouts	Development Services Managers	26	3		X
6.	Aggressively address employees with customer service issues	Development Services Managers	26	2	x	
7.	Return phone calls and emails same day received	Development Services Managers	27	2	X	
8.	Seminar for staff problem solving	Public Works staff	27	3	x	
9.	Use Customer Comment Cards	Development Services Managers	28	3		X
10.	Correct issues with on-line survey	Development Services Managers	28	3		X
<b>Development Review Committee (DRC) and DRCII</b>						
11.	Improve DRC meeting	Development Review Manager	29	2	X	
12.	Create checklists for assigned planners	Planning Supervisor	30	2	X	
13.	Invite applicants to DRC meeting	Development Review Manager	30	2	X	
14.	Update DRC Manual	Development Review Manager	30	1	X	
15.	The DRC II to have a chairperson	City Manager	31	1	X	
<b>Economic Development</b>						
16.	Planners to review approach to economic development	Economic Development Director	31	2	X	
<b>Fees</b>						
17.	Develop staffing model as part of fee study	Finance Department	34	1		X
18.	Adjust fees to full cost	City Council	34	2		X
19.	Use revenues that exceed budget estimates to supplement staff or consultants	City Manager	34	1	X	
<b>Office Space</b>						

#	Recommendation	Responsibility	Page	Priority	Phase One Actions	Phase Two Actions
20.	Decide how to handle City Hall reception function	City Manager	36	2		X
21.	Use one counter for Development Services functions	Development Services Managers	37	1		X
22.	Pay permits at same location as process	Finance Department	37	3		X
23.	Use customer participation techniques at counters	Development Services Managers	38	3	X	
24.	Include some sit down counters in City Hall remodel	City Manager	38	3		X
<b>Performance Evaluations</b>						
25.	All employees to receive annual evaluation	Human Resources	39	2		X
<b>Timelines/Performance Standards</b>						
26.	Implement new performance standards re timelines	Development Services Managers	42	1		X
<b>Technology</b>						
27.	Expand GIS training program	Information Technology	45	2		X
28.	Integrate GIS into EnerGov	Information Technology	45	2		X
29.	Expand permits to be issued by MyBuilding Permit	EnerGov Committee	46	1	X	
30.	Require EnerGov to test software prior to shipping	Information Technology	46	1	X	
31.	EnerGov Committee to continue to participate in Energov user group	EnerGov Committee	47	2	X	
<b>Website</b>						
32.	Develop integrated Development Services web page	Information Technology	47	2		X
33.	Have residents tab on city's website	Information Technology	47	3		X
34.	Rename website "Directory" to "Staff Directory"	Information Technology	49	3		X
35.	Add staff photos to website	Development Services Managers	49	3		X
36.	Up-date all on-line applications	Development Services Managers	50	2	X	
37.	Up-date tree removal forms for on-line completion	Urban Forester	50	2	X	
38.	Review and clarify all handouts	Development Services Managers	50	3		X
39.	Add revision dates to all handouts	Development Services Managers	50	3	X	
40.	Develop simple flow charts for all processes	Development Services Managers	50	2		X
41.	Add to Buildings FAQs on web site	Building Official	50	3		X
42.	Add vision and goal statements to all departments web pages	Development Services Managers	51	3		X
43.	Add links to Growth Management Laws	Deputy Planning Director	51	3		X
44.	Add maps to City Hall	Information Technology	51	3		X
45.	Add staff organization charts	Development Services Managers	51	3		X
46.	Allow permit status check in EnerGov	Information Technology	52	1	X	

#	Recommendation	Responsibility	Page	Priority	Phase One Actions	Phase Two Actions
<b>FIRE AND BUILDING DEPARTMENT</b>						
<b>Organizational Issues</b>						
47.	Continue to participate in EnerGov User Group	Building Official	59	2	X	
48.	Business cards to include Inspectors cell phone number	Building Official	59	2	X	
49.	Set rules for implementing new programs	Development Review Committee	59	2	X	
50.	Update DRC Manual	Development Review Committee	60	2	X	
51.	Compile index of all handouts	Development Review Committee	60	3	X	
52.	Update all handouts and applications	Development Review Committee	60	2	X	
53.	Hire Administrative Support Supervisor for Fire	Assistant Fire Chief	61	3	X	
54.	Create desk procedures and performance standards	Administrative Support Supervisor	61	3		X
55.	Fire Marshal to become full-time plans examiner	Director of Fire and Building	62	2	X	
56.	Up-date Building and Fire job descriptions	Personnel Department	62	3		X
57.	Add minimum certification requirements to Electrical/Building Inspector position	Personnel Department	63	3		X
58.	Continue combined Fire and Building pending regional Fire Department	City Manager	63	1		X
59.	Hire consultant re records management issues	City Manager	64	3		X
60.	Review flex-time program	City Manager	64	3		X
61.	Correct inspection module in EnerGov	Information Technology	68	1	X	
62.	Consider transferring electrical plan review to Plan Review Section	Building Official	68	3		X
63.	Hire contract inspectors as needed for increased workload	Building Official	68	1	X	
64.	Fill vacant Plans Examiner position	Building Official	68	2	X	
65.	Hire contract plans examiners as necessary re workload	Building Official	69	1	X	
66.	Continue to support training for inspection and plan review staff	Building Official	69	2	X	
67.	Monitor inspector and plan reviewers qualifications	Building Official	69	3		X
68.	Purchase e-codes for 2013 codes	Building Official	69	2	X	
69.	Include line item in budget for training	Building Official	70	2	X	
70.	Weekly training sessions for plan checkers and inspectors	Building Official	70	2	X	
71.	Fire staff to participate in Manager/Supervisor training	Director of Fire and Building	71	3		X
<b>Policy Issues</b>						
72.	Obtain copies of new codes	Building Official	71	2	X	
73.	Prepare staff training program for new codes	Building Official	71	2	X	
74.	Develop public education program re new codes	Building Official	71	2		X

#	Recommendation	Responsibility	Page	Priority	Phase One Actions	Phase Two Actions
75.	Review all handouts re new codes	Building Official	72	2		X
<b>Processing Issues</b>						
76.	Create processing manual re issuing permits in EnerGove	Building Official	72	1	X	
77.	Permit Technician Supervisor to assist at public counter 25% of time	Building Official	73	3	X	
78.	Ensure Fire, counter backup	Assistant Fire Chief	73	3	X	
<b>Fire Bureau Activities</b>						
79.	Establish performance standards for all positions	Fire Marshal	73	3	X	
80.	Create inspection auditing program	Fire Marshal	73	3		X
81.	Expand tools for Fire code enforcement	City Attorney	74	3		X
82.	Consider converting inspection tracking system to EnerGov	Fire Marshal	74	2		X
<b>Inspection Activities</b>						
83.	Resolve IVR System issues	EnerGov Committee	75	1	X	
84.	Establish performance standards for inspections	Inspection Supervisor	75	3		X
85.	Create inspection auditing program	Inspection Supervisor	76	3		X
86.	Use audit reports as part of employee evaluations	Inspection Supervisor	76	3		X
87.	Replace tablet computers	Building Official	76	2	X	
88.	Enter all inspection correction notices into EnerGov	Inspection Supervisor	76	2		X
<b>Plan Review</b>						
89.	EnerGov to report on percent that meet performance standards	EnerGov Committee	77	1	X	
90.	Table of plan check times to be developed and available to public	Building Official	79	1	X	
91.	Adopt new plan check times	Building Official	81	1	X	
92.	Building plan checkers to be permit project managers	Building Official	81	1	X	
93.	Clearly communicate plan checker permit project manager role	Building Official	81	1	X	
94.	Create aggressive Expedited plan review program	Building Official	83	1	X	
95.	Set Expedited Plan Review times	Building Official	84	1	X	
96.	EnerGov to track each plan reviewers times	Building Official	85	2		X
97.	Create project tracking log re time spend on plan checks	Plan Review Supervisor	85	2	X	
98.	Use tracking report to balance plan check assignments	Plan Review Supervisor	85	2		X
99.	For new Plans Examiners consider electrical qualifications	Building Official	86	3		X
100.	Complex plans to be reviewed by qualified staff or consultant	Building Official	86	2	X	
101.	Set performance standards for Plan Reviewers	Building Official	86	3		X

#	Recommendation	Responsibility	Page	Priority	Phase One Actions	Phase Two Actions
102.	Establish plan review auditing program	Plan Review Supervisor	86	3		X
103.	Incorporate audit information into performance evaluations	Plan Review Supervisor	86	3		X
104.	Create plan review procedures manual	Plan Review Supervisor	87	3		X
<b>ORGANIZATIONS</b>						
<b>Design Review Board</b>						
105.	Reformat PDC applications for filling on-line	Development Review Manager	91	1	X	
106.	Consider eliminating intermediate CDC submittal	Development Review Manager	92	2	X	
107.	DRB members to use laptops or I-Pads	Development Review Manager	93	3		X
108.	Review timelines for delivering agenda packets to DRB members	Development Review Manager	93	2	X	
109.	Distribute notice of decision within 4 days	Development Review Manager	94	3	X	
<b>Hearing Examiner</b>						
110.	Finalize Guide to Hearings Before the Hearing Examiner	Development Review Manager	96	2	X	
111.	Determine workload for processing hearings for other departments	Development Review Manager	96	3		X
<b>Houghton Community Council</b>						
112.	Use strike out and bold text for changes in policy documents	Deputy Planning Director	98	3		X
<b>Planning Commission</b>						
113.	Commissioners to attend APA training sessions	Deputy Planning Director	99	3		X
<b>PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT</b>						
<b>Organizational Issues</b>						
114.	Establish formal chain of command	Planning Director	106	2	X	
115.	Use EnerGov reports to track timelines	Development Review Manager	107	1	X	
116.	Record all time data in EnerGov	Development Review Manager	107	1	X	
117.	Increase public outreach	Planning Director	108	2	X	
118.	Purchase printer for centralized location	Planning Director	108	3		X
119.	Improve policy for meeting rooms	City Manager	108	3	X	
120.	Convert paper files to electronic files	Planning Director	109	2		X
121.	Program EnerGov to handle file notes prior to an application	Information Technology	109	2		X
122.	Contract documents to be managed via HP TRIM software	Planning Director	109	3		X
123.	Log Code Enforcement customers in EnerGov	Development Review Manager	110	2		X
124.	Analyze all meetings re purpose	Planning Director	113	2		X

#	Recommendation	Responsibility	Page	Priority	Phase One Actions	Phase Two Actions
125.	Revise meeting formats, agendas, etc.	Planning Director	113	2	X	
126.	Clarify Department's mission	Planning Director	113	2	X	
127.	Simplify staff reports for complex projects	Development Review Manager	114	3		X
128.	Create policy and guidelines for power point	Development Review Manager	115	3		X
129.	Regularly update Development Review Committee Manual	Development Review Manager	115	3		X
130.	Consistently process all application	Development Review Manager	115	3		X
131.	Budget 2% of personal budget and 5% time for training	Planning Director	116	2		X
132.	Identify staff training needs	Planning Director	117	3		X
133.	Assign lunch hour telephone coverage to administrative staff	Planning Director	117	2	X	
134.	Staff to use outlook system calendar for time	Planning Director	118	2	X	
135.	Decide on one name to refer to planning function	Planning Director	118	3	X	
<b>Administration</b>						
136.	Add temporary half-time Administrative staff	Planning Director	120	1	X	
137.	Provide IFAS, TRIM, and EnerGov manuals to appropriate staff	Planning Director	120	2	X	
138.	Update administrative staff procedures	Administrative Division Supervisor	120	2	X	
<b>Code Enforcement</b>						
139.	Increase voice mail storage capacity for code enforcement	Planning Director	122	1	X	
140.	Clarify Exception to Work Hours Request Forms	Development Review Manager	124	3	X	
141.	Increase outreach for voluntary code compliance	Development Review Manager	125	3		X
142.	Develop more comprehensive enforcement strategy	Development Review Manager	125	2	X	
143.	Use factor of 11 hours average for code enforcement cases and add staff or consultants if volumes go up	Development Review Manager	126	1	X	
<b>Land Use Management (Current Planning)</b>						
<b>Organizational Issues</b>						
144.	Planners to be true project managers	Planning Director	129	1	X	
145.	Add one temporary planner for current planning activities	Planning Director	132	1	X	
146.	Use 1,349 hours as current productivity hours needed for current planners and supplement as necessary with consultants.	Development Review Manager	132	1	X	
<b>Policy Issues</b>						
147.	Consider additional delegation of land use decisions	City Council	134	2	X	
148.	Move more appeals to Hearing Examiner	City Council	134	2	X	

#	Recommendation	Responsibility	Page	Priority	Phase One Actions	Phase Two Actions
149.	Resolve wage issues for Expedited Reviews	City Manager	136	2	X	
150.	Clearly communicate plan sign offs	DRC 2 team	137	2	X	
151.	Revise Multi-family dwelling checklist	DRC 2 team	137	3	X	
152.	Review staff training and tools for building plan review	Development Review Manager	137	3	X	
<b>Process</b>						
153.	Create submittal deadline schedules	Planning Director	140	3		X
154.	Immediately assign new cases to planners	Planning Supervisors	141	2	X	
155.	Do completeness checks within 5 working days	Development Review Manager	142	2	X	
156.	Storm Water Engineer to attend some pre-submittal conferences	Development and Environmental Services Manager	144	2		
157.	Convert pre-submittal logistics to online process	Development Review Manager	146	2		X
158.	Planning Director to render decision at close of meeting	Planning Director	146	3	X	
159.	Simplify review and Notice of Application/Comment form	Development Review Manager	147	3	X	
160.	Transmit Notice of Decision electronically	Development Review Manager	147	2	X	
161.	Program EnerGov to create form letters and notices	EnerGov Committee	149	1		X
162.	Simplify Public Notice form	Development Review Manager	149	3	X	
163.	All packets to be electronic	Development Review Manager	149	2	X	
164.	Assign file close out to administrative staff	Planning Director	150	3	X	
165.	Consider if file close out can be done via EnerGov	Information Technology	150	2		X
166.	Distribute Process IIB recommendations only electronically	Planning Director	153	2	X	
167.	All planning staff to have additional EnerGov training	Planning Director	155	1	X	
168.	Reduce review times for planning applications	Planning Director	160	1	X	
<b>Policy and Planning Division (Long Range Planning)</b>						
<b>Organizational Issues</b>						
169.	Add new layers to GIS maps	Information Technology	164	2		X
170.	Integrate GIS with EnerGov	Information Technology	165	2		X
171.	Continue to set staffing needs for Long Range planning as part of 2013 work program	Deputy Director	166	2	X	
172.	Expand planning work program to accommodate special projects	Deputy Director	167	2	X	
<b>Policy Issues</b>						
173.	Complete Comprehensive Plan update in 12 to 18 months	Deputy Director	168	1		X
174.	Comprehensive Plan and codes to be in conformance	Deputy Director	168	1		X

#	Recommendation	Responsibility	Page	Priority	Phase One Actions	Phase Two Actions
175.	Reduce volume of Comprehensive Plan	Deputy Director	168	2		X
176.	Simplify and complete neighborhood plans in 6 to 12 months	Deputy Director	170	2		X
177.	Conduct Zoning Code diagnosis	Deputy Director	173	1	X	
178.	Computerize Zoning Code	Deputy Director	173	1	X	
179.	Include comprehensive update of zoning code in annual work program	Deputy Director	173	1	X	
<b>Process</b>						
180.	Update Process Guide for Processes IV and IVA	Deputy Director	173	2	X	
181.	Provide for PAR application online	Deputy Director	177	1	X	
182.	Do not accept PAR applications after deadline	Deputy Director	178	2	X	
183.	Review Process IVA criteria to allow more types of projects	Deputy Director	179	2	X	
<b>Urban Forestry</b>						
184.	Move Urban Forestry position to Public Works	Planning Director	183	2	X	
185.	Simplify Chapter 95 of Zoning Code	Deputy Director	183	2		X
186.	Create a comprehensive urban forestry program	Deputy Director	183	3		X
<b>PUBLIC WORKS</b>						
<b>Organization Issues</b>						
187.	Include all relevant Public Works staff in fee staffing model	Finance Department	184	2		X
188.	Develop uniform policy for counter hours	DRC II	192	2	X	
189.	Monitor permit activity levels to set staffing levels	Development and Environmental Services Manager	193	1	X	
190.	Add ROW inspector to inspection team	Development and Environmental Services Manager	193	1	X	
191.	Initiate comprehensive training program for inspection staff	Development and Environmental Services Manager	193	2		X
192.	Designate Public Works project manager for certain projects	Development and Environmental Services Manager	194	1		
193.	Hire consultant for filing system	Development and Environmental Services Manager	194	3		X
194.	Add temporary staff to digitize files	Development and Environmental Services Manager	195	3	X	
195.	Set deadline for digitized electronic files	Development and Environmental Services Manager	195	3		X
196.	Evaluate increased access to GIS files	Development and Environmental Services Manager	195	3		X

#	Recommendation	Responsibility	Page	Priority	Phase One Actions	Phase Two Actions
197.	Increase delegation and staff empowerment	Development and Environmental Services Manager	195	2	X	
198.	Increase management training for some Public Works staff	Development and Environmental Services Manager	196	3		X
199.	Expand EnerGov staff training	Information Technology	197	1	X	
200.	Additional training re Bluebeam program	Development and Environmental Services Manager	197	2	X	
201.	Add additional dual monitors	Development and Environmental Services Manager	198	2	X	
202.	Retain current organizational structure for Transportation	Public Works Director	198	3		X
203.	Develop communication link re tree permits	Development and Environmental Services Manager	199	2	X	
204.	Review tree regulations	Deputy Planning Director	199	3		X
<b>Policy Issues</b>						
205.	Local developers to review Pre-Approved Plans Manual	Development and Environmental Services Manager	200	3		X
<b>Process Issues</b>						
206.	Training for inspection staff re field computers	Development and Environmental Services Manager	201	2	X	
207.	Improve inspection call process	Development and Environmental Services Manager	201	2	X	
208.	Change Public Works review times	Development and Environmental Services Manager	202	1	X	
209.	Provide weekly list of all active projects	Development and Environmental Services Manager	203	2	X	
210.	Update Traffic Concurrency Data Base	Development and Environmental Services Manager	203	2	X	
<b>EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS</b>						
211.	Meet with Fire Staff re employee question 1	Director of Fire and Building	206	2	X	
212.	Review employee low scores for eight questions	Director of Fire and Building	207	2	X	
213.	Review workload and delegation issues with Development Services Managers	City Manager	208	2	X	
214.	Review Planning Department training needs	Planning Director	208	2	X	
215.	Review Public works training budget	Public Works Director	208	2	X	
<b>CUSTOMER PERCEPTIONS</b>						

#	Recommendation	Responsibility	Page	Priority	Phase One Actions	Phase Two Actions
216.	Discuss overall customer timeline concerns	DRC II	217	2	X	
217.	Discuss planning customer timeline concerns	Planning Director	217	2	X	
218.	Share customer survey with City Council, Planning Commission, and Hearing Examiner	City Manager	219	3	X	

Before the City begins implementing this study, we suggest that it take the following action.

**1. Recommendation: The City Manager and the Directors of the Development Services functions should review the study and agree on an implementation plan, which should include:**

- An agreed-upon timetable and work program
- Costs estimates and method of funding
- Confirmation by the Mayor and the City Council

The Development Services functions already have many important tasks they are undertaking and may find the 218 recommendations overwhelming. However, as improvements take place and staff becomes empowered to change, the City and staff will be surprised at how fast implementation can occur.



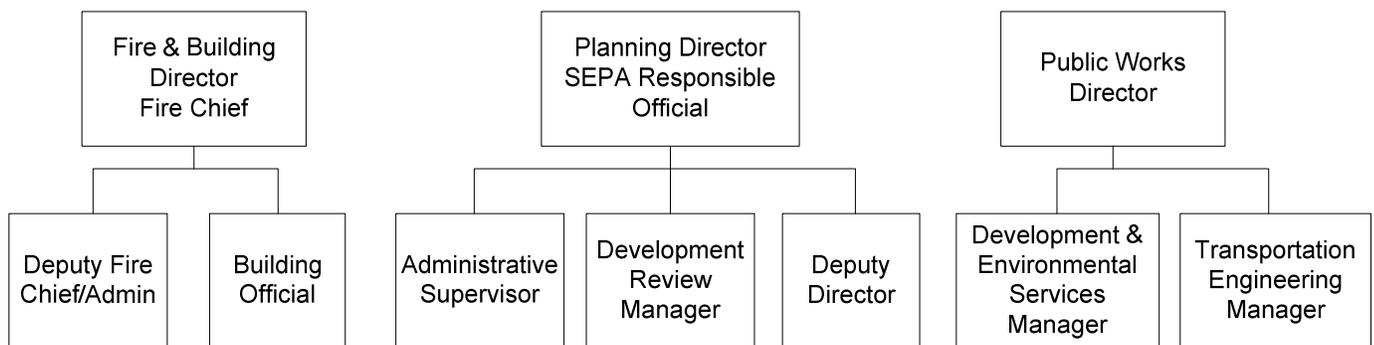
# III. ISSUES RELATED TO ENTIRE DEVELOPMENT SERVICES FUNCTIONS

## A. ORGANIZATION ISSUES

### Kirkland's Organization

The City's Development Services functions are organized under the three departments of Fire & Building, Planning, and Public Works as shown in Figure 2. The functions are often referred to as Development Services but there is no actual organization with this title. On the organization chart we were given, Planning includes both the current and long-range planning functions. Fire & Building and Public Works only include the development related functions.

**Figure 2**  
**Development Services Organizations**



### Alternative Ways to Organize

There are many alternative ways to organize the development and planning functions. Having worked with over 160 cities and counties in 31 states, we have our own database of alternative organizational patterns. We have also discussed organizational issues with some 10,000 planners in seminars. Finally, we have conducted a comprehensive survey of the nation's 50 largest cities. A few features stand out as follows:

- **Combining Fire and Building**

Although we have seen this combination in one or two communities, it is clearly not the norm. Evidently it was once the trend in parts of Washington but most of the combined functions no longer exist. None of the 50 largest cities had this combination.

- **Combining Building and Planning**

Combining Building and Planning is increasingly a normal combination in many communities, particularly small and mid-sized communities like Kirkland. However, only a third of the 50 largest cities have this combination.

- **Combining Current and Long Range Planning**

Most communities have combined Current and Long Range planning in one department. Some have combined Current Planning and Building in a development-oriented department with Long-Range Planning as a standalone department. Ten percent of the 50 largest cities have Long-Range Planning separate from Current Planning but 40 of them or 90% have them combined.

- **Engineering**

Engineering is often a division within a larger Public Works Department. However, many communities have created two departments with Engineering handling development review and Public Works operations. A relatively new trend is to have Engineering either merged into a Development Department (Building, Planning, and Engineering) or at minimum collocated with the other functions and, in some cases, having the function in a subordinate position, even if staff remain Public Works or Engineering department employees.

- **Transportation Planning and Traffic Engineering**

Transportation Planning and Traffic Engineering are normally located within a Public Works or Engineering department; however in a few places Transportation Planning is located within the Planning function. Either or both functions may be included in a combined department.

- **Code Enforcement**

Code Enforcement is generally located either within Planning or Building. A few communities have created a combined Code Enforcement Department pulling together code enforcement functions from a variety of city functions. Combined Functions or Departments would generally include Code Enforcement.

- **Combined Functions**

A variety of communities have combined Building, Current Planning, Long Range Planning, Engineering, Transportation Planning, Traffic Engineering and Code Enforcement into one integrated department. Sometimes the entire Public Works function is included in this combination; however, often the operational aspects of Public Works are in a separate department.

We have worked with virtually all of the combinations outlined above. The best approach is highly dependent on a variety of local and historic factors in the community. We have worked with cities where separated functions operate too much

as silos, which often leads to the desire to consolidate functions. On the other hand, we have worked with fully combined functions that still exhibit silo mentality within the functions. Although we at time recommend consolidation of functions, we tend not to be fans of re-organization for re-organization sake. We did create a new department for Columbus, Ohio, which is close to the Combined Functions alternative. We have worked with combined function departments in San Jose, California; Maricopa, Arizona; McKinney, Texas; Calgary, Alberta; Markham, Ontario; Fremont, California; and San Antonio, Texas.

## **Key Features for All Alternatives**

All of the alternatives should include the following key features.

- **Collocation and Permitting Systems**

All attempts to integrate functions and better serve the customers start with collocating the function and having all functions work with a common permitting system. Kirkland has already collocated the functions. However, as outlined in the Office Space section below, much more could be done in relation to counter functions to better integrate functions, irrespective of any organizational changes and the current collocation.

Kirkland has had a combined permitting system called Advantage/Permit Plan for many years. This system is no longer supported by its creator and is in the process of being replaced by EnerGov. It will likely be a number of months until this new system is fully operational.

- **Processing Systems, Timelines & Performance Standards**

Irrespective of organizational structure, it is important to have integrated processing systems, with agreed timelines and performance standards across all functions. Kirkland has what appears on the surface to be integrated processing systems and has had an excellent Development Review Committee Manual documenting the processes. However, as noted in other parts of this report, much can be done to improve these systems. The area most needing attentions is the use of clear performance standards, timelines and a monitoring system to enforce timelines. In many case Kirkland's timeline are too long. Additionally the performance standard system, although partially used, has not been perfected or enforced.

- **Project Managers**

Another key feature, irrespective of organization, is the use of clear project manager systems where it is clear to both staff and the applicant who is in charge of the application. In theory, Kirkland has solved this by having a planner in charge during the planning and entitlement phase and a building plan checker in charge at the building phase. However, this system is not as clear as it should be and the way engineering and tree issues and timelines get

resolved by the Project Managers has been an issue. Strengthening this system is discussed in other parts of this study.

- **Staff Attitudes**

Another key feature is the need for clarity of staff attitudes. Kirkland's staff has prided themselves in working well together and being customer friendly and in many cases we have seen this in operation. Key to this is that staff see themselves in a problem solving, "how can I help you" role. According to our research, Public Works does an excellent job in this regard, the best we have seen in our many studies. It appears that Building and Fire do reasonably well in this area but could still improve. Finally, we received a considerable amount of feedback that the how can I help you attitudes within Planning needs to be improved.

- **Overall Coordination**

In theory, overall coordination is the easiest to do in a Combined Organization since traditional management techniques can be utilized. Lacking this, some communities have had an Assistant City Manager serve this coordinative role. This has not been the role of the Assistant City Manager in Kirkland. Kirkland has at least partially solved this issue by use of a Development Review Committee II consisting of the Building Official, Planning Development Review Manager, and Public Works Development and Environmental Services Manager. We had the opportunity to observe this Committee in practice and were most impressed with the apparent level of coordination and cooperation. There is one piece missing in this picture and that is how the long-range planning functions and the Planning Director tie into this coordination pattern.

## **Recommendation**

Although we would not object to the City moving to a Combined Department, organizational change of this magnitude can be very disruptive and may not be the best approach, at least at this time and in the short term. This would likely require the hiring a Director and some support staff, which may have a negative economic impact. Instead we see a staged approach with the following features:

- **Combined Counters**

As part of the City Hall remodel, combine the Building, Engineering, and Planning counters.

- **Fire/Building**

Should the regional Fire Authority become a reality, create a separate Building Department including the features outlined in this report or combine the Building function with Planning. (See the Fire/Building chapter for more discussion of this issue)

- **Performance Standards**

Revise the performance standards and monitoring systems as outlined in this report.

- **Development Review Committee II (DRCII)**

Continue the use of the Development Review Committee II and strengthen its role as seen needed. This group could be given the responsibility to oversee the implementation of this report. The City Manager should designate one of the three members as chair of the Committee and periodically rotate this responsibility amongst the three key functions.

- **Assistant City Manager**

Should the above feature prove not to be as successful as desired, have the three functions be coordinated by an Assistant City Manager.

- **Turnover**

Should any of the key top management positions have a turnover, revisit the possibility of a combined department at that time.

**2. Recommendation: The City should pursue a staged approach to re-organizing the permitting and planning functions as outlined above.**

## **B. ANNEXATION**

The City completed a major annexation effective June 2011. The annexation increased the City population from 48,787 to 80,505. This has had a major impact on activity levels for the Development Services functions. Each function made service level projections and a variety of staff positions were added or retained to service the projected increased activity demands. In addition to this added activity, it appears that applications in the pre-annexation City have also begun to increase. Unfortunately, as part of this study it has not been possible to obtain good data for the annexation area. Staffing levels will need to be based on the combined areas, which roughly appear to be higher than total activity levels in the higher activity years prior to annexation.

## **C. CUSTOMER SERVICE**

Customer service issues are discussed throughout this report. Listed below are a number of generic issues or approaches that cut across all Development Services functions.

### **Business Cards**

Customers often come in contact with staff and then later can't recall whom they talked with. A good policy is that any customer who is in contact with staff is always given a business card.

- 3. Recommendation: All Development Services staff should follow a policy of giving out a business card to every customer they talk with.**

### **Email Lists**

The use of email can be an effective tool for good customer service. The Development Services functions should have comprehensive lists of all professionals and special interest groups operating in the City and use these to communicate new policies and regulations or obtain input on a variety of issues.

- 4. Recommendation: The Development Services functions should develop comprehensive customer email lists and use them as a communication device.**

### **Forms and Handouts**

The Development Services functions use a variety of different formats for their handouts and forms. When these are in one of the handout racks, they can be very confusing for customers. The top of the form or handout should be the title in quarter inch or larger lettering, rather than the City of Kirkland, which should take a smaller title on the handout. We also noted that there is inconsistency in requesting email addresses. Email addresses should be requested for the property owner, contractor, and contact person.

- 5. Recommendation: Development Services handouts should be uniformly designed with the title in large letters at the top and with a comprehensive request for email addresses.**

### **Personnel Issues**

In virtually all of our studies, it becomes clear that when one or more staff has poor customer service skills or attitude, it can create impressions that negatively flavor the entire organization. Some customers will say that they avoid such staff whenever possible. We are not under contract to do personnel evaluations and do not list names of employees that are named over and over again. However, in our experience, managers are already aware of the staff with customer service issues but have not effectively dealt with the issues. Such employees need to be trained and counseled and in many cases reassigned to a less sensitive position or find an organization more suited to their desires or style.

- 6. Recommendation: Development Services Managers should more aggressively address employees with known customer service issues.**

### **Phone Calls and Emails**

The Building Division has a policy to return all phone calls the same day received. This is a policy we support but the policy should also include emails.

The Planning and Community Development staff indicated that no formal or informal policy exists for the Department for returning emails and phone calls the same day; however all staff strive to return calls the same day or within 24 hours. Customer surveys and focus group workshops indicate that there have been, at times, issues with receiving timely return emails and telephone calls from staff. We recommend that a formal policy be instituted by the Development Services Departments to require all staff to return all phone calls and emails before the end of the day.

Another way we say this is, no one goes home at night until they have returned all phone calls and emails. We consider this to be Best Practice. We suggest that this policy be adopted by all the Development Services functions.

**7. Recommendation: All staff in the Development Services functions should return phone calls and emails the same day they are received.**

## **Problem Solving**

A key to good customer service starts with staff attitude. The customer wants staff to understand their needs or problem and then help them solve it. This is a “what can I do to help you” rather than this is what you need to do or this is how you don’t meet our policies and regulations. According to our research, the Public Works staff in Development Services does an outstanding job in this area. We suggest this staff should conduct a lunch hour discussion of their approach with all of the other Development Services staff.

**8. Recommendation: the Public Works Development Services staff should conduct a lunch hour seminar with other Development Services staff to explain how they approach problem solving for customers.**

## **Surveys**

Best Management Practices include being sensitive to customer needs and actively soliciting their feedback regarding the quality of services being provided to them. One of the most frequently utilized tools for gathering this type of information is customer comment cards and/or website customer service surveys. Gathering a customer’s comments regarding their specific experience working with City staff can provide great insights into opportunities for enhancing customer service and can also help identify and recognize incidents of outstanding employee performance. The survey currently on the City’s website is well organized to collect valuable information, however, very few surveys are actually completed and no specific program is in place to compile and distribute the results of the surveys. At the initial stages of this study, attempts to access the online survey forms were unsuccessful due to errors in the hyperlink connection. Interviews with staff also suggest there has been no direction to staff to encourage customers to participate in the surveys.

Planning sends out a survey form to applicants with the notice of approval. This is an excellent approach and the form is well designed.

**9. Recommendation: A Customer Comment Card similar to the on-line survey should be developed and staff should be directed to encourage customers to complete the cards or the on-line survey upon completion of the counter transaction and again at project completion.**

**10. Recommendation: The Development Review Committee II should periodically confirm the on-line survey is operational and develop a system to compile the survey results and make them available to staff for the purpose of enhancing future customer service.**

As part of this study, a customer email survey was sent to 500 applicants. The responses from this survey are discussed in Chapter IX and shown in Appendix D. Overall the Development Services functions scored much better than we have found with most of our clients. The biggest concern was slow timelines, which is discussed extensively throughout this report. Overall, the respondents were very positive in relation to how staff handles customer service.

The City also conducts a broader annual survey of all City services. Zoning and land use had the lowest scores of all functions on this survey with only 4% of respondents scoring service as Excellent and 26% Above Average. These are very low scores and should be of concern to Development Services function.

## **D. DEVELOPMENT REVIEW COMMITTEE (DRC)**

The DRC is a regularly scheduled hour-long weekly meeting conducted with staff and supervisors from various city departments involved in the development review process. The DRC is generally attended by a current planning supervisor, the planner, Development & Environmental Services Manager and Supervisor, the Development Engineer, the Plan Review Supervisor, the Permit Tech Supervisor, and the Fire Marshall. Staff indicates that the primary purpose of the DRC meeting is to discuss the permit review status report generated by EnerGov, in order to help drive staff review timeframes and the permit process. In addition, the meeting is used to distribute new project plans to department reviewers.

Our observations and interviews with staff indicated that this meeting could be more effective if more time was spent as a forum to review, discuss and resolve-issues with current land use permits as a team, rather than a meeting to distribute plans and discuss reviewing time line issues.

Effective DRC meetings are structured so that designated reviewing staff gathers for a coordinated review of new development projects on a weekly basis, during the staff

review period. Staff representatives from planning, public works, building, fire, and urban forestry should be designated to attend every meeting. When designated staff is unavailable, substitute staff should attend on their behalf. Designated planning staff should be charged with preparing agendas, and summarizing outcomes. A Supervising Planner should continue to manage the meeting. Agendas should be distributed electronically in advance of the meeting to all participants. The Supervising Planner should ensure that each designated member consistently conducts their full scope of review on each project in advance of the meeting, rather than relying on other participants. Members, who are unsure as to their scope of review, should be educated accordingly. Participants should be required to review projects listed on the agenda prior to the meeting and provide written comments to the assigned planner, who is the lead on the project. The written comments are then collected by the assigned planner and folded into a master list of review comments, which are forwarded to the applicant in the next business day.

To provide designated DRC members with as much time as possible to conduct reviews, paper and electronic submittal materials should be routed to reviewers as soon as accepted. The Planning Supervisor should also consider using a projector and laptop to display an electronic copy of each project plan scheduled for discussion in order to focus discussions. To further guide discussions, the Planning Supervisor should consider creating a DRC review checklist to ensure that projects are consistently reviewed to cover the full scope of review of each discipline including Public Works, Fire/Building, Urban Forestry, Planning, etc. More experienced planners (e.g., seniors and supervisors), should use the meeting as an opportunity to proactively help less experienced Planners improve their reviewing skills.

Once the DRC is restructured and functioning as a forum to review, discuss and resolve-issues with current land use permits as a team, the Department should consider inviting applicants with complex projects to attend the DRC. After staff discusses the project, the Applicant could be invited into the meeting so that they have the opportunity to ask questions, clarify issues, receive feedback from staff, and when possible work with staff to resolve any outstanding issues or concerns.

**11. Recommendation:** The Development Review Manager should restructure the DRC so that there are designated participants from each discipline, a Planning Supervisor is in charge of and runs the meeting, agendas and plan review materials are distributed in advance of the meeting and that participants attend regularly, are prepared, and thoroughly outline issues which encompass their entire scope of review.

**12. Recommendation:** The Planning Supervisor should create a checklist of discussion items for use by the assigned Planners for each project

scheduled for DRC to guide the review discussion, so that meetings are predictable and efficient, and provide consistent, timely and relevant feedback to applicants on all relevant issues.

- 13. Recommendation:** Once DRC meeting are working effectively, applicants with complex projects should be invited to attend the DRC meeting, during the time that his/her project is scheduled on the DRC Agenda. Time should be set aside during the meeting to answer applicant questions and address issues.

## **E. DEVELOPMENT REVIEW COMMITTEE II**

The Development Review Committee II (DRCII) consists of the Building Official, Development and Environmental Services Manager from Public Works and the Development review Manager from the Planning Department. The Committee was created to assume the responsibility to address policy issues that arise as a result of the individual departments working together to provide development services. A separate committee, the Development Review Committee I, has the responsibility to meet and discuss actual projects and consists of first-line supervisors. Many other communities have actually created a Development Services Department comprised of the appropriate employees from the Building, Fire, Planning and Public Works Departments reporting to a single Department Head. This DRCII has essentially assumed the role of providing a platform to resolve policy conflicts that would otherwise be the responsibility of the director of the combined department. We believe this concept has merit in lieu of a single Development Services Department. To be effective, such a committee needs to truly focus its attention on the bigger picture policy issues, be willing to assertively address conflict and develop solutions that all participants will actively promote. Recording and distributing these decisions to all staff is essential for group communication and to establish the credibility of the Committee's work. A DRC Manual has been created, but some of the information is outdated as a result of the implementation of the EnerGov System and not all employees are familiar with the existence of the Manual.

- 14. Recommendation:** The DRCII should actively seek to resolve policy issues that affect the staff working in development services and the existing DRC Manual should be updated to reflect policy decisions made by the Committee.

Given the importance of the DRC II it would be appropriate to have a slightly tighter structure. We suggest there be a designated chairperson for the DRC II, which could be rotated every six months between Building, Engineering and Planning.

- 15. Recommendation:** The DRC II should have a chairperson.

## F. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The City has an economic development staff that reports to the City Manager. The focus is mostly on business retention with some recruitment. Given the City Council's interest in economic development and an expanded tax base, this appears to be an important function. With most of our clients, we see a conflict between the economic development efforts and planning. While the two functions appear to work reasonably well in Kirkland, planners should be reminded that the economic health of the community is an integral planning issue. This is a critical issue for the Totem Lake area and economic issues should be a key part of the up-date to the Comprehensive Plan. It may be useful for planners to take a more active role in economic development efforts than they have been in the past.

**16. Recommendation: The Planning staff should review its approach to economic development issues. A seminar with the Economic Development Manager could be part of this effort.**

## G. FEES

### Overview/Philosophy

Most Best-Practice communities have a full cost recovery approach to development processing fees. In addition to direct cost, these fees often include an allocation for external overhead, which may add 15% to 30% to the base fees. Fee structures also may include excess revenue designed to build a reserve account for use when there is a down cycle in applications, avoiding the need to layoff trained staff or other disruptive activities. We used to have a rule of thumb that the target for the reserve account should be nine months of the normal operating budget. However, as part of a recent contract for Calgary, Alberta, we did a detailed analysis for possible down cycles similar to those experienced in the United States. As part of that analysis we concluded that a better rule of thumb would be a reserve equal to 12 months of the normal budget. As part of the Calgary study, Calgary staff followed our recommendation and increased its reserve account from 30 million to 60 million.

Some believe that full cost recovery fees are contrary to economic development goals and strive to keep fees low and below that for surrounding or competitive communities. However, developers are more interested in short timelines and clear, consistent processes. The fees are a very small part of the project. We have used this approach with many of our client communities. One of our studies was for a very aggressive economic development community, Fort Worth, Texas. The economic development staff in Fort Worth told us that they never once had a prospective company complain about processing fees.

However, it should be noted that:

- This analysis relates only to processing fees and not impact fees. Impact fees require a different type of analysis.
- Full cost recovery may also need to be modified for small applications such as a water heater, deck, or small residential addition. Actual full cost for these types of applications may be quite high in relation to the cost of the construction. As such, many communities subsidize these out of the general fund. Others tend to slightly over-charge larger projects to help subsidize the smaller project.

One additional component used by many communities is the use of a surcharge to fund special long-term improvements to the processes. Sometimes these are for a limited period of time, such as five years.

### **Kirkland's Approach**

We reviewed a variety of financial reports and discussion of Kirkland's fees for development services approach and were most impressed with the depth of thought and analysis, which match many of our Best Practice approaches. In the past the City used a top down approach to setting fees that did not include detailed staffing analysis for each type of permit. We were told that a new fee study will be conducted that will use a bottom up approach calculating staff time for various types of permits. This is the normal approach that we support and is considered Best Practice. Staff indicates that some types of permits routinely require multiple reviews and that some of these have additional fees. However, these fees may not accurately reflect all of the time spent on subsequent reviews. This should be corrected in the new fee study.

The City Council discussed an overall approach to fee recovery in 2007 using the approach shown in Table 2. The actual full cost recovery for 2011 is shown in the last line of the Table. It was 81% for Building, 88% for Planning and 103% for Public Works.

**Table 2  
Cost Recovery Rationale, 2007 & Actual Recovery, 2011**

<b>Cost Layer</b>	<b>Building</b>	<b>Fire *</b>	<b>Planning **</b>	<b>Public Works</b>
<b>Direct Development Services</b> These costs represent the direct, hands-on work performed to provide development services. Planning & Public Works consider part of their regulatory responsibilities benefit the public by protecting existing City environment, character, and infrastructure, whereas, Building and Fire solely benefit the private projects they regulate.	100%	100%	80%	80%
<b>Code Enforcement</b> These costs are associated with ensuring compliance with City code. The cost recovery is based on not penalizing compliant development projects for those who do not follow City regulation. A portion of these costs might be recovered through fines and penalties.	0%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Public Information</b> Cost recovery based on department judgment of the amount of front-counter time that is attributable to the level of development active in the City.	50%	50%	20%	50%
<b>Policy Development</b> This level of recovery was determined because much of the City's planning and policy development focuses on maintaining a specific community "look and feel" for the public. In addition, much of the planning aspects the City performs are required regardless of the level of ongoing development	20%	21%	20%	20%
<b>Weighted Average Target Recovery</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>72%</b>
<b>Full Cost Recovery in 2011</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>103%</b>

\*Includes only that portion of Fire Prevention related to development review.

In late 2005 the City Council established the Development Services Reserve designed for a combined staffing stabilization and work in progress approach with a balance of \$920,000. The reserve was used to backfill and maintain staff in 2008 (\$400,000) and in 2009 (\$425,000).

In 2011, Building fell short of meeting the cost recovery target and the difference was offset by holding vacant positions open. Planning and Public Works exceeded the target recovery due to higher than projected activity levels. Funds were set aside in reserve to fund resources to accomplish work for which fees were collected that year, but the work would take place in 2012 or subsequent years.

A draft 2012 Competitiveness Assessment Study for Kirkland indicted that Kirkland's permit fees are on the higher end of seven comparison communities. This was true for all permit categories except for Strip Retail. While this may give City Council some

pause in further increasing fees, it should be noted that developers are more interested in short timelines and clear processes than in the relatively small amount of permit fees. Given the competitive issues, it may suggest that more expedited processes could be a more acceptable way to increase revenue.

## **Conclusion**

Like most cities, Kirkland has had to adjust to the economic downturn and appears to have done a better job than most. As related to the development processes, the real issue will be how to handle staffing levels as activity returns to more normal levels. Given the lack of data, we were unable to prepare detailed staffing models. Once the new fee study is completed, it should be possible to do so.

However, if service levels and good performance standards are to be retained, some additional staffing will likely be needed in the future. We see several ways to approach this.

- Once a detailed fee analysis is completed a staffing model can be constructed and staffing set in relation to fee revenue and cost recovery philosophy.
- We suggest the City consider, over a five-year period, adjusting fees to full cost recover for all development related functions.
- In the short term, the City has made budgetary strategy based on projected development revenues. As revenues begin to increase beyond these projections, additional staffing or consultants should be added as needed to meet the pre-set performance standards we have recommended in this report. We understand that Building revenues are currently at about 100% of the budgeted estimate, but Engineering and Planning are exceeding the budget. Most of the excess revenues are being placed in a Development Services Reserve account, some are being released for needed added staffing, and some are carrying over for work in future years.

**17. Recommendation: Develop a staffing model as part of the proposed fee study.**

**18. Recommendation: Over a five-year period, gradually adjust fees to full cost recovery or achieve full cost recovery through expedited fees.**

**19. Recommendation: In the short term, as development revenues exceed budget projections, use excess revenues to supplement staff as necessary to meet the performance standards recommended in this report.**

## **H. LEGAL ISSUES**

In addition to the City Attorney, the City has two Assistant City Attorneys, one who handles plats and subdivisions, and another enforcement issues. The attorneys suggest

that the Development Services departments work will with them and most cases are settled with little need for litigation. Development Services staff handle most issues at the Hearing Examiner and an attorney attends only if asked. Not having an attorney routinely at the Hearing Examiner is unusual but an approach we favor and which we consider to be Best Practice. Planners as well as attorney's need to know the planning laws and Kirkland's planners appear quite sophisticated in this regard.

## I. OFFICE SPACE AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

### Overview

The Kirkland City Hall is one of the more interesting and creative City Halls we have experienced. Views of the outside are present in all directions, private offices have glass walls, and all cubicle walls are low in height allowing open views throughout the space. This layout should facilitate good communication across functions.

### Reception Function

The entrance to City Hall by customers can be confusing. The key feature upon entrance is a major reception desk. However, this desk is only staffed part time and only on three days a week. It appears that the main purpose of this desk is to issue passports. During our visit, there were two large signs on the counter saying, "I am temporarily away from my desk. Please see the Cashier for assistance." This sends a confusing message to anyone coming to City Hall for the first time.

**Figure 3**  
**Reception Sign**



Given the open nature of City Hall, some type of reception function at the entrance is appropriate. There are several choices for this function.

- The reception function could be staffed at all times and become a true reception function for all of City Hall. Staff would be cross-trained to answer additional questions. This would be similar to the way Bellevue has organized their new City Hall. Since we did not review all City Hall functions, we are not in a position to make a recommendation on this approach. There could be a staffing cost to this alternative unless some of the reception functions from various City Hall departments re-located with staff cross trained.
- Another, and likely less costly approach, would be to identify the reception function as part of one of the operating departments. To some extent, the Fire/Building permit counter already performs part of this function because of its location and the outgoing and friendly nature of its counter staff.

**20. Recommendation: As part of the proposed City Hall remodel, a decision should be made on how to handle the City Hall reception function.**

### **Development Services Intake and Information Counters**

A key to Best Practices for planning and developments is co-location of staff. Kirkland has this feature with Building, Engineering, Fire, and Planning all being located in City Hall. However, these functions operate out of three separate counters. It is not unusual that a customer is routed from one counter to another. Since by policy, the functions only accept complete plans (another Best Practice used in Kirkland), there is actually a process called, “walk about”, where the customer starts at the Building counter and then must go to the Engineering and Planning counters for a sign off prior to submitting an application. Even the term used to describe this function is an indication of a problem.

Best Practices generally have the staff do the walking rather than the customer. Under a Best Practice scenario, the three counters would be merged into one Development Services counter. Intake staff could be cross-trained to take in all types of applications, or if necessary, specialized staff could still be located near the counter to serve customers as necessary. However, staff would move to the customer, not the customer to staff. A joint counter could work irrespective of any decision on merging functions. At minimum, it could have the three primary functions operating side by side. At maximum, counter staff would be cross-trained in all functions. Those activities that are directly related to providing customer service should be located in proximity to the counter. Other activities, such as purely administrative support functions, can be located in areas not requiring direct public access.

**21. Recommendation: As part of the proposed City Hall remodel, consideration should be given to having one counter for the Development Services functions.**

### **Cashier Function**

Once one of the Development Services functions has completed its transaction or review, the applicant is sent to the Cashier station to pay. A better approach, and Best Practice, would be to pay at the same counter where the transaction is taking place. A good example of this would be a typical department store where the sales clerk also processes your payment. Merging the counter functions as suggested above would facilitate this change since it would result in one pay station rather than having pay stations at three separate counters or sending the customer to a separate cashier.

**22. Recommendation: Payments for permits should be made where the transaction takes place, not at a separate Cashiers function.**

### **Customer Participation**

We consider Best Customer Service Practice as having the customer actually participate in the process. There are at least three features that address this issue.

- Currently when a customer wants to apply for an over-the-counter permit in Building, (electrical, plumbing, mechanical, and similar permits), the customer completes a form at the counter which the Permit Technician then takes to an office to complete the transaction while the customer waits out front. The customer may wonder why it is taking so long, did the staff go for coffee, or what is happening. A better approach is to have the customer join the staff to be a part of the transaction, and in some cases, even helping the Technician avoid errors in entering data.
- Many of the transactions can currently be completed over the Internet without the customer needing to come into the office. If the customer is a one-time user of the system, it is appropriate that staff handle the transaction for them. However, for repeat customers, they should be encouraged to learn how to apply through the Internet. One way to do this is to have a computer station where staff can sit with and work with the customer while they submit their application. Staff indicates that they attempt to do this.
- Some transactions require staff to use a computer screen at the counter. When this is the case, it is useful if the customer can participate in and see the transaction as it is taking place. Some communities use a dual screen for this purpose. One screen faces the staff and another, the customer. Public Works does have this set up at their counter.

**23. Recommendation: As counter and intake functions are revised, use of customer participation techniques should be included.**

**Stand Up or Sit Down Counters**

Stand up counters can be useful for short transactions and reception functions. However, for longer transactions, sit down counters are preferable. Some sit down counters are also useful to meet disability regulations. Many communities now use virtually all sit down counters. We also favor increasing the use of what is called, “over-the-counter” permits. These are transactions that are completed while the customer is still in City Hall. While Kirkland uses some over-the-counter permits, we believe additional ones would be desirable. Sit down counters are useful for over-the-counter permits that may require additional time.

**24. Recommendation: As part of the decision to merge Development Services counters, at least a few sit down stations should be available near any stand-up counter.**

**Technical Staff Backup**

Regardless of how well counter staff is trained and cross-trained, there is often a need for a staff specialist to help the customer. The various Development Services functions do a good job of having such staff available. For example, Planning has a planner of the day assigned for this purpose. During our time in Kirkland, specialized staff were readily available to help us. This could have been just because of the nature of our study. However, this approach to customer service appears to be a standard part of the approach being used in Kirkland and is Best Practice.

**J. PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS**

Interviews with staff have revealed that employees in some departments do not routinely receive formal performance evaluations. Comments from several staff members suggested that this lack of periodic performance appraisals has contributed to continued poor performance by some employees. It has been our experience that resolving performance issues with employees is made even more challenging when the jurisdiction has not provided the employee with frequent and specific performance evaluations. If the results of customer service feedback reveal the need for corrective action to improve an employee’s performance to an acceptable level, the use of a performance evaluation will be a useful tool in achieving that result. Performance evaluations are an important tool that helps to ensure successful staff performance. They provide the necessary feedback and mentoring to help employees be motivated, do better and accomplish more. They also facilitate communication between supervisors and staff.

- 25. Recommendation:** Development Services managers should initiate a system to ensure that all employees receive annual performance evaluations that reflect the employee's adherence to established performance standards.

## **K. PERFORMANCE STANDARDS/TIMELINES**

One of the major issues uncovered in this study is the need to set shorter performance standards for many of the Development Services processes. As would be expected, many staff raised the issue as to how this can be accomplished. The first approach always seems to be to ask for more staff. While this may be needed in some instances, it is not always the case. It is important that the City and staff see this in a broader perspective. Some of the issues to be considered include the following:

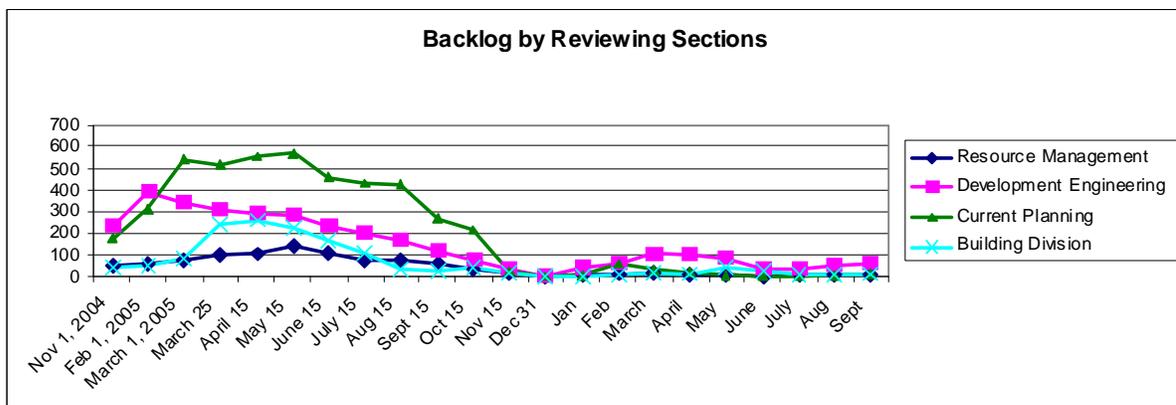
### **Backlog**

The existence of a backlog of applications can impact the shortening of timelines and performance standards. For example, it is not unusual that if the performance standard is 10 days, an application is not actually looked at until the 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> day, even if the actual review time is only two hours. This generally means that there is a backlog of cases. The concept of backlog is not well understood. Backlog is calculated as follows:

- List the average number of applications per category received per month. For our example we will use building permits. There were 625 in 2011 or an average of 52 per month.
- Now, the number of projects (52) is multiplied by the process time in months. The performance standards for building permits is 6 weeks or 1.15 months. So, 52 is multiplied by 1.15 resulting in 59.8 applications. Any number over that amount can be considered backlog. We are recommending a 3-week timeline, which is .58 months. So, 52 is multiplied by .58 resulting in 30.16. Anything over that amount can be considered backlog. As can be seen, as performance standards are shortened, backlog goes up.

Why is this important? If performance standards are to be shortened, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to improve processes that have a backlog. In other words, the process needs to be stable before it can be fully managed. An example of this was some extensive work we completed for Pierce County. As can be seen in Figure 4, the County had a very large backlog of building permits. We set in place a process to bring the backlog down to zero within a year. This was done through supplemental staff and the use of consultants. Once completed, the County was in a position to manage the process.

**Figure 4  
Pierce County Backlog Example  
Parkinson's Law**



A well-known and accepted theory is called Parkinson's Law, which holds that- work expands to fill the time available for its completion. Most people experience this in their personal life, and it is also present in the work place. It is not unusual in government development activities to see that in times of high volumes, staff time per application is less than it is in times of low volume. This has been shown time and time again in many studies and staff has experienced how this actually was the case in Kirkland.

### Performance Standards/Deadlines

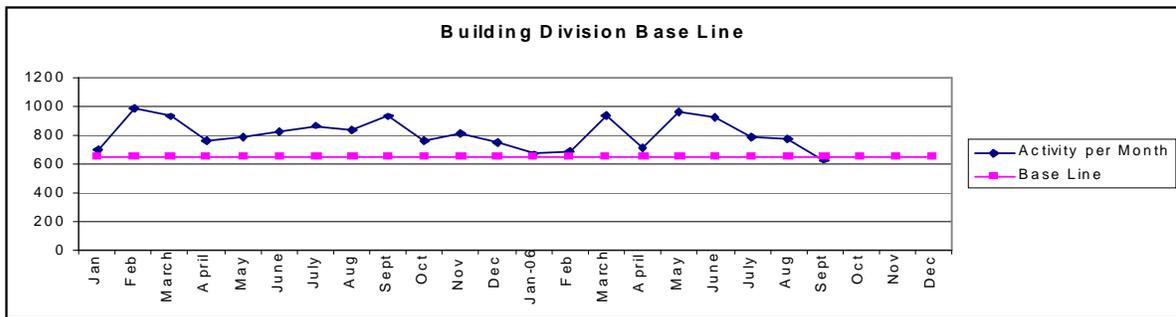
The setting of a deadline or performance standard to complete a task, in and of itself, impacts the performance. However, to be successful timelines need to be monitored and there needs to be either a penalty for not meeting the standard or a way to meet it. Kirkland has had a system of performance standards for the Development Services functions, however, in some cases they have not been clear to staff, the monitoring system is incomplete, and there is no clear strategy for what to do if the standard is not met.

Here is a very simple example of how a deadline can effect a timeline and performance. Instead of answering phone calls and emails in 24 or 48 hours, we have recommended that they be answered the same day received. Staffs' response is often that they are too busy to meet this goal. However, we then ask if the actual amount time spent on the phone call or email is less if answered the next day. The answer is generally that the time is the same. Thus, the shorter performance standard has little or no impact on the actual staffing requirement. Of course, if the phone calls or emails are never answered, that is another matter.

### Time Required to Complete a Task

Irrespective of the impact of Parkinson’s Law and Deadlines, an average amount of hours is needed to complete a task. For most of the Development Services tasks, these hours are not known and as such it is difficult to construct a staffing model. In a few cases in this report we have tried to make estimates to help with the analysis, however, in the final analysis a good staffing model is needed. The proposed new fee study will be designed to fulfill this need. A good example of this concept is work that the Pierce County building function completed as shown in Figure 5. They calculated how many permits on the average the staff could handle each month, a base line. Any applications over that amount were routed to consultants.

**Figure 5  
Pierce County Base Building Staff Model**



## Summary

In order to implement the proposed new timelines, Development Services management and staff will need to use the methodology described above and develop a specific implementation approach for each type of application. Some of the timelines may be accomplished by simply changing the performance standards and clearly communicating that to staff. There will be some trial and error in this process. Key tasks will include:

- Agreeing on the proposed performance standards.
- Projecting workload by sub- type of application for 2013.
- Calculating backlog for each type of application.
- Work with EnerGov to complete the appropriate monitoring system.
- Sample actual average staff time required to process a variety of applications.
- Hire consultants as necessary to remove the backlog or supplement staff as needed. As discussed under fees, any revenue beyond the original budget estimates should be used for this purpose.

**26. Recommendation: The City and Development Services should adopt the approach outlined above to implement the proposed new performance standards.**

**L. STAFFING ISSUES**

**Staff Numbers**

The budgeted staffing numbers for 2007 to 2013 are shown in Table 3. The increased staffing starting in 2011-2012 is primarily related to the estimated workload from the annexation area. Public Works and Fire/Building estimated a 38% increase. Planning estimated a 25% increase in land use permits as well as code enforcement.

**Table 3  
Development Services Budgeted Staffing\*\***

<b>Function</b>	<b>2003-2004</b>	<b>2005-2006</b>	<b>2007-2008</b>	<b>2009-2010</b>	<b>2011-2012</b>	<b>2012-2013</b>
Fire & Building	17.53 (3.5)*	19.53 (3.5)	21.53 (2.5)	17.28	21.28 (1.6)	21.78 (1.6)
Planning & Community Development	21.56 (1.0)	22.56 (1.50)	23.56 (.5)	19.95	24.25	23.45
Public Works	7.00	7.00	7.00 (1.0)	6.50	7.95	8.95
Total	46.09	49.09	52.09	43.73	53.98	54.18
Temporary Positions	(4.50)	(5.00)	(4.00)	(0.00)	(1.60).	(1.60)
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>50.59</b>	<b>54.09</b>	<b>56.09</b>	<b>43.73</b>	<b>55.58</b>	<b>55.78</b>

\*Numbers in parentheses are temporary positions and are in addition to the other numbers in the cell. \*\*Numbers may not reflect layoffs or unfilled positions.

**Billable Hours**

For productivity analysis and analysis of staffing levels it is useful to examine the actually billable hours available to employees in Kirkland. These are shown in Table 2. Employees work a 40-hour week less holidays, personal time, vacation time and sick leave. A maximum of 96 hours per year is authorized for sick leave and for purposes of this analysis we use 50 percent. Vacation time varies by the length of employment. For our purposes we have used the category for 11 to 13 years resulting

in 144 hours per year. Should the average move to higher staff longevity, time could increase to as much as 200 hours. For staffing analysis, we never assume that employees can operate at 100% at all times and feel a more reasonable allocation is 80%. Thus actual productive or billable hours for the Kirkland government employees as shown in Table 4 are 1,338 hours per year.

**Table 4  
Annual Billable Hour Analysis**

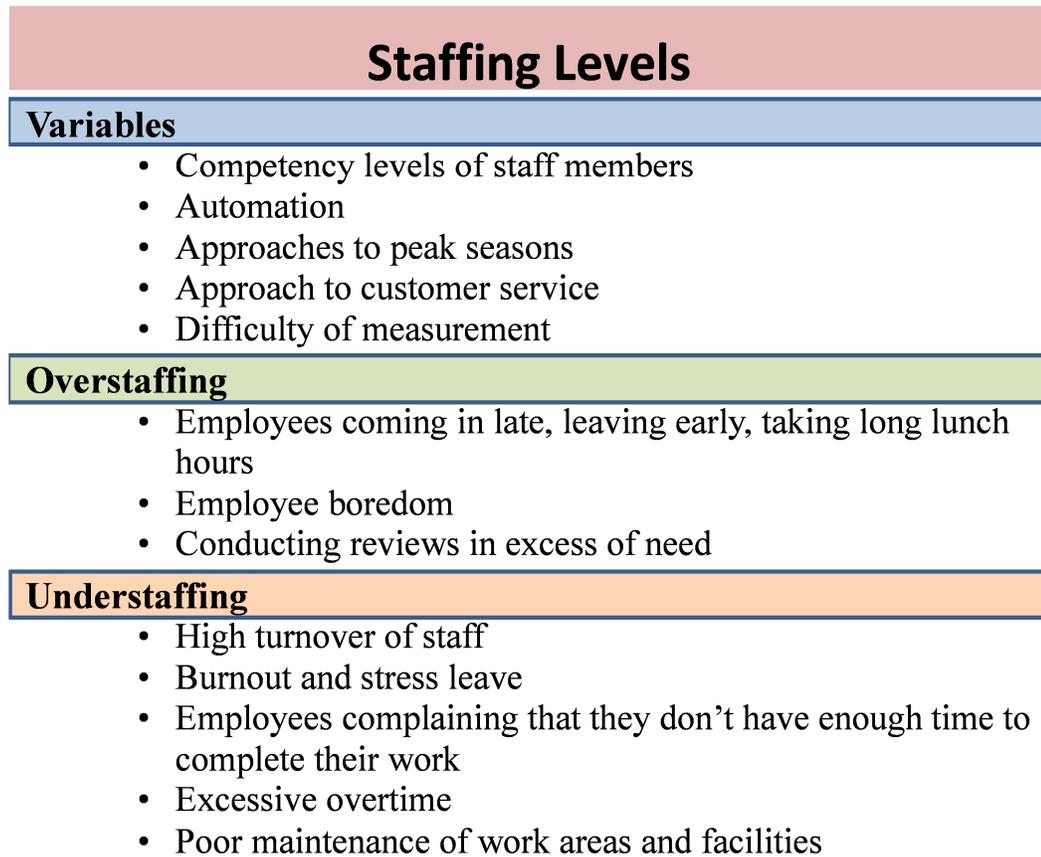
Category	Hours
40 hour work week	2,080
Holidays, 13 days	104
Vacation, based on 11 to 13 years employment, which is the medium of existing staff. Actual varies between 104 and 200 hours.	144
Sick leave, maximum of 8 hrs. per month or 96 hours. Use half or 48	48
Net available hours	1,784
Rest periods, two 15 min. per day	112
Second Net	1,672
80% of Second Net	1,338

## Overview

We were able to obtain detailed staff numbers by project type for Planning and Community Development for a nine-month period. While we will be using some of these numbers for our staff analysis, some of the numbers are suspect. There may be some double counting and some of the totals exceed the available staff hours, which we cannot explain. Similar numbers were not available for Fire/Building, or Public Works.

As part of the new fee study, the City will be able to prepare a detailed staffing model for all the development applications. However, even when detailed numbers are available, managers and financial analysts needs to look at other variables before arriving at recommendations. Some of these variables are shown in Figure 6.

**Figure 6  
Staffing Variables**



## **M. TECHNOLOGY**

### **Overview**

Overall, the City has had an excellent approach to technology and we were impressed with the staff working on technology issues. Some of the Best Practice features we observed include:

- All development related functions have been using the same application permitting system, Advantage.
- The City has an excellent GIS System.
- The City participates in the E-Gov Alliance for easy of building permit applications.
- Overall computers and screens are adequate.
- Some applications can be received over the Internet.
- Electronic plans can be received and electronic plan check systems are in use.

- Copy machines and printers are up to date and include an automatic Pdf function.
- The City is committed to a new permitting system, EnerGov.

The biggest technology issue we observed was the use and installation of the new Energov permitting system. Most of the staff are very unhappy about this new system. Some of this simply relates to learning a new system since the prior system was in use for many years. However, there have been major problems with the vendor and the way the new system is designed. The City's IT Department along with a staff EnerGov committee is working with the vendor to correct these issues. The City has not yet accepted the product from the vendor and will not do so until certain problems are solved. We see no advantage in our entering these discussions since staff appears to be well versed in the needs and adding yet another party to the transactions could be counterproductive. However, in the future, should the City feel additional support would be useful, our technology expert could be used for that purpose.

We have suggested features related to setting and monitoring performance standards and have been assured that this will be part of the new system.

### **Geographical Information System (GIS)**

The City's GIS system is generally regarded as being a very useful tool for staff use, however, it is not being utilized to its full capabilities. Many staff members report that they are aware of the GIS System, but have not received sufficient training to feel comfortable in its use. Additionally, the GIS System is not fully integrated into the EnerGov System. Discussion between the City's Information Technology (IT) staff and the EnerGov vendor have not convinced staff that EnerGov's proposed integration solution meets their performance criteria.

**27. Recommendation: The City should consider expanding its GIS training program to include a larger group of staff members from all departments.**

**28. Recommendation: The IT Department should continue to work with the EnerGov vendor to explore methods to fully integrate the GIS System into the EnerGov program or consider writing their own interface into the EnerGov System.**

### **On-line Permitting**

The City of Kirkland currently offers customers the opportunity to apply for electrical, plumbing, mechanical, and low-voltage electrical and re-roofing permits online through MyBuildingPermits.com (MBP). The MBP system is the customer portal to the City's EnerGov System. We understand that efforts are underway to further expand the MBP system to allow the acceptance of all types of permits by

May, 2013. We strongly support this effort. The City should also be commended for its practice of encouraging on-line digital plan submittal for review. By utilizing an FTP site and BlueBeam software, the City has effectively implemented an on-line plan review program that represents a substantial step toward a paperless permit system.

**29. Recommendation: The DRC should continue to diligently work on expanding the scope of permits that can be issued through the MyBuildingPermit.com program.**

EnerGov is the single most frequently expressed complaint in employee surveys and during staff interviews was their disappointment with the performance of the EnerGov Permitting Software System. This system was implemented approximately two years ago in response to the need for the City to move off of the previously used Advantage Software System because the original company (Tidemark) was purchased by Accela and Accela was no longer going to support the Advantage software. While an exhaustive evaluation was conducted in conjunction with several other jurisdictions in the region and other jurisdictions using the existing version of EnerGov software were contacted for references prior to the City finally selecting EnerGov, in hindsight, it appears that EnerGov misrepresented its ability to deliver the features it promised on the new platform it was proposing. City Management has signaled that they are strongly committed to seeing that this software program be successfully implemented rather than consider replacing the system at any time in the near future.

The members of the internal EnerGov Committee should be commended for their continued efforts and patience while working with the EnerGov software vendor. At the time of our site-visit the Committee had compiled a list of over 80 system deficiencies that they had communicated to the vendor. Rather than create a comprehensive list of our own, we feel that the Committee has done an ample job identifying outstanding deficiencies. This position is reinforced by our belief that the members are very familiar with the desirable features that were available previously in the Advantage System but are currently unavailable in the new EnerGov System. One of our major concerns relates to an apparent lack of responsiveness by the vendor to address these outstanding deficiencies. Staff reports that frequently the vendor responds to these deficiencies with proposed corrections that create further problems with other parts of the system. It is reported that the vendor does not test their proposed “fixes” prior to sending them to the City. Essentially, the City has been expected to perform the quality control testing that traditionally is a responsibility of the software vendor.

**30. Recommendation: The City should insist that EnerGov establish a test environment that mirrors the Kirkland system at their facility and that all proposed software “fixes” be tested in that environment prior to shipment to the City.**

Members of the internal EnerGov Committee also participate with other jurisdictions that use the EnerGov System as part of local and regional User Groups. By sharing their issues with other jurisdictions that are also customers of EnerGov, efforts can be made to exercise greater influence on the vendor to address those issues important to Kirkland.

- 31. Recommendation:** The members of the internal EnerGov Committee should continue to participate in EnerGov User Group meetings to collectively exert pressure on the vendor to address those issues of greatest importance to the City of Kirkland.

## Website

**Overview:** The home page of the City's website, while attractive, is difficult to navigate to retrieve information about various development process. The entire site seems to have been designed around the concept of separating the functions of individual departments and divisions rather than highlighting the services that customers are likely to need and providing a path for them to follow to receive those services. It appears that customers are expected to try and guess which department, based on a list of Departments, might provide them the services they seek. Based on preliminary work available at the Kirklandpermits.net site, staff has demonstrated a desire to create a Development Services website page that combines relevant information from the various departments that currently participate in the development process. However, this website page is currently not available from the City's home page.

The City's home page includes tabs for Visitors and Businesses but nothing for residents seeking services. The Business tab does not provide any link to information about obtaining a building permit. There is no tab provided for Residents, which would be an appropriate location to identify a link to building permits. Businesses and residents are expected to assume they must look under the Departments tab and select the Fire and Building Department.

- 32. Recommendation:** The City should continue to work on developing a Development Services website page that combines relevant information from each of the Departments that support the development process.

- 33. Recommendation:** The home page of the City's website needs to include a tab for Residents seeking services such as obtaining a building permit. The tab should lead them to a development services page that highlights the specific services that are available and links to how they can obtain those services.

Table 5 below shows a list of the typical features that Best Practice Communities include on their website. The Table indicates whether the Development Services

Department's web pages include, partially include, or do not include typical features. Specific recommendations follow the Table.

**Table 5  
Planning & Community Development Department Proposed Web Features**

<b>Typical Best Feature Features</b>	<b>Included</b>	<b>Partially Included Link Provided</b>	<b>Not Included</b>
Announcements, News/Events	X		
Automated Email contact feature	X		
Comprehensive List or Link to all planning & development related fees	X		
Comprehensive Information page for Hearing Examiner Planning Commission, Houghton Community Council, including Members, Hearing Schedules/Calendars Agendas, Minutes, Agenda Packets/Reports, including staff contact for project inquiries	X		
Comprehensive Staff Contact List with Automated email Contact Feature	X		
Credit Card Payment Options		X	
E-government online application completion	X		
Forms and Handouts		X	
Frequently Asked Questions Related to Planning & Community Development	X	X	
Functional Statement, Mission Statement	X	X	
Handouts/Applications for Land Use Mgt, Policy Planning	X		
How to Guides and flow charts	X		
Links to State & Regional Planning & Zoning related agencies	X		
Links to Municipal Code, Zoning, Subdivision Ordinance, Comprehensive Plan, other related regulations, plans, policies	X		
Major Project List (i.e., recently approved, on-going projects) for both Land Use Mgmt. (Current) and Policy (Future) Planning	X		
Office Location, Hours, Map/Directions to Offices		X	X
Online Submittal of Land Use Management Plans/Permits, Applications		X	
Organization Structure Chart			X
Permit Tracking		X	
Public Notifications Displayed	X		
Work Program for Department Posted	X		
Zoning Map/GIS	X		

As the above Table shows, the City has done a good job including important Best Practice features on their Development Services web pages. However, as observed

and uncovered in interviews and staff surveys, the website is generally difficult to navigate for first-time users due to the type and volume of content posted and its overall format. In addition, the search engines are limited and don't provide sufficient search assistance for users trying to locate information that may be placed in other locations on the websites.

We understand that the City will be undertaking a makeover of its websites with the goal of improving accessibility, which we applaud. Below are recommendations that should be included in the website overhaul project.

**Comprehensive Staff Contact List with Automated email Contact Feature, Staff Photo.** The Departments should consider renaming the “Directory” tab to “Staff Directory,” so that the information is easier to locate. In addition, many of the Best Practice Communities that we have worked with include a staff photo next to the contact information.

**34. Recommendation: The Development Services Departments should consider renaming the “Directory” tabs to “Staff Directory,” so that the information is easier for users to find.**

**35. Recommendation: The Development Services Departments should also consider adding staff photos along with staff contact information.**

**Handouts/Applications/Forms/Guides:** There are numerous applications, handouts, forms and other information sheets available for permit processes and are posted on the website. However, they are not categorized by Process Type, which would be a more intuitive format for locating needed applications, etc. In addition, not all have been updated. Further, the number of applications and handouts available can be overwhelming and confusing for users, as well as difficult for the Department to keep current. In addition, some additional handouts may be necessary to help customers understand complex concepts, which currently aren't available. For example, a handout on critical area regulations and procedures would be a useful tool to help new users understand and navigate this process. In addition, there are handouts that should be generated to explain Planning & Policy Division (long-range) concepts, such as growth management and the comprehensive plan, and regulations such as shoreline regulations.

The Departments should consider reviewing all of its handouts and applications and consolidate them where possible. Many best practice communities use a single application packet that uses a checkbox system to distinguish the type of permit(s) requested. In addition, all applications should be able to be completed online (fillable). Best Practice communities also create flow charts that show how applications are processed and appealed through the various decision-making bodies.

All handouts should be kept up-to-date and contain a revision date so that users know they have the most current version of the document. In addition, simple flow charts should be developed for processes to help users better understand how processes work.

- 36. Recommendation:** The Development Services Departments should update all online applications in a format that allows them to be filled in on line, and post them under their respective process type category under the “Applications and Forms” tab.
- 37. Recommendation:** The Development Services Departments should update the public notice and tree removal request forms, and other forms, which are used routinely, in a format that allows them to be filled in online.
- 38. Recommendation:** The Development Services Departments should review all of its handouts and applications to ensure they are written in clear concise language, and consolidate them where possible.
- 39. Recommendation:** The Development Services Departments should update all applications and handouts and include a revision date so that customers know they have the most current version.
- 40. Recommendation:** The Development Services Departments should prepare simple, accurate flow charts for permit processes, which should be posted on the website to help users understand how processes work.

**Frequently Asked Questions:** The Fire and Building Department’s Building and Construction website currently includes a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) section. Traditionally the FAQs page has been the most frequently visited site for most development services departments. By providing a user friendly and comprehensive FAQs page customers are afforded an opportunity to get their information immediately 24/7 without requiring staff intervention and the information is always consistent. The information on the page should be geared towards users looking for quick answers to basic building-related questions. While many useful questions and answers are included among these FAQs, the question of “How Do I Obtain a Building Permit” is not included.

- 41. Recommendation:** The Building and Construction website page for FAQs should include a response to the question “How do I obtain a Building Permit?”

**Functional Statements, Vision, Mission, Goals:** The Fire and Building Department’s web pages contain a very basic description of the duties of the Department, however, there is no information regarding the Department’s Mission

Statement, Functions or Goals to provide staff and customers with clear direction on the Department's purpose or function in the City. This information would provide an excellent opportunity to express the Department's commitment to work cooperatively with other staff throughout the City system to deliver excellent service to the customer. These statements need clarification for other functions as well.

**42. Recommendation: Add Functional and Vision Statements and a list of goals to the Department's main website page to precisely describe the Department's purpose and functions in the City.**

**Links:** The Department should add links to information on growth management laws and practices.

**43. Recommendation: The Development Services Departments should add links to information on growth management laws and practices.**

**Map/Directions to Offices:** The City's website does not include a link for directions and a map of City Hall. This information may be particularly important to permit applicants needing to come to City Hall to obtain a permit, especially if they are pulling a construction trailer and need to know where to park.

**44. Recommendation: A map and directions to City Hall should be included on the City home web page and links provided to that information from the proposed Development Services page and each of the Departments. The Fire and Building Department's web page should also include preferred parking information to direct contractors pulling construction trailers.**

**Organization Structure Chart:** The City has apparently chosen to not include Organization Structure Charts within the individual Department web pages. We believe this basic information is necessary in order for users to understand the structure of each Department. A logical place to include this information would be on a page that provided direct links to contact information for the individuals on the chart.

**45. Recommendation: Create a web page for each Department that includes an Organization Chart with links to contact information for the individuals listed on the chart.**

**Permit Tracking:** Various types of building and land use permits can be tracked online through the Mybuildinpermit.com, which is an easy-to-use permitting portal that also makes it possible to apply, pay for, and receive electrical, low voltage, mechanical, plumbing, and re-roof permits from the City as well as other ten participating jurisdictions.

Our interviews with staff revealed that neither the permit tracking system nor EnerGov provides the public with a means to conduct an overall status check of a permit to find out where it is being held up in the review process.

**46. *Recommendation:* EnerGov should be configured to provide the public with a means to conduct an overall permit status check to determine where permits are being held up in the review process.**

# IV. FIRE AND BUILDING DEPARTMENT

## A. PROFILE

### Overview

The Fire and Building Department serves the City of Kirkland by providing emergency response services, permit and plan review, inspections, fire prevention services and emergency management. The primary focus of this section of the report is the Department's role in the enforcement of City adopted Building Codes and State Mandated Regulations. Comments on the Fire related aspects will be included as appropriate. All jurisdictions in Washington must enforce the minimum construction standards adopted by the State but have the option of adopting additional local amendments that are at least as restrictive as the State Codes. Kirkland has traditionally avoided adopting numerous amendments to the building codes.

### Authority

Chapter 19.27 Revised Code of Washington (RCW) establishes the State Building Code and identifies the conditions under which a local jurisdiction may amend the state building code. Kirkland Municipal Code Chapter 21 adopts the state building code which references the 2009 edition of the following codes along with minor state and local adopted amendments.

- (1) 2009 International Building Code—Chapter 51-50 WAC;
- (2) 2009 International Residential Code—Chapter 51-51 WAC;
- (3) 2009 International Mechanical Code—Chapter 51-52 WAC;
- (4) 2009 National Fuel Gas Code (NFPA 54)—Chapter 51-52 WAC;
- (5) Kirkland Electrical Code;
- (6) 2008 Liquefied Petroleum Gas Code (NFPA 58)—Chapter 51-52 WAC;
- (7) 2009 International Fuel Gas Code—Chapter 51-52 WAC;
- (8) 2009 Uniform Plumbing Code—Chapters 51-56 and 51-57 WAC. (Ord. 4246 § 1 (part), 2010: Ord. 4208 § 2 (part), 2009: Ord. 4099 § 2 (part), 2007: Ord. 4017 § 2, 2005: Ord. 3946 § 1 (part), 2004)
- (9) 2009 International Fire Code- Chapters 51-54 WAC

### Basic Functions

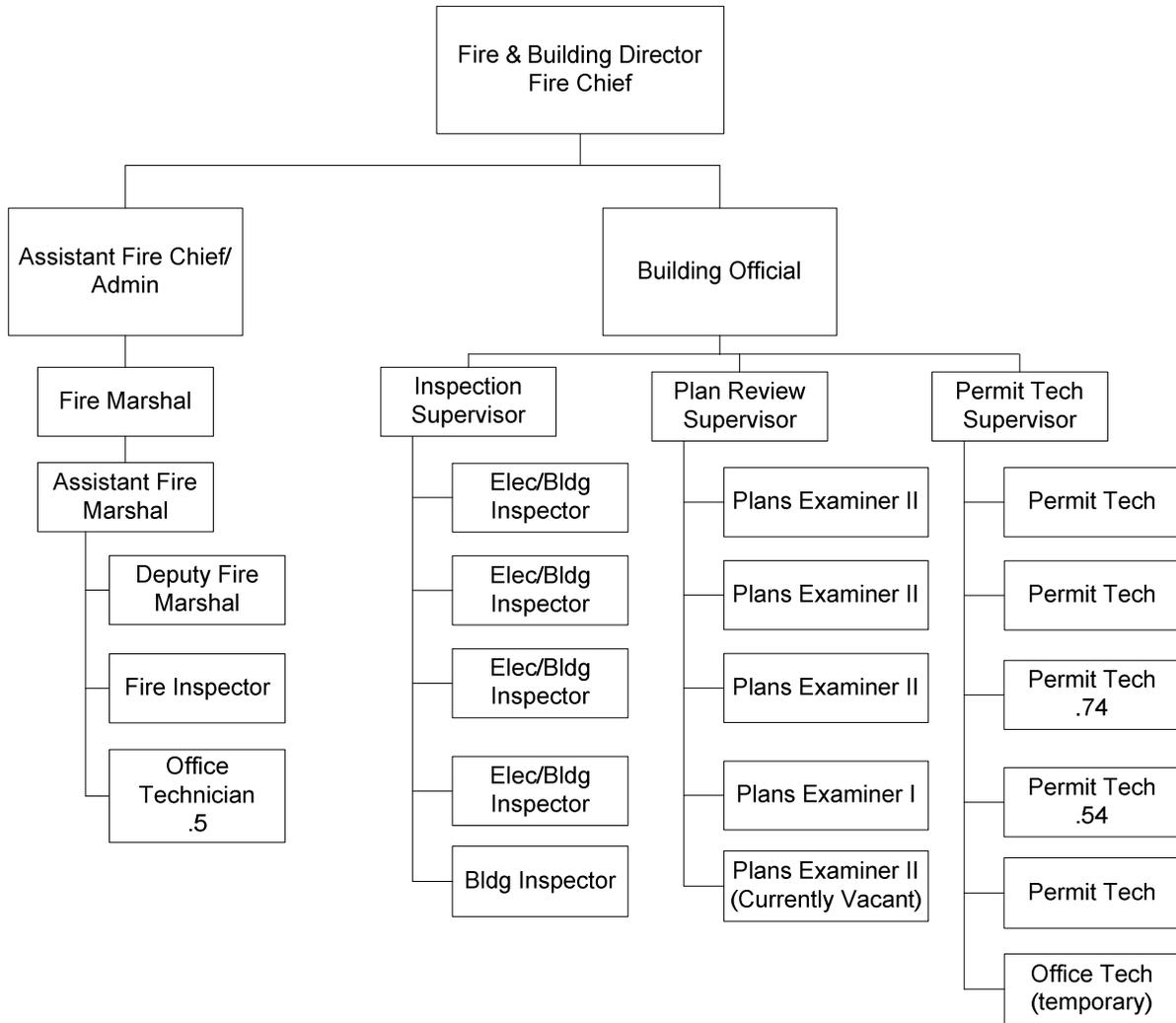
The Fire and Building Department employs 112 employees in a diverse range of activities. This section of the report will focus attention primarily on the activities of the Building Division and the Fire Prevention Bureau as those groups support the overall development review and inspection process. This process is designed to protect the public and property by ensuring that the minimum fire, health and life safety standards are incorporated into all new construction. This is achieved by working in cooperation with other Departments including Planning and Public Works.

In addition, the staff works daily with members of the commercial development community and homeowners to identify and resolve construction code related deficiencies.

## **Organization**

The Fire and Building Department is under the overall coordination and management of the Director of Fire and Building who reports directly to the City Manager. The Building Division is managed by the Building Services Manager who performs the functions of the local Building Official and reports directly to the Director of Fire and Building. The Fire Prevention Bureau provides support through plan review and inspection of new construction and is supervised by the Fire Marshal who reports to the Deputy Fire Chief of Administration. There are currently nineteen (19) employees (18.28 FTEs) within the Building Division and four (4) employees in the Fire Prevention Bureau for a total of 22.28 FTEs as shown in Figure 7 and Table 6. The City's budget document shows 21.28 for 2011-2012 and 21.78 for 2013-2014. Of the four and a half (4.5) employees in the Fire Prevention Bureau, only the Fire Marshal, Deputy Fire Marshal and the Fire Inspector have responsibilities that are primarily related to activities in development services.

**Figure 7  
Fire and Building Department Organization**



**Table 6  
Building Division Staffing**

<b>Classification</b>	<b># of Positions (FTEs)</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
Building Official	1	Oversees the building functions for plan review, building permit counter and inspections, Reports to Fire Chief
Inspection Supervisor	1	Supervises Combination Inspector staff and performs electrical plan reviews. Reports to Building Official
Elect/Building Inspector	4	Performs electrical, building, plumbing, mechanical inspections and performs electrical plan reviews. Reports to Inspections Supervisor
Building Inspector	1.0	Performs building inspections. Reports to Inspections Supervisor
Plan Review Supervisor	1	Supervises Plan Examiners by assigning projects and monitoring completion. Reports to Building Official
Plans Examiner II	4	Performs plan reviews of commercial and residential building plans and coordinates plan correction letters. Reports to Plan Review Supervisor
Plans Examiner I	1	Performs residential and small commercial building plan reviews and coordinates plan correction letters. Reports to Plan Review Supervisor
Permit Technician Supervisor	1	A working supervisor position providing counter support 75% and overseeing work of Permit Technicians. Reports to Building Official.
Permit Technician	3.28 *	Performs plan intake function, establishes fees and issues permits. Reports to Permit Technician Supervisor
Building Office Technician	1	Provides administrative support services to Building Division, initial contact with customers for Building, Reports to Permit Technician Supervisor
Total FTE's	18.28	

\*Plus one temporary Permit Technician

**Table 7  
Fire Prevention Bureau Staffing**

<b>Classification</b>	<b># of Positions (FTEs)</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
Fire Marshal	1	Provides direct oversight of Fire Prevention Bureau, performs fire plan reviews for new construction. Reports to Deputy Fire Chief/Administration.
Assistant Fire Marshall	1	Directly supervises fire inspection staff, trains engine companies to ensure inspections are performed correctly, inspects fire protection systems and conducts fire investigations. Reports to Fire Marshal.
Deputy Fire Marshal	1	Performs fire and life safety inspections for new construction and investigates fires. Reports to Assistant Fire Marshal
Fire Inspector	1	Performs fire and life safety inspections and conducts fire investigations. Reports to reports to Assistant Fire Marshal.
Fire Office Technician	0.5	Provides administrative support services to Fire Division, initial contact with customers for Fire permits. Reports to Deputy Fire Chief/Administration
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.5</b>	

**B. POSITIVE FINDINGS/AREAS OF STRENGTH**

- Department offers and encourages Electronic Plan Review using Bluebeam software for markups.
- Staff actively participates in local and regional EnerGov User Groups to coordinate software improvements.
- The Building Division utilizes combination inspectors to improve efficiency.
- The Development Review Committee II concept brings various managers together to review and improve development review policies and regulations.
- The highly successful MyBuildingPermits.com program is to be further expanded to all permit types in May, 2013.

- The Department strives to minimize local amendments to State mandated Building Codes in order to enhance consistent interpretations among regional jurisdictions.
- Building and Fire Staff actively participate in Annual Washington Association of Building Official (WABO) Education Week.
- Department is actively beginning steps to adopt most current new Building Codes in July, 2013.
- Fire has an active Engine Company Fire Prevention Inspection Program with technical support provided by Fire Prevention Bureau staff.
- City reimburses staff for all training and recertification costs.
- Building Official confers with Industry on proposed code changes prior to adoption.

## **C. ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES**

### **Building Division Management**

The Building Services Manager (Building Official) oversees the operations of the Building Plan Review, Building Inspections and Permit Counter to assure all construction within the City complies with all Building Codes and Ordinances related to construction. The Building Official has over 16 years' experience in enforcing building code requirements and has been the Building Official for the City of Kirkland for the 6 ½ years. He is well respected by staff and has received recognition on a regional basis as the local Building Official of the Year.

The Building Official actively participates in regional and state building official association activities that bring a direct benefit to the City of Kirkland. The Building Official's participation on the regional MyBuildingPermit.com committee has helped keep Kirkland among the leaders in the field of on-line permit processing and his participation on technical advisory committees has helped shape the language in the state building codes. The Building Official also participates as a member of the local and regional EnerGov User Group, a group that coordinates efforts to provide direction to the suppliers of the EnerGov software.

In addition to concerns about adequate staffing and budget, a major challenge facing the Building Official at this time is overcoming the numerous significant problems created by the implementation of the new EnerGov permitting software program. The program has not performed up to expectations, with some of the features from the previous program being unavailable or very cumbersome to utilize. The impacts are significant and affect every aspect of his Division's operations. Staff at every level has been forced to spend significantly more time entering information into the systems and correcting errors that the system generates. These additional

responsibilities have diminished the amount of time available to perform staff's core functions such as conducting field inspections, completing plan reviews and issuing building permits. The EnerGov system also does not currently provide the type of detailed activity reporting that was previously available from the Tidemark Advantage System. Allocating resources to address this major challenge should be a top priority for the Department.

**47. Recommendation:** The Building Official should continue to participate in local and regional EnerGov User Group meetings to pressure the software provider to resolve the current deficiencies in the permit software.

### **Business Cards**

Staff routinely assigned to perform field inspections, including Building and Fire Inspectors, frequently need to contact customers in advance of inspections and likewise customers have a need to contact inspectors to coordinate field inspection times. When the City provides an inspector with a cell phone, that phone number should be included on the inspector's business card. This practice is only being partially implemented at this time.

**48. Recommendation:** As new business cards are ordered for Fire and Building Inspectors they should be modified to include the Inspector's City cell phone number.

### **Communications**

Staff involved in development services has been recently subjected to a significant amount of change as a result of the implementation of several new programs or significant changes to existing programs. These programs include EnerGov, On-Line Plan Review, Expanded MyBuildingPermit.com, New World Fire Inspection Tracking and GIS. While implementation of new programs is encouraged and inevitable, the methods used to introduce these changes can have a significant effect on the success of the program. Staff interviews revealed considerable frustration with the methods used to implement several of these new programs based primarily on poor communication during the process. Complaints included failure to be consulted on proposed "enhancements" to the system prior to implementation, lack of notification to all staff when procedures have been changed, lack of procedure manuals and an inconsistent process in notifying staff of process changes.

**49. Recommendation:** The Development Review Committee II should establish a general set of communication guidelines to follow when implementing new programs that help ensure all staff becomes willing and informed participants in the process.

One of the communication devices utilized in the past by the development services departments has been the Development Review Committee (DRC) Manual. A copy of this Manual is maintained on the City's Intranet site (Kirknet) for employee use. A review of this manual suggests that it can provide assistance in addressing some of the communication concerns currently being expressed by staff. The Manual appears well organized and sufficiently detailed to provide genuine assistance to staff; however, it does not appear to have been updated within the last three years and does not adequately cover the new programs that have been implemented.

- 50. Recommendation: The Development Review Committee should update the DRC Manual currently on the City's intranet site and use it as a consistent method of communicating procedure changes to all staff.**

### **Customer Handouts**

Professional builders, as well as homeowners, frequently rely on the availability of informational handouts to assist them in navigating through the permit process and understanding how code provisions are interpreted within the local jurisdiction. The number of customer handouts available at the Fire and Building Department counter and on the City's website is comprehensive. The information is generally well organized and follows a logical sequence in providing information to applicants who are using the system for the first time. However, for frequent users of the system the volume of information to wade through can be onerous. Providing an index that includes each handout would assist those customers seeking a specific piece of information. An Index has been created for all handouts and permit applications; however, it is only accessible on the Kirklandpermits.net site and is not currently linked to the City's main website. In addition, some of the handouts have not been updated to reflect procedural changes such as the implementation of the IVR system through EnerGov.

- 51. Recommendation: An index list of all available customer handouts should be compiled and made readily available to the public on both the City's main website and at the public counter.**

- 52. Recommendation: All handouts and applications should be periodically updated to reflect current operating procedures.**

Our experience has shown that one of the most frequently requested informational handouts are flow charts that helps describe the permit process. Development Process flow charts were created for some of the development processes as part of the implementation of the new EnerGov Permit System, however, this information has not been provided in a format accessible to the customer. Flow charts for all processes are recommended in a previous recommendation.

## **Department Administration**

The Director of Fire and Building is responsible for the overall operation of the Fire and Building Department. Having previous experience in a large Fire Department, the Chief has been with the City of Kirkland for 3½ years during which time he has taken steps to mold the organization to reflect his philosophy. The impacts on the development services functions are primarily reflected in the operations of the Building Division and the Fire Prevention Bureau. As stated elsewhere, the Director of Fire and Building has expressed great confidence in the Building Official and has allowed him a high level of autonomy in running the Building Division. The Director of Fire and Building also acknowledges that the Building Division is funded primarily from building permit related fees and certain restrictions are in place to ensure that the funds from these permits are utilized to support the activities of the Building Division.

The administrative support provided to Fire Administration is under the supervision of the Deputy Fire Chief/Administration. During interviews with various staff members several comments were provided that indicated a general lack of teamwork and accountability among the administrative support staff. Comments generally focused on an unwillingness or inability to cover for other administrative staff members during absences or when high volumes of customer generated work arose at the counter. Comments also reported a lack of written procedures and performance standards for administrative positions. It is our understanding that an Administrative Support Supervisor position is to be filled in the near future to provide additional oversight of the administrative staff.

**53. Recommendation: The Director of Fire and Building should continue efforts to hire an Administrative Support Supervisor to provide oversight and assistance to the administrative support staff.**

**54. Recommendation: Upon hiring an Administrative Support Supervisor, the individual should be tasked with the responsibility to establish employee performance standards and create a set of written desk procedures.**

## **Fire Prevention Bureau Management**

The Fire Prevention Bureau is supervised by the Fire Marshal who reports to the Deputy Fire Chief/Administration. The current staffing in the Fire Prevention Bureau consists of a combination of sworn and civilian positions. At one point the Fire Prevention Bureau consisted entirely of civilian employees. That trend is now transitioning to a Bureau comprised entirely of sworn personnel as positions become vacant. The current Fire Marshal has been with the City of Kirkland for over 25 years in a civilian position. The role of the Fire Marshal has evolved during that time to become a position that primarily performs plan review services for new construction. The Fire Marshal is considered a tremendous source of knowledge regarding the

application of the Fire Code and is frequently consulted in that capacity. The Job Description of the Fire Marshal position, however, includes numerous other duties that are not currently being addressed by the Fire Marshal. The Fire Marshal has suggested that some form of job swap be initiated that would allow her to continue to perform the critical plan review function without the supervisory responsibilities identified in the Fire Marshal Job Description.

**55. Recommendation: The Director of Fire and Building should pursue granting the Fire Marshal’s request for reassignment to a full-time plans examiner type position and seek candidates to assume the full duties of the Fire Marshal position.**

## **Job Descriptions**

Fundamental to providing quality customer service is establishing employee performance standards based on accurate job descriptions. A review of current job descriptions revealed that most descriptions have not been updated for many years and contain references to required certifications from organizations that no longer exist. In addition, some job classifications include minimum educational requirements that current incumbents do not meet. These minimum qualifications should be reviewed to determine if they are still appropriate for the specific position.

**56. Recommendation: The City should update Job Descriptions to reflect any desired changes in minimum educational qualification and appropriate changes to reflect the current names of certifying organizations.**

The Job Description for the Electrical/Building Inspector position mandates a minimum of five years’ experience as a licensed commercial journeyman electrician with the State of Washington Department of Labor and Industries. This appears to be an appropriate minimum State mandated qualification to perform electrical inspections. Kirkland is one of the few jurisdictions in the state that performs its own electrical inspections, other jurisdictions contract with the State to provide these types of inspections. In Kirkland these same inspectors also provide building, plumbing and mechanical inspections, though the job description only requires certification as a Building Inspector within one year of hire. The Electrical/Building Inspectors also perform all electrical plan reviews rather than staff from the Plan Review Section. There is little question that the inspectors are very qualified to perform electrical inspections based on their experience in the trade, however, no such trade experience is required in building, plumbing or mechanical. In reality, it would be very difficult to find any inspector that possessed the equivalent of five years of journeyman experience in each of these trades. Other jurisdictions that utilize “combination” inspectors typically mandate certification from the International Code Council as a

Combination Inspector to reflect their inspector's qualifications in all of the trades they are inspecting.

**57. Recommendation: The City should update the Job Description for the Electrical/Building Inspector position to include minimum certification requirements to reflect their assignments to also inspect plumbing and mechanical installations.**

## **Organization**

Unlike most jurisdictions, the City of Kirkland has been organized to combine the Fire Department and the Building Department functions into a single Department. Traditionally Building functions have been either a separate department or combined with a Planning Department or a Public Works Department. In recent years the trend has been to combine the development review functions from Planning, Building and Engineering/Public Works into a separate Development Services Department. A variety of arguments can be made in support of each of these models; however, in reviewing the actual operation of the combined Kirkland Fire and Building Department it appears this organizational structure works well at this time. There seems to be a strong working relationship between the Director of Fire and Building and the Building Official based on mutual respect. In addition, there is a very good working relationship between the members of the Fire Prevention Bureau and the Building Division employees. A shared purpose of ensuring appropriate fire and life safety protection for the people of Kirkland has provided a strong bond among this group.

There has been some suggestion that a consolidation of regional fire protection districts may be considered in the future. Under such a scenario it appears unlikely that Kirkland's Building functions would be included in such a consolidation and therefore consideration should be given as to how the Building Division operations would be reorganized. Establishing the Building Division as a separate department or combining development review functions from Building, Planning and PW into a Development Services Department should be considered.

**58. Recommendation: The City should continue to operate a combined Fire and Building Department until such time that the Fire Department becomes part of a consolidated regional Fire Department. Upon consolidation, Building should become a Department, be merged with Planning, or be incorporated with specific Planning and Public Works functions into a Development Services Department.**

## **Records Management**

The State of Washington establishes a minimum retention schedule for building permits and plans for all jurisdictions. The City of Kirkland currently stores the

original paper copy of plans and permits in a variety of formats that make retrieval difficult and time consuming. It was frequently mentioned that older planning type reports were nearly impossible to retrieve and that recently completed projects are not being filed in a timely manner. The long-term solution should be to digitize and index all documents required to be retained and thereby make them immediately available to staff and the public when the need arises. Digitizing plans will also facilitate future access to these plans and reports via the EnerGov permit software.

**59. Recommendation: The City should work with the City Clerk’s Office to evaluate and recommend a long-term solution to the records management function as it relates to plans, records and reports that are reviewed as part of the development review process.**

### **Staff Coverage**

Frequently during staff interviews the subject of inadequate staff coverage was raised as a source of poor customer service. First-line staff often found it difficult to find technical or administrative staff to assist customers at the counter or to receive phone calls. They attributed this to the extensive use of flex-time and a general lack of coordination of work schedules. This situation can also contribute to a feeling of unfair workload assignments in the eyes of those that don’t have the opportunity to participate in flex-time. Other organizations faced with such a challenge have initiated a variety of methods to keep staff informed about the status of individual employees during the course of the workweek. These methods have ranged from simple sign-out white boards to sophisticated computer-based master calendars.

**60. Recommendation: The City Manager should review the current flextime program and implement additional measures to keep all staff better informed of the daily status of those participating in the program.**

### **Staffing/Activity Levels**

We believe that a variety of activities should be measured in order to evaluate appropriate staffing levels. Table 8 below provides a cross section of activities both currently and historically performed by Building Department staff and the available staff during the same time period.

This table does not include the three (3) FTEs from Fire Prevention Bureau assigned plan review and new construction inspection responsibilities and also does not include the approximate 15 permits/month that are fire protection system only permits issued during those years.

During interviews with the Building Official it was stated that the current staffing level provides the bare minimum necessary to meet the basic plan review, permit processing and inspection responsibilities on a daily basis. Other important tasks such

as tracking expired permits, updating forms and handouts and updating information on the website has had to take a backseat.

The total number of permits issued over the last seven years has fluctuated consistent with the economic downturn. The permit activity levels for 2012 of 4,980 are 22% above the high 2006 year with 4,072 activities. In 2006 staff handled roughly 156.6 activities per staff. In 2012 it is projected to be 263.8 per staff. Thus, the total number of staff available to support the 2012 level of activity is less than that provided during 2006. A closer review of the permit activity data indicates that the current rate of new single family development still lags behind the peak periods of 2006 and 2007 with much of the increase in permit activity being attributed to additions and alterations to existing commercial buildings and a significant increase in minor electrical and mechanical permits. This is only an overview type of analysis since we do not have actual staff time required for each permit type. It is proposed that these numbers be developed as part of the proposed fee study. Nevertheless, the analysis does indicate that there is a probable need for additional staffing, particularly in light of our proposed new performance standards, shorter timelines, and the need to address deferred tasks such as tracking expired permits and updating handouts and the website content.

It is also appropriate to note that the average valuation per permit has decreased which means that staff is generally working on smaller projects. This shift to smaller projects can impact the City in two different ways. First, smaller projects are frequently undertaken by less experienced contractors and homeowners resulting in an increased expectation that the plan review and inspection staff will provide an even higher level of assistance to successfully complete the projects. Secondly, these smaller projects tend to result in additional staff costs that are not fully recovered by existing building permit fees which ultimately results in fewer staff to perform the work unless the fees are adjusted.

**Table 8  
Building Permit Activity**

Type	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	6 Yr. Ave.
Comm-New	6	12	8	12	2	19	40	9.8
Comm-Adds/Alts	174	172	186	141	181	201	266	175.8
Res – New SFD	232	222	120	44	71	106	173	132.5
Res-SFD Adds/Alts	262	256	252	234	242	248	217	249
Res- New MFD	7	3	0	3	1	1	1	2.5
Res-MFD Adds/Alts **	0	0	0	0	0	108	150	108
Misc – Signs/Grading/Demo/Oth	374	298	232	142	157	159	170	227
Electrical	1397	1360	1169	960	1213	1371	2055	1245
Mechanical	923	924	734	612	780	851	1247	804
Plumbing	697	652	564	372	442	330	661	509.5
Totals	4072	3899	3265	2520	3089	3394	4980	3373.2
Percent Change	-	-4.2	-16.3	-22.8	+22.6	+9.9	+46.7	
Effective FTEs	22.5	22.5	20.78	20.03	15.28	16.28	17.28	
Temporary Positions	3.5	2.5	2.5	0	0	1.6	1.6	
Total FTEs + Temporary	26	25	23.28	20.03	15.28	17.88	18.88	
Total per FTE & Temp.	156.6	159.96	140.2	164.9	202.2	189.9	263.8	168.95

\*2012 Projected

\*\*Report categories restructured 2011

Evaluating the appropriateness of staffing levels must also consider the overall effectiveness of the staff performing the services. This report contains recommendations to enhance employee performance by establishing performance standards and conducting periodic staff performance audits. However, evaluating employee effectiveness must also consider whether the employees have access to the tools that would allow them to consistently perform at a high level. As stated elsewhere, staff's effectiveness is currently being seriously hampered by the shortcomings of the EnerGov permit software program. Staff from the Building Inspection section report that they spend approximately two hours per day per inspector reconciling the inspection requests and result postings. The time spent daily on these activities is approximately equivalent to a full time position. This is a level of intervention that was not required under the previous software and should be corrected as soon as possible.

**Table 9  
Inspection Activity**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Inspections</b>	<b>Avg/Inspection/Day</b>	<b>Inspection FTEs</b>	<b>Avg/Insp/Day/Inspector</b>
2008	15,202	60.1	5	12.0
2009	11,446	46.0	4	11.5
2010	11,119	45.6	4	11.4
2011	11,975	54.8	5	11.0
2012*	15,216	60.1	5	12.0

\*Projected

The number of average inspections per day per inspector has generally been a good indicator of overall inspection workload. We recommend that the average number of inspections per day per inspector fall within a range of between 10 and 15 per day. This recommendation assumes the inspectors are focusing all of their attention on conducting field inspections. In the case of Kirkland, there are other considerations that impact the time available for inspection staff to complete their daily inspections. As stated previously, overcoming the current shortcoming of the EnerGov system has reduced the amount of staff time available to complete inspections and could be considered to reduce available inspection staffing equivalent to one full-time position. Factoring this into the current staffing assignments would reduce the available staff to four FTEs and increase the average inspections per day to 14.6. Another factor to be considered is the fact that the Electrical/Building Inspectors are also tasked to perform all plan review responsibilities for electrical installations. Per Washington State Law,

they appear to be the only staff qualified to perform such plan review services. In most communities throughout the country, electrical plan review is performed by qualified plans examiners assigned to the Plan Review Section. This arrangement tends to create efficiencies by allowing a single plan reviewer to check all code requirements at the same time.

The City should be commended for utilizing a combination inspector program that provides greater efficiency than a specialty inspection program and historically using temporary and contract employees to address peak workload situations. We also support the City commitment to provide next business day inspections. The average inspection workload of inspection per day per inspector is approaching the upper limit of our recommendation, however, alternatives should be considered before hiring additional staff.

- 61. Recommendation: The City should take immediate steps to correct deficiencies in the inspection module of the EnerGov software program in order to allow inspection staff to spend more time conducting field inspections.**
- 62. Recommendation: The Building Official should consider transferring the responsibility for electrical plan review to the Plan Review Section.**
- 63. Recommendation: The Building Official should continue to utilize the services of temporary and contract inspection staff to address increased workload.**

The Building Division currently has an unfilled Plans Examiner Position that is scheduled to be filled on January 2013. The need for this position was originally identified as a response to the recent annexation. While the Department has been able to generally meet its stated plan review target turnaround times, we believe these targets turnaround times are much too long. As will be discussed in the Plan Review Section of the report, public feedback and best practices indicate these turnaround times should be substantially reduced. It is with the anticipated reduction in target turnaround times that we recommend this vacant Plans Examiner position be filled as scheduled. Consideration should also be given to again utilizing the services of outside consultants to provide plan review services when the revised turnaround times can no longer be met with existing full-time staff.

- 64. Recommendation: The Building Official should continue his efforts to fill a new budgeted Plans Examiner position in January 2013 in order to respond to a commitment to reduce overall plan review turnaround times.**

- 65. Recommendation:** The Building Official should again utilize the resources of outside plan review consultants as necessary to achieve compliance with the new reduced plan review turnaround target times.

## **Training**

Unlike many other municipal services, the building, fire and other related codes adopted by the jurisdiction change frequently, which requires the Building Official to apply constant vigilance to ensure that the most current adopted code provisions are being properly enforced. One of the methods to obtain the needed training on these new codes is through attendance at outside training classes. Technical code classes are made available locally by such organizations as International Code Council (ICC), Washington Association of Building Official (WABO), National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), and the International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials (IAPMO). The City of Kirkland has identified minimum certification requirements in the Job Descriptions for many positions in the Fire and Building Department. Maintaining certifications generally requires obtaining a prescribed number of Continuing Education Units (CEUs) every three years. If budget is not available for travel, many of these classes are available on-line from these same organizations. It is appropriate that the City continue to pay for attendance at outside training classes and reimburse staff for the cost of processing their Certification renewals. According to staff, the City has continued to be supportive of most of their efforts to participate in these classes and obtain the necessary Continuing Education Units (CEUs) to maintain their certifications.

- 66. Recommendation:** The City should continue to financially support attendance at local and State code training classes for all members of the inspection and plans review staff.
- 67. Recommendation:** The Building Official and Fire Marshal should actively monitor the status of both their Inspector's and Plans Reviewer's qualifications and establish a program to confirm they are accumulating the necessary CEUs to maintain their qualifications.

A critical component of an appropriate training program is the existence of a well-stocked technical library. Staff indicates they are generally satisfied with the content of their existing technical library with the exception that they would appreciate having access to a digital copy (e-codes) of the next set of Codes to be adopted. We support this request because we believe having a copy of the e-codes available can greatly facilitate code research based on word searches.

- 68. Recommendation:** The Building Official should consider purchasing a copy of the e-codes appropriate for the jurisdiction in conjunction with adoption of the new State mandated codes in 2013.

We understand that, due to budget constraints, the City may need to curtail outside training expenditures; however, we believe that 2% of this function's personnel budget should be set aside for annual supervisory training and other training of employees. In addition, employees should continually receive in-house training and mentoring from supervisors and other designated trainers. We typically suggest that 5% of staff's time be devoted to training.

**69. Recommendation: The budget for the Fire and Building Department should include a line item for on-going technical code and supervisory training for Department staff equivalent to 2% of the Department's annual personnel budget, so that all staff can receive training appropriate for their positions.**

Neither the Building Division nor Fire Prevention Bureau conduct weekly in-house training sessions for their inspection, plan review or permit technician staff. Conducting weekly training sessions typically provides an opportunity for staff to share their experiences gained while conducting field inspections, performing plan reviews or processing permits. This sharing process contributes to more consistent interpretations among the staff. Weekly training sessions are particularly important when a new set of codes are adopted every three years. Tracking these training sessions gives supervisors the opportunity to confirm that all appropriate subjects are being covered during training and helps ensure that all staff has had access to the training. In addition, a specific training program for new employees is essential to establish not only a basic understanding of the technical code requirements enforced by the City, but also as a means of determining if new employees are familiar with the policies, regulations, and procedures unique to the jurisdiction.

**70. Recommendation: The Fire Marshal and Building Official should ensure that all inspection, plans examination and permit technician staff participate in some form of a weekly training session that is recorded for both subject matter and attendance. Opportunities to lead the classes should be given to all staff as a means of encouraging the development of technical expertise and identifying staff for potential future promotional opportunities.**

In addition to the technical training needed to ensure continued competency within the individual discipline, there appears to be an immediate need for additional basic supervisory training for managers and supervisors. While employees seem to "like" their supervisors, upon closer review, they frequently cite examples of problems that are indicative of a supervisor's failure to understand and/or perform the basic responsibilities of their position. As stated elsewhere in this report, the lack of performance standards, work product audits and failure to administer performance evaluations tends to encourage a wide range of employee performance. Inevitably, this leads employee's to feel there is an inconsistent or unfair distribution of workload

and breeds concerns of favoritism. It is our understanding that the Human Resources Department has recently launched a Manager/Supervisor Training Program. We strongly support this effort.

- 71. Recommendation: The Director of Fire and Building should strongly encourage full participation by all of his Managers and Supervisors in Human Resources' recently initiated Manager/Supervisor Training Program.**

## **D. POLICY AND REGULATION ISSUES**

### **Codes**

The City of Kirkland is required to enforce the minimum standards adopted in the Washington State Building Code. The State is currently enforcing the 2009 editions of the various building related codes. It is anticipated that the State will move to adopt the 2012 editions of the codes in July 2013. Ensuring that staff and the building community are aware of the impending changes to the codes should be a priority for the Building Official. Securing an adequate number of copies of the new codes and beginning the process of training staff to be familiar with the new requirements should begin as soon as practical. As the enforcement date approaches, the Building Official should also initiate a public education program for local builders and homeowners to alert them to the new provisions of the codes and how they will be interpreted for local enforcement. With the adoption of the new codes, a review of current customer handouts should be undertaken to confirm they do not conflict with the new code provisions. This would also be an appropriate time to develop additional customer handouts to draw attention to provisions specific to the new codes and make other handout suggestions covered in other parts of this report.

- 72. Recommendation: The Building Official should immediately secure sufficient copies of the 2012 editions of the various codes anticipated to be adopted by the State of Washington.**

- 73. Recommendation: The Building Official should begin developing a comprehensive training program to familiarize the inspection and plans reviewer staff with those requirements that will be changed with the adoption of the new codes. The Department should continue to participate in the Annual WABO Education Week.**

- 74. Recommendation: The Building Official should develop a public education program to familiarize local builders with the new provisions of the codes and how they will be interpreted for local enforcement.**

- 75. Recommendation:** The Building Official should review all existing customer handouts to confirm the information is consistent with newly adopted codes and generate additional handouts that will assist the customers in transitioning to the new codes.

## **E. PROCESSING ISSUES**

### **Building/Fire Permits Counter**

The Building Permits counter is staffed by a Permit Technician Supervisor, Permit Technicians (4.08 FTEs) and an Office Technician. The group's primary responsibility is to receive and process permit applications and provide general and applicable technical information to the public. Duties include initial review of applications and plans to determine completeness, calculation of permit fees and routing of permits to appropriate departments. This is but one of many counters that open on to the main pedestrian lobby. The Planning counter and the Public Works counter are also adjacent to this main lobby but are operated separately. The Building counter is located immediately adjacent to the main entrance to City Hall and therefore receives numerous general inquires unrelated to building permits, particularly when the general reception desk at the main lobby is not staffed

The Building Permit Technicians are the group most seriously impacted by the introduction of the EnerGov permitting system. In comparison with the previous computer permitting system, the new system is estimated to take two times longer to process a permit. While efforts are continuing to be made to improve the performance of the system, there are steps that should be taken to minimize the adverse impact on staff. There is currently no procedures manual available to staff to assist them in operating the system. The supervisor has encouraged each individual to create their own set of procedures as they attempt to learn how to operate the system. This approach can lead to considerable inconsistencies in the data entered into the system and adversely affect the quality of the reports subsequently obtained from the system. This process does not reflect a sound use of resources. If the supervisor does not have the technical skills to prepare a comprehensive procedures manual or is not sufficiently familiar with the operation of the system then we recommend that a single individual be selected and charged with the responsibility to prepare the needed Manual. While the agreement authorizing the filling of the Permit Technician Supervisor position stipulated that the Supervisor would work approximately 25% of the time at the public counter that is not how the position is currently being utilized.

- 76. Recommendation:** The Building Official should designate an individual to create a comprehensive procedure manual for issuing permits in the EnerGov system. The individual should be given temporary out-of-class pay and at least partially relieved of their normal assignments in order to complete this task.

**77. Recommendation:** The Building Official should direct the Permit Technician Supervisor to assist at the public counter approximately 25% of the time and to become thoroughly familiar with the EnerGov system.

The Permit Counter also issues fire related permits and is staffed by an Office Technician that is part of the Fire Administrative Support Group. During staff interviews an issue was raised regarding the apparent lack of backup for the Fire Office Technician during her absence or during times of peak counter activity. Evidently the backup is provided by Building Division staff but this appears to need to be clarified and enforced.

**78. Recommendation:** The Deputy Fire Chief/Administration should take steps to ensure that administrative staff has the capability to provide Permit Counter backup.

### **Fire Prevention Bureau Activities**

There is currently very limited oversight of the daily activities of the Fire Prevention Bureau staff, which has generated complaints from other staff about difficulty in contacting staff for assistance during normal business hours. As stated elsewhere in this report, the extensive use of flex time without a commensurate employee status reporting system in place has generated frustration for other staff members. In addition, there is currently no established set of employee performance standards in place; no periodic field audits of employee performance and performance evaluations are not routinely conducted. We have earlier recommended employee evaluations for all Development Services employees.

**79. Recommendation:** The Fire Marshal should meet with staff to establish employee performance standards for each position based on their job description.

**80. Recommendation:** The Fire Marshal should establish a comprehensive inspection-auditing program that includes ride-alongs, independent site visits by the Fire Marshal and a post-final inspection customer satisfaction survey.

The Director of Fire and Building has indicated a concern about the lack of formal enforcement tools available for Fire Prevention Inspectors to utilize to encourage compliance with Fire Code regulations. It is generally believed that the Code Enforcement staff in the Planning and Community Development Department routinely uses enforcement tools that are not currently available to the Fire Prevention Bureau staff.

- 81. Recommendation:** The Fire Marshal should work with the City Attorney and the Code Enforcement staff from Planning and Community Development to expand the number of code enforcement tools that can be utilized by Fire Prevention staff to encourage compliance.

**Fire Inspection/Tracking System.** The Fire Prevention Bureau and Fire Engine Companies are currently developing and testing the “New World” software program to enter the results of fire inspections. Staff reports that this program was originally designed to meet the reporting needs of police departments. Police reporting systems are generally based on tracking individuals. Fire inspection and building inspection programs are traditionally based on information specific to an individual property site. It is understandable that the Fire Prevention Bureau chose to not immediately convert their inspection program to utilize the EnerGov System, however, over time, as the deficiencies of the EnerGov System are corrected, the Fire Prevention Bureau should consider utilizing the inspection components in the EnerGov System. Utilizing this EnerGov System will allow access to the vast amount of existing property related data currently in the system and allow for a more integrated approach to both inspections and permit issuance.

- 82. Recommendation:** The Fire Prevention Bureau should consider converting its inspection tracking system to the EnerGov program in the future when the current systems deficiencies have been corrected.

## **Inspection Activities**

**Inspection Requests.** Inspection requests are currently received in two different ways. Customers may enter inspection requests into the MyBuildingPermit.com system. However, these requests are then subsequently reentered by staff into the inspection module of the EnerGov System. This duplication of effort should be eliminated in favor of a system that automatically imports the inspection requests into the EnerGov System. The second option for receiving inspection requests is through the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) System that is directly connected to the EnerGov System. During the interview with the inspection staff we accessed the IVR system via telephone and went through the exercise of entering an inspection request. The program is both confusing and very cumbersome to operate due to the numerous menu options the requestor must pass through to reach their specific inspection request. There are no readily available short-cuts for experienced system users to employ to reduce the time they must take to complete the inspection request process. Customers have also complained about the limitations on the number of inspections that can be requested during the same call. If customers have more than three inspections to request for a property, they must start the process over for the remaining inspections. In addition, the system does not afford the requestor the option of leaving a message for the Inspector. This type of information can frequently be

critical to the successful completion of an inspection. The Inspectors also report that the IVR system frequently enters inappropriate inspection requests or numerous duplicate inspection requests that require significant staff time to resolve. It is our understanding that the MyBuildingPermits.com (MPB) is expected to be expanded to include all inspections types and allow direct access for inspection requests into the EnerGov System in May, 2013.

**83. Recommendation:** The Building Official should work with the EnerGov Committee to encourage progress on resolving the current shortcomings of the IVR System and continue monitor progress toward having all inspection requests processed through the MyBuildingPermits.com interface in the future.

**Inspection Consistency.** We did not hear any complaints in Kirkland about inconsistent inspectors. However, this is a standard issue that we see in virtually all of our studies and a program should be in place to assure consistency as much as possible. While in-house group training can contribute to increasing the knowledge of inspection staff and give the Building Official and Inspection Supervisor the opportunity to give specific direction on how the code should be interpreted in the field, this must be followed up with a comprehensive in-field audit program. Currently there is no such program in place. Such a program should consist of a periodic ride-along program whereby the Inspection Supervisor accompanies the inspector during a day of inspection activity and confirms performance against a standardized checklist of established performance standards. Deficiencies should be immediately identified and also noted as performance goals in future performance evaluations. The audit program should also include independent visits by the Inspections Supervisor to job sites to solicit feedback from construction site supervisors regarding the performance of the assigned inspector. These visits also afford the Supervising Inspector or his designee the opportunity to confirm that all required paperwork is on-site and properly completed to reflect the current status of the project. Due to an inherent reluctance by contractors to complain about an inspector while their project is still being inspected, the audit program should also include a component to mail a customer satisfaction survey form to contractors and homeowners after the project has received final inspection. This approach will not only provide the Building Official and Inspections Supervisor an opportunity to gather more reliable feedback regarding the performance of the inspector, but also can provide an opportunity for the permittee to provide valuable feedback and suggestions regarding the entire permitting process.

**84. Recommendation:** The Building Official should work with the Inspections Supervisor and inspection staff to establish a set of performance standards for evaluating inspector performance in the field.

**85. Recommendation:** The Inspections Supervisor should establish a comprehensive inspection-auditing program that includes ride-alongs, independent site visits by the Inspections Supervisor and a post-final inspection customer satisfaction survey.

**86. Recommendation:** The Inspections Supervisor should review all reports gathered during field audits and confirm that appropriate information from those reports is incorporated into employee performance evaluations as future performance goals.

**Field Computers.** The inspection staff currently use tablet computers in the field, however, the inspectors report that they have very limited capability and are in the process of being replaced with new field units. Providing staff with devices that will allow them to retrieve or update permit related information from the field is critical to their success. The Building Division is currently reviewing different types of field computer units to determine which type would be most appropriate for their use in the field (tablets, laptops, iPads, etc.). One of the benefits of using field computers is the ability to coordinate the issuance of correction notices while in the field. Currently not all inspectors are entering their correction notices into the EnerGov System. This inconsistency can lead to confusion for both the customer and other inspectors who may be asked to perform future inspections at that site. The replacement field units should include the capability to enter correction notices directly into the system and be printed out for the customer.

**87. Recommendation:** The existing tablet computers being used by the inspection staff should be replaced with new units that have complete and rapid access to the EnerGov System from the field.

**88. Recommendation:** The Inspections Supervisor should direct all inspectors to enter correction notices into the EnerGov Systems.

## **Plan Review**

The most significant complaint identified from customer surveys and comments during Focus Group interviews was the excessive plan review turnaround times. The City has set performance standards for first review as shown in Table 10. The Table also shows actual review times. However, the latest data we obtained was for March 2012. Newer data is not yet available from the new EnerGov system. There are also performance standards for Green Permits consisting of three weeks for residential and five weeks for commercial projects.

Care must be taken in interpreting the data. Data is shown as averages, which can be very misleading. We recommend that the data systems be changed to report on the percent of applications that met the Goal with a desired performance of meeting the Goal for at least 90% of the projects.

In addition to the issue of meeting First Review Goals, the City sets but does not report timelines for any subsequent reviews. As such, the Total Review Avg. includes applicant time to review and as such may not be a good indicator. We believe performance standards should be set and measured for each review cycle.

**89. Recommendation: The EnerGov system should be changed to set performance targets for each review cycle and report on the percentage of projects that meet the performance standard.**

The City's First Review Goals were met for March 2012 for most residential items except for all three categories of single family as well as multi-family Additions/Alterations. However, only one of the seven Commercial and Tenant Improvement categories were met, and none of the mechanical, land surface modification or sign categories. These poor timelines would appear to work against the City Council's goals for economic development.

**Table 10  
Review Timelines, March 2012**

<b>Item</b>	<b>First Review Goal (weeks)</b>	<b>Building</b>	<b>Planning</b>	<b>Public Works</b>	<b>City First Review, Avg</b>	<b>Total Review, Avg.</b>
<b>Single Family</b>						
New, regular	5	4.7	4.8	0.4	4.8	8.7
New, third party	3	1.9	2.2	1.6	2.2	2.9
Add/Alt, Express	0.4	1.1	0.5	0	1.1	1.6
Add/Alt, Fast Track	2	2.1	2	1.3	2.1	3.5
Add/Alt, Regular	4	3.5	3.6	0.9	3.6	6.2
Total						
<b>Multi-Family</b>						
New, regular	10	0	0	0	0	0
Addition/Alteration, Express	0.4	0.6	0.4	1	1	1.1
Addition/Alteration, Fast Track	2	0	0	0	0	0
Addition/Alteration, Regular	3	0	0	0	0	0
Total						
<b>Commercial, Public &amp; Indust.</b>						
New, regular	10	10.6	11.1	0.1	11.1	26
Addition/Alteration, Express	0.4	0.7	0.7	0	0.7	0.9
Addition/Alteration, Fast Track	2	0	0	0	0	2.1
Addition/Alteration, Regular	3	4.9	4.7	3.1	4.9	2.1
Total						

Item	First Review Goal (weeks)	Building	Planning	Public Works	City First Review, Avg	Total Review, Avg.
<b>Tenant Improvement</b>						
Tenant Improvement, Express	0.4	0.4	0.5	0	0.5	0.9
Tenant Improvement, Fast Track	2	2.6	2.6	0	2.6	2.9
Tenant Improvement, Regular	3	4.4	6.4	0.7	6.4	6.9
Total						
<b>Mechanical</b>						
Mechanical, Express	0.4	0.3	0.3	0	0.3	2.3
Mechanical, Fast Track	2	2	2	0	2	2.1
Mechanical, Regular	3	0	0	0	0	0
Total						
<b>Land Surface Modification</b>	4	1.5	3.7	32.7	32.7	38.8
<b>Signs</b>	2	0.4	1.6	0	1.6	3.7
Total, All Items						

The City target turnaround times are further adjusted for projects that meet specific requirements that typically involve being very small and simple in scope or are considered “green” projects. Additionally, applicants have the option of paying a surcharge to significantly reduce the normal plan review turnaround times. These turnaround times are not published on the City website or otherwise readily available as handout information to the permit applicants.

**90. Recommendation: A table of target turnaround times needs to be developed and readily available to customers via the website and at the public counter.**

Table 11 below reflects our recommended turnaround times for specific project types based on our understanding of the processing requirements specific to the City of

Kirkland. Since plans often may require more than one review cycle, we set different times for each cycle. Some of the City function have set revision times but these are not well known by all participants. This is Best Practice. As a rule of thumb, we reduce the time in half for each cycle.

**Table 11  
Recommended Plan Check Times**

Item	City's First Cycle Target Times	Recommended Times		
		First Cycle	Second Cycle	Third Cycle
New SFD residential construction	6 weeks	3 weeks	1½ weeks (1 week)	4 days
	(5?)	(2 weeks)		(2 days)
New Multi-Family	10 weeks	4 weeks	2 weeks	1 week
		(3weeks)		
Residential remodels	4 weeks	2 weeks	1 week	3 days
		(1 week)	(3 days)	(2 days)
New commercial construction, less than \$1,000, 000 valuation	10 weeks	4 weeks	2 weeks	1 week
		(3 weeks)		
New commercial construction, more than \$1,000, 000 valuation	10 weeks	5 weeks	3 weeks	2 weeks
		(4 weeks)		
Tenant improvements	3 weeks (5?)	2 weeks	1 week	3 days
		(1 week)	(3 days)	(2 days)
Electrical, Mechanical and Plumbing	3 weeks	4 days (3 days)	2 days (1 day)	1 day
Land Surface Modification	4 weeks	3 weeks (2 weeks)	2 weeks (1 week)	1 week (3 days)
Signs	2 weeks	1 week (3 days)	3 days (2 days)	1 day

As can be observed from the table above, we believe the turnaround times for all types of projects should be substantially reduced. It should be also noted that the table above includes establishing time frames for second and third reviews (i.e., rechecks) that are significantly less than the original review periods. In a number of cases we are recommending timelines longer than we feel are desirable but likely necessary as a

first step. In some cases a shorter timeline is shown in parentheses, which could be a longer-term goal.

We understand that there will need to be some process and possible staff changes in order to meet these timelines. Our approach to meeting timelines is described in Chapter I of this report. Adopting these new standards would help address the single most frequently expressed complaint about the City's development review services.

**91. Recommendation: The City should adopt the target turnaround times identified in Table 11.**

As identified above, the City has established overall plan review turnaround target times; however, these times are excessive with at least one Department reportedly frequently missing even these target dates. Staff reports that the plan reviews conducted by the Fire, Building and Public Works staff are consistently completed prior to the deadlines, while the Planning Department frequently fails to meet the target dates. Staff indicates that this occurs most frequently with those projects that require Planning review and sign-off by a Planner working on advanced planning projects. A recommendation to address this issue can be found in the Planning section of the report.

All processes need what we generally refer to as project managers. The Plans Examiners have been designated as the project managers for building permits; however, they have not been performing the full scope of the responsibilities of a project manager. A true project manager monitors timelines, intercedes and problem solves when necessary, and helps resolve any conflicts between reviewers. The Building Official indicates that the Plan Reviewers have this responsibility. However, this assignment is not clear to either the plan reviewers or the reviewers from other functions. It is apparent that the Plans Examiners have not received specific training on the role of the project manager and this role has also not been clearly communicated to other staff that participate in the development review process. There are a variety of ways other communities' handle this issue including assigning it to a planner, or special staff that function only as project managers. This latter approach generally adds to the cost. We suggest that the City proceed with the Building Officials suggestion that the Plan Reviewers assume project management responsibility.

**92. Recommendation: The City should clarify that the Building Plan Reviews have the role of being project managers for all building and fire reviews.**

**93. Recommendation: The role of the building permit project manager must be clearly communicated to staff that participate in the development review process.**

## **Express Permits and Fast Track Permits**

Express Permit and Fast-Track permits were introduced in 2001 in order to segregate the less complex permits so that they could be reviewed more quickly.

- Express Permits, such as rooftop appurtenances, tenant improvements, basic decks, single family first floor additions, and ground mounted mechanical units, are permits that are intended to be issued in three (3) working days or less.
- Fast-Track Permits are intended to be issued within ten (10) working days or less. Typical Fast-Track permits include new single family homes, more complex single family additions or garages under 500 square feet and other small projects, such as decks, sheds, repair/maintenance projects in or near sensitive areas that are exempt from the State Environmental Policy Act. In addition, complex rooftop appurtenances, rockeries and retaining walls up to 8 feet tall, tenant Improvements up to 5,000 square feet without a change in use, slab on grade greenhouse additions under 500 square feet and single family outdoor swimming pools.

Staff interviewed indicated that they are generally able to perform the reviews of Express and Fast-Track Permits within the review timeframes, and that the process works well.

## **Expedited Review and Priority Reviews**

In 2003, the City initiated a new program for single-family dwellings to allow builders to pay an additional review fee (~ \$1,700) in exchange for an expedited review process. Builder's that elect to pay for expedited review are guaranteed first review comments from the building and planning departments for their Building Permit within fifteen (15) working days, compared to six weeks for the normal review process.

Interviews with staff indicated that the City no longer hires outside planning and building consultants to perform expedited reviews. Rather the plans are routed to in-house Building Plan Reviewers and Assistant Planners to conduct the reviews through over-time. Since these staff members are eligible for over-time compensation, a portion of the expedited review fees is utilized to defray the over-time costs associated with plan review. However, these staff members do not always have the capacity in their workload to complete expedited reviews and salaried employees are not assigned expedited review work as a backup because they do not receive the over-time compensation.

Staff indicated that they explored the option of eliminating the expedited fee, and balancing out fees and timelines across the board to provide faster overall service during the last fee update. However, the City decided to maintain the expedited fee and review program.

We prefer that cities have an expedited review option for builders and often recommend to those cities that don't have such a program to establish one. Expedited reviews can be particularly useful for Kirkland given customers concerns related to slow timelines. Additionally, since there may be a reluctance to raise fees for normal processing, expedited reviews lets the customer decide if they want pay the extra fee.

Given staffing issues, it is likely that most expedited reviews would need to be completed by consultants. There are a variety of ways cities have handled these reviews including:

- Finding consultants willing to perform the reviews at a percentage of the normal review cost, often 60 to 80% with the remaining fee available to handle city overhead.
- Having a fixed additional fee, similar to Kirkland's fees for Single Family houses.
- Charging the normal fee but then adding on all the consultants' costs.
- It should be noted that the expedited fee would need to cover costs for all the review agencies.

**94. Recommendation: The City should have an aggressive expedited plan review process, and set the fees in consultation with the industry.**

In order to make an expedited program truly workable, the timelines need to be substantially below the normal plan review timelines. We suggest the timelines shown in Table 12 below.

**Table 12  
Suggested Expedited Plan Review Times**

Item	City's First Cycle Target Times	Recommended Times		
		First Cycle	Second Cycle	Third Cycle
New SFD residential construction	6 weeks	1 week	3 days	2 days
New Multi-Family	10 weeks	2 weeks	1 weeks	3 days
Residential remodels	4 weeks	1 week	3 days	2 days
New commercial construction, less than \$1,000, 000 valuation	10 weeks	2 weeks	1 weeks	3 days
New commercial construction, more than \$1,000, 000 valuation	10 weeks	2 weeks	1 week	1 day
Tenant improvements	3 weeks (5?)	1week	3 days	2 days
Electrical, Mechanical and Plumbing	3 weeks	2 days	1 days	1 day
Land Surface Modification	4 weeks	1 week	4 days	3 days
Signs	2 weeks	3 days	2 days	1 day

**95. Recommendation: Expedited plan review times should be set as shown in Table 12.**

**Plan Review Hours**

Currently Plans Examiner assignments are being tracked on a separate Excel Spreadsheet maintained by the Plan Review Supervisor. The hours allocated for plan review on this sheet are not truly related to the expected duration of the plan check, but rather based on the fee collected. There is currently no specific set of guidelines being used to assign individual projects based on the anticipated time needed to complete the plan review. The spreadsheet also does not include a significant number

of the plan reviews actually being performed by staff and is therefore not a complete picture of the actual Plans Examiners' workload. A major selling point of computer based permit tracking software is the ability to closely measure the plan review workload in order to help ensure an appropriate balance between Plans Examiners and the total plan review workload. In many cases, this type of information is also essential to the successful completion of a comprehensive permit fee study. Such information helps provide a "nexus" between the amounts of time staff spends processing a permit and the fee appropriate to recover the cost for that staff time. The EnerGov system should have the capability to provide this level of detailed staff time tracking. In the interim period, staff should at least create a short-term alternative time tracking log to gather this type of information.

**96. Recommendation:** The EnerGov Committee should direct EnerGov to provide a comprehensive plan review tracking module that will allow tracking of individual plans examiner project completions.

**97. Recommendation:** The Plan Review Supervisor should direct the plan review staff to utilize a project tracking log to record the amount of time they spend performing plan reviews on each project.

**98. Recommendation:** The Plan Review Supervisor should utilize the information from the Plans Examiner tracking logs to help ensure that the total workload is appropriately balanced between all Plans Examiners.

## **Plans Examination**

The current Plan Review Supervisor has been employed by the City of Kirkland for 11 years, and been in the position of Plan Review Supervisor for seven years. As the Plan Review Supervisor, he is responsible for supervising the plans examiners, organizing and prioritizing work activities, providing technical guidance and coordinating the plan review needs of permit applicants and staff in other Divisions and Departments. Per the Job Description, this position is required to have a thorough knowledge of current building, residential, plumbing, mechanical and general construction codes as well as a working knowledge of electrical, carpentry, concrete, mechanical and plumbing work. This position and the other four (4) plans examiners perform plan review for all types of construction, except electrical. At this time the electrical plan reviews are performed by the Electrical/Building Inspectors due to the State requirement that electrical reviews must be conducted by individuals that are licensed as Journeyman Electricians. Currently commercial plans are reviewed by the Plan Review Supervisor and two Plans Examiner IIs while residential and small commercial tenant improvements are performed by the other Plans Examiner II and the Plans Examiner I. All Plans Examiners are required to be ICC Certified as Plans Examiners. Overall, staff appears to be qualified to perform the types of plan reviews

that are typically submitted to the City. In addition, the Plan Review Supervisor has the ability to retain outside professional engineers to review the occasional highly complex project. This Section is anticipated to hire an additional plans examiner in January 2013 to address increased workload.

**99. Recommendation:** In hiring a new Plans Examiner position, the Building Official should consider seeking an applicant with qualifications that not only meet the minimum of ICC Commercial Plans Examiner Certification but would also have electrical qualifications that satisfy the State Law.

**100. Recommendation:** Projects involving significant structural design or complex plumbing/mechanical/electrical systems should be reviewed by an in-house plans reviewer with appropriate qualifications in that specific field or the plan review should be contracted out to a firm with qualified staff to perform those services.

Key indicators for measuring the effectiveness of a plan review operation is the quality of the plan review and the quantity of plans reviewed. The quality of plan review is frequently measured by the degree to which similar plans are reviewed in a consistent and uniform manner by the Plans Examiners. A traditional method used to help advance completeness and accuracy for plan reviews is the implementation of a periodic audit program. The City of Kirkland does not currently employ a program to periodically audit the performance of the plans examiners.

**101. Recommendation:** The Building Official should work with the Plan Review Supervisor to establish a set of performance standards for evaluating Plans Examiner performance.

**102. Recommendation:** The Plan Review Supervisor should establish a comprehensive Plans Review auditing program that includes periodic review of completed plan reviews performed by both in-house staff and any reviews that may be conducted by outside consultants.

**103. Recommendation:** The Plan Review Supervisor should review all reports gathered during the plan review audits and confirm that appropriate information from those reports is incorporated into employee performance evaluations as future performance goals.

To maintain consistency in interpretations and to aid in the orientation of new employees, it is essential to have a set of written procedures in the form of a manual. At this time the Plan Review Section does not have a Procedures Manual for employee use.

**104.** *Recommendation:* The Plan Review Supervisor should create a comprehensive Plan Review Procedures Manual to provide guidance for both existing employees and new hires.



# V. ORGANIZATIONS

## A. DESIGN REVIEW BOARD AND PROCESSES

### Overview

The Design Review Board (DRB) consists of (7) seven members appointed by majority vote of the City Council, for four-year terms. In addition, the Planning & Community Development Director is required to sit on the DRB as a nonvoting member for purposes of advising the board on regulatory and urban design issues.

DRB members are required to be design professionals, building/construction experts, and residents of Kirkland capable of reading and understanding architectural plans and knowledgeable in matters of building and design. The majority of the Board must be comprised of architects, landscape architects, urban design and similar professionals. Attendance requirements for DRB members have been established by the Kirkland Municipal Code, and any members missing three or more consecutive meetings not excused by majority vote of the DRB can be recommended for removal by the City Council by majority vote.

The DRB is charged with reviewing and making decisions on “non-exempt” development activities for consistency with various design guidelines in the City’s Zoning Code. “Non-exempt” development activities include specific types of new buildings and additions to existing buildings, as well as renovations to facades identified as a historic structure or located within any of the six (6) zoning districts that require design review. In addition, the DRB reviews and approves certain types of Conceptual Master Plans, and is authorized to approve minor variations in development standards found in certain design guidelines, provided they comply with the adopted criteria.

DRB meetings are held the first and third Mondays of each month at 7pm in the City Hall Council Chambers. There are generally no more than two projects on the agenda per meeting, and all meetings are open to the public. Staff indicates that the number of meetings is sufficient and that there are no backlogs. Rules of Procedure and public participation are posted on the City’s website. Agendas, minutes and audio recordings are kept for each meeting and available on-line. On-call recording secretaries take minutes and audio recordings of DRB meetings and all minutes are up to date and posted online.

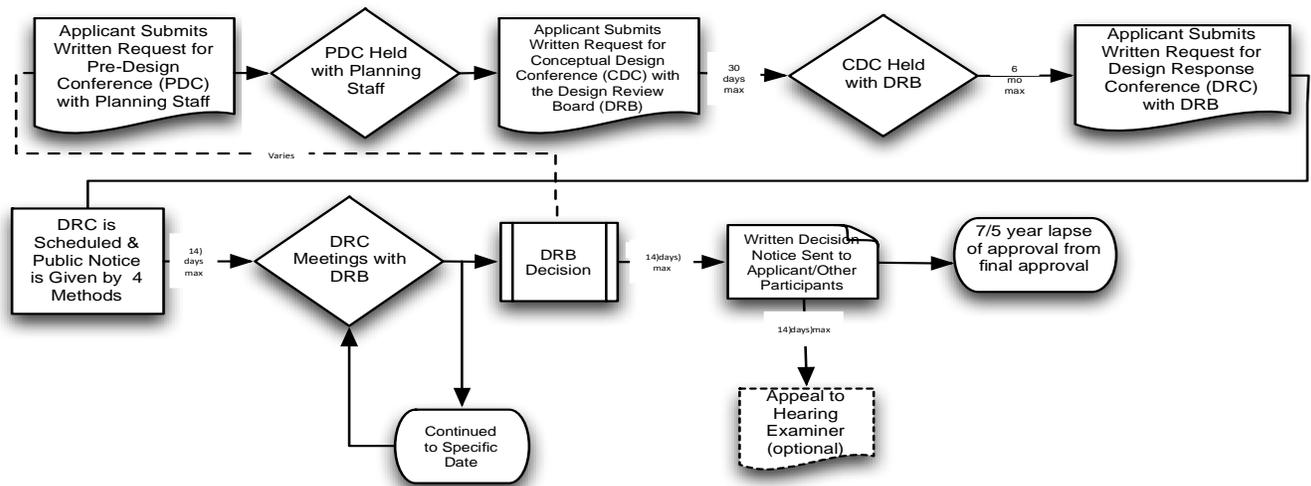
### Design Review Board Approval Process

The Design Review Board (DRB) must approve projects located within any of the six (6) established design districts. Applicants with development projects requiring DRB approval (i.e., “non-exempt development projects) must comply with all Zoning Code

provisions contained in Chapter 142, before a building permit can be approved. However, applicants do have an option of submitting a building permit application at their own risk at any time during the design review process, which we agree is a good option for builders. There is also an Administrative Design Review process, which entails approval at the Planning Official level, which is good.

Figure 8 shows the basic process flow for DRB applications.

**Figure 8**  
**Existing DRB Basic Process Flow**



As the above figure shows, the DRB process is fairly straightforward. Generally the Review Board process consists of three (3) broad steps: A Pre-design Conference; A Conceptual Design Conference; and A Design Response Conference. Additional steps are associated with these broad steps and summarized below, along with our recommended process changes.

1. Pre-Design Conference (PDC). This is the first step in the process before an applicant can apply for DRB approval. The applicant uses the City’s pre-submittal conference application to apply for and schedule the meeting. An application fee is required, which can be credited towards application fees when a formal application for DRB is made. PDC’s are scheduled a minimum of ten (10) business days in advance, and meetings are held on Tuesdays at 11am and 1:30pm and on Thursday afternoon as 1:30pm and 2:30pm. Submittal requirements include a vicinity map, conceptual drawings, which also show the location of all significant trees, (at least 6" diameter), existing and proposed contour lines if available (include parking lot, circulation system, and any natural features).

The PDC application currently can't be filled in, submitted, paid for or scheduled on line.

**105. Recommendation: The City should allow Predesign Conference (PDC) applications and electronic plans to be submitted, scheduled and paid for online.**

PDC is held by a team of City staff, which generally includes staff from Planning, Public Works, Building and Fire. The purpose of the PDC is for the applicant to ask questions and staff to discuss any issues and comprehensive plan, zoning code and design guideline requirements that may apply to the project. The PDC is also intended to assist the applicant in preparing for the conceptual design conference and written notes are kept on the meeting.

Interviews with staff indicated that the meetings are not consistently run by Planning Staff as intended.

*See our recommendations under “Process Issues” regarding Planning Project Manager Systems.*

2. Conceptual Design Conference (CDC) is the next step in the process. The applicant submits a completed application form, various submittal requirements and the required fee to the Planning & Community Development Department. Submittal requirements include: Four (4) copies of simple and clear graphic materials in 11x17” format illustrating:
  - The site, including topography, aerial photography, existing uses and structures, and existing vegetation;
  - Vicinity map;
  - Site and context analysis;
  - Conceptual site plan(s) and massing diagrams;
  - Three alternative massing and siting concepts;
  - Design departures (if any) being considered;
  - Graphic or written materials indicating the development objectives for the project.

The CDC is scheduled within 30 calendar days of the application submittal. The CDC is a preliminary meeting with the DRB to review the site context and project objectives prior to detailed project design work. The applicant can ask

the DRB, questions about the design regulations, design guidelines and other applicable provisions of the Comprehensive Plan. The DRB also has the opportunity to designate which design regulations, design guidelines and other applicable provisions of the Comprehensive Plan apply to the proposed development based primarily on the location and nature of the proposed development, as well as determine what models, drawings, perspective, 3-D Cad Models or other application materials the applicant will be required to submit.

Staff and board member interviews indicated that the CDC is a necessary step that allows applicants to get thorough feedback and direction from the DRB before spending money on the final design. However, we are not convinced. It appears that the PDC meeting could be strengthened to require applicant's to provide the submittal materials necessary so that staff can provide the applicant with adequate feedback and direction to proceed with a DRB submittal, without the need for an intermediate CDC submittal.

**106. Recommendation: The Land Use Management Division should review the submittal requirements for the PDC with the goal of obtaining enough information from the applicant so that adequate feedback and direction can be provided to the applicant in order to make a formal DRB submittal without the need for an intermediate CDC submittal.**

3. After the CDC, the applicant submits a formal DRB application and fee along with all required submittal materials noted as part of the CDC, and submittal requirements noted on the application within 6 months of the CDC. A "Design Response Conference" (DRC) is scheduled with the DRB as soon as practicable, but generally no longer than 60 calendar days of receiving the completed application.
4. Public Notice is typically given by four (4) methods, at least 14 calendar days prior to the first DRB meeting (note: staff indicates that 3 meetings are typically held with the DRB before the applicant gains approval) including, distribution to all property owners within 300 feet of any boundary of the subject property; community groups; publishing the notice once in the official newspaper of the City; the applicant erecting public notice sign(s) conspicuously on or near the subject property facing the public right-of-way, or primary vehicular access road; and posting of the notice on the City's website by City staff.

Interviews with staff indicate that the Department Administrative Staff handle the publishing, adjacent property notice, and website posting. Staff also confirms property owner posting. The Public notice process is handled electronically (with the exception of property posting) and occurs as early as possible in the process so that ample notice is extended to the public, which is a good practice.

5. Following public notice, staff prepares a staff report, which is edited by a planning supervisor, then finalized by the planner. The Staff Report is then transmitted electronically to the Department's Administrative Staff for assembly into both electronic and paper agenda packets, and posting on the City's webpage. Agenda packets are distributed to Board members and the applicant a minimum of seven calendar days in advance of the meeting.

Interviews with staff and a board member indicated a need for a more structured, condensed, checklist staff report template that includes a staff recommendation, to ensure that any staff assigned to process DRB cases presents consistent information to the Board. In addition, there is a need for a presentation template to ensure that assigned staff presents consistent, relevant information to the DRB.

*See recommendations under "Staff Reports and Presentations regarding creating checklist format staff report templates and presentation templates.*

Further, it was revealed that DRB members prefer paper packets, since they do not have laptops available to review packets at the hearing electronically. As such, staff has to continue to request and distribute paper submittal materials.

**107. Recommendation: The Planning & Community Development Department should budget for laptop computers or iPads for use at the hearing daises for each DRB member, so that agenda packets can be transmitted and viewed electronically on laptop computers without the need for preparing and distributing paper agenda packets.**

In addition, Board members indicated that agenda packets are intended to be delivered approximately nine days prior to the meeting; however they are often distributed only six to seven days prior to the meeting. Members expressed a need to have nine days to review plans prior to the meeting.

**108. Recommendation: The Development Review Manager should discuss the timeline for delivering agenda packets to DRB members.**

6. A Design Response Conference (DRC) is held by the DRB. At the DRC the DRB reviews the design plans and provides direction to the applicant on issues to be resolved for final approval. The DRC order of presentation includes a staff Power Point presentation, followed by the applicant's presentation. The Board then solicits comments from interested members of the public. If Board finds that the application does not meet specified requirements, it may indicate what areas have not been met and outline for the applicant the options available to meet the requirements through conditional approval or continuing to allow the applicant to revise and resubmit. The Board can also deny the application or continue the DRC to gather additional information necessary for its decision on the design review application. If the conference is continued to a specific date, no further public notice is required; otherwise notice is redistributed. If the project is approved, the DRB makes a motion that adopts the approved project drawings or adopt with changes and/or conditions. The terms of approval or conditional approval become conditions of approval on each subsequent development permit and no subsequent development permit will be issued unless it is consistent with the DRB approval or conditional approval.
7. Per the City's Zoning Code, A Notice of Decision is sent to the applicant within 14 calendar days of the DRB decision. Administrative staff sends a Notice of Decision to the applicant (and all other parties who participated) electronically and via regular mail. If the application is denied, the decision indicates the reasons for denial. The applicant then has the option of appealing the decision to the Hearing Examiner. The final DRB decision is considered the date of distribution of the written decision or, if the decision is appealed, the date of the City's final decision on the appeal.

**109. Recommendation: The Land Use Management Division should review the Notice of Decision time frame stipulated by the Zoning Code and amend the code, so that the notice is distributed within four days, so that it is consistent with other processes.**

8. If the applicant submits a complete application for a building permit for the approved DRB development within 180 days of the final decision, the vesting date for the building permit application is the date of the final DRB decision.

Interviews with Staff indicate that the Department has not established staff review or overall processing goals/performance standards for Design Review projects. Performance Standards should be established and monitored for these projects to streamline reviews and processing.

*See our recommendations under the “Performance Standards Section” about establishing processing performance standards for the DRB.*

## **B. HEARING EXAMINER**

### **Overview**

The Hearing Examiner (HE) is appointed by the City Manager to provide independent reviews of certain types of appeals of city departments, land use permits and zoning violations. The City currently contracts with the City of Seattle to provide Hearing Examiner services.

According to Chapter 3.34 of the KMC, the purpose of the HE is “to separate application of city regulations from planning, policy making and legislative functions; to provide a high level of expertise in the conduct of administrative and quasi-judicial hearings arising from the application of this code, the Kirkland Zoning Code and the rules and procedures developed under this code and the Kirkland Zoning Code; to protect and promote the interests of the community; and to ensure fairness and due process in public hearings.” As such, the HE is intended to be autonomous from the supervision or influence of the City Manager or any City official. Hearings are governed by constitutional principles, state law, the Kirkland Municipal Code and Zoning Code, the Comprehensive Plan, and the rules of procedure for hearing examiner proceedings.

The HE is charged with conducting public hearings in accordance with the City’s adopted rules of procedure for the various proceeding types, and making decisions on code enforcement cases (e.g., Notices of Civil Violations), and either issuing a recommendation to the City Council or a decision on all Process IIA and IIB application types. In addition, the HE conducts hearings and makes decisions on appeals arising from decisions of the Planning & Community Development Director and other City Departments. The HE also has the power to issue a summons to compel the attendance of witnesses and to preserve order but it appears that this has never been needed. Decision-making is based on available information, the record and findings of fact. Since Appeal hearings are quasi-judicial proceedings, state and local law prohibits anyone from contacting the HE about the merits of an appeal or for the purpose of influencing a decision, except during a hearing.

The Planning & Community Development Department acts as staff for the HE, scheduling hearing dates, sending out notices, preparing and distributing staff reports, setting up the room for the hearing, and recording minutes of proceedings. The order of presentation at Hearings includes the HE introduction, department presentation

(generally PowerPoint), applicant/appellant's presentation, testimony from others, rebuttals and closing arguments.

Interviews revealed that the HE is well served by staff and that meetings are very consistent and efficient. Agenda, audio recordings and minutes are prepared and maintained for all proceedings and are available on line via the City's website.

Given the current volume of HE permit application cases, code enforcement cases and appeals, the number of meetings is adequate to accommodate the caseload without creating backlogs. Further, when needed for more complex cases, the HE may schedule a Prehearing Conference to clarify issues and address procedural matters to facilitate an efficient hearing. HE meetings are held on the first and third Thursday of each month at 9a.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers.

Recently, the HE drafted a "Guide to Hearings Before the Hearing Examiner," to assist staff, applicants, and appellants with the understanding and navigating the Hearing Examiner meeting process, which are governed by rigorous state and local laws. The "Guide" has not yet been reviewed and approved by the City and is not yet available for use. We reviewed the "Guide," and feel it would be an excellent tool for citizens, applicants and staff. The "Guide" should be reviewed, edited, finalized and posted on the City's website along with the other handouts, applications and guides. It should also be made available in paper form at the Department's front counter. Staff should create a basic flow chart of the HE processes and include it as part of the "Guide."

**110. Recommendation:** The Planning & Zoning Department should review and finalize the "Guide to Hearings Before the Hearing Examiner," and post it on the Department's website, as well as at the front counter. A basic flow chart of the HE processes should be created and included as part of the "Guide."

Interviews with Staff indicated that other department/division appeals, including Fire and Solid Waste utilize the Hearing Examiner (HE) for their appeal process as well. Because the Planning & Community Development Department staff are the most versed in supporting HE hearings, staff handles the HE appeals hearings for the other departments, when they arise. Because the volume of appeal cases from these other departments is so low, the Planning & Community Development Department staff has agreed to handle these cases; however, this additional workload has not been formally acknowledged and factored into the Department's workload.

**111. Recommendation:** The Planning & Community Development Department should acknowledge and factor in the additional workload created by processing appeal cases for other departments through the HE process.

## C. HOUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

### Overview

The Houghton Community Council (HCC) is the elected council for the Houghton Community Municipal Corporation (HCMC), which was created pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 35.14 of the Revised Code of Washington (RCW). The territory of the HCMC is identical to the territory within the boundaries of the former Town of Houghton. Every four years, all the constituents within the Houghton territory vote to decide whether HCMC should remain in place.

The HCC is composed of the seven Council members of the former Town of Houghton. Currently, one seat is vacant, and the City is actively recruiting to fill the position. The HCC conducts meetings on the fourth Monday of each month in the City Hall Council Chambers at 7pm.

The HCC is responsible for reviewing and approving both current planning projects (Process IIB) and long-range projects (e.g., Process IV & IVA) that are within the former boundary of the Town of Houghton. Planning & Community Development Department Staff and the HCC instituted a joint hearing process with the HCC and Hearing Examiner to streamline current planning permit processing and prevent processing delays, which we applaud. Current planning permit projects within the HCMC boundary are often scheduled for a joint hearing with the Hearing Examiner and a combined public notice can be published, mailed to surrounding property owners and posted. Staff reports and agenda packets are transmitted electronically, posted on the City's website and mailed to the HCC and Hearing Examiner in advance of the scheduled joint Hearing, which is good. Each decision/action of the HCC is approved by resolution by majority vote of the members prior to the Hearing Examiner's final decision. The Hearing Examiner then factors the HCC's decision into the Hearing Examiner's final decision. Interviews indicate that this process works well.

City codes give the HCC "Disapproval Jurisdiction," over projects within the HCMC boundary. This means that when the City Council approves a resolution or ordinance within the disapproval jurisdiction of the Houghton Community Council the Ordinance becomes effective within their jurisdiction after the approval by a majority of the entire membership of the HCC by Resolution or the failure of the HCC to disapprove the Ordinance, by resolution, within 60 calendar days of City Council approval.

Interviews with HCC members indicated that they are well served by current planning staff and that they are provided them with thorough staff reports/memos, presentations and agendas and minutes and audio recordings of proceedings are taken of every proceeding and are up-to-date. Activity levels for development projects have been

very low over the past few years, with only three to four meetings per year. As such, the number of meetings scheduled annually is more than sufficient to accommodate the caseload.

Long Range planning projects within the HCC boundary are processed similarly by the Planning & Community Development Department, except that joint hearings are held with the Planning Commission rather than the Hearing Examiner, since the Planning Commission is responsible for reviewing and making recommendations on legislative acts in the City. HCC interviewees indicated that they received good service from staff and feel the joint hearing process helps to streamline the process.

However, interviewees did indicate that the neighborhood planning process is arduous and needs to be restructured. For example, both staff and HCC interviewees indicated that the planning process can take up to two years to complete due to the public participation component. They also indicated that participants are not adequately informed about the time commitment required to participate, so participants filter in and out of the process, which impedes progress, while new participants are brought up to speed.

In addition, some interviewees' believe that the document drafting and revision process is partly responsible for the lengthy planning process because participants struggle to follow the myriad of changes that occur. To help simplify the document drafting and revision process, interviewees suggested that staff should consistently use conventional strike out and bold text to clearly show text changes and edits.

**112. Recommendation: The Policy & Planning Division should consistently use conventional strike out and bold text to clearly show text changes and edits in long-range policy document amendments within the HCMC.**

### **Joint Study Sessions with City Council**

Interviews with staff and HCC members indicated that the HCC periodically meets with the City Council in a joint session to discuss issues and facilitate trust and ensure that objectives and goals are in alignment, which is excellent.

## **D. PLANNING COMMISSION**

### **Overview**

The Planning Commission consists of seven (7) members. Currently, there are no vacancies. Members are appointed for four-year terms by a majority vote of the City Council. The Commission meets twice per month, on the second and fourth Thursdays at 7 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers. Agendas, minutes and audio recordings are kept for each meeting and available on-line.

Attendance requirements for Commissioners have been established by the Kirkland Municipal Code (KMC), and members are expected to attend no less than 80% of all meetings annually, unless the required is waived by City Council. A commissioner may be removed by majority vote of the city council.

The principle responsibility of the Commission is to act as a planning advisory board for all legislative matters relating to land use, comprehensive planning and zoning, including but not limited to, such things as adopting or amending the zoning code text and map, and subdivision regulations. The Planning Commission only deals with legislative issues (no permit applications). They make recommendations to the City Council on plan and code changes. The Commission also provides direction on and makes recommendations for the Planning & Community Development Department work program, and appoints Planning Commission members to serve on other city committees, advisory groups and task forces.

### **Joint Study Sessions with City Council**

Interviews with staff and PC members indicated that like the HCC, the PC periodically meets with the City Council in a joint session to discuss issues and facilitate trust and ensure that objectives and goals are in alignment, which is a good practice. Moreover, PC members may attend City Council meetings to present their recommendation on controversial projects, which we support.

### **New Member Orientation**

Interviews with staff indicated that new members are provided with training and given a comprehensive orientation session to introduce them to staff, procedural rules, scope of review, etc., which is consistent with Best Practices. As the budget permits, PC members should also attend periodic training session sponsored by the American Planning Association and other professional industry-related organizations to help keep them abreast of the latest trends and legal issues.

**113. Recommendation: Planning Commission members should attend training sessions, as the budget permits, that are sponsored by the American Planning Association and other professional industry-related organizations periodically, to keep them abreast of the latest trends and legal issues.**

### **Staff Support**

The Commissioners we interviewed feel the Commission is well served by the staff in the Planning & Community Development Department.



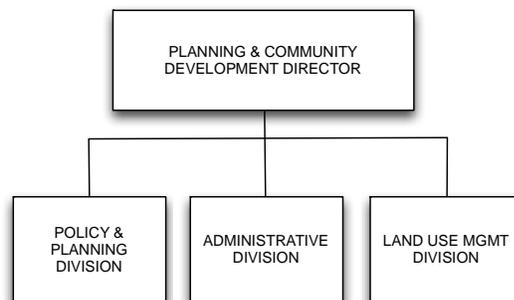
# VI. PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

## A. PROFILE

### Overview

The Planning & Community Development Department is responsible for directing Comprehensive Planning, processing development applications, Tree Preservation/Urban Forestry, and Code Enforcement/Complaint Investigation activities of the City. The Department is comprised of three (3) functional divisions as shown in Figure 9, including the Administrative, Land Use Management, and Policy and Planning Divisions. A Planning Director/SEPA Responsible Official manages the Planning & Community Development Department. All Planning & Community Development Department Staff are housed in the City Hall building, located at 123 5th Avenue.

**Figure 9**  
**Existing Planning & Community Development Department Functional Areas Organization**



### Authority

The Planning & Community Development Department is charged with preparing, updating, implementing and enforcing the City's Comprehensive Plan, Growth Management, and various other local and state planning regulatory and planning policy documents in accordance with various City Policies,

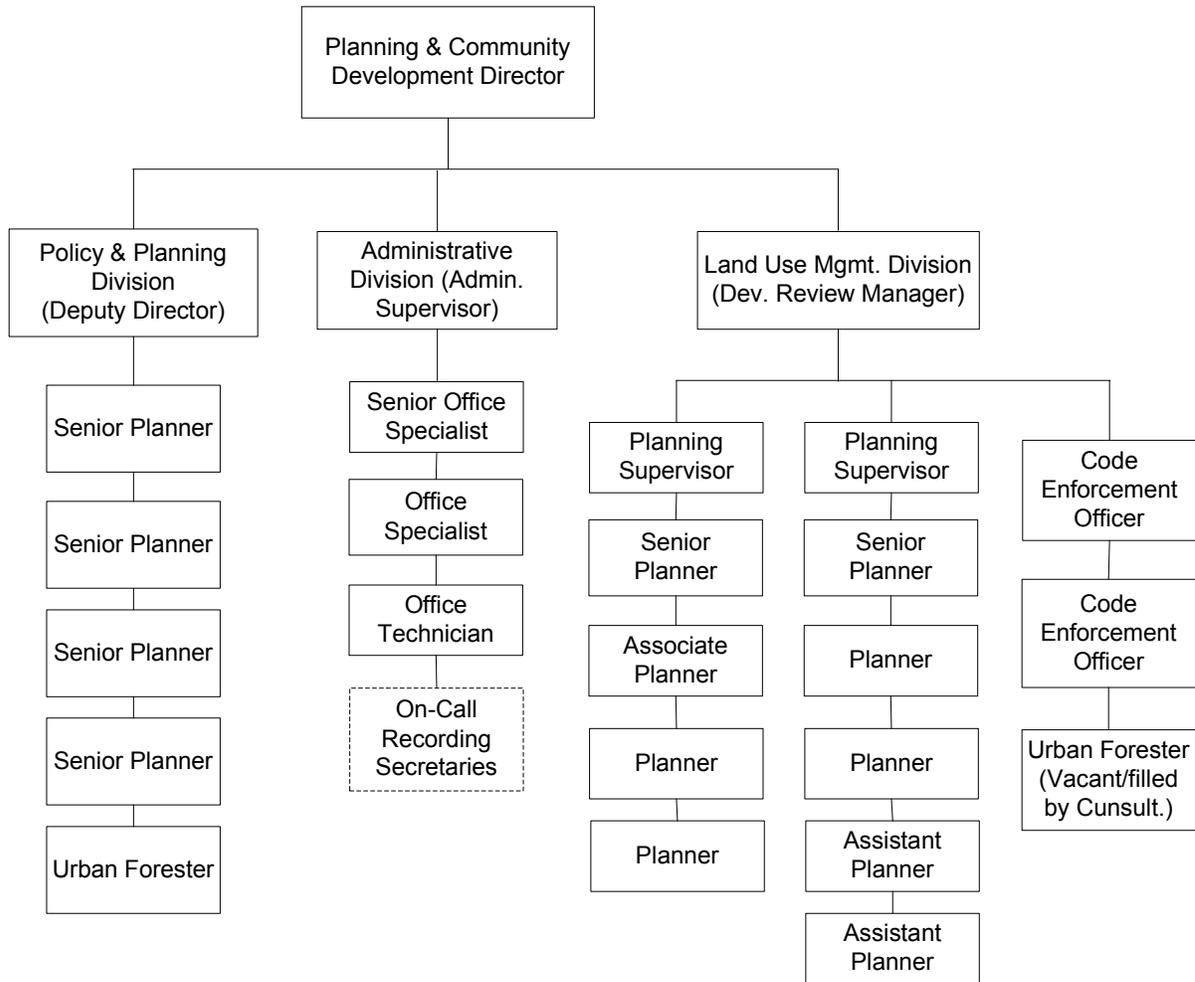
Regulations, Ordinances and provisions within the Kirkland Municipal Code, including, but not limited to, Titles 1, 3, 5, 11, 15, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29, Article XI, Section 11, of the Washington State Constitution, the State of Washington Administrative Codes (WAC), Chapter 197, et seq., and the State Revised Code of Washington (RCW), Chapter 35 (Zoning, Comprehensive Planning), Chapter 36 (State Growth Management Act, Local Project Review Act), Chapter 43

(State Environmental Policy Act), Chapter 58, 63, 64 (Subdivision, Comprehensive Planning), Chapter 82 (Impact Fees), Kirkland Natural Resources Management Plan, Surface Water Master Plan, Lake Washington/Cedar/Sammamish Watershed Chinook Salmon Conservation Plan, Shoreline Management Act, Chapter 90.58, etc.

## Organization

The existing organizational structure for the Planning & Community Development Department is shown in Figure 10 below.

**Figure 10**  
**Existing Planning & Community Development Department Organization**



The Planning & Community Development Department currently consists of 23.95 FTE (Full-Time Equivalent) positions for FY 2011/2012 as outlined in Table 13 below.

**Table 13  
Existing Planning & Community Development Department Staffing**

<b>Position Title</b>	<b>Number of FTE Positions (Per Budget)</b>	<b>Responsibilities</b>	<b>Reports To</b>
Planning & Community Development Director	1	Plans, directs and reviews the activities of the City's Department of Planning and Community Development. Serves as part of the City's senior management.	City Manager
Deputy Director	1	Under direction of the Planning Director, provides leadership and manages, supervises, and administers the activities of the Department of Planning and Community Development. Assists the Director in the day-to-day operations of the Department, personnel, budget, administration and work program tasks. Oversees the activities of the Department in Director's absence. Manages the Long-Range planning activities.	Director
Development Review Manager	1	Under direction of the Planning Director, provides leadership and manages, supervises, and administers the current planning activities of the Department of Planning and Community Development.	Director
Planning Supervisor	2	Supervises professional staff of planners; assists in preparation and implementation of work program and budget; and develops department policies and procedures. Manages long-range planning projects. Administers land use regulations ensuring regulatory compliance.	Development Review Mgr
Administrative Supervisor	0.85	Provides secretarial and administrative support to the Director and supervises the office support staff. Coordinates and manages office support functions and activities of clerical staff, and provides liaison between the Director and other management positions, hearing bodies and the public.	Director
Senior Office Specialist	1	Provides administrative support, coordinates recording secretary for hearings, schedules public meetings, creates and distributes meeting packets, performs duties in the absence of the Admin Supervisor..	Admin. Supervisor
Office Technician	1	Provides front desk administrative support to contribute to the effective office operation of the department. First point of contact for the department in providing quality customer service to the public. Performs administrative tasks for the code enforcement officers and planners in addition to helping maintain official city records.	Admin. Supervisor
Office Specialist	1	Provides administrative support, maintains official city records, creates and distributes meeting packets and official records to hearing bodies..	Admin. Supervisor
Recording Secretaries	Various (on call)	Record and transcribe minutes of various planning-related meetings.	Admin. Supervisor

Position Title	Number of FTE Positions (Per Budget)	Responsibilities	Reports To
Senior Planner	5.1	Serves as a senior level professional planner. Implements the mission of the Department in order to assure the orderly growth of the City. Undertakes and coordinates professional planning services for a broad range of planning activities involving long-range and neighborhood planning; drafting regulations; processing discretionary and ministerial development applications; providing public information; and collection and analysis of data.	Deputy Dir./Planning Supervisor
Urban Forester	1*	Provides urban forestry services for a broad range of city activities including permit and development application review, long-range comprehensive and neighborhood planning, drafting of regulations and standards and providing public information and education. Works cooperatively with other departments as needed to coordinate vegetation management practices.	Deputy Dir./Dev Review Mgr.
Associate Planner	1	Serves as a mid- level professional planner. Implements the mission of the Department in order to assure the orderly growth of the City. Undertakes and coordinates a broad range of planning activities involving long-range and neighborhood planning; drafting regulations; processing discretionary and ministerial development applications; providing public information; and collection and analysis of data.	Planning Supervisor
Planner	4	Serves as a first- level professional planner. Implements the mission of the Department in order to assure the orderly growth of the City. Assists and coordinates with preparing a broad range of planning activities involving long-range and neighborhood planning; drafting regulations; processing discretionary and ministerial development applications; providing public information; and collection and analysis of data.	Planning Supervisor
Assistant Planner	2	Serves as a customer liaison for the Planning Department. Implements the mission of the Department in order to assure the orderly growth of the City. Undertakes and coordinates planning services involving providing public information; conducting technical plan review and processing minor administrative development applications.	Planning Supervisor
Code Enforcement Officer	2	Responsible for investigating and ensuring compliance with the City's codes and regulations regarding land use and development.	Dev. Review Mgr.
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>23.95</b>		

\* This is two positions, .5 each.

## Activity

Activity levels for each division or function are shown in specific sections addressing each function. Public Assistance cuts across all section and activity levels are shown in Table 14.

**Table 14  
Public Assistance**

<b>Activity by Function</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012 (YTD)</b>	<b>Five Year Average</b>
Public Assistance Hours	4,696	4,328	4,978	4,894	4,968	Not Available	4,773
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4,696</b>	<b>4,328</b>	<b>4,978</b>	<b>4,894</b>	<b>4,968</b>	<b>Not Available</b>	<b>4,773</b>
<b>% Change</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>(-8%)</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>(-17%)</b>	<b>1.5%</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>

The five-year average for public assistance hours for the Division was 4,773 hours. Activity levels for public assistance hours declined in 2008, but increased in 2009. In 2010, there was another significant decline (17%) in public assistance activity hours, followed by a slight increase in activity in 2011. Given the annexation, it is likely that activity levels could increase for 2012.

## **B. POSITIVE FINDINGS**

The following are positive findings for the Planning & Community Development Department:

- The Director, Deputy Director, Development Review Manager, Planning Supervisors, and several Planners are or have been AICP certified. In addition, one of the Code Enforcement Officers is also certified by the National Association of Code Enforcement Officers.
- The Policy and Planning Division is proactive and prepares a comprehensive work program, which is adopted by the City Council annually to focus their efforts.
- The majority of the staff planners have worked in the Department for over 10 years and have established a cooperative working relationship with one another and a good understanding of the City's sophisticated planning regulatory scheme.
- Staff has made a concerted effort to simplify processing systems to facilitate streamlining objectives.
- The Department's staff is friendly, experienced, dedicated and accessible without an appointment and strives to provide high-quality customer service.
- Some of the planners have a broad skill-set and work on both development review and Long Range planning tasks.

- The City offers mediation services free of charge to complaining parties, through the Bellevue Neighborhood Mediation Program to assist property owners in resolving their disputes.

## C. ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES

### Chain of Command

The Department is organized into 3 divisions that are managed by three separate individuals, all of which report to the Planning Director. The Management staff interviewed indicated that the structure that is in place requires a higher degree of coordination and that the biggest challenges are communication, equity and consistency. However, the department has established a chain of command, adopted job descriptions, developed a mission statement and instituted various reoccurring meetings with a mix of staff to help alleviate these issues.

Nevertheless, line staff indicated that equity, communication and consistency issues are still prevalent in the Department, which causes frustration and morale issues. For example, because the management structure includes both supervisors and management staff, decision-making has become less effective. It is not clear which managers have decision-making authority over which issues, and who staff should go to resolve certain issues, introduce efficiency measures and troubleshoot problems. Instead, stronger personalities end up making decisions, regardless of designated titles.

**114. Recommendation: The Planning & Community Development Director should reestablish a formal chain of command to help alleviate personality conflicts, and facilitate communication, equity and decision-making consistency by creating written policies, with consequences.**

### Data Collection/Reporting

In conducting our audit of the Planning & Community Development Department Application processing activities and system, we were able to obtain the majority of the data related to processing, such as activity levels over the last several years; however, some data, such as information corresponding to the number of staff reviews on permits, applicant revision periods, and specific timeframes for processing applications, was not readily available and had to be reassembled in a new spreadsheet and tabulated in order for us to conduct our analyses. For example, data compiled by the Department relating to overall processing timeframes was available, but tabulated in ranges and medians, which makes it difficult to determine exactly how the Department is performing, and draw conclusions about performance. As such, this data had to be re-tabulated for our analysis at considerable effort.

In addition, staff stated that the timekeeper system, which is used in part to collect data on the number of staff hours per task category, is inefficient and inaccurate. For example, all staff members have created and are maintaining a separate Excel spreadsheet to keep an accurate record of their time, which is inefficient. Management Staff indicates that all staff hours (including all hours over 8 and beyond the normal work week) that are spent working on a project are recorded in the Excel timesheet as well as the Timecard Online timesheet. However, the Finance Department has indicated that the City's timekeeping and payroll system cannot be used for this purpose.

Precise performance measurement data allows management to more accurately evaluate application processing systems and resources so that they can be efficiently modified, as the need arises, in order to respond to changes in the market.

We recommend that additional performance data be collected and tabulated to reflect actual numbers, rather than averages, medians or ranges to facilitate the quarterly evaluation of permit processing systems. Once performance standards are established, the reports should show the number and percent of applications that meet the performance standards. We generally want to see at least 90% meeting the performance standard. For example, data should be collected on the amount of time an applicant has an application, versus the amount of time staff has an application for every application type throughout the application process so that the Department can identify and respond to processing complaints. In addition, data should be collected on the number of days it takes each staff reviewer to review an application, as well as the number cycles each reviewer takes to review an application (e.g., fire, building, planning, public works, etc., reviewers). Data should be compiled in the City's EnerGov system, to improve accuracy and accelerate report generation so that management can accurately, efficiently and effectively evaluate performance standard data to ensure standards are being met, and how often, and if not, determine why and make necessary adjustments.

**115. Recommendation:** The Planning & Community Development Department should compile and generate monthly performance reports through EnerGov that track overall permit processing timelines, each staff reviewer time, the number of cycles of review, and applicant time, as well as other performance standard time frames recommended in this Study.

**116. Recommendation:** The Planning & Community Development Department should record all data in their EnerGov system to improve reporting accuracy and continue to create weekly and monthly reports based on the performance standard data in order to track performance and troubleshoot performance issues.

## Education and Outreach

The Staff interviewed indicated that the Department does not do enough community education and outreach. “Neighborhood U” (e.g., a workshop held by staff to educate the community about neighborhood issues) and other educational workshops are only held periodically and more proactive efforts are needed to inform and instruct citizens and the development community about innovative zoning provisions.

**117. Recommendation:** The Planning & Community Development Department should increase public outreach and community education efforts to inform and instruct citizens and the development community about innovative zoning provisions.

## Equipment

Planning & Community Development Department staff indicated that they generally have adequate equipment to conduct assigned work efficiently; however, some staff indicated a need for a centralized color copier. In addition, staff indicated that Printer PCD-5 is chronically out of service and requires excessive staff time to troubleshoot problems and bring it back on line. Finally, staff indicated that additional controls or procedures are needed for meeting rooms to eliminate meeting room scheduling conflicts.

**118. Recommendation:** The Planning & Community Development Department should consider purchasing a replacement printer and a color copier that can be placed in a centralized location so that it is more accessible to all staff members.

**119. Recommendation:** The City should establish clear structured policies and procedures regarding the use and management of meeting rooms.

## Filing Systems/Records Management

Staff indicates that the on-site paper filing system is workable, however several systems exist, so the system is inefficient. The Department keeps up to five years of project files on-site to facilitate research and reporting efforts. Files are arranged by permit type by year. Older files are moved to an off-site storage location, which is managed by a paper file archive company called, “Access.” When staff needs an archived file to conduct research as part of a case or public information request, the Department Administrative staff makes a request for the file through the online file retrieval request system set up by the company. Requested files are then delivered on one of three scheduled delivery days (i.e., Monday, Wednesdays and Friday). Archived files are disposed of according to the City’s file retention policy.

While this system works, it is not efficient or cost-effective. To eliminate the storage, management and delivery expenses associated with maintaining paper files, the City should begin electronically scanning archived files (digitize), to convert them to an electronic format.

**120. Recommendation: The Planning & Community Development Department should convert all paper files to an electronic format to reduce costs associated with storing, maintaining and delivering paper files.**

Staff indicates that the archive system works well overall, however, at times, staff does not always return files to the archive management company in a timely manner and occasionally files are misplaced. The Department, along with the archive management company maintains a record of all files requested and delivered by the City, so files misplaced files can be tracked down, which is helpful.

In addition to paper project files, the Department also creates and maintains paper and electronic parcel data files onsite which are annotated by planners to note research findings until the file is converted to a permit file through an application. Once a permit application is made on a particular parcel, the annotated file is merged with the new permit files. The EnerGov system should have the capability to handle these notes prior to having an actual application.

**121. Recommendation: EnerGov should be programmed to handle file notes prior to an actual application being received.**

Staff indicated that the City recently purchased HP TRIM software, which is an enterprise paper and electronic document and records management system that is designed to help capture, manage, and secure City contract documents and other City documents. HP TRIM is currently managed by the City Clerk's Office, however staff indicates that the system is not being used consistently, which has caused some confusion and frustration. Staff indicates that the EnerGov system is intended and designed for permitting, rather than document and records management, so the City uses the TRIM system to help manage documents.

**122. Recommendation: All contract documents generated by the Planning & Community Development Department should be created, managed and secured through the HP TRIM software.**

### **Front Counter/Reception Areas**

Staff indicates that two Assistant Planners have primary responsibility for covering the Planning & Community Development Department Counter. A back-up coverage system is in place to ensure counter coverage.

Ensuring continuous counter coverage through the assignment of planners on a rotating schedule is necessary in order to provide good customer service and we are in agreement with this practice. However, it is important that all staff assigned to front counter coverage are adequately trained on EnerGov so that they can be efficient and effective, without needing assistance from other planners.

*See recommendations regarding EnerGov training for all planning staff earlier in this Study.*

The Assistant Planners are responsible for the Intake of Land Use Permit pre-submittal conference meeting applications; the Intake of some types of Land Use Permits; the review of permits for compliance with the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA); the review of building permits for completeness and land use code compliance; and disseminating information to the public about land use codes, policies and regulations.

To prevent long lines from forming at the counter, walk-in customers are limited to about 15 minutes to complete their inquiries/business. After 15 minutes, planners direct customers to fill out and schedule a pre-application meeting with staff, where they can obtain more detailed information about a project or area, which is a good practice.

Customers who need information about code enforcement also utilize the front counter. However, staff interviews indicated that code enforcement staff members are often unavailable to assist walk-in customers with code enforcement related questions, which can frustrate customers looking for an immediate answer.

**123. Recommendation:** The Development Review Manager should ensure that walk in customers with code enforcement questions are logged (through EnerGov if possible) and assigned to Code Enforcement Staff to make contact within the same day or no later than 24 hours of their visit.

### **Meetings/Communication/Team Work**

Our interviews with the staff indicated that there are of number of recurring and regularly scheduled meetings in the Department, which are aimed at facilitating communication and coordination between department staff, interrelated development review staff, and the development community, including the following:

#### *All department functions:*

- Periodic meetings with the Kirkland Developer's Partnership to educate partnership members about city policies, regulations, procedures, development-related codes and processes;

- A periodic meeting with the entire 60 + member Development Services staff in the City Council Chambers to introduce new staff, review code amendments, provide general instruction, and discuss items of function-wide and City-wide importance;
- A regularly scheduled biweekly meeting held by the Director with all department staff on Wednesdays following a City Council Meeting to discuss City Council agendas and decisions;
- A regularly scheduled weekly meeting on Tuesday afternoon with the Planning Director with Senior Staff that includes all department managers and supervisors to discuss and resolve operational-related issues;

### ***Code Enforcement***

- A bi-monthly Code Enforcement Service Team meeting (i.e., meets six times per year) on the second Thursday morning of the month with the Development Review Manager and various interdepartmental team members that work on code enforcement in some capacity, including building, fire, public works, police, fire, finance, planning, city manager’s office, etc., to discuss cases that cross departments, as well as recent Hearing Examiner’s decisions;
- A regularly scheduled weekly meeting on Monday with the Planning Director, Development Review Manager and Code Enforcement Staff to discuss current code enforcement cases and issues, and problem-solve;

### ***Current Planning***

- A regularly scheduled weekly meeting on Wednesday morning with current planning staff and planning supervisors to discuss active cases, code interpretations, permit processing issues and problem-solve.
- A regularly scheduled hour-long weekly Development Review Committee meeting (DRC) with staff and supervisors from various city departments involved in the development review process, including a current planning supervisor, a planner, Development & Environmental Services Manager and Supervisor, the Development Engineer, the Building Official, the Permit Tech Supervisor, and the Fire Marshall, to discuss the permit review status report generated by EnerGov in order to help drive staff review timeframes and the permit process;
- A regularly scheduled weekly DRC II meeting on Thursdays with the Development Review Manager, Building Official and the Development & Environmental Services Manager to discuss and troubleshoot development review process and procedures in an effort to continuously improve the development review process; and
- Regular weekly one-on-one meetings between the Planning Supervisors and the current planners to discuss workload, issues, etc.

### ***Long Range Planning***

- Regular weekly one-on-one meetings between the Deputy Director and long-range planners to discuss the status of long-range projects, talk about issues and problem-solve.

An agenda is prepared for each meeting, and attendees strive to wrap up meetings within the scheduled time frame.

Despite the existence of the above list of reoccurring meetings and corresponding agendas, staff reported that communication, coordination and consistency issues still exist within the Department and that they believe silos still exist between the various departments and divisions involved in Development Services functions. For example, staff indicated that the Current Planning Staff meetings are ineffective and inefficient because decision-making staff is often not in attendance. Issues, such as code or processes issues are raised and discussed, but not resolved by formal direction from decision-making staff. When the group reaches an informal decision, managers do not always subsequently ratify it, so it is not memorialized in a permanent record. As a result, the same issues are discussed and debated over and over, with differing outcomes.

We were able to observe one Current Planning meeting. The meeting is similar to those we observe in many communities. An Agenda was distributed, a few announcements are made, and various issues are introduced and discussed by participants. The meeting lasted a little over one hour. However, despite the presence of supervisors and a manager, there seemed to be no one in charge of clearly leading the meeting. In addition, there did not appear to be anyone recording the actions taken and directions given to staff. Further, some of the information shared could have been handled via a group email, rather than occupying staff's time in a meeting format, which would have left more time for discussion of what we believe should be higher priority items.

The management and supervisory staff could achieve a greater benefit and purpose of this and all other meetings by implementing a few basic changes.

Generally all meetings that are held in the department should be structured. They should have:

- A clear established objective/purpose;
- A Leader – someone who runs the meeting and keeps everyone on point and the agenda moving;
- An Agenda with action items and summary notes that can be distributed electronically to participants in advance of and following the meetings. Decisions coming out of meetings should be formally memorialized so that everyone in the Department is equally informed. In addition, plans, policies

and regulations discussed in meetings should be also be communicated to all staff through a written meeting summary notes.

- Some time in each meeting should be spent to discuss the mission and direction of the Department, particularly as related to customer service issues.

**124. Recommendation:** The Planning & Community Development Department Director should evaluate all existing reoccurring meetings to ensure that they have a clear purpose and objective and that the reoccurring meetings being held still fulfill the intended purpose and objective.

**125. Recommendation:** All reoccurring meetings held by the Planning & Community Development Department should include an agenda, with action items and summary notes that can be distributed electronically to participants in advance of and following the meeting; a leader to guide meetings; and decision-maker(s), when issues are to be discussed and resolved; follow-up summary meeting notes that are distributed to all relevant staff, whether in attendance or not.

*See additional recommendations under “Process Issues” and regarding the DRC, and DRC II meetings/function.*

### **Mission Statement**

Under a website tab labeled, “Planning Department Functions,” is a Mission Statement and Functional Statements explaining the function, services and activities of the Department. However, interviews with staff revealed that some are aware that a Mission Statement has been adopted for the Department, but are not sure what it says.

**126. Recommendation:** The Planning & Community Development Department should meet with all staff regarding the mission and function of the department, so that each staff member has an understanding of the overall charge of the Department.

### **Staff Reports and Presentations**

The Planning & Community Development staff managers, supervisors, planners and code enforcement officers prepare different types of staff reports for the various hearings they attend. Staff indicates that they have made a concerted effort to distill the staff reports down to a checklist format for the more routine, simpler projects, to improve efficiency and effectiveness, which is excellent. For example, the staff reports for the Design Review Board (DRB), Wireless and Short Plat applications are now in a standardized checklist format. In addition, Code Enforcement staff reports have been simplified so that they summarize the issues and facts of the case and

provide a succinct legal analysis and a conclusion that includes staff recommendations.

However, there may be additional opportunities to streamline the staff report formats for other types of applications as well. For example, variance and shoreline/substantial development permit (SDP) applications have specific information that must be relayed in a staff report and these types of reports could be simplified into standardized checklist format.

**127. Recommendation: The Development Review Manager should determine whether there are opportunities to condense staff reports for additional types of the routine applications, such as variances and SDP's, into a simplified, standardized checklist format and if so, convert them accordingly, so that they can be prepared more efficiently.**

Staff indicates that the staff report format for more complex types of applications, such as Planned Unit Developments (PUD's) is fairly standardized, however, it contains too many unnecessary headings and subject areas that are only used under special circumstances and that a significant amount of time is spent culling unnecessary subject matter from the report. There appears to be further opportunity to streamline the staff report template for more complex projects into a more simplified format so that report writing efficiency is improved.

According to staff interviews, the staff report review and approval process is straightforward. Generally, planners draft staff reports electronically and then transmit them electronically to their respective planning supervisors for review and edit via track changes. The edited version is then returned to staff electronically and finalized. Staff then forwards the final report to administrative staff, along with attachments, electronically for assembly into electronic and paper hearing packets. We agree with electronic staff report drafting, editing and assembly process since it promotes efficiency and moves the city toward its goal of becoming paperless. This is an excellent process.

Staff presentations to the Hearing Examiner, Design Review Board, Planning Commissions and City Council are generally accomplished using PowerPoint, however there are times when less formal presentations are provided by staff, when appropriate.

However, interviews with staff revealed that the Department has yet to provide clear written direction and/or create presentation templates for staff to use as a guide when preparing Power Point presentations, and as such, presentations are prepared inefficiently, inconsistently and at times, are not as effective as they could be. Staff needs clear direction about the format, content and length of power point presentations so that they are prepared and delivered consistently, efficiently and effectively at hearings. Management staff should immediately create a written policy

providing staff with clear direction on expectations for the format, content and length of power point presentations. In addition, a presentation template should be prepared for staff to use as a guide in preparing power point presentations.

**128. Recommendation:** The Development Review Manager should create a written policy providing staff with clear direction on expectations for the format, content and length of power point presentations. In addition, a presentation template should be prepared for staff to use as a guide in preparing power point presentations.

## **Training & Procedures Manual**

Department staff have created detailed “Step Sheets,” that provide staff with instruction for setting up electronic files in EnerGov and paper files, sending determination of completeness and notice of application letters, preparing hearing notifications and conducting SEPA reviews, and filing related SEPA documents, which is excellent. The Department Administrative Staff has also created and maintains a complete list of templates for notices, letters, memos, staff reports, etc., which is also exceptional.

In addition, the Department has created “Follow-up Checklists,” to guide staff through the processing steps after approval. There are also “Timeline Guides” for each planning application/permit type, which pilot planners through completing the various processing steps – all of which are excellent tools. However, staff revealed that they do not use them regularly to guide their processing efforts, which can result in processing inconsistencies between planners.

The Department created and maintains a Development Review Committee Manual (DRC 2), which outlines the permitting procedures for interdepartmental permit processing, which is excellent. It includes the details of permit review process to facilitate coordination and consistency among the departments involved in permitting. The DRC Manual is intended as a living document, and has to be continually updated, as processes are refined.

*See our recommendation under the “Building Division Section,” regarding updating this document.*

**129. Recommendation:** “Development Review Committee Manual,” should be updated regularly and included in the Department’s annual work plan to ensure that there are adequate resources available to keep the Manual relevant.

**130. Recommendation:** Planning Staff should be directed to process applications as required by the Zoning Code and Development Review

**Committee Manual so that all applications are consistently processed in the same manner by all staff.**

*See recommendations in the “Process Issues” section about further streamlining processes, where possible.*

Management Staff indicated that in-house training is provided to planning staff following adoption of revised codes; however, staff revealed that all staff involved in the development services functions are not equally informed of changes and adequately trained on revised codes.

In addition, many of the staff interviewed indicated that they had not received sufficient training on the EnerGov system and have been left to figure out the system as they go, through trial and error, which has created inefficiencies and frustration among staff (see EnerGov training and support discussion for more detailed information on training issues). Many staff that were interviewed indicated that there is a need for an “Energov Operations Procedure Manual,” (in addition to more training) to assist them in becoming more proficient users and facilitate training of new staff on the system.

A review of the budget materials for the Department indicates that there is inadequate amount budgeted for annual staff training. Currently, the biennial training budget is \$8,760. According to staff, the training money is normally spent over the course of the two-year budget biennium. However, at the end of 2011 City Management asked the Department not to spend any funds that were remaining in the 2011 budget. Staff indicates that they have an informal process to determine which staff members receive training funds. Typically a staff member requests training and management reviews their training history and if training is warranted and funds are available, training is granted.

This training budget amount represents just over .2% of the Department’s personnel budget (~\$3.7m), which is low. The general rule of thumb is to set aside at least 2% of the Department’s Personnel budget for annual training of employees (~\$74,000). In addition to the training budget, we typically suggest that about 5% of staff’s time be devoted to annual training. Given that the training budget is not available for use, it appears that 5% of staff’s time is not being devoted to training.

**131. Recommendation:** The budget for the Planning & Zoning Department function should continue to include a line item for training, which is equivalent to 2% of the function’s annual personnel budget, and 5% of staff’s time, so that supervisors and staff can receive adequate technical training and stay abreast of new trends in the industry.

Staff indicates that there is little opportunity for training due to workload and budget constraints, particularly in the areas of computer literacy (i.e., Microsoft office suite, adobe, etc.) and technology, such as the GIS and permit tracking system. In addition, the City no longer pays for membership in professional organizations (APA, AICP, ULI), and as a result, many planners have dropped their membership resulting in fewer opportunities or participation in conferences, training, workshops, etc.

Inadequate training impedes staff's ability to grow and advance professionally. It can also lead to unnecessary processing missteps, which hinders efficiency. When inadequate training is coupled with inconsistent or untimely decision-making and a lack of training manuals and/or resource materials (as noted above) it creates frustration and low morale issues.

**132. Recommendation:** The Planning & Community Development Director should identify additional staff training needs of staff and schedule necessary internal and external training to help staff grow professionally, raise competency and work efficiency and reduce frustration and low morale issues in the Department.

### **Telephone, Emails**

Telephone coverage for the Department during the lunch hour is inadequate according to survey respondents. The Department currently assigns planners to cover the phones and the front counter/reception simultaneously during the lunch hour, due to administrative staff shortages. There is often a high volume of phone calls along with walk-in customers who need immediate in-person assistance. As a result, assigned planning staff is unable to answer all of the telephone calls that are received and calls are routinely ignored and allowed to go into voice mail, and/or not returned in a timely manner, which results in customer service complaints. We agree that it is important to provide telephone and counter coverage during the lunch hour, as long as customer service request volumes warrant this practice. However, if calls are being ignored and unreturned, the purpose for lunchtime phone coverage is defeated. We recommend that the Department reassign administrative staff to cover lunch hour phone calls to ensure that all calls are answered and customers assisted. Planning staff should continue to provide walk-in customer service on a rotating basis during the lunch hour.

**133. Recommendation:** In order to improve telephone customer service during the lunch hour, the Planning & Community Development Department Director should reassign lunch time telephone coverage to administrative staff so that assigned planning staff can assist walk-in

**customers with technical and other questions. ( We have been told that this has now been accomplished.)**

It was also reported that email is often used as the primary communication vehicle for relaying critical information to staff, such as new ordinances and other code revision information, which is good. However, the email system should not be relied upon as the primary source for memorializing new regulatory changes, while the Department awaits codification of the Zoning Code to reflect new code changes. The Department should maintain a searchable database of all new code changes, which should be updated as changes are adopted, so that staff has an accurate and readily accessible catalogue available as a reference tool. Once code documents are codified, the database should be edited accordingly.

Further, staff indicates that they are inundated with emails concerning staff members' personal appointments, vacation and sick days, etc. To help reduce the volume of these types of emails, the Department Director should establish a policy to require staff members to schedule approved external appointments and out-of-office days on the outlook system calendar. Calendars should be required to be updated daily, and should be viewable by all staff members. Department Administrative staff should be granted access to update individual staff calendars to reflect when staff calls in sick or is out of the office due to an emergency.

**134. Recommendation: The Planning & Community Development Department Director should (re) establish a formal policy to require staff members to update outlook system calendar for appointments only.**

## **Terminology**

There appears to be inconsistency in how the City refers to this Department in various communications. For example, it is referred to as the "Planning Office," "Planning Department," "Department of Planning & Community Development," and the "Planning & Community Development Department depending on the communication resource (e.g., the website, handouts, codes, organizational charts, etc.). The use of varying names for the department can be confusing to new users. The Department's official name should be labeled consistently in all communications.

**135. Recommendations: The City should select one name to describe this Department and use this name consistently in all communication, codes, handouts and the website.**

## **D. ADMINISTRATION**

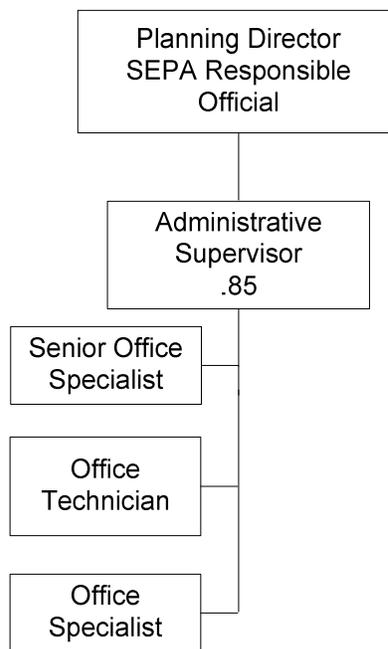
### **Overview**

The Administration Division coordinates personnel, training and budgeting activities and provides support to department staff, City Council, Planning Commission, and the Houghton Community Council. Approximately 20% of the department's resources are expended on Administrative Division functions.

## Organization

The Administrative Division includes the Planning Director and four staff positions as shown in Figure 11. Two of the staff positions are part time resulting in 3.55 FTEs. The daily functions are directed by an Administrative Supervisor.

**Figure 11**  
**Administrative Division**



## Staffing Analysis

As indicated earlier in this Study, we will be using an actual productive or billable hours number of 1,338 for Kirkland government employees. The current approved budget indicates that the Division has a 4.55 FTE's. However, the Director would normally not be included in the administrative number resulting in 3.85 staff available.

Data obtained from the Department for the nine-month period from December 2011 through August 2012, indicates that 5,575 man-hours were spent in administrative activities over this period, including 1,334 hours for EnerGov implementation. The staff for this same time period would be 1003.5 times 3.85 or 3,863 hours. This means there would be a shortage of 1,712 hours or roughly the equivalent of 1.7 staff.

However, there is an obvious problem with this analysis. How did staff that was available for 3,863 hours actually work for 5,575 hours? It is possible that there is some double counting of input. It was reported that there are insufficient administrative personnel to handle the workload in the Department, and that planners are needed to cover administrative counter duties, while administrative staff is at lunch, at various administrative duties relating to permit processing has been shifted to planners due to the shortage. This could explain the difference in numbers. However, in this case the equivalent staffing would need to be deducted from the available staff for planning activities. Additionally, once EnerGov is fully in place, the amount of time spent on EnerGov should be reduced bring the numbers closer in balance.

Calculating staffing for Administrative staff is always difficult and existing data sources make it impossible to conduct a definitive analysis. We suggest staff remain the same until the EnerGov implementation is completed and work load for 2013 is clarified. However, if EnerGov continues to require continued heavy administrative support, it may be appropriate to supplement administrative staff on a temporary basis.

**136. Recommendation: Until EnerGov is fully implemented and operating efficiently, add a half time temporary help to the Administrative Division.**

## **Training**

The Administrative Division staff indicated that a procedural manual was developed for each administrative position to help train and guide administrative activities; however, they have not been consistently updated by individual staff assigned to updating. In addition, some administrative staff feel there is a need for additional training or additional documentation of IFAS (Integrated Financial Accounting System) and HP TRIM Manual(document and enterprise management software) to assist staff in becoming proficient users of these systems and facilitate the training of new staff.

**137. Recommendation: IFAS and TRIM, and EnerGov Operation Manuals should be provided to staff involved in those functions to assist them in becoming proficient users of those systems.**

**138. Recommendation: The Administrative Division Supervisor should immediately update all administrative staff procedures so that they are current and available for use by administrative staff in conducting their duties.**

## E. CODE ENFORCEMENT

### Overview

The Code Enforcement function is part of the Land Use and Management Division and consists of two full-time Code Enforcement Officers that respond to predominantly zoning enforcement related issues; however, they also assist other City departments, such as public works, building, fire and police departments with their enforcement efforts (e.g., public trees, graffiti, stop work orders, etc.), as part of the City's combined enforcement initiatives, aimed at increasing the overall efficiency and effectiveness of various departments code enforcement efforts.

In addition, the Code Enforcement Officers are members of a city-wide enforcement effort, known as, "the Code Enforcement Service Team," which is an interdepartmental team that includes staff members from the Police, Fire, Building, Public Works, Parks, City Manager City Attorney and Finance Departments. The Service Team meets once every other month on the 2nd Thursday, for one hour, to discuss and strategize how to effectively manage city-wide code enforcement policies and regulations, issues and actions, such as recent Hearing Examiner decisions and medical marijuana, annexation complainant confidentiality, property maintenance code amendments, etc.

### Activity

The Code enforcement activity levels compiled by Department staff for the last five years are shown in Table 15.

**Table 15**  
**Land Use Management Division Code Enforcement Activities**

Activity	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012 (YTD) <sup>2</sup>	Five Year Average
Cases <sup>1</sup>	308	306	254	230	256	286	271
% Change	N/A	(-0.6%)	(-17%)	(-9.4%)	11%	12%	

<sup>1</sup>Includes violations of the Tree Ordinance, Commercial/Residential Noise Complaints, Permits, Signs, Home Businesses, Junk/Garbage, Sensitive Areas, Wetland/Stream, Sidewalk/Street Obstruction, Animals, Fences, Grass Height, Nonconformance, and Setbacks

From 1/1/12 to 11/30/12

The five-year average for Planning Complaint Code Enforcement complaint activities was 271 per year. There was a slight decrease in activity in 2008, followed by a significant (17%) decrease in activity in 2009. 2010 activity levels decreased again from the previous year; however 2011 activity levels increased by 11%. Given the annexation, the activity levels have increased in 2011 and 2012.

## Equipment

Code Enforcement Staff indicated a need to increase their voice mail phone storage capacity (from 25 to 35+ messages) so that more messages can be preserved longer, while enforcement cases are being investigated.

**139. Recommendation: The Planning & Community Development Director should consult with Code Enforcement Officers to determine the appropriate volume of voice mail storage needed and obtain additional voice mail storage capacity for code enforcement officers to allow Officers to preserve more messages for a longer period, while enforcement cases are being investigated.**

## Process

Code Enforcement Officers largely respond to citizen-initiated complaints, rather than instigating complaints, due to limited staff resources. The majority of complaints received are non-emergency and are received through the City's on-line complaint reporting system on the City's website. They can also be reported by fax or over the counter. Non-emergency complaints are not anonymous and may be subject to disclosure under the Public Records Act (RCW 42.56), which helps to eliminate false reporting. Life Safety Complaints are considered emergency complaints and can be reported anonymously. These types of complaints are typically phoned in due to their time sensitive nature; however some are received over the counter or through the online complaint system.

Complaints that are received by the function are collected by staff the same or next day, depending on when the complaint is initiated. Administrative staff then creates an electronic file in the EnerGov system, as well as a paper file for dissemination to Code Enforcement Officers. Once the paper file is created, it is forwarded to the Development Review Manager who immediately assigns it to a Code Enforcement Officer, based on caseload. Once EnerGov is fully operational it should be possible to eliminate the paper file.

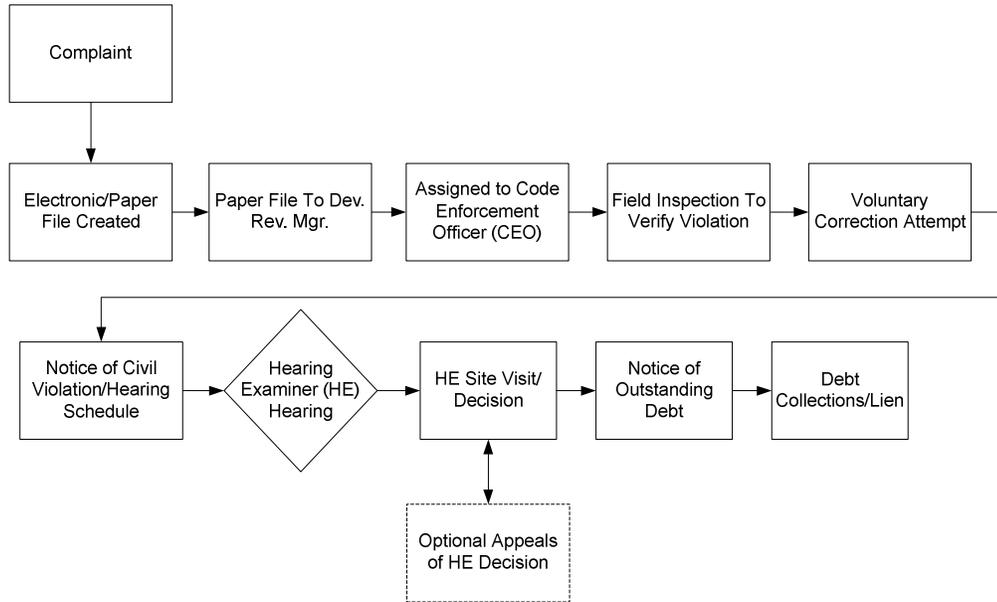
The assigned Officer then conducts a field inspection within the next business day to verify the violation. If there is no evidence of a violation, the complainant is contacted to relay the findings and the case is closed. If the Officer finds evidence of a violation, the complainant is contacted to relay the findings and the enforcement process is initiated.

The Code Enforcement Officer will try to resolve the matter first through education, voluntary compliance, and/or negotiation. In addition, the City offers mediation services free of charge to complaining parties, through the Belleview Neighborhood Mediation Program to assist property owners in resolving their disputes, which is excellent.

Voluntary Compliance typically includes requiring the property owner to sign a “Voluntary Correction Agreement,” which gives the property owner a reasonable period of time to correct the violation or be automatically subject to the assessment of monetary penalties. If property owner signs the agreement, the Code Enforcement Officer follows up to ensure the violation is corrected by the date agreed upon. Once corrected the case is closed, and the complainant is notified of the disposition of the case. If this proves ineffective, then more formal enforcement proceedings commence.

The Code Enforcement Officer sends a standardized Notice of Civil Violation letter, informing the property owner that a hearing has been scheduled before the Kirkland Hearing Examiner to order corrective action of the violation, and that monetary penalties will be assessed if found in violation. If corrective action is achieved 48 hours prior to the hearing, the hearing is cancelled and no monetary penalties are assessed. If the Hearing Examiner finds the property owner in violation, the corrective action is specified and monetary penalties may be assessed. Staff indicates that if the evidence presented supports the Notice of Civil Violation issued by a code enforcement officer and the violator unreasonably delays correcting the violation, or refuses to comply with the written Decision and Order issued by the City Hearing Examiner setting the compliance date, fines are routinely imposed against violators for code violations. The property owner must pay the fines and correct the violation as ordered by the Hearing Examiner, or the Code Enforcement Officer will send a standardized letter to the property owner advising them of the debt owed (e.g., Notice of Outstanding Debt) and that failure to pay debt and correct violation will result in additional fines that accrue daily. At times, the City will enlist the help of collection agencies to secure the debt or place a lien on the property. The property owner can appeal the Hearing Examiner’s decision to Superior Court, if desired. Figure 12 below shows the *basic* existing flow of the Zoning Code Enforcement Process.

**Figure 12  
Existing Zoning Code Enforcement Process**



Interviews with staff indicated that the Code Enforcement function has improved over the last few years, however there are still issues. For example, it was reported that confusion still exists as to their scope of responsibility and their level of accountability, particularly with regard to which staff are responsible for processing certain types of complaints and “Exceptions to Work Hours Request” forms, as well as what type of enforcement issues take priority over others.

**140. Recommendation:** The Development Review Manager should continue to meet with Code Enforcement staff to clearly outline all areas of responsibility for processing “Exceptions to Work Hours Request Forms” and all complaints under their purview, and provide guidance on enforcement priorities.

In addition, at times there remains some disagreement between Code Enforcement Staff, Building Staff and Public Works staff regarding areas of responsibility for inspecting, investigating and enforcing various types of building and/or public works code violations. As a result, the enforcement process can be lengthened while the various departments attempt to resolve enforcement responsibility conflicts. In addition, various departments approach code enforcement less systematically, which creates documentation issues and can impede compliance efforts.

Staff interviews also revealed that the City has been working on resolving these issues in an effort to create a more efficient, holistic, citywide enforcement approach, which we agree is necessary. As part of this effort, the City should consider increasing

communication between the various enforcement functions by holding regularly month meetings, and increasing its public education efforts to further improve voluntary compliance rates. Enforcement data should be analyzed to identify the type of violations that occur most often, as well as the geographic areas where they occur the most, so that a more comprehensive enforcement strategy can be developed, including: identifying city-approved companies and facilities that can haul and accept junk cars, scrap, trash, etc., at affordable rates for violators with little financial means.

**141. Recommendation:** The City should consider increasing public education & outreach efforts to improve voluntary compliance rates for code enforcement activities.

**142. Recommendation:** The Planning & Community Development Department should analyze enforcement data to identify the type of violations that occur most often, as well as the geographic areas where they occur the most, to assist in the formulation of a more comprehensive enforcement strategy, which includes identifying city sponsored companies and facilities that can haul and accept various types of trash and junk at affordable rates.

### Staffing

There are two full-time code enforcement officers charged with investigating zoning code enforcement cases. Recent data obtained from the Department for the period from December 2011 through August 2012, indicates that 2709.5 man-hours were spent by Code Enforcement Officers investigating code enforcement cases. During this same period, the Officers worked on a total of 194 cases, which equates to about 14 man-hours spent on average per case. Table 16 below outlines the average number of hours, per staff data, involved in the processing code enforcement cases.

**Table 16  
Land Use Management Code Enforcement Officers – Hours Required for Processing**

Process Type	No. Of Cases Processed FY 10	No. of Cases Processed FY 11	Average Hours Required to Process <sup>1</sup>	Total Time Processing FY 10	Total Time Processing FY 11
Code Enforcement Cases	230	256	14	3220	3584

<sup>1</sup> Per Staff 2012 Data

According to our billable hour analysis each staff member has 1,338 hours per year available for productive time. Using the 3,584 hours processing time for 2011 would result in the need for 2.7 positions. However, mathematically, this is not possible. Either the actual hours devoted to enforcement are wrong or the hours required per case processing are too high. The proposed fee study should provide more definitive numbers to use for staffing analysis.

Code enforcement staffing is based on two items. First the amount of enforcement cases received, and secondly the amount of pro-active enforcement the community wishes to undertake. It will also require determining the amount of new activity generated from the annexation area. In the interim, we suggest that the average hours per case be set at 11 hours. If the caseload goes up from the 256 in FY 11, this factor should be used to determine need for any additional staffing.

**143.**        *Recommendation: Initially use a factor of 11 hours needed for each code enforcement case received and as numbers increase, adjust staffing accordingly.*

## **F. LAND USE MANAGEMENT (CURRENT PLANNING)**

### **PROFILE**

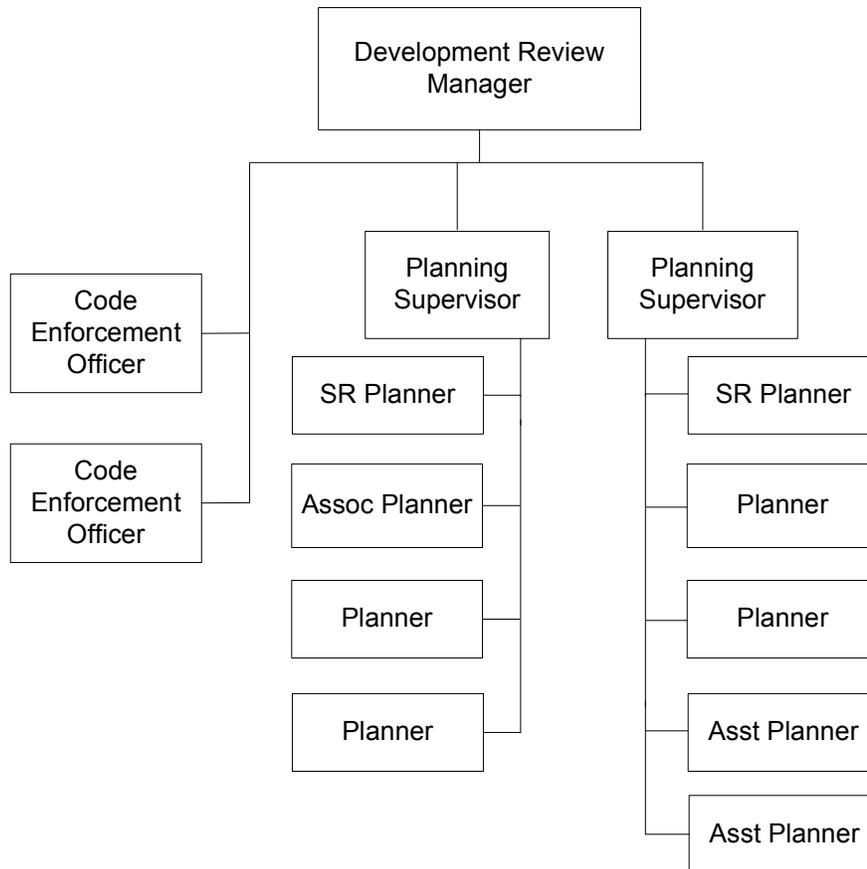
#### **Overview**

The Land Use Management Division performs permit and development review functions to implement the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) and the City's Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Code, Subdivision Ordinance, and the Shoreline Master Program. The Urban Forestry position, which is currently contracted out on a part-time basis, administers the tree code, reviews proposed developments for tree protection, and processes tree removal permits, as well as other urban forest-related activities. This Division also provides regulatory and development policy information, enforces zoning and development-related codes and provides staff support for the Hearing Examiner, the City's Design Review Board, the Houghton Community Council and the City Council. Approximately 50% of the department's resources are spent on Land Use Management Division functions.

#### **Organization**

The staff is headed by a Development Review Manager. There are 11 planners including two Planning Supervisors, plus two Code Enforcement Officers. The organization is shown in Figure 13.

**Figure 13  
Land Use Management Division Organization Chart**



**Activity**

The Land Use Management activity levels for the Planning & Community Development Department, compiled by Department staff for the last five years are shown in Table 17.

**Table 17  
Land Use Management Division (Current Planning, Code Enforcement),  
Activities**

Activity by Function	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012 2 (YTD)	Five Year Average
<b>Current Planning</b>							
Zoning, Subdivisions, Other Discretionary Land Use Permits <sup>1</sup>	192	117	73	82	144	155	122
Pre-Submittals	124	66	84	70	106	119	90
Building Permit Application Reviews <sup>2</sup>	848	671	495	597	625	943	647
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,164</b>	<b>854</b>	<b>652</b>	<b>749</b>	<b>875</b>	<b>1,219</b>	<b>859</b>
<b>% Change</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>(-26%)</b>	<b>(-23%)</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>39%</b>	

<sup>1</sup> Includes Planning Official Decisions, Director Decisions, Process I, Process IIA, Process IIB/III, Design Review, SEPA Determinations, and Miscellaneous Permit types.

<sup>2</sup> From 1/1/12 to 11/30/12

<sup>3</sup> Equals actual Planning Building Plan Reviews for 4/2/12 through 11/30/12 and estimated Planning Plan Reviews for 1/1/12 through 4/1/12.

The five-year average for current planning permits, pre-submittal and building permit review activities was 859 per year. Activity levels for permits, pre-submittals and building permit reviews dropped significantly in 2008, by 26% and then dropped again in 2009, which reflects lower activity levels due to the national recession. In 2010, and 2011, these activities increased by 15% and 17% respectively. Given the City’s annexation the numbers increased to 1,219 or 39%, however this was only for 11 months. The actual year-end will be higher.

## **ORGANIZATION ISSUES**

### **Project Managers**

Interviews with staff indicated that the Land Use Management Planning Staff function as Planning Project Managers, which is commonly referred to as a “Cradle-to-Grave,” system. In a traditional “Cradle-to-Grave” project management system, the assigned current planner manages the permit project and works directly on the project. We advocate this system because it promotes processing consistency, coordination and communication in the permitting Process. In addition, we have found this system to be generally more fulfilling for planning staff because they are elevated from processors and regulators to problem-solvers. However, a true Planning Project Manager permitting system entails having the Planning Project Managers perform the following functions:

- Conduct (e.g., leading) pre-submittal conference meetings.
- Review/Screen formal applications to ensure they are complete.
- Coordinate plan routing to other reviewing agencies.
- Drive (e.g., be an advocate during the review process) the interdepartmental review process to ensure reviews are completed on time.
- Coordinate input from regional, state or federal agencies and collect and integrate all review comments.
- Challenge other department conditions when they appear inappropriate.
- Resolve interdepartmental project-level problems/issues.
- Analyze the project for compliance with policies and regulations, and long-range plans.
- Coordinate with key decision-makers.
- Write and sign staff reports that provide decision-makers with a recommendation.
- Present formal presentations of the project at public meetings.
- Sign off prior to issuing building permit and Certificate of Occupancy.
- Conduct field reviews of the project to verify required improvements and within six months or a year after construction to determine if approvals were satisfactory or if unintended impacts have occurred.

Our interviews with staff, as well as our observations, indicated that current planning staff performs most of the above functions, but not all of them. In particular, planning staff is not consistently leading permit-related meetings as the project manager. In addition, planning staff is not driving (e.g., tracking, monitoring, etc.) the interdepartmental/outside agency review process to ensure reviews are coordinated and completed on time. For example, the DRC meeting (described in greater detail below) is often used as a forum for senior-level staff to monitor and push review timelines of current permit projects, rather than empowering the assigned planner to perform this function. Moreover, it appears that planners are reluctant to challenge other department conditions that they believe may be inappropriate and/or resolve project-level issues without assistance. Finally, planning staff does not consistently perform field inspections to ensure that required improvements have been constructed and within six months or a year after construction to determine if approvals were satisfactory or if unintended impacts have occurred. Instead, it was reported that Public Works inspectors conduct some inspections on behalf of the project planner to verify the construction of improvements.

**144. Recommendation: The Land Use Management Division of the Planning & Community Development Department should empower**

**current planners to perform all of the functions described above through formal policy and interdepartmental (DRC 2) agreement (e.g., agree planners are the lead, and act as projects managers; also agree on review timelines) with other departments involved in the permitting process to promote processing consistency, coordination and communication in the permitting**

## **Staffing**

The Land Use Management Division Planners manage the processing of all land use (zoning) permit applications including subdivisions, building permit reviews (site plans), and zoning applications, etc., through various processes that have been established, which are shown in the table below. Per the Department's approved budget, there are 11 planning positions in the Land Use Division (Current Planning). Two of these positions are supervisors and we assume spend half time supervision and the other half time on direct activities. This results in a net staff of 10 positions. However, as discussed in the Long Range Planning sections, we assume that at least 1.15 of these positions work on Long Range planning projects. This leaves a net of 8.85 positions available for direct projects.

Department counter duties are largely the responsibility of the Assistant Planners. During the instances when they are not available, the substitute is called according to the published schedule. As a result, with the exception of the Assistant Planners, who also focus on customer service and intake in addition to processing less complicated land use permits, the majority of the Planner's available work hours can be focused on permit application processing/case management.

We obtained permit and time by task data from the Department for an nine-month period, from December 11, 2011 to August 2012, in order to estimate the average number of hours required to complete each of the zoning and building permit tasks identified in Table 18 below.

**Table 18**  
**Land Use Management Planners – Hours Required for Processing by Permit Type**

Permit Application Type	Total Hours (12/11-8/12)	Total Permits	Average Hours Required to Process <sup>1</sup>
Building Permit Reviews	3117.25	656	4.75
Admin Design Rev. Permit	5.5	1	5.5
Pre-Submittal Conf. Mtgs.	554.5	71	7.8
Planning Official	355.5	45	7.9
Planning Director	368.25	18	20
Process I	1096	14	78
Process IIA	442.5	7	63
Process IIB/III	919.75	3	307
Design Review	390.75	2	195
SEPA Reviews	525.0	32	16
Other	45.5	3	15
Potala EIS	133	1	133
Public Information/Records Requests	2891.75	No Data	-
Procedures Interpretations	106	No Data	-
Land Use Applications	652.25	No Data	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,143.5</b>		

<sup>1</sup> Per Dept. Data

The number of average hours required to process a permit can be a useful start at producing a staffing model. However, care must be taken in interpreting the data as related to accuracy. Our billable hour's analysis shown earlier in this report indicates 1,338 hours available per staff person. For the same nine-month period this would be 1,003 hours per staff person. If all 11 staff were working on projects there would be up to 11,003 hours (1,003 times 11) or a shortage of 1,140 hours, roughly one person.

However, if we modify our analysis to assume that only 8.85 staff are available, there would only be 8,877 hours (1,003 times 8.85) available for production, which is a shortage of 2,165 hours, or roughly two staff. It should be noted that this analysis assumes using current performance standards, which in some cases are not being met. Additionally, we are recommending faster processing time in some categories, which can increase staffing, needs.

We believe that some of the data being used for this analysis is suspect. However, it is a good starting point that can be refined. If the demand for 12,143 hours is divided by the nine-month period it results in a demand of 1,349 hours per month. As a starting

point to determine the need for additional staff or consultants, we suggest using the hours per application analysis. When hour demands exceed this 1,349 hours for the activities shown in Table 18, additional staffing or consultants should be considered. Additionally, as performance standards change, the demand hour number may need to be reduced. Once the proposed fee study is completed, it should be possible to design a more precise staffing model.

In addition to the full-time staff planners, the department uses various part-time consultants to help them manage spikes in development activity. For example, the Department currently employs a planning consultant, and an urban forestry consultant to handle short plat permit applications, and regulatory reviews related to the Tree Ordinance.

Staff interviews revealed that the use of qualified consultants has helped them manage their work flow more effectively; however, at times, less qualified consultants have been hired, which has taxed staff resources because they have had to train and assist them and/or correct their mistakes. We understand that management staff is making a conscience effort to ensure that only qualified consultants are hired to assist the department, which is good.

**145. Recommendation:** Add one temporary planner to the current planning functions.

**146. Recommendation:** Use 1,349 hours as the current base productivity hours needed for current planners. Should that application numbers increase, supplement staff with consultants. Additionally, re-examine the number as performance standards change.

## **POLICY ISSUES**

### **Decision Authority**

Table 19 shows the Decision Making Authority for Land Use Management (Current Planning) permit applications.

**Table 19  
Decision Making Authority for Planning (Current Planning) Applications**

Action	Planning Official (staff)	CDD Director	Design Review Board (DRB)	Hearing Examiner (HE)	Houghton Community Council (HCC)	Planning Commission (PC)	City Council (CC)
<b>LAND USE MANAGEMENT DIVISION PERMIT APPLICATIONS</b>							
<b>Annexations</b>	R	R	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	D
<b>Planning Official Decision</b> (Accessory DU, Admin. Wireless, Admin. Design Review, Minor (PUD) Modifications, Review for Code Compliance)	D	N/A	N/A	N/A A-Admin Wireless only	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Director Decision Process</b> (Variance Exception, Off-Site. Dir. Signage, Master Sign Plan, LLA, Bldg. Site Plan, TUP's)	R	D	N/A	N/A A-Off-site & MSP only	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Process I</b> (Short Sub. Substantial Dev. Permit*, Wireless)	R	D	N/A	A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Process IIA</b> (Prelim. Sub., Shoreline CUP/Var*, Plat Alterations)	R	N/A	N/A	D	N/A	N/A	A
<b>Process IIB</b> (PUD'S, Subdiv. Vacations, Wireless)	R	N/A	N/A	R	R <sup>1</sup>	N/A	D
<b>Miscellaneous:</b>							
Sidewalk Cafe	D	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Final Subd.	R	R	N/A	N/A	R <sup>1</sup>	N/A	D
Street Vacations	R	R	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	D
Design Response Conference (if in 1 of 6 Districts)	R	N/A	D	A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Conceptual Design Conference</b> (if in 1 of 6 Districts)	R	N/A	Prelim. guidance	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Other?</b>							
<b>POLICY &amp; PLANNING DIVISION</b>							
<b>Process IV</b> (Amendments to Zoning Map, Code, and Comp. Plan, Neighborhood Plans)	R	R	N/A	N/A	R <sup>1</sup>	R	D
<b>Process IVA</b> (Abbrev. Process for Minor Zoning Map & Code Amendments)	R	R	N/A	N/A	R <sup>1</sup>	N/A	D
R = Review/Recommendation, R <sup>1</sup> = HCC Review/Decision if in HCC Area, D=Decision, A=Appeal, N/A= Not Applicable, *Appeal to State Shorelines Hearing Board							

As the table above shows, staff has decision-making authority over many types of permit applications, including Planning Official, Planning Director and Process I permits, which is excellent and Best Practice.

The Hearing Examiner makes decisions on code enforcement cases, serves as the appeal body for administrative decisions, has decision-making authority over Process

IIA permits, and is a recommendation body for Process IIB permits. The Planning Commission function has been adjusted so that they serve as a recommendation body on legislative matters only, which has eliminated the need for Process III permits, and streamlined Process IV and IVA permits. The City Council has decision-making authority over Process IIB permits, and serves as the appeal body for Hearing Examiner (Process IIA) permits. Staff has made a concerted effort to shift non-legislative decision-making permits to the Hearing Examiner and the administrative decision-making level, in order to streamline processing, which is consistent with Best Practices. Shifting non-legislative decision-making away from the City Council to Hearing Examiners and staff in order to expedite processing, provide for appeal avenues and free up City Council time so that they can focus on policy and legislative functions is an excellent approach.

Overall, staff has done a good job streamlining current planning permit processes by moving the decision-making authority of land use permits to lower levels. However, interviews with staff indicated that there might be additional opportunity to move even more land use permits to lower levels. For example, staff indicates that the administrative wireless permit could be approved over-the-counter, without the need for Planning Official processing. In addition, there are some land use permits that are designated for Director-level decision-making that could be moved to Planning Official-level decision-making. For example, Staff indicates that the noticing requirements for Temporary Use Permits for Tent Cities are overly burdensome and unnecessary and that these Director-level decision-making permits should be moved to Planning Official-level decision-making permits. Further, Hearing Examiner approval (e.g., Process IIA) to Planning Director approval, with appeals to the Hearing Examiner. Finally, the City Council should consider further reducing its role in hearing appeals of quasi-judicial decisions. One possibility is for short plats with through road connections.

**147. Recommendation:** The Planning & Community Development Department should explore further opportunities to streamline and condense land use permitting processes, such as moving certain Director-level decision-making to Planning Official decision-making (e.g., Lot Line Alterations, Binding Site Plans, Temporary Use Permits) and certain Hearing Examiner decision-making to Planning Director-level decision-making, with appeals to the Hearing Examiner.

**148. Recommendation:** The City Council should consider further reducing its role in hearing appeals of quasi-judicial decisions by moving these types of appeals to the Hearing Examiner level.

## PROCESS ISSUES

## **Building Permit Plan Review**

### **Building Plan Reviews**

The Assistant Planners have primary responsibility for reviewing and approving some building plans for compliance with zoning regulations. The Assistant Planners conduct completeness reviews for some single-family permits, tenant improvements, signs and other permits before the application is accepted. The applicant does a walk around to the Building, Public works and Planning counters to accomplish the completeness checks with each department before the Building Department intakes the permit. Staff from various departments (e.g., building, planning, public works, etc.) also conducts a completeness meeting for new multifamily & commercial permits, prior to accepting an application for submittal. Completeness checklists have been created for the various permit types and are used by the Assistant Planners as a tool to guide their completeness checks, which is excellent.

The review process includes the Building Permit Technicians routing plans for Fast Track and Express permits directly to the Assistant Planners for review. Other building permits go to the Planning Supervisor for assignment. Planners are given between one and ten weeks to conduct reviews, depending on the project type. Planners review the site plans associated with building permits to ensure there are no issues with setbacks, easements, zoning, etc., and ensure compliance with all conditions of approval. For electronic submittals, Bluebeam software is used to review, mark-up and electronically stamp/approve plans. Paper plan submittals are reviewed and marked by hand. Comments are recorded in EnerGov and approved plans are signed off in the EnerGov System. Staff indicates that the Building Plan Review process works well overall. However, Building staff indicate that there are timeline issues related to Planning's review of single-family houses.

### **Express Permits and Fast Track Permits**

Staff indicated that Express Permit and Fast-Track permits were introduced in 2001 in order to segregate the less complex permits so that they could be reviewed more quickly.

- Express Permits, such as rooftop appurtenances, tenant improvements, basic decks, single family first floor additions, and ground mounted mechanical units, are permits that are intended to be issued in three (3) working days or less.
- Fast-Track Permits are intended to be issued within ten (10) working days or less. Typical Fast-Track permits include new single family homes, more complex single family additions or garages under 500 square feet and other small projects, such as deck, sheds, repair/maintenance projects in or near sensitive areas that are exempt from the State Environmental Policy Act. In

addition, complex rooftop appurtenances, rockeries and retaining walls up to 8 feet tall, tenant Improvements up to 5000 square feet without a change in use, slab on grade greenhouse additions under 500 square feet and single family outdoor swimming pools.

Staff interviewed indicated that they are generally able to perform the reviews of Express and Fast-Track Permits within the review timeframes, and that the process works well.

*However, see recommendations under the “Building Section,” regarding establishing shorter review performance standards for certain building permit reviews.*

### **Expedited Review and Priority Reviews**

In 2003, the City initiated a new program for single-family dwellings to allow builders to pay an additional review fee in exchange for an expedited review process.

However, interviews with staff indicated that the City no longer hires outside planning and building consultants to perform expedited reviews for new single family residences. Rather the plans are routed to in-house Building Plan Reviewers and Assistant Planners to conduct the reviews through over-time. Since these staff members are eligible for over-time compensation, a portion of the expedited review fees is utilized to defray the over-time costs associated with plan review. However, there are only two Assistant Planners and these staff members are not always available to work over-time and the other Planners are not assigned expedited review work as a backup.

In the Building Chapter of this report we have recommended a comprehensive expedited plan review process. Although much of the work would be by consultants, some work could be done by staff if the pay issues were resolved or in some cases if salaried planners would perform expedited reviews as needed as part of their salaried duties and use the expedited fee monies to adjust salaries to compensate for additional work load.

**149. Recommendation: The City Manager should resolve the wage issues associated the Expedited Review Program for in-house plan reviewers.**

### **Permit Review**

Applications for single-family dwelling (SFD) permits are accepted every day from 8am to 4pm, except Wednesday mornings. On Wednesday mornings the counter is closed until about 10:30am, so that staff can conduct internal meetings. SFD Applicants must first undergo a completeness check through all relevant departments, including Public Works, Planning and Fire/Building before they are accepted for processing. Once all departments have signed off on completeness the application

processing begins. A building plan reviewer is then assigned to track the progress of the review and coordinate redlines and the correction letter.

The Development Review Committee II (DRC II Team) has worked diligently on continuously improving the SFD permit process to streamline permitting, which is good. For example, the completeness review process has been modified, and the exemption level for the number of residential units subject to SEPA review has been increased.

However, despite their efforts some issues still exist. For example, staff indicated that there are still issues with reviewers communicating when they have signed off on land use permits. In addition, staff indicates that, at times, Multi-family permit applications are substandard. Further, staff indicates that it typically takes as long as four (4) hours to review a SFD permit because of onerous code requirements, planner workloads, varying plan review styles and EnerGov programming issues. Planners also indicated that the submittal checklists and application instructions are too convoluted and need to be simplified, which could help improve planners conduct reviews more quickly.

*See previous recommendations under the “Front Counter Section” regarding reassigning Administrative Staff to cover lunch hour so the planners can focus on completing reviews and other substantive tasks, and under “Antiquated Code Section” regarding updating the zoning code to simply and clarify language and computerize the code.*

**150. Recommendation:** The DRC II Team should ensure that all plan reviewers are consistently communicating when they have signed off on land use permits via EnerGov, and when warranted, via email.

**151. Recommendation:** The DRC II Team should ensure that the submittal checklist for Multi-family dwelling permits provides clear instructions for applicants to ensure that submittals are accurate and complete.

**152. Recommendation:** The Development Review Manager should ensure that all planners responsible for conducting building plan review have adequate training and tools to ensure that reviews are conducted in a consistent manner and similar level of effort.

### **Planning Permit Processes**

The Land Use Management Division (Current Planning) Permitting process varies somewhat according to the permit process used as follows:

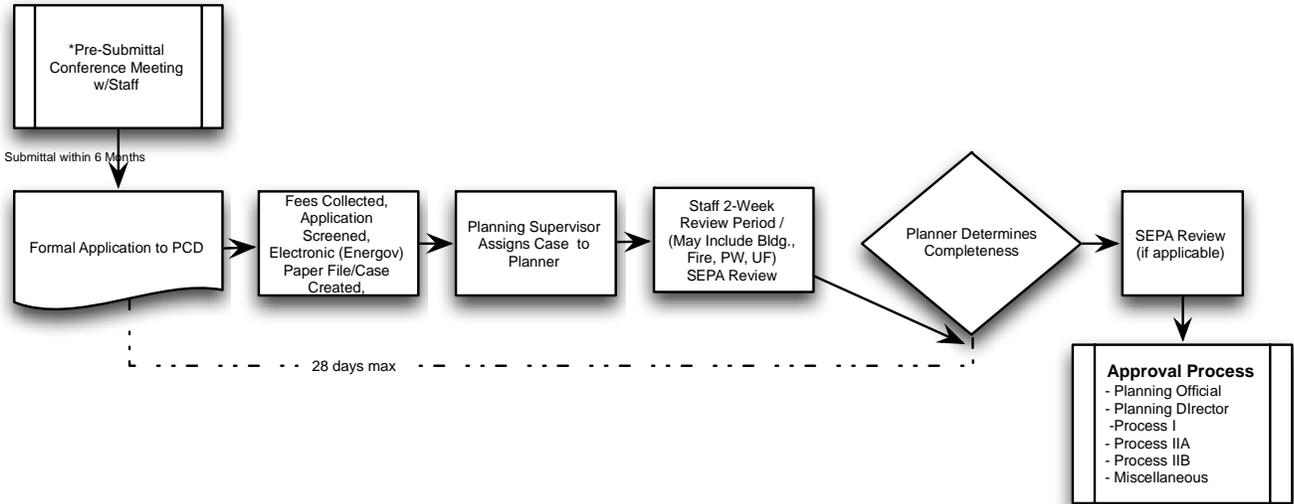
- The Department has established Planning Official, Planning Director and Process I administrative decision-level processes for approving less complicated, more routine permits.
- More complicated permits, such as PUD's and CUP's are processed through Process IIA and IIB procedures, which require Hearing Examiner approval.
- Projects located within any of the six (6) design districts required Design Review Board Approval.
- Legislative matters are considered by the Planning Commission and approved by the City Council.

Although different Processes have been established to process permits in the Department, all of the processes have some initial steps in common. For example, nearly all the permit processes start with a mandatory pre-submittal application submittal followed by a pre-submittal conference meeting. A formal application is filed within six months of the pre-submittal conference meeting, then fees are collected and electronic and paper files are created. The formal application is also checked to ensure that it contains all required submittal materials.

The file is then forwarded to a planning supervisor, who assigns it to a planner within a few days. The assigned planner does an initial completeness check and forwards a copy to each of the various departments that conduct a review of the permit application (e.g., building, fire, public works and the urban forester). Reviewers have up to two weeks to complete their review. Following the two-week review, the planner makes a determination whether the application is complete. Once deemed complete, the Planner conducts an initial SEPA review (if applicable). The permit application then proceeds through one of five processes, depending on the type(s) of application(s) submitted.

Figure 14 below details the initial broad steps of the permit application process. The text that follows summarizes the process as well as our recommended changes. A more detailed description of each process follows.

**Figure 14**  
**Existing Initial Steps of Permit Approval Processes**



1. As the above figure depicts, most of the current planning permit applicants are required to attend a Pre-submittal Conference Meeting with Planning Staff as their first step in the approval process.. In addition, some application permit types, such as zoning applications, also encourage meetings with neighborhood groups prior to the formal submittal, which is a good practice.
2. The next step in the process is the formal submittal to the Planning & Community Development Department front counter. An appointment or coordination with the planner is necessary, and application materials and fees can be submitted anytime in person.

Interviews with staff indicated that the department has not created a “Submittal Deadline Schedule” for each process to help them manage the counter, flow of submittals, and corresponding staff resources. As development activity increases, the Department should consider creating and publishing a “Submittal Deadline Schedule.” The “Schedule(s)” should outline: 1) Front counter submittal days and times; 2) Submittal Deadlines for each process type; 3) Corresponding hearing dates for each submittal deadline. Adequate time should be built in between the submittal deadline and corresponding hearing/decision date to accommodate the time required to deem the application complete, conduct staff reviews, give public notice, provide public comment periods, prepare and distribute staff reports, etc.

“Submittal Deadline Schedules” are an excellent tool used by many Best Practice communities to manage submittal intake activities and staff resources and help guide both staff and applicants through the submittal processes.

**153. Recommendation:** The Department should create/establish “Submittal Deadline Schedules” as development activity increases to help them manage the counter, flow of submittals, and corresponding staff resources.

Submittal requirements for the permit applications vary but generally include the following:

- Paper copy of a completed, Signed Application Forms;
- A road concurrency application (e.g., for preliminary subdivisions, etc.) must be submitted to the Public Works Department and a notice of passing must be received;
- Fee;
- Vicinity Map;
- Completed environmental checklist (for non-exempt SEPA projects);
- Supporting Affidavits;
- Neighborhood Meeting Sheet (if conducted);
- Five (5) paper copies of dimensioned site plans, drawn at 1" = 20' or a comparable scale, and folded to “8 1/2 x 11” size;
- One (1) copy of all plans reduced onto 8 1/2" x 11" sheets;
- Perspective drawings, photographs, color renderings or other graphics may be needed to adequately evaluate the application;
- A CD of all submittal materials for presentation at public meetings and/or permanent storage;
- Copies of recorded easements;
- Other special studies (geotech report, tree retention plan, etc.).

Interviews with staff indicate that the Department strives to require the minimum number of plan sets for plan review in an effort to further their goal of becoming paperless, which is good.

*See previous recommendation regarding updating applications so that they can be filled in online, online submittals, fee payments and electronic plan review.*

3. Fees are collected, the application is screened and an electronic file is created in EnerGov by the intake person (e.g., assistant planner), along with a paper file. The EnerGov system creates file labels for the paper file. As mentioned earlier in the Study, detailed “Step Sheet” have been created for Administrative and Planning staff to guide them in the electronic (EnerGov) and paper file preparation and maintenance throughout the process to ensure files are set-up and maintained consistently, which is good.
4. The new file is immediately forwarded to the Planning Supervisors for assignment to planners based on a number of factors, including who conducted the pre-submittal meeting, level of difficulty, existing case loads, etc. Cases are generally assigned to planners on Fridays, so there is lag time between submittal and assignment of up to five working days.

Because state law requires a 28 day maximum completeness check, which begins on the day the application is submitted, all new cases, regardless of whether they are being processed via “fast tracked,” or “express reviewed” should immediately be assigned to planning staff, rather than be collected and assigned on Fridays. Immediate assignment of cases will become even more critical if completeness check timeframes are shortened, as we recommend in this Study.

**154. *Recommendation:* The Planning Supervisors should immediately assign new permit cases to planners, rather than collecting them and assigning them on Fridays to ensure the completeness checks are conducted within established performance standards.**

The assigned planner then typically conducts a cursory review to determine that the project is complete and distributes the submittals materials and plans to various city reviewers, including building, fire, public works, and the urban forester, and third-party reviewers, when warranted, for a two-week review period.

*See our recommendations under the “Performance Standards Section” regarding establishing formal review performance standards for up to three (3) review cycles.*

5. Following the two-week review period, administrative applications (e.g., Planning Official, Planning Director, Process I) are formally deemed complete (or incomplete) by the assigned planner. Process IIA and IIB applications often receive a preliminary SEPA review prior to determining that the application is complete.

If the application is found to be incomplete, the applicant is notified in writing to revise and resubmit the required information. Once resubmitted, staff has an additional 14 calendar days to review the resubmittal and deem it complete, per state law. However, it should be possible to complete this review in a much shorter timeframe. We recommend five working days. The Department has created a “Step Sheet” that provide instructions to the administrative staff and planners in the determination of completeness process, which is good. For example, planners have to send an electronic completeness form to administrative staff to send to the applicant three working days prior to its due date, for distribution to the applicant.

**155. Recommendation: The Department should establish a performance standard to complete completeness checks within five working days of the resubmittal.**

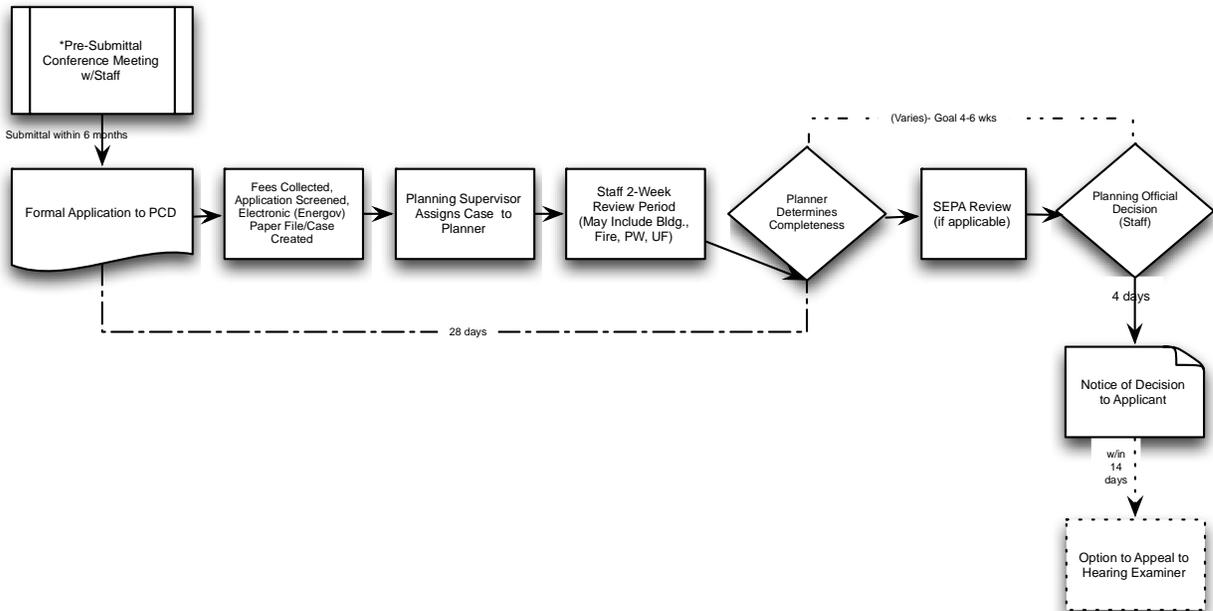
6. Following the completeness determination for more routine administrative processes, the Planner may conduct a SEPA review, if applicable. For more complex projects processed through Process IIA or Process IIB, Planners often conduct a preliminary SEPA review prior to deeming the application complete, as noted in the above step.
7. At this point, the application processes varies according to the application type, as described in more detail below.

### **Planning Official and Planning Director Decision Processes**

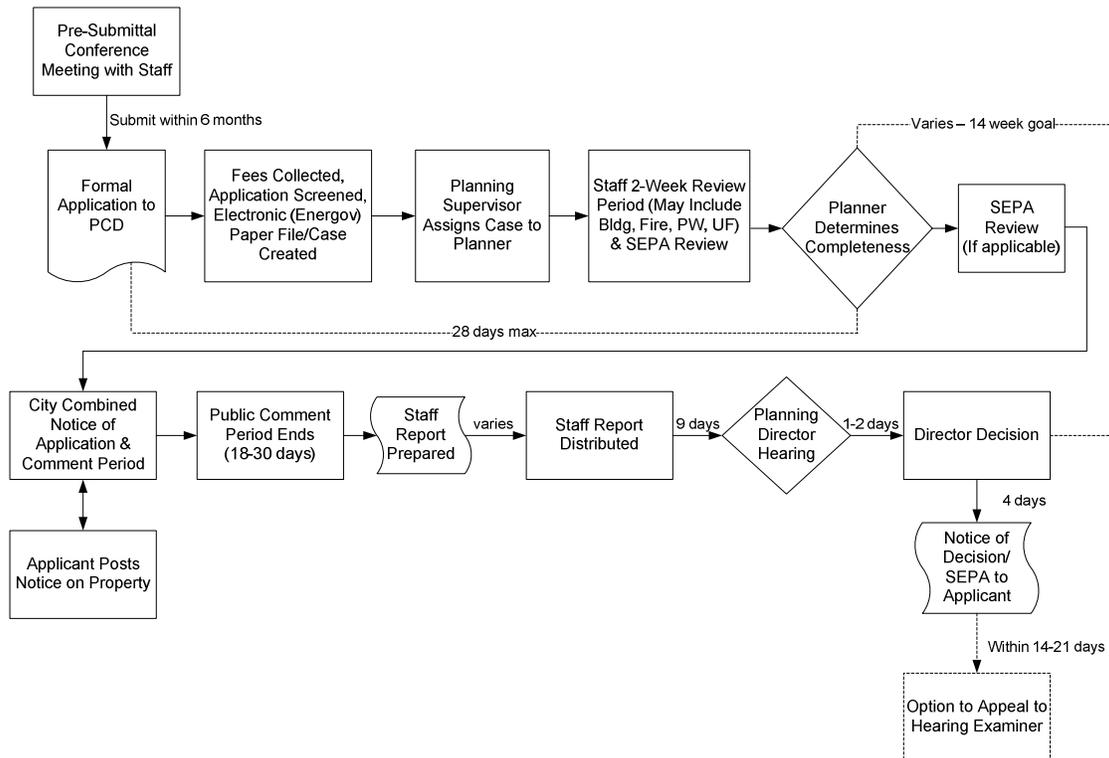
Minor, more routine application categories are processed administratively through the Planning Official Approval Process, Planning Director Decision Processes Following the SEPA review (if required), a final decision is made by staff on Planning Official applications. For Planning Director applications, a hearing with the Planning Director is scheduled and a staff report is drafted. The report is edited electronically by Planning Supervisors and then finalized and transmitted to the Planning Director in advance of the scheduled hearing (e.g., typically nine calendar days). Following the hearing, the assigned planner directs administrative staff to send a Notice of Decision to the applicant, within four calendar days. Again, procedural “Step Sheets” outline the numerous detailed steps for administrative and planning staff to follow to complete the Notice of Decision process, which have been streamlined by staff to the extent possible, which is good.

An appeal of the Planning Official or Planning Director decision can be made in writing and filed with the Department within 14 calendar days of the date the decision was mailed. Appeals are heard by the Hearing Examiner. Figures 15 and 16 outline the *basic* Planning Official and Planning Director Approval Processes.

**Figure 15**  
**Existing Planning Official Decision Process**



**Figure 16**  
**Existing Planning Director Decision Process**



## **Pre-Submittal Conference Meetings**

Currently, pre-submittal conference meetings are mandatory for several types of permits, including some types that undergo the Planning Official and Planning Director decision processes and all permits that undergo Process I, IIA, IIB and the Design Response process. Miscellaneous permit types, such as final plats, sidewalk cafes, etc., are not required to attend pre-submittal application meetings because they are more routine.

We agree with the requirement for pre-submittal meetings for more complicated permit types, and often recommend this as a standard practice to our clients. When structured properly, pre-submittal conference meetings can be invaluable to staff, and applicants/developers during their due diligence period because they provide applicants/ developers with an understanding of the required application submittal materials, help them to understand major project issues, the development review/permit process, and the timing and cost of the entitlement process, including impact fees.

We agree that Pre-submittal conference meetings should be attended by key (senior-level staff, if possible) representatives from the Planning, Building, Fire and various disciplines within Public Works, so that critical development issues that have the potential to create delays in the approval process can be outlined by experienced staff. The City engineer who attends the Pre-submittal conference represents stormwater and transportation issues and consults with appropriate staff prior to the meeting. For complex issues, the stormwater or transportation expert may also attend. Some staff indicated that the Public Works Storm Water Engineer should be in attendance for all pre-submittal conference meetings to outline and discuss critical storm water issues. This is a complex issue that we see in many of our studies. It is not practical to have all specialists attend all meetings. However, given the increased focus on stormwater issues, additional attendance at these meetings could serve an educational purpose.

### **156. Recommendation: The Public Works Storm Water Engineer should attend some additional pre-submittal conference meetings.**

Staff interviews indicated that a “Project Manager,” is introduced at the Pre-Submittal Conference Meeting. For Land Use Management permits, the Team Leader is intended to be the assigned Planner. In addition, staff indicated that they complete a “pre-submittal worksheet/checklist to record staff comments about the proposal, which is also a good practice and one that we often recommend. The Department also collects a fee for pre-submittal applications, which is credited back (less a small surcharge fee) to the applicant if a formal application is made within 180 days of the pre-submittal conference. Staff said that pre-submittal meetings are scheduled about

ten (10) days after the application materials are received to allow all reviewing staff ample opportunity to study the submittal and prepare comments in advance of the scheduled meeting

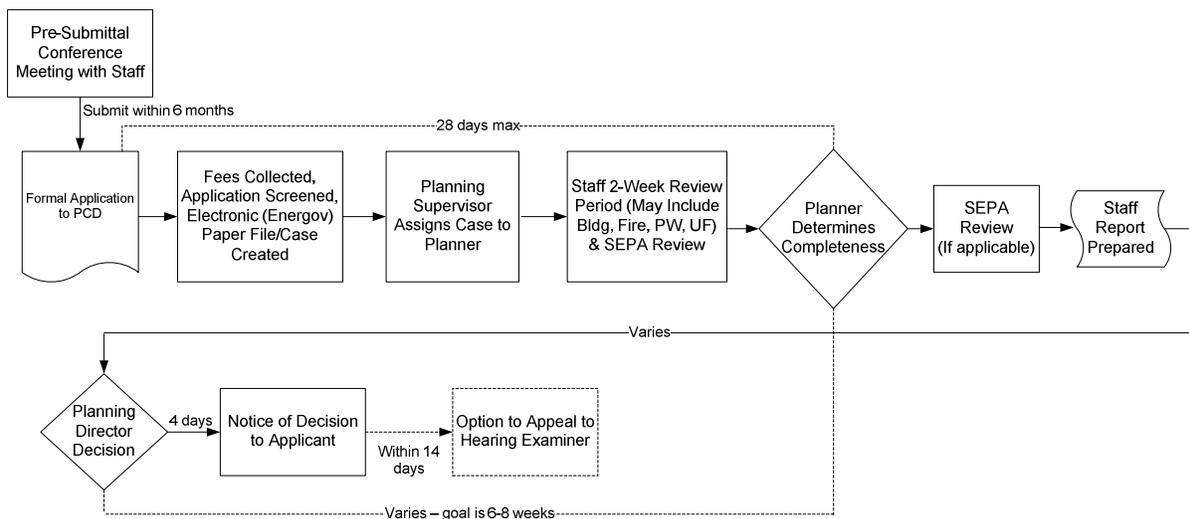
Currently, Pre-submittal conference meetings can't be submitted, paid for or scheduled online through the City's website. This is a relatively simple application process, with minimal submittal requirements and is a good candidate for online submittal.

**157. Recommendation: The Planning & Community Development Department should transition the pre-submittal conference meeting submittal process to an online process, so that applicants can apply for, submit, pay for and schedule these meetings online.**

**Process I Approval Process**

In addition to the steps identified above in the Planning Official and Planning Director Approval processes, the Process I Approval process also includes requirements for a "Notice of Application and Public Comment Period" before the final decision by Planning Director. A "Step Sheet" has been created to guide administrative and planning staff through the numerous steps required to complete this Notice of Application/Public Comment period process.

**Figure 17  
Process I Approval Process**



1. After deeming the application complete, the assigned planner directs administrative staff to electronically prepare a "Notice of Application and Comment Period," which is published in the general newspaper and posted on

designated City boards and the City website. In addition, the notice is sent to adjacent property owners. The property owner is also required to provide for and erect public notice signs at various locations on or near the property as instructed by the assigned planner. The Comment period for the public is a minimum of 18 calendar days from the date of the Notice and no more than 30 calendar days, depending on the type of application (e.g., shoreline permits require 30 days comment period).

2. Following the close of the comment period, the assigned planner prepares a brief staff report/memo, which evaluates and provides a recommendation of the proposal for the Director Decision. The report is forwarded to the Planning Supervisor for electronic review and edit, and then finalized by the assigned planner.
3. The Staff report is distributed electronically, along with any supplemental materials, to the Planning Director, approximately 9 days prior to the scheduled meeting.
4. Staff presents the proposed project to the Planning Director at an open meeting. The Director considers the proposal using decision criteria established in the code. Administrative staff records the meeting and prepares minutes of the proceedings to preserve the record.

Following the public meeting, the Planning Director considers the proposal in light of all of the information submitted and can grant, conditionally grant, modify or deny the application by written decision within one to two working days of the hearing. However, for most cases we believe the Planning Director should provide his decision at the end of the hearing while persons of interest are still present.

**158. Recommendation: The Planning Director should provide a decision at the close of the meeting rather than two days later.**

5. The assigned planner prepares the SEPA determination. A written Notice of the Director's Decision is sent within four calendar days of the decision to the Applicant and other participants, both electronically and by mail. The Notice of Decision is also posted on the City's website.

Interviews with staff indicated that the Notice of Application and Comment Period form letter is too wordy and should be simplified. We agree.

**159. Recommendation: The Development Review Manager should review and simplify the Notice of Application/Comment Period form.**

**160. Recommendation:** The Notice of Decision should be transmitted only by electronic means, and posted on the City’s website to streamline the distribution process and reduce mailing costs.

**161. Recommendation:** EnerGov should be programmed to create and distribute Form letters, such as Notices of Application and Comment Period and Notices of Decision.

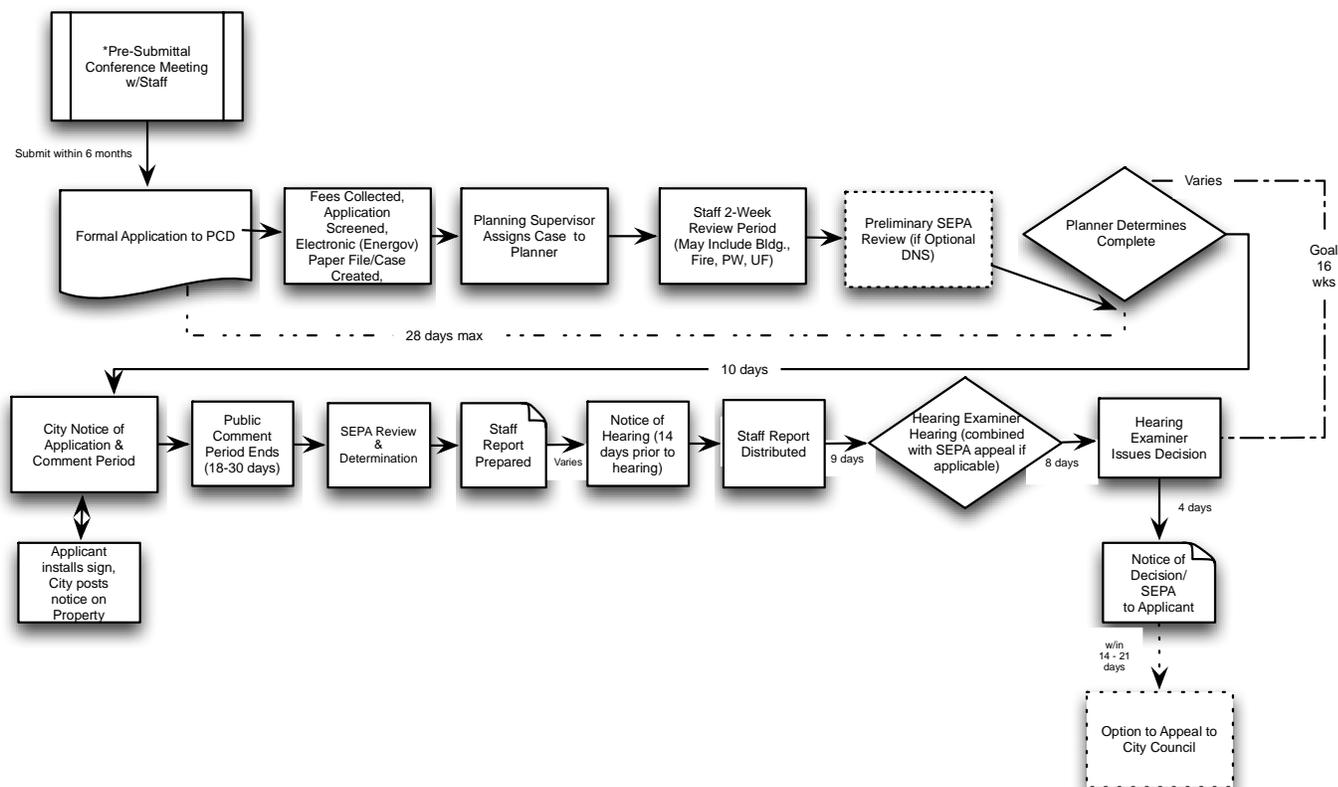
7. The applicant, or anyone who has submitted written comments, can appeal the Planning Director (Process I) decisions to the Hearing Examiner within 14 calendar days of the distribution of the Notice of Decision. If the project involves a SEPA determination, the applicant has up to 21 calendar days to file an appeal.

### **Process IIA Approval Process**

Process IIA application types include preliminary subdivisions, shoreline variances and CUP’s and Plat Alterations. The Hearing Examiner (HE) has final decision-making authority over these types of applications. As with the Process I applications, Process IIA applications also include requirements for a “Notice of Application and Public Comment Period.” Process IIA also requires public notice 14 calendar days before they can be considered by the Hearing Examiner for a final decision. Public Notice has to be published, and posted on the City’s website and designated posting boards. Public Notice must also be mailed to adjacent property owners within a 300’ radius.

Figure 18 below outlines the basic steps involved in the Process IIA approval process, after Staff deems the application complete

**Figure 18  
Process IIA Approval Process**



1. Following the determination that the application is complete, the planner directs administrative staff to electronically prepare a “Notice of Application and Comment Period,” in the same manner described in Process I. Again, the Comment period varies according to the application type.

*See earlier recommendation regarding programming EnerGov to automate form letters and public notices.*

2. After the close of the Public Comment Period, the Assigned Planner gathers any public comments received and completes the SEPA review and makes a determination as to whether the project is Non-significant (DNS) Non-significant with Mitigation (MDNS) or determined to be Significant (DS), which triggers the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (discussed in greater detail later in this Study). The Department has created a detailed “SEPA Instructions Sheet” to guide administrative and planning staff in completing the SEPA determination process, which will not be detailed here.

3. The Planner then schedules a hearing before the Hearing Examiner, and drafts a staff report with a recommendation, as outlined earlier.
4. In addition, a notice of public hearing is published, posted, etc., and mailed to adjacent property owners within a 300' radius a minimum of 14 calendar days prior to the scheduled hearing before the HE. Public Notice is given as early in the process as practicable following the SEPA determination, which is good practice. The Department has created a detailed instruction sheet to guide administrative and planning staff through the public notice process, which is good.

Interviews with Staff indicated that the Public Notice form letter is too wordy and should be simplified. We agree.

**162. Recommendation: The Planning & Community Development Department should review the Public Notice form and simplify the wording.**

The finalized staff report is then transmitted electronically to administrative staff, along with other materials for inclusion into agenda packets. As noted above, applicants provide staff with a CD of electronic plans, studies, etc., for inclusion into the agenda packet and record-keeping purposes.

5. Electronic and paper agenda packets are prepared and distributed to the HE, applicant and other participants at least seven (7) calendar days before the scheduled HE hearing.

Interviews with staff indicate that in addition to creating, distributing and posting electronic packets, paper packets are also prepared and mailed to the applicant, Hearing Examiner and various participants. The Department should no longer produce paper agenda packets in order to reduce administrative staff workload, reduce costs and further its paperless goals. In the short-term, the Department Director should establish a written policy indicating that only electronic packets will be prepared, posted and distributed, so that applicants and the public are aware of the new policy. Exceptions to this policy can be made for applicants that do not have electronic capability.

**163. Recommendation: The Planning & Community Development Department Director should establish a written policy indicating that only electronic packets will be prepared, posted and distributed, to reduce staff workload, and further is paperless goal. The policy should include exceptions for applicants without electronic capability.**

1. The HE holds an open hearing to consider the application (and any SEPA appeal, if applicable). A recording secretary creates an audio recording of the hearing and

prepares minutes of the proceedings. The HE can grant, modify or deny the application. In addition, the HE can continue the open hearing if necessary.

2. The HE issues a written decision based on decisional criteria listed in the Zoning Code, within 8 calendar days of the date of the open record hearing.
3. The Planner directs Administrative Staff to distribute a written paper and electronic Notice of Decision to the applicant and other required participants within 4 calendar days after the HE's written decision is issued. The Notice of Decision is also immediately posted on the City's website. The Department has established an overall processing goal of 16 weeks for Process IIA Applications.

*See above recommendations regarding Notice of Decisions only being transmitted and posted electronically, and generated by EnerGov.*

4. Appeals of Process IIA are heard by the City Council. Appeals must be submitted in writing within 14 -21 calendar days (depending on SEPA) of the distribution of the Notice of Decision.
5. Once the file is closed, a "Step Sheet" guides the administrative and planning staff through the detailed steps for closing out a file, which we will not detail here. As part of this process, the assigned planner makes a CD of all the emails, files and other information related to the file to preserve the record.

Interviews with staff indicated that Planners have a difficult time completing the task of creating a CD of all emails, etc., related to the file to preserve the record, due to work load and other priorities. This task should be assigned to administrative staff to allow planners to focus on substantive planning tasks and to ensure that it is completed and files are closed out properly.

**164. Recommendation:** The Planning & Community Development Department Director should reassign the task of making a CD of all emails, etc., related to the case file to administrative staff for all Process II applications and all relevant application types, so that planners can focus on substantive planning tasks, and ensure that files are closed out properly.

**165. Recommendation:** The Planning & Community Development Department should work with EnerGov to determine whether the closing file step can be automated through Energov for Process II applications and all relevant application types, or whether the TRIM Software or an alternative storage solution can be implemented to allow efficient transfer of planner emails to administrative staff.

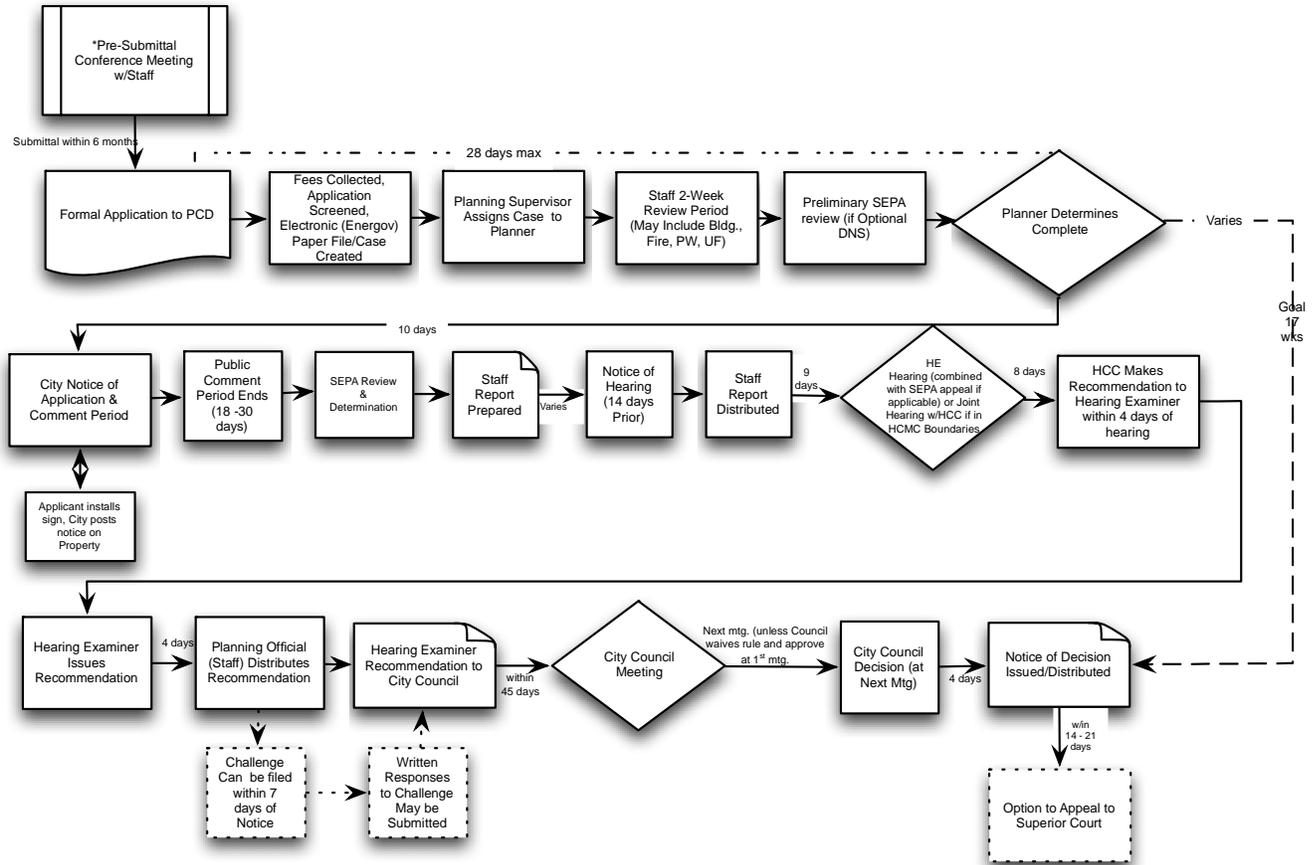
## **Process IIB Approval Process**

Process IIB application types include more complex applications, such as PUD's, subdivision vacations, and certain types of wireless communication projects. The HE is a recommendation body and the City Council has final decision-making authority over these types of applications. Process IIB applications may also require a recommendation by the HCC if the project is located within the HCMC boundaries.

The Process IIB permit approval process includes all of the same steps as the Process IIA application, except that the HE is not the final decision-maker. Instead, the HE provides the City Council with a recommendation, based on the open record proceedings and decisional criteria established in the Zoning Code, so additional processing steps are necessary to complete the approval process. The hearing of the HE is the hearing for City Council and the City Council makes a final decision at a subsequent closed record hearing.

Figure 19 below outlines the *basic* steps involved in the Process IIB approval process, from the issuance of the HE's recommendation to City Council to the closed hearing Council hearing, where the final decision is rendered

**Figure 19**  
**Process IIB Approval Process**



1. Following the HE Hearing (joint hearing with HCC, if within the HCMC boundaries), the HE issues a written recommendation to grant, modify or deny the application to the City Council within 8 calendar days of the open record hearing. The HE’s recommendation is based on evidence presented at the open record hearing and decisional criteria established in the zoning code. Hearings are recorded and summary minutes are prepared by a recording secretary.

Interviews indicated that the HE needs up to eight calendar days to review project evidence and make a final recommendation.

2. The Planner distributes a Notice of the HE’s recommendation within four calendar days to the applicant and other parties, electronically and, when requested in paper form.

**166. Recommendation:** The Planning & Community Development Department Director should establish a written policy indicating that Hearing Examiner recommendations for Process IIB applications will only be distributed and posted on the City's website in electronic format to reduce staff workload, and further the paperless goal.

3. A Challenge to the HE's recommendation can be filed by any person who submitted written or oral testimony to the HE, within seven calendar days of the Notice of Hearing Examiner's Recommendation. Any person receiving a copy of the Challenge letter can file a written response to the Challenge. Responses must be submitted to the Department within seven (7) calendar days after the day the challenge letter was filed. Written responses to the Challenge may be submitted to Planning Staff, which will be transmitted to the City Council for consideration during their subsequent meeting.
4. Staff schedules the City Council meeting for final consideration of the project within 45 calendar days of the HE's Notice of Recommendation. Staff prepares a report in the same manner described earlier, along with a draft ordinance or resolution incorporating the HE's recommended action, and any challenge material received in an electronic agenda to the City Council at least 12 calendar days prior to the scheduled meeting. Electronic agenda packets are also posted on the City's website.

Staff indicates that the 45-day scheduling time frame for City Council is a worst case (outside limit) time frame, which takes into consideration a maximum of four days for the HE to issue a decision; a seven day challenge period; a seven day response to challenge period; staff report/memo, ordinance or resolution preparation time; City Manager review of the agenda packet; and the City Council meeting schedule (e.g. meeting on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesdays). The project is scheduled for City Council consideration as soon as practicable, considering these variables, which is often within two to three weeks.

*See above recommendation regarding only preparing electronic agenda packets.*

5. The City Council will hold a closed record hearing.
6. At the next regularly scheduled City Council meeting (unless the Council waives the rule and makes a decision at the first council meeting), the Council will by resolution or ordinance decide to grant, modify or deny the application. By motion, the council can also remand the matter back to the HE if it concludes, based on a challenge to the recommendation or its own review of the recommendation, that the record compiled by the HE is incomplete or inadequate

for the City Council to make a decision on the application. The HE will then be required to reopen the hearing and provide supplementary findings and conclusions on the matter or matters specified in the motion. In the case of the HCC disapproval jurisdiction, the Council Ordinance or Resolution becomes effective within their jurisdiction after the approval by a majority of the entire membership of the HCC by Resolution or the failure of the HCC to disapprove the Ordinance, by resolution, within 60-calendar day of City Council approval.

7. The Planner distributes the SEPA determination. The Notice of Decision to be distributed to the applicant and other required participants within four (4) working days following the City Council decision. The Notice is also posted on the City's website. City Council decisions can be appealed to the Superior Court.

### **SEPA (State Environmental Policy Act)**

Planning staff must review various permits and legislative projects (e.g., plans, code updates, etc.) for compliance with the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). The SEPA process is controlled by the Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 197-11, et seq., and Title 24 & 25 of the Kirkland Municipal Code.

SEPA compliance review occurs within the context of the permit/project review process. The Act establishes various processing timeframes, which must be met by planning staff (e.g., time frame for determining completeness, completing threshold determinations, public comment periods, posting requirements, etc.). The SEPA process is similar to other state environmental review acts and involves the following primary steps:

1. Determining if a permit/project is subject to SEPA;
2. If it is, completion of an Environmental Checklist;
3. Staff evaluation and identification of potential/probable adverse environmental impacts from a review of the environmental checklist and supporting information. Additional studies may be requested in order to complete the evaluation;
4. Staff identification of mitigation measures to reduce, avoid or eliminate the environmental impacts identified;
5. A Threshold determination by planning staff as to whether any remaining potential/probable adverse environmental impacts remain after mitigation applied;
6. Staff issuance of a Determination of Nonsignificance (DNS), or Mitigated DNS (MDNS), which may include a public comment period, when no significant impacts are found to exist. If a comment period is required, the comments are collected and evaluated and Planning Staff either retains, modifies or withdraws

the DNS after the close of the comment period. If the DNS is withdrawn by staff due to evidence presented in comment letters that potential adverse impacts still exist, planning staff will issue a Determination of Significance (DS)/scoping notice for public review/comment, and begin the Environmental Impact Statement process, which culminates in a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

7. Public review and comment on the EIS.
8. EIS revisions based on public comments;
9. Preparation of a Final EIS, which is reviewed and adopted/approved by decision-makers.

In addition to the above broad steps that are listed, staff completes numerous other procedural steps in between these steps in order to complete the SEPA compliance process, which we are not outlining in this Study for the sake of brevity.

Our interviews with staff indicate that they have streamlined the SEPA compliance process where possible, and in the majority of cases, have been able to distill environmental issues down to traffic (e.g. concurrency management review).

Staff indicates that the SEPA determinations are now being generated in EnerGov, which is good. However, not all staff are able to generate EnerGov determinations and largely relying on one staff person, who is adept at it, to either help them or do the task for them, which is inefficient. All Planning staff should receive additional training on EnerGov so that they can create SEPA determinations without assistance.

**167. Recommendation: The Planning & Community Development Department Director should ensure that all Planning staff receive additional training on EnerGov so that they can create SEPA determinations without assistance.**

## **Application Processing Times**

Given problems with the permitting system we were unable to obtain comprehensive data on application processing times. We did obtain a sampling of projects as shown in Table 20. The Table shows a sampling of recent permits (2011), categorized by Process Type, which were processed by the Land Use Management (Current Planning) staff.

**Table 20  
Actual Current Planning Permits Processed**

Permit Process Type	Submit Date	Date Application Deemed Complete	Calendar Days to Deemed Complete	Standard for Deemed Complete in Calendar Days (CD)	Calendar Days for Staff		Decision Date	Calendar Days from Deemed Complete to Decision	Actual Processing from Deemed Complete to Decision in Calendar Days	Processing Goal – (from Deemed Complete to Decision (weeks/ calendar days))	
					Review (e.g., Bldg. Fire, PW)						
<b>Planning Official Decision Permits:</b>											
Accessory Dwelling Unit	3/15/2011	No Data	No Data	28	N/A		8/5/2011	143	No Data	4-6wks/ 28-42CD	
Administrative Design Review	3/17/2011	No Data	No Data	28	N/A		4/13/11	27	No Data	4-6wks/ 28-42CD	
Wireless (Admin)	3/30/2011	No Data	No Data	28	N/A		5/12/2011	43	No Data	4-6wks/ 28-42CD	
<b>Director Decision Permits:</b>											
Lot Line Alteration	2/4/2011	3/17/2011	42	28	N/A		3/28/2011	52	11	6-8wks/ 42-56CD	
Lot Line Alteration	9/27/2011	10/5/2011	8	28	No Data		10/20/2011	23	15	6-8wks/ 42-56CD	
Variance Exception	3/23/2011	No Data	No Data	28	No Data		4/11/2011	19	19	6-8wks/ 42-56CD	
<b>Process I Permits</b>											
Short Subdivision	5/31/2011	7/19/2011	49	28	No Data		9/23/2011	115	66	14wks/ 98CD	
Substantial Development Permit	2/8/2011	3/30/2011	50	28	No Data		7/14/2011	156	106	14wks/ 98CD	
Wireless	4/7/2011	6/21/2011	56	28	No Data		10/4/2011	180	105	14wks/ 98CD	
<b>Process IIA Permits</b>											
Variance	2/1/2011	3/2/2011	29	28	No Data		10/24/2011	265	236	16wks/ 112CD	
<b>Process IIB Permits</b>											
Zon (New Comm. Bldg. parking, etc.)	8/18/2010	9/22/2010	35	28	No Data		4/5/2011	230	195	17wks/ 119CD	
Zon (Replace Elementary School Bldg.	12/29/2010	4/12/2011	104	28	No Data		8/2/2011	216	112	17wks/ 119CD	
<b>Design Review Board</b>											
Design Response Conference	5/23/2011	No Data	No Data	28	No Data		8/15/2011	No data	85	None	
<b>Miscellaneous</b>											
Final Subdivision	9/1/2011	9/7/2011	6	28	No Data		12/12/2011	102	96	10-16wks/ 70-112CD	

The above table shows that two of the three Planning Official permits sampled, none of them contained data as to when the applications were deemed complete; however, it appears that at least two of the three were processed within the Department's established performance goal.

The three Director Decision permits that were reviewed were all processed well within the Department's established performance goal, which is good. However, deemed complete data was not recorded/provided for one of the permits, and only one out of the three was deemed complete within the established standard.

None of the three Process I permits evaluated were deemed complete within the Department's established performance standard time frame. However, one was processed within the Department's goal time frame and the other two were completed only about a week after the stated goal time frame. The only Process IIA permit that we reviewed was deemed complete within the performance standard time frame, but not processed within the Department's goal time frame. Neither of the two Process IIB permits we evaluated was deemed complete within the established performance standard time frame, and only one was processed within the Department's goal time frame. The data provided for the single Design Review Board case that we evaluated was incomplete; however it was processed within 84 calendar days, which appears to be excessive.

Finally, the miscellaneous permit that we reviewed was both deemed complete and processed within the Department's performance standard and goal time frame, which is good.

## **Performance Standards**

Table 21 provides a summary of the Performance Standards and "goals" established either by State Law, the KMC or internal Department Policy for each type of Land Use Management Permit application. The table also shows whether a pre-application meeting is required, the city reviewers for each application type, and whether the Department monitors the performance standards to ensure they are met.

**Table 21  
Existing Performance Standards/Goals for Land Use Management Division  
Applications**

Land Use Permit Application Type	*Pre-Application Mtg. Requirement (Y/N)	Completeness Determination Standard in calendar days (Est. by KMC and State Law)	City Dept. 1 <sup>st</sup> Cycle Review Standard in weeks/working days (Est. by Internal Policy)*	2 <sup>nd</sup> /3 <sup>rd</sup> Cycle Review Standards	Applicant Review Time Tracked (Y/N)	Notice of Application Comment Period in calendar days	Overall Processing Time Standard or Goal	Monitored Quarterly (Y/N)	% Time Performance Standards Met
<b>Planning Official Decisions –</b> (Accessory DU, Wireless Admin., Admin. Review, Minor Modifications)	Y <sup>1</sup>	28 days	10 days (2 calendar weeks)	None	N	N/A	Goal is 4-6 weeks	Y	Not Tracked
<b>Director Decisions</b> (Variance Exception, Off- site Dir. Signs, Master Sign Plan, Lot Line Alteration, Binding Site Plan)	N <sup>2</sup>	28 days	10 days (2 calendar weeks)	None	N	N/A	Goal is 6-8 weeks	Y	Not Tracked
<b>Process I Permits</b> (Short Subdiv., Substantial Dev. Permit, Wireless)	Y	28 days	10 days (2 calendar weeks)	None	N	18-30	Goal is 14 weeks	Y	Not Tracked
<b>Process IIA Permits</b> (Prelim. Subdiv., Shoreline CUP, Plats & Alterations)	Y	28 days	10 days (2 calendar weeks)	None	N	18-30	Goal is 16 weeks	Y	Not Tracked
<b>Process IIB / III Permits</b> (PUD's, Subdiv. Vacation, Wireless)	Y	28 days	10 days (2 calendar weeks)	None	N	18-30	Goal is 17 weeks	Y	Not Tracked
<b>Design Review</b> (Design Response Conf., Conceptual Design Conf.)	Y <sup>3</sup>	28 days	10 days (2 calendar weeks)	None	N	N/A	N/A	Y	Not Tracked
<b>SEPA</b>	As Required by Land Use Permit	As Required by Land Use Permit	As Required by Land Use Permit	None	N	"" ""	N/A	Y	Not Tracked
<b>Miscellaneous</b> (Appeals, Sidewalk Café, St. Vacation, Final Subdiv.)	N/A	None	10 days (2 calendar weeks)	None	N	18-30	- Final Sub. 10 weeks, St. Vac. 16 weeks	Y	Not Tracked

\*Reviewed by other City departments

As Table 21 indicates, the Performance Standards have been established for Completeness Reviews, and 1<sup>st</sup> Cycle Project reviews. In addition, the Department has established “goals” for overall processing timelines (from the point it is deemed complete to final decision) for each application type and conducts a quarterly review (e.g., quarterly report) to determine whether established Performance Standards and “goals” have been met. However, the Department has not established Performance

Standards for subsequent review cycles, nor do they track the amount of time the applicant has the project to complete requested revisions. Further, the Department does not quantify the percent of time that established Performance Measures and “goals” are actually met. Rather, Staff indicates that the quarterly report is reviewed by Senior Staff to generally determine whether Standards and “goals” have been met, and if not, they track down the permits that didn’t meet the Standards and Goals to determine the reasons that caused the delay.

In order to more accurately gauge and monitor the effectiveness and efficiency of Land Use Permit processing, Performance Standards should formally be established for up to 3 Review Cycles, (e.g., two review cycles following the initial review, until the project is accepted for final decision-making). In addition, the Department should establish formal Performance Standards, rather than “goals,” for overall processing time frames for each permit types, since a statutory approval time frame clock may begin following the determination that an application is deemed complete. Finally, Performance Standards should continue to be reviewed/monitored by the Department monthly to ensure that they are met 90% of the time. Performance Standards should be set up in the City’s EnerGov System (if possible) so that data can be consistently and efficiently recorded and quarterly reports generated quickly.

Table 22 below shows the existing Performance Standards and “goals” established by the Department and our recommended Performance Standards.

**Table 22  
Existing & Recommended Performance Standards for Land Use Management  
Division Permits**

Permit Types	Existing State Completeness Review Standard in Calendar Days (CD) /Working Days (WD)	Recommended Completeness Review Standard in Working Days (WD)	1st Cycle Review Goal in Working Days (WD)/Weeks	Recommended Comment Review Cycle Performance Standard in Working Days			Existing Code Notice Comment Period Standard in Calendar Days (CD)/Working Days (WD)	Recommended Notice Comment Period Standard in Calendar Days (CD)/Working Days (WD)	Existing Overall Processing Goal In Weeks/Calendar days/working days (WD)	Recommended Overall Processing Standard in Weeks/Working Days	Existing Goal for % Met	Recommended Goal for % Time Met
				1 <sup>st</sup> Cycle	2 <sup>nd</sup> Cycle	3 <sup>rd</sup> Cycle						
Planning Official Decisions	28CD/20WD	10WD	10 WD/2 weeks	5WD	2WD	1WD	N/A	Same	4-6wks/20-30WD	4 weeks/20 WD	None	90%
Director Decisions	28CD/20WD	10WD	10 WD/2 weeks	5WD	2WD	1WD	N/A	Same	6-8wks/30-40WD	6 weeks/25WD	None	90%
Process I	28CD/20WD	10WD	10 WD/2 weeks	5WD	3WD	2WD	18-30CD/13-20WD	Same	14wks/70WD	13weeks/65WD	None	90%
Process IIA	28CD/20WD	15WD	10 WD/2 weeks	8WD	4WD	2WD	18-30CD/13-20WD	Same	16wks/80WD	Same	None	90%
Process IIB/III	28CD/20WD	15WD	10 WD/2 weeks	10WD	5WD	3WD	18-30CD/13-20WD	Same	17wks/85WD	Same	None	90%
Design Review	28CD/20WD	15WD	10 WD/2 weeks	10WD	5WD	3WD	N/A	Same	None	17 weeks/85WD	None	90%
SEPA	As Required by Underlying Permit										None	90%
Misc.	None	8WD	10 WD/2 weeks	5WD	5WD	1WD	18-30CD/13-20WD	Same	10-16wks/50-80WD	9-15weeks/45-75WD	None	90%

As with our suggested Performance Standards for Building Review timeframes, we suggest that several of over the overall processing Performance Standards remain as is or only minimally shortened. By formally establishing the above suggested Performance Standards for Completeness Reviews, Staff Review for Three Cycles, Overall Processing, and % Time Met, and managing them through regular reporting and analysis, the City will be better able to track, monitor and evaluate the success of Performance Standards, and ensure that they are met 90% of the time.

**168. Recommendation:** The review times for Current Planning applications should be set and monitored as shown in Table 22.

## G. POLICY AND PLANNING DIVISION (LONG RANGE PLANNING)

### PROFILE

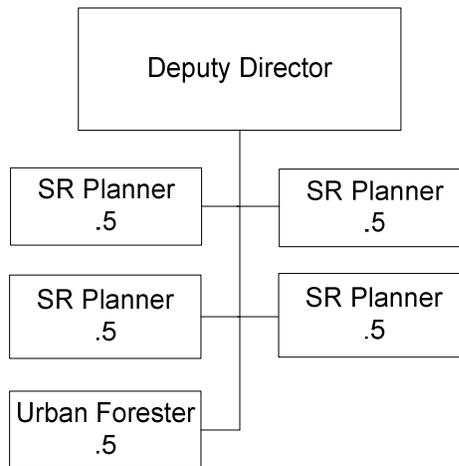
#### Overview

The Policy and Planning Division prepares and annually amends the City’s Comprehensive Plan, and Zoning Code, and periodically amends the Subdivision Ordinance, and the local SEPA ordinance. In addition, the Division has already scheduled an amendment for the new Shoreline Master Plan to keep it consistent with other policy documents and regulations. In addition, Staff provides support to the City Council, Planning Commission, Houghton Community Council, and a variety of citizen committees and task forces, and coordinates with other agencies on regional planning issues, and monitors legislative activity. They also maintain development-monitoring systems, and carryout special projects. About 30% of the Department’s resources are spent on Policy and Planning Division functions.

### Organization

The Policy and Planning Division is headed by the Deputy Director and consists of five staff as shown in Figure 20. All of the staff work half time so the equivalent FTE is 2.5.

**Figure 20**  
**Policy Planning Division Organization**



### Activity

The Policy and Planning Division activities from FY 2005/2006 to present are shown in Table 23 below.

**Table 23  
Policy and Planning (Long-Range) Division Activities**

2005/2006	2007/2008	2009/2010	2011	2012 (on-going)
Completed Annual Comp. Plan Amendments	Completed Annual Comp. Plan Amendments, & private amendment requests for 3 properties	Completed Annual Comp. Plan Amendments including updates to Capital Facilities Element and new policies addressing climate change and Environmental stewardship	Completed Annual Comp. Plan Amendments and review of private amendment request	Completed Annual Comp Plan amendments and two private amendment requests
Completed new Neighborhood Plans for Market, Norkirk & Highlands	Prepared an EIS, planned action ordinance and amendments to the Comp. Plan, Zoning Code and design guidelines for redevelopment of the Park Place Center & 2 nearby properties	Responded to an order by the Central Puget Sound Growth Management Hearing Board to Complete supplemental EIS Comprehensive Plan amendments for the Park Place Center site	Completed work on the Supplemental EIS for Park Place	Completed annual misc. Zoning Code Amendments
Completed two groups of misc. Zoning Code Amendments Completed revisions to zoning regulations for wireless communication facilities and floor area ratio standards (FAR).	Prepared two groups of annual misc. Zoning Code Amendments	Completed four groups of misc. Zoning Code Amendments. Completed code amendments to establish unified code enforcement procedures.	Completed misc. annual Zoning Code Amendments	Completed Commercial Code amendments and Residential Suite Code Amendments
Initiated revisions to design guidelines & zoning regulations	Completed revisions to urban design guidelines & regs.	Completed revisions to downtown zoning regulations to clarify permitted building heights & setbacks and to refine permitted ground floor uses	Completed work on CBD Code Amendments on ground floor uses.	Completed the draft Urban Forest Strategic Management Plan
Completed evaluation of innovative housing demonstration projects via interim regs. Initiated preparation of permanent regs. Completed new zoning regs for temp. homeless encampments temp. homeless encampments	Completed new zoning regulations governing cottage and other innovative housing projects. Received a 2008 Governor's Smart Communities award. Prepared Zoning Code amendments to provide requirements and incentives for affordable housing	Completed Zoning Code regulations to require affordable housing.	Initiated work on the Urban Forest Strategic Plan	Coordinated the interdepartmental Green Team to implement the NRMP

2005/2006	2007/2008	2009/2010	2011	2012 (on-going)
Completed new zoning regulations for tree management and landscaping	Coordinated the interdepartmental Green Team to implement the NRMP	Completed revisions to tree management regulations Obtained grant funding and initiated an urban tree canopy analysis for the City and the annexation area	Coordinated the interdepartmental Green Team to implement the NRMP	Initiated work on the Everest/Houghton Neighborhood Center Plan
Coordinated the Natural Resource Management Team to implement the NRMP	Completed new zoning and design regulations to implement the Market and	Coordinated the interdepartmental Green Team to implement the NRMP	Completed work on the Lakeview Neighborhood Plan and zoning regulations and the Central Houghton Neighborhood Plan	Participated in an RFP to select a developer for the South Kirkland Park and Ride
Completed zoning regulations & design standards for the Totem Lake and Rose Hill Business Districts.	Norkirk Neighborhood Plans, including new regulations allowing smaller lots for small and historic houses	Initiated work on the neighborhood plans for the Central Houghton and Lakeview Neighborhoods	Initiated work on code amendments for the Totem Lake Business District	Continue to Provide Staff Support for City Council, Planning Commission, HCC and Economic Dev. Program
Provided Staff Support to City Council, Planning Commission and HCC	Prepared Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code amendments for the TL-9 zone	Provided staff support to the City's economic development program.	Completed work on the Shoreline Master Program for the annexation area	
Provided staff assistance to WRIA 8 in compliance with Endangered Species Act	Completed amendments to the Comp. Plan to allow a TOD at the South Kirkland park and ride facility	Initiated work on zoning regs and design guidelines for the South Kirkland Park and Ride property	Completed regulations for the South Kirkland Park and Ride	
Initiated a major update to the Shoreline Master Program	Provided Staff Support to City Council, Planning Commission and HCC	Provided Staff Support to City Council, Planning Commission and HCC	Provided Staff Support to City Council, Planning Commission and HCC.	
Initiated Update of Impact Fees	Assisted in efforts to prepare for potential annexation of Kingsgate, North Juanita and Finn Hill. Prepared new zoning regulations for the annexation area	Provided staff support for annexation activities. Completed new zoning regulations for the annexation area and revisions to neighborhood boundaries. Completed work on the Bridle View annexation and initiated work on the Wild Glen annexation	Completed work on the LID/Green Codes	

2005/2006	2007/2008	2009/2010	2011	2012 (on-going)
	Initiated a green building program	Initiated revisions to regulations to promote green development.		
	Completed the first draft of the Shoreline Master Program	Completed a five year process of preparing a new Shoreline Master Program		
		Participated in regional efforts on growth targets, Countywide Planning Policies and multi-county regional planning issues		

As the above table shows, the Planning & Policy Division has been very active with long-range planning for the period shown, undertaking more than a dozen projects per year from FY 2005 to FY 2011. In addition, this Division currently has at least 8 projects underway for the current year. Staff indicates that activity levels have remained fairly constant because they make a concerted effort, through their annual work program, to plan for and complete numerous policy projects each year.

## **ORGANIZATION ISSUES**

### **Geographic Information System (GIS)**

The City of Kirkland has an Enterprise Geographic Information System (GIS), which is administered through the IT Department and made available for users under a “maps” tab on the Planning and Community Development Department’s web page. Interviewees reported that the GIS system is excellent overall, however, there a few maps that need to be updated, including adding a canopy assessment so that it is accessible to multiple departments, and adding/updating the bald eagle protection zones to critical areas.

**169. Recommendation:** The Planning & Community Development Department should request that the IT Department update the GIS map(s) to include canopy assessments so that this information is available to multiple departments that use this information to conduct their work.

In addition, Land Use Management Division staff indicates that EnerGov needs to be integrated better with the City’s GIS system. For example, staff has to look up a

parcel on GIS, and then pull the parcel up on the EnerGov System in order to locate any permits or projects associated with the parcel.

**170. Recommendation: The IT Department should integrate the GIS system with EnerGov so that staff can locate parcels and related permit/project data in one system.**

Finally, the Policy & Planning Division indicates that GIS is not being fully utilized as a tool to map out and analyze planning data, such as employment densities, and demographic data to assist them in the planning efforts due to training and other issues.

*See previous recommendations about GIS Training under the “Training” section of this Study.*

## **Staffing**

Per the Department’s approved budget, there are five, long-range Senior Planners, all of which work half time, for a total FTE of 2.5. There is also a half time Urban Forester discussed in another section of this report. Additionally, given the small size of this division we believe the Deputy Director can contribute 25% of his time to direct work program items. This results in a total of 3.0 FTEs available for the work program.

Other than attending meetings, and other miscellaneous activities (e.g. phone calls, etc.) the majority of the Planner’s available work hours can be focused on long-range planning activities.

As discussed below, the Division has a long history of preparing and having adopted an annual Work Program. The adopted work program for 2012 shows nine basic categories of work totaling the need for 4.9 positions. We were not in a position to examine how efficient staff is in meeting all the assignments or in estimating needed hours. However, given the longevity of this staff and the annual use of the work program, it is reasonable to assume that the numbers have a reasonably high degree of accuracy. The current staff equivalent of 3.0 positions is 1.9 positions short of what would be needed to complete the adopted work program which indicates that 4.9 positions are required. However, we are told that at times planners from the Development Review Division also work on Long Range planning projects. As such we will assume staffing is in balance for this Division and will reduce the available staffing in the Development Review Division by the 1.9 positions.

The staffing levels for Long Range planning is essentially a policy issue that exceeds to scope for this study. However, a number of our recommendations could result in the need to adjust the work program or add additional staff or consultants. These decisions should be made as part of adopting a 2013 work program.

**171. Recommendation: Staffing needs for Long Range planning should be determined as part of the adoption of a 2013 work program.**

**Work Program**

The Policy & Planning Division prepares an annual work program, which is reviewed and discussed with the Planning Commission at their annual retreat, and the Houghton Community Council and then refined and later presented to City Council with the Planning Commission's recommendation for adoption by Resolution. The adoption of an annual work program is an excellent practice, and one that is used by Best Practice communities.

The Work Program prepared by the Department establishes the major long-range planning projects/tasks to be accomplished in order of priority, along with corresponding staffing resource needs and completion schedules. Once adopted by Council, staff outlines all of the individual tasks that must be completed along with the resources required to implement the Work Program. The Program then becomes an "action plan" for the Policy and Planning Division, which sets the community's expectations for what the department is going to accomplish. It is also used, in part, to measure the City's success in accomplishing its major policy and administrative goals. As the Department works through the plan, Staff periodically updates the Council on their Work Plan implementation efforts.

Despite the existence of the Department Work Program, staff interviews indicated that staff is inundated with "special project" requests by decision-makers, which are not part of the adopted Annual Work Program. The volume and pressing nature of these "special project" requests consumes available staff time and resources and hinders their ability to successfully implement the Work Program, which causes frustration.

One way to deal with demands from decision-makers to undertake and complete "special projects" that are not on the adopted Work Program, is to include a category of "special projects" to the annual Work Program and budget sufficient staff time and resources for a reasonable number of them so that they can be accomplished effectively. Given the pressing nature of many of these requests, they may need to be rated as a higher priority than other Work Program tasks, which may result in some tasks being pushed to a subsequent year during the Work Plan formulation process. One of the benefits of adding "Special Project Tasks" to the annual Work Program is that it compels decision-makers reviewing and approving the Work Plan to acknowledge that "Special Projects" are a reality and must be programmed because they compete for available resources.

Another option, which is less politically palatable, is to reject decision-makers' requests to complete "Special Projects," that are not programmed in the Work Program, unless there is a vote of the entire City Council to modify the existing Work Program to add a particular "special project." However, we are not fans of this

approach as it we prefer the City Council to view the Planning Department as a “can do” department.

**172. Recommendation:** The Planning & Community Development Department should add a category of “special project” tasks to accommodate a reasonable number of “Special Project Tasks” to the annual Work Program so that adequate resources can be programmed for completing these projects.

## POLICY ISSUES

### **Comprehensive Plan**

The Planning Commission is responsible for reviewing and recommending updates to the City’s adopted Comprehensive Plan (Process IV) to the City Council. Updates/amendments are initiated by citizens through “Private Amendment Requests (PAR’s) and by the City. All updates/amendments are required to be in harmony with the Community’s Vision, and the State’s Growth Management Act (GMA). In addition, the GMA requires the City’s zoning to be in harmony with the Comprehensive Plan. The Plan was last updated in 2005, following consultation with the State to confirm the GMA legislative changes required for the Update and a community visioning and planning study process.

Interviewees indicated that the existing Comprehensive Plan and the various codes that implement the Plan, such as the zoning code and map, shoreline master program, and neighborhood plans may not always be in conformity with one another, which has periodically created processing challenges for the Land Use Management (current planning) division.

Although a 1997 Supreme Court of Washington ruling affirmed a superior court decision that essentially finds that zoning codes are the controlling document when inconsistencies between the comprehensive plan and zoning code are present (Citizens for Mount Vernon v the City of Mount Vernon), we believe that it is critical for all of the adopted implementation documents to be in conformance with the Comprehensive Plan.

The State Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A.130) requires cities (including Kirkland) and counties to review and update their comprehensive plans and development regulations every seven years, however, the State legislation recently extended the deadline to December 1, 2014. According to the Planning & Community Development Department’s adopted 2011-2012 Planning Work Program, the Department is scheduled to begin the Comprehensive Plan Update project in late 2012. The Update is estimated to take approximately two years to complete and is

anticipated include the formulation of a new vision statement, and transportation network and revisions to the land use and capacity analysis, level of service standards, and updates to the capital facilities and transportation elements. The Update will also involve the adoption of an Environmental Impact Statement, and be used as a framework to subsequently revise the City's Impact Fees. While it is not unusual that Comprehensive Plan Updates last two years or even longer, we believe it is difficult to retain good citizen involvement over these long time periods. Consideration should be given to trying to complete this work within 12 months or a maximum of 18 months.

**173. Recommendation:** Staff should attempt to complete the Comprehensive Plan update within 12 months or a maximum of 18 months.

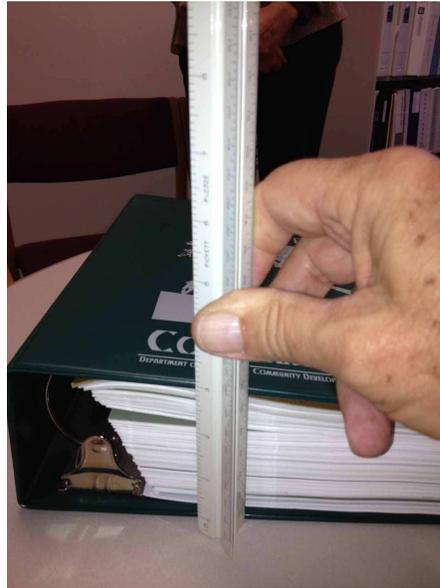
Interviewees indicated that during the update process, staff should ensure that comprehensive planning policy language should be carefully and succinctly written to ensure that it is interpreted accurately.

**174. Recommendation:** The Planning & Community Development Department should ensure that the updated comprehensive planning policies are written clearly to ensure they are interpreted accurately and the overall comprehensive plan and implementing codes are in conformance with one another.

We have also noted that the Comprehensive Plan includes 16 Chapters, plus Appendices, and is about 3 inches thick (some 665 pages long) as shown in Figure 21. Plans of this length are very common throughout the country but we believe are difficult to use as a policy document. We prefer plans that are more concise and compact.

**175. Recommendation:** As part of the revision to the Comprehensive Plan, attempts should be made to result in a more concise (smaller) document.

**Figure 21**  
**Kirkland Comprehensive Plan**



### **Neighborhood Plans (Subarea Plans)**

Currently, the City's Comprehensive Plan contains twelve (12) neighborhood plans and two corridor plans, which require maintenance and periodic updates. The recent annexation (~7 square miles) added three new neighborhood areas and expanded an existing neighborhood significantly. As a result, two new neighborhood plans will potentially need to be prepared for the two new neighborhoods and another substantially updated to reflect the expanded boundaries as a result of the annexation, in addition maintaining and revising the existing neighborhood and corridor plans.

In May of this year, the Policy and Planning Division initiated the Houghton and Everest Neighborhood Center Plan update project, which was a task outlined in their council-adopted Work Program. However, in September of this year, after much discussion with the Houghton Community Council and the City Planning Commission, the City Council voted to amend the adopted Work Program to remove the Update project, and work on the Neighborhood Plan was postponed. It was decided that the general role of all Kirkland business districts, including the Houghton/Everest Neighborhood Business District, in accommodating future growth will be considered during the 2013-2014 Comprehensive Plan update. In addition, the Council directed staff to conduct an assessment of the Neighborhood Plan process to develop recommendations as to how the planning process can be streamlined.

Our interviews revealed that there has been considerable discussion as to how to the Policy and Planning Division can complete neighborhood-planning projects more efficiently and effectively. Staff indicates that neighborhood planning is an important

tool for the City because it allows for the evaluation and planning of unique areas of the City on a local or micro-scale. Moreover, the City views neighborhood planning as another avenue to involve citizens in the planning process. However, the Department's approach to neighborhood planning has been inconsistent, partly in an attempt to adapt the process to the unique circumstances of each neighborhood. This fluctuating approach has extended the planning process for some neighborhood plans to more than two years.

In an attempt to define a more efficient neighborhood planning process staff, studied the issue in a "white paper," that was drafted in January of this year; however only options for improving the process, rather than recommendations for improving the process were presented.

Interviewees indicated that the City's neighborhood planning process should be systematized, so that it is predictable and can be completed more efficiently. In addition, the process should be designed so that it can be concluded within 6-12 months, rather than two or more years. Interviewees also said that neighborhood-planning documents are too wordy and lengthy, with far too much detail and that the documents needed to be standardized into a concise template.

**176. Recommendation: The Planning & Community Development Department should define a uniform process for neighborhood planning that is designed to be concluded within 6-12 months, and includes a standardized, concise document template.**

## **Zoning Code**

Interviews with staff, focus groups, and officials, as well as a cursory review of the Kirkland Zoning Code (KZC) revealed that it is generally unwieldy and difficult for customers to understand and the staff to administer. For example, the KZC establishes more than 80 zones, which are tailored to specific geographic regions of the City, which is the result of the City's "micro-zoning philosophy." In addition, most of the business districts have multiple zone districts with their own unique zoning and there are numerous single-family residential zones as well. Some of the residential zones apply to areas annexed in 1988 and others to areas annexed in 2011.

Moreover, some code sections are antiquated, such as the permitted uses section, and other code provisions may no longer reflect the current philosophy of City Officials, such as the parking (e.g., requirements for parking demand analyses) and signage regulations, or may be too onerous such as the tree regulations (Chapter 95). Additionally, various regulations, such as those governing the location/setback and design of garages, Floor Area Ratios, height limits (e.g., plate heights and building heights), and drainage basins are overly complex, making them difficult and time consuming to administer. Finally, interviewees indicated that various provisions, such as variances (e.g., they are too subjective), and lot size calculations are not

administered consistently (e.g., some staff allow lot sizes to be averaged in order to meet code requirements) and that appeal provisions should be reviewed (e.g., concurrency appeals may not be necessary).

In addition, the KZC is amended often and done so on an incremental basis. As such, interviewees reported that some related provisions need further cross-referencing, so unfamiliar users are not immediately aware of all related requirements. Further, the code is filled with technical and legal jargon making it difficult for users to understand and staff to administer. Interviewees reported that a significant amount of staff's processing time is spent informally deliberating and interpreting code provisions. A code interpretation section exists at the beginning of the KZC to document formal code interpretations made by the Director. However, there are numerous informal code interpretations that are being made at the staff level that are not being memorialized effectively through internal department policy or another mechanism, and as a result, code provisions are not being interpreted consistently causing confusion and frustration for staff and customers.

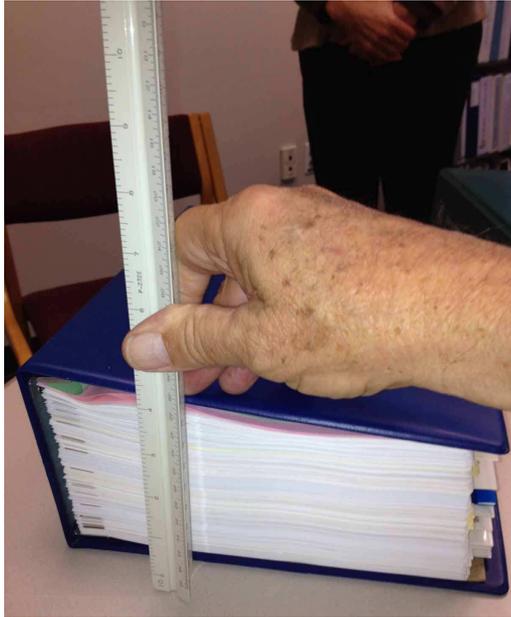
There are also code provisions, such as the Sensitive Areas provisions, which are so difficult for staff to administer, due to unclear language and overly complex concepts that many staff members spend excessive time trying to interpret provisions, as well as explain it to customers.

Moreover, staff indicates that there are so many code revisions requested and pending, that staff is unable to efficiently process the amendments. The need for constant revisions, staff interpretations, multiple processes, explanation handouts for customers, variances, etc., are clear signals that the Zoning Code needs to be updated to simplify administration, improve predictability and increase processing efficiency.

Finally, as discussed under the "Comprehensive Plan Section," the zoning code is not entirely consistent with the City's adopted Comprehensive Plan, which has created issues for current planning staff processing certain applications.

Contemporary and voluminous codes like Kirkland's Zoning Code can be difficult to use for both staff and customers, when they have been incrementally amended, contain overly complex provisions, and unclear technical jargon, an unwieldy number of zoning districts and overlays, and reflect philosophies that may no longer be desirable. As can be seen in Figure 22, the Zoning Code is over 1,338 pages long and 4 inches thick. This makes it a very difficult document to work with.

**Figure 22**  
**Kirkland Zoning Code**



Ideally, the City should hire a consultant to complete a comprehensive rewrite of the Zoning Code. However, since this would likely cost plus or minus \$500,000, such a review may not be financially feasible at this time. Should this be the case, there are two additional approaches the City could consider.

1. The City could hire a Consultant to conduct an analysis of the Zoning Ordinance (e.g., Code Diagnosis), to identify the major issues that are interfering with effective and efficient administration of the code, as well as the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan, and the policy direction of the city in order to facilitate streamlining the review and permit processes. Code Analyses typically cost between \$40,000 and \$50,000, depending on the scope of the project. Such an analysis could help the staff to prioritize its work on updating the Code.
2. The City could also hire a consultant to computerize the zoning code (i.e., on-line or electronic zoning code) so that it is easily searchable via hyperlinks, can be annotated by staff (e.g., note sections in margins) is color coded, and has a high interface with the City's GIS system. This work typically costs \$30,000 to \$50,000. Modern codes that provide a high interface with GIS can be very beneficial for fostering economic development, among other things, providing users with the capability to easily locate available properties, etc. The City of

Redmond is in the final stages of computerizing their zoning code, and is a good local example that Kirkland can investigate.

There could be a major advantage in the City pursuing both of these options with one consultant, which could reduce the cost and increase the effectiveness.

**177. Recommendation:** The City should hire a consultant to conduct a **Zoning Code Diagnosis** to identify the major issues that are interfering with effective and efficient administration of the code, as well as the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan, and the policy direction of the city in order to facilitate streamlining the review and permit process.

**178. Recommendation:** The City should computerize the zoning code so that it more user friendly and provides a high interface with GIS.

**179. Recommendation:** In the long-term, the Planning & Community Development Department should include a comprehensive update of KZC as part of the Annual Work Plan, so that staff and budget resources can be allocated for this work effort. If Budget constraints prevent a comprehensive update of the Zoning Ordinance as a single project, the Department should get agreement on which code provisions should be amended, prioritize them according to need and budget for them in consecutive budget cycles to completion.

## PROCESS ISSUES

### Overview

The Policy and Planning Division processes both major and minor types of zoning code and comprehensive plan amendments, including both private individual initiated requests, called Private Amendment Requests (PAR's) and City initiated requests. Amendment requests are processed using the Process IV and IVA process procedures outlined in the Zoning Code. In addition, the Division has created very detailed, step-by-step procedures to guide planning and administrative staff through the process, which is excellent. However, the procedures should be updated to reflect recent changes that were instituted such as the conversion to the EnerGov System.

**180. Recommendation:** The Policy & Planning Division should update their Procedure Guides for Process IV and IVA to reflect recent changes that were instituted, such as the conversion to the EnerGov system.

The *basic* steps of both IV and IVA processes are summarized below, along with our recommended changes.

## **Process IV, Major Amendments**

Process IV amendments consist of four categories of amendments:

- Annual City initiated amendments to the Comprehensive Plan that typically include Zoning text and Zoning Map amendments that are approved for study through the Annual Planning Work Program;
- Neighborhood and Business District Plan Updates that are initiated by the City and approved for study through the Annual Planning Work Program (these Plans also typically include Zoning Text and Map amendments). The Plans are part of the Comprehensive Plan, and constitute an Amendment to the Comprehensive Plan when updated;
- Citizen Initiated requests to amend the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Map, which are called Private Amendment Requests (PAR's) that also typically include map and text amendments); and
- Annual Zoning and Municipal code amendments initiated by the City that are approved for study through the Annual Planning Work Program (typically).

Because these types of amendments are legislative actions, they involve the Planning Commission, the HCC (if the amendments are within their disapproval jurisdiction) and the City Council. Chapters 130 and 135 of the Zoning Code govern amendments to the Zoning Code text and map, and Chapter 140 governs amendments to the Comprehensive Plan. Chapter 160 establishes the Process IV procedures and describes the procedures that are used for processing amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code text and maps, whether city-initiated or privately initiated (PAR).

City-initiated amendments to the Comprehensive Plan with corresponding zoning text amendments, and annual zoning and municipal code text amendments are ratified for study and processing through the Division's Annual Planning Work Program approval process. The Planning Commission reviews the work program and makes a recommendation to the City Council for their consideration and approval. Once approved as part of the Planning Work Program, the Division undertakes processing the amendments according to the schedule established in the work program.

Staff indicates that the majority of the long-range planning work is on "major amendments," which are city-initiated comprehensive plan and zoning amendments, neighborhood, subarea and business district plans, and code amendments.

These types of projects typically involve extensive study sessions with the Planning Commission and HCC (where applicable) prior to a public hearing being scheduled. In addition, they often have substantial public outreach, such as workshops and open houses, etc., prior to the public hearing. According to the detailed procedures created by staff, the general Process IV procedure for City-Initiated Major Amendments is similar to the Process IVA procedure and generally includes the following:

1. Staff sets up electronic file;
2. Staff scopes out the proposed Amendment, which may include holding Study Sessions with Planning Commission and HCC; consulting the Transportation Commission and Park Board to determine whether they have any issues to study; meeting with City Council to determine if they have any suggested changes and obtain their agreement on the scope of work; staff deciding on the nature and extent of the public participation process, such as whether study session, workshop, focus groups, facilitation tours, questionnaires, etc., will be used in the process, etc.
3. Preparing the amendments, which entails putting amendments in draft form and then sending them to other departments for review and edit, and GIS prepare revisions to figures and graphics, etc.
4. Staff completes an environmental review under SEPA and decides whether the amendment fits within a SEPA Addendum, is determined to have Non-Significance (DNS) or determined to have Significance (DS), requiring the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (*See SEPA discussion earlier in this Study for additional details on the SEPA process*).
5. Combined Public Notice of the Study Session and Hearing (if all dates are known) is emailed to the Chamber of Commerce, neighborhood associations, and interested parties. In addition, administrative staff published notice in the newspaper at least 14 days prior to the Study Session and hearing. Mass mailing postcards announcing the study session and hearing may also be distributed to the community. Public notice signs may also be posted (e.g., for land use map or zoning map changes). For the 10-year Comprehensive Plan Update, the notices may also be posted on the City's cable channel and website, which is a good practice.
6. Staff sends two electronic copies of the draft amendments and cover letter/Notice of Intent to Adopt to the State Department of Commerce at least sixty days prior to final adoption, for review as required by the Growth Management Act.
7. A staff report/memo with a recommendation is drafted, edited, finalized and included in an agenda packet that is posted on the web and distributed to

- Planning Commission, HCC (when applicable) and/or Transportation Commission (when applicable).
8. Study Session(s) are held with the Planning Commission. A joint Study Session may be held with the Transportation Commission. The HCC may hold a courtesy hearing in the amendments and forward a recommendation through planning staff to the Planning Commission and City Council.
  9. Staff prepares a draft ordinance, staff memo/report, and recommendation of the Planning Commission and HCC for City Council action. For significant or extensive annual amendments, controversial private amendment requests (PAR's) and 10-year Comprehensive Plan Updates, the City Council may hold a Study Session on the proposed amendments prior to final Council action.
  10. Following adoption of the Ordinance, the City Clerk publishes the Ordinance, which is typically effective four months later, in order to allow the Planning & Community Development Department the opportunity to finalize amendments, prepare handouts, etc.
  11. Ten days after the City Council Adoption date, staff sends two copies of the adopting ordinance and the amendments to the State Department of Commerce, along with a cover letter, via registered mail, which provides Notice to the State of the amendments, as required by law.
  12. Staff prepares a memo and resolution to approve the City Council Ordinance and distributes it to the HCC for final approval (if applicable). The Ordinance becomes effective within their jurisdiction after the approval by a majority of the entire membership of the HCC by Resolution or the failure of the HCC to disapprove the Ordinance, by resolution, within 60-calendar day of City Council approval.
  13. Assigned Planning and Administrative staff complete a number of follow up tasks such as, circulating the adopted ordinance to staff, putting a copy of the ordinance at the front counter, removing posted signs, changing forms, updating the website, reporting back to the Planning Commission as to the final disposition of Council's action, etc.
  14. City Clerk sends the adopted ordinance to Code Publishing for codification.

### **Private Citizen Initiated Amendment Requests (PAR's)**

Citizen-initiated requests to amend the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Map are called Private Amendment Requests (PAR's). The Department considers PAR requests every other year, during odd years (e.g., 2013, 2015, etc.). PAR's applications must be submitted by December 1<sup>st</sup> on even years (e.g., 2012, 2014) to be

considered in the following odd year, in accordance with a submittal deadline published by the Department.

The PAR application is posted on the city's website, however, according to staff it can't be filled in paid for or submitted online.

**181. Recommendation: The PAR application should be modified so that it can be filled in, paid for and submitted online.**

PAR's typically include both map and text amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code as part of their request. While PAR's are sometimes processed separately, they are eventually folded into the annual comp plan update at the end of the year.

The PAR amendments are processed as outlined above, except that when staff is "preparing the amendments" (listed as #3 above), the PAR's undergo a two-step/phase review process involving a "Threshold Review," followed by final consideration. Staff has outlined the details of the PAR two-phase process in a comprehensive procedure memo, which is excellent.

Generally, the first step or Phase I of the process involves a "Threshold Review," which includes a study session with the Planning Commission (and HCC when applicable) to determine whether the PAR meets established "Threshold" criteria Review." The Planning Commission and HCC, when applicable will provide a recommendation to the City Council who reviews the recommendation and PAR at a council meeting (no public hearing is required) and makes a final determination as to whether the PAR has merit and should be further considered by the Planning Commission and HCC during the current year or during a subsequent year. The City Council may also determine that a PAR does not have merit and will not be given further consideration.

The second step or Phase II of the process involves a study session or sessions with the Planning Commission, and HCC (if applicable) and action by the City Council. The Planning Commission and HCC each hold a study session or sessions and makes a recommendation to the City Council. The City Council then approves, denies or alters the proposal. Notice of the City Council meeting is provided to the application and property owner of the study area, as well as interested parties, prior to the meeting.

Staff indicates that the Process IV process for PAR projects can take up to a year to complete, depending on the complexity of the project, but works well.

Interviews with staff revealed that application deadlines have been established for the submittal of private individual comprehensive plan amendments (PAR's), however

the Department is occasionally required to accept and process PAR applications after deadlines, which creates scheduling, staffing and work load issues.

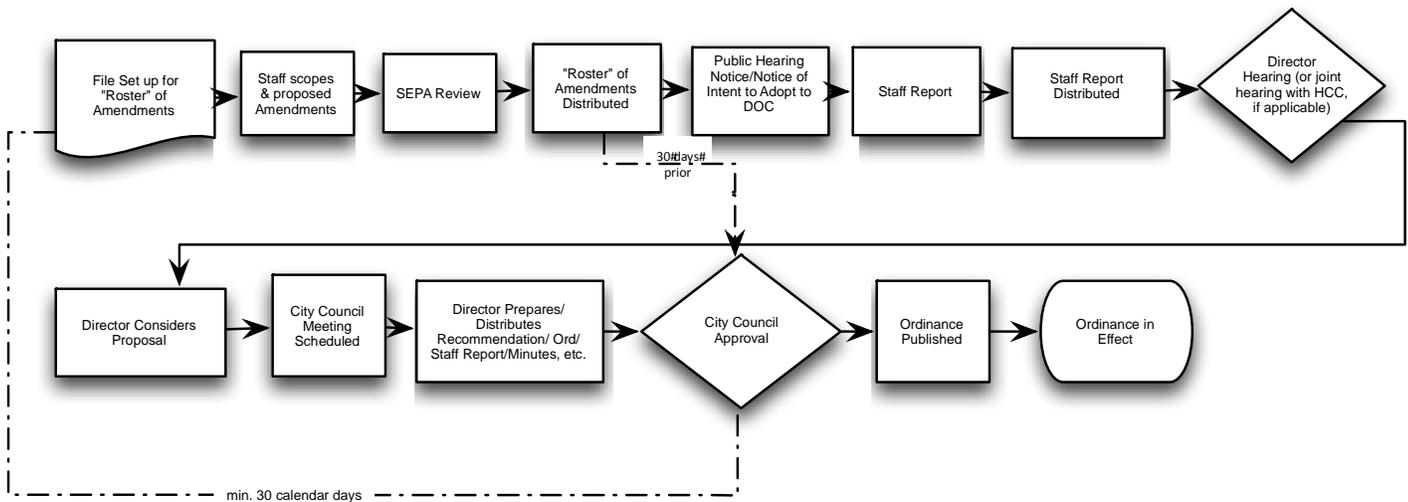
**182. Recommendation: The Department should reaffirm its policy not to accept PAR’s for processing after established deadlines.**

**Process IVA, Minor Amendments**

Process IVA is a “fast track” process used by the Policy & Planning Division staff to review and decide upon proposed minor Zoning Code amendments, that promote clarity, eliminate redundancy, or correct inconsistencies and grammatical, labeling, scrivener’s, or similar errors on the official Zoning Map.

It is an abbreviated process used for proposals that are not controversial and do not need extensive policy study. The Policy & Planning Division proposes minor amendments to the Zoning Code annually, through the Process IVA procedures, which does not involve the Planning Commission, but may involve the HCC if the amendments are within their disapproval jurisdiction. Staff maintains a list of potential code amendments and, as new issues arise, staff is constantly adding to and updating the list. The Division’s annual work program generally includes an on-going code update task each year so that staff resources are available to accomplish this task. Figure 23 below shows the *basic* existing basic flow of the Process IVA procedure.

**Figure 23  
Existing Process IVA Process Flow**



The process IVA procedure generally works as follows:

1. The Policy & Planning Division staff sets up the official electronic file of a proposed “roster” of amendments for consideration and approval by the Planning Director at a public hearing.

Interviews with staff indicated that the Suitability Criteria established for Process IVA amendments should be broadened to allow more types of amendments to be processed using the IVA procedures.

**183. Recommendation: The Department should review and broaden the suitability criteria established for Process IVA (minor zoning code amendment process), so that more types of amendments are eligible to be processed as IVA projects.**

2. Assigned planner meets with Deputy Director/Director to decide the amendments that are suitable for Process IVA and studies issues around each amendment to narrow the list of acceptable amendments to fit within the scope of the work program.
3. Staff conducts a SEPA review and makes a SEPA determination.
4. A roster of amendments is compiled and distributed at least thirty days (30) prior to City Council consideration of the “roster” of proposed amendments, staff distributes an electronic link of the “roster,” to the City Council, the Planning Commission, the Houghton Community Council (if applicable), neighborhood associations and the Chamber of Commerce to obtain comments, along with brief comments explaining the list.
5. At the direction of the assigned planner, administrative staff prepares and distributes a public notice of a Planning Director hearing (and Houghton Community Council hearing, if applicable) to consider recommendation of approval of the minor amendment “roster,” for publication in the newspaper. Administrative staff forwards the notice, electronically, at least 20 days prior to the meeting to ensure that it is published in the newspaper a minimum of 14 days prior to the scheduled public hearing. In addition, Staff sends two electronic copies of the draft amendments and cover letter/Notice of Intent to Adopt to the State Department of Commerce at least sixty days prior to final adoption, for review as required by the Growth Management Act. Each planning agency subject to the Growth Management Act is required to notify the Washington State Department of Commerce, Growth Management Services Unit, when adopting or permanently amending it comprehensive plan and/or development regulations at least 60 days prior to final adoption. However, in the case of “fast track” amendments, planning staff can request, and the state can grant an expedited review.

6. The assigned planner prepares a staff report, which evaluates and provides a recommendation of the proposal for the Director Hearing (and Houghton Community Council Hearing, if applicable). The report is forwarded to the Deputy Director for electronic review and edit, and then finalized by the assigned planner.
7. The Staff report is distributed electronically, along with any supplemental materials, to the Planning Director and Houghton Community Council (HCC), if applicable, approximately nine days prior to the scheduled hearing.
8. The Planning Director and the HCC (if applicable) hold either a separate or joint hearing (unless the HCC elects not to hold a hearing). Staff presents the proposed minor amendments to the Planning Director at an open public hearing for recommendation to the City Council. The Director considers the proposal using decisional criteria established in the code. The hearing of the Planning Director is the hearing for City Council. City Council need not hold another hearing on the proposal. Administrative staff records the meeting and prepares minutes of the proceedings to preserve the record. The HCC may choose to have a public hearing on the amendments.
9. Following the public hearing, the Planning Director considers the proposal in light of all of the information submitted and may modify the proposal in any way. If modifications are materially significant, subsequent public notice must be given and a new public hearing on the proposal be held. If the Planning Director determines that the proposal meets the applicable decisional criteria established in the Code, the Director recommends that City Council give effect to the proposal by amending the appropriate text.
10. Following the hearing, staff schedules the proposed minor amendments for City Council consideration at a regular Council meeting.
11. The Planning Director prepares a Director (staff) report recommending approval of the proposal, along with a draft ordinance, and distributes the materials prior to the City Council meeting. Minutes from the HCC meeting are also forwarded, if applicable, or the HCC may forward a separate recommendation.
12. The City Council hold a meeting to consider the amendments and may pass the proposed ordinance and amend the Zoning Code or may carry the topic over as unfinished business, or may instead decide to hold a new public hearing on the proposed minor Zoning Code amendments. If the City Council elects to consider adoption of a materially modified ordinance, then the City Council has to first hold a public hearing on the proposal as modified, after public notice is provided.

13. If Council adopts an Ordinance approving the amendments, the City Clerk must post or publish the ordinance as required by law. The Ordinance will be in effect on the date specified in the Ordinance. In the case of the HCC disapproval jurisdiction, the Ordinance becomes effective within their jurisdiction after the approval by a majority of the entire membership of the HCC by Resolution or the failure of the HCC to disapprove the Ordinance, by resolution, within 60-calendar day of City Council approval.

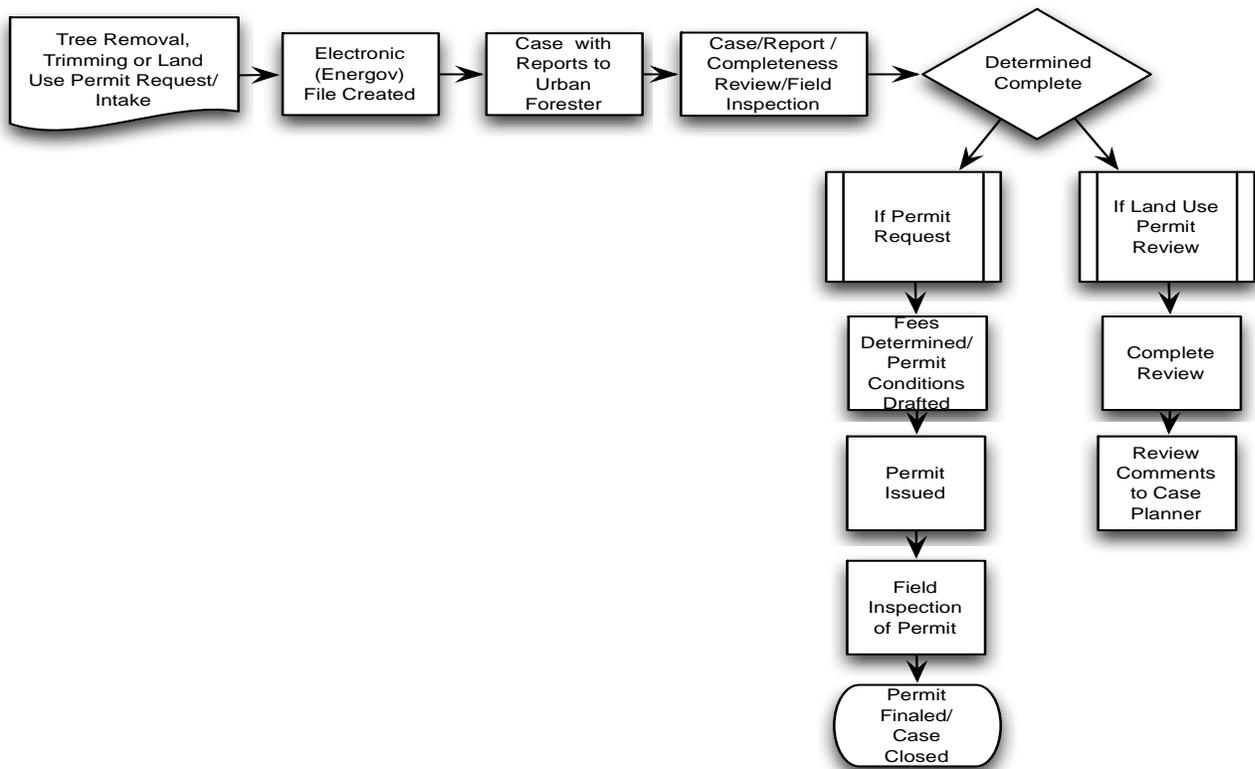
## **H. URBAN FORESTRY**

The Urban Forestry function is part of the Planning & Community Development Department. Currently, an .5 FTE Urban Forester position works under the Policy and Planning Division of the Department, which is funded through the surface water utility fund in the Public Works Department. This position assists Policy and Planning (Long-range planning) with drafting, reviewing and amending long-range plans, policies and regulations related to urban forestry issues, writing grants, and other related duties.

In addition, another half time contract arborist works under the Land Use Management (Current Planning) Division, which is funded by the General Fund. The half time contract position assigned to the Land Use Management Division administers the tree management and protection codes (e.g., Chapter 95 of the Kirkland Zoning Code), including reviewing proposed developments to ensure compliance with tree protection codes (e.g., Arborist Reports, Tree Retention Plans, etc.), processing tree removal and providing public information on tree matters and acting as an advisor on urban forestry related matters. .

Staff indicates that they are not going to try to increase this .half time contract position in the Land Use Management Division to a full time for the upcoming fiscal year because they have determined that half time is adequate for now. Figure 24 below shows the *basic* existing flow of the Tree Pruning and Removal Permit Issuance Process conducted by the Urban Forester.

**Figure 24  
Existing Tree Permit Review Process**



The Staff interviewed about the Urban Forestry function indicated that the function is still evolving and that there have been budgetary and staffing challenges, which have impeded their progress toward creating a comprehensive and efficient Urban Forestry/Tree Program. For example, they only recently hired a new contract arborist professional to administer the tree management and protection codes, including reviewing proposed developments to ensure compliance with tree protection codes.

In addition, the .5 FTE Urban Forester position assigned to the Policy & Planning Division function is currently funded by the Surface Water Utility Fund (as noted above), so there has been on-going interdepartmental discussion about whether the position should be moved to the Public Works Department or remain in the Planning & Community Development Department to focus on long-range activities. To date, there appears to be a tentative agreement that the position should be moved to the Public Works Department, and that the transition should occur over the next 6 months. However, it is not yet clear whether the position will be moved under the Surface Water Utility Division or some other Division within Public Works because various divisions are involved in different aspects of preserving and maintaining the urban forests.

**184. Recommendations:** The City should move the .5 Urban Forester position that is currently assigned to the Policy & Planning Division and funded by the Surface Water Utility Fund, as tentatively agreed, to the Surface Water Division of the Public Works Department.

Despite the challenges noted, the Planning & Community Development Department is moving forward in their efforts to improve the Urban Forestry function under the Land Use Management (Current Planning) Division. In 2011, the Department completed an Urban Tree Canopy Assessment, and more recently (2012) completed a Draft Urban Forest Strategic Management Plan, which was recently presented to City Council and is in the final approval stages. The Plan is important because it is intended to provide long-term, consistent guidance to Kirkland's citywide urban forestry operations and programs over the next twenty years.

Feedback we received from our focus group and staff interviews and the 2012 City survey feedback indicated that the community remains interested in the City's Urban Forestry efforts. Interviewees indicated that there are important existing issues that need to be addressed, as the City moves forward with the current planning urban forestry function. For example, interviewees indicated that they believe the tree code should be amended to more precisely define what constitutes a "High Retention Value Tree," because the term is inconsistently interpreted by staff and produces unintended results.

In addition, many of the interviewees stated that they felt the provisions in Chapter 95 gave the contract arborist position too much subjective interpretation discretion. They also indicated that the tree code does not provide adequate tree replacement options (e.g., option to replace with an equivalent or higher ratio of trees). Interviewees also said that they felt the five-year tree maintenance provision was excessive (some communities require only two years) and that the criteria for determining tree removal (with development activity) is unclear and poses too much risk for developers. Finally, interviewees indicated that they believe the thresholds established to trigger the requirement for an Arborist Report are applied inconsistently by staff, which frustrates applicants because it can unnecessarily increase cost and cause processing time delays.

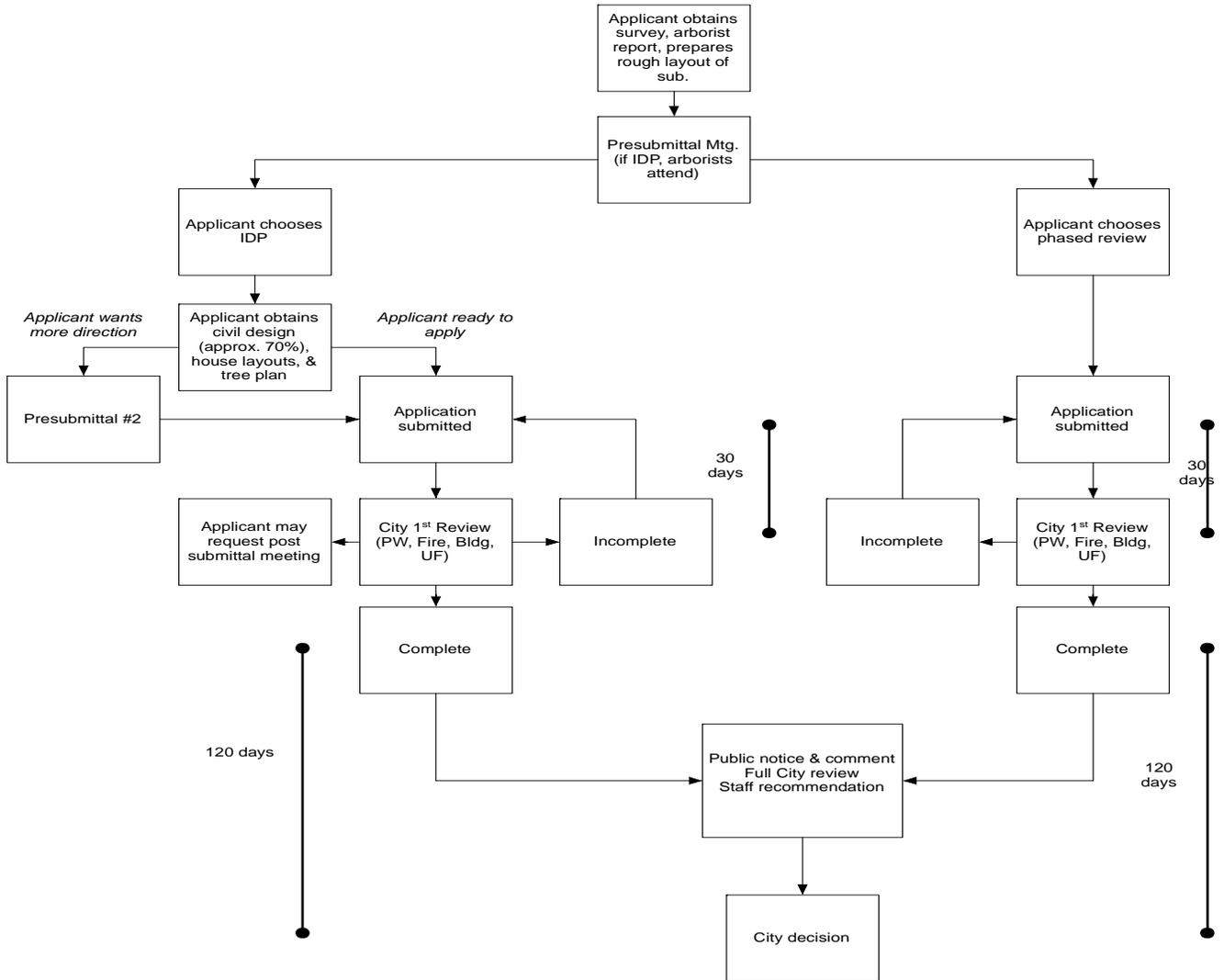
**185. Recommendations:** The Planning & Community Development Planning & Policy Division should review Chapter 95 of the Kirkland Zoning Code with the goal of simplifying the language, clarifying definitions and criteria, and reducing five-year maintenance requirements and other provisions so that the code is less subjective and easier for staff to administer and the development community to gauge risk.

**186. The City should finalize the Urban Forest Strategic Management Plan and implement its recommendations to create a comprehensive urban forestry program in the City.**

As indicated above, the Contract Arborist assigned to the Land Use Management Division is charged with reviewing land use (current planning) permits for compliance with tree-related code requirements. Separate reviews occur at various points during the permitting processes including, but not limited to, a review at the Pre-submittal Conference Meeting (e.g., tree retention plan), reviews during the formal application approval process (e.g., supplemental tree retention plan), reviews during the grading permit process (Land Surface Modification), reviews during demolition and reviews during the building permit approval process.

In an effort to integrate the various individual reviews conducted by the Contract Arborist during different stages of the permitting process, the Land Use Management Division created a new, optional “Integrated Development Plan (IDP)” review process for short plats and subdivision projects. The IDP consists of a copy of the proposed plat that includes topography, home/structure footprints, utility placement and access locations, along with tree retention plan information. This detailed information allows staff and the applicant to discuss and resolve layout issues early in the entitlement process, which helps speed up the grading, demolition, and building permit issuance later in the process. This new process appears to help streamline the tree permit review processes and we support staff’s effort in this regard. Figure 25 is a flow chart created by staff that outlines the IDP process.

**Figure 25**  
**Integrated Development Plan Review Process**





# VII. PUBLIC WORKS

## A. PROFILE

### Overview and Authority

The Development Engineering Group operates under the direction of the Director of Public Works who also serves as the City Engineer for Kirkland. The Development Engineering Group is a separate group within the Public Works Department, however additional Public Works Department Groups or Divisions including Surface Water (quality) Engineering and Transportation also perform development review work under the direction of both the Public Works Director/City Engineer and the Manager of Development Services. A detailed table illustrating the staff with development review responsibilities and their reporting relationship is shown in Figure 26 below.

The Public Works Director/City Engineer general authority is initially described in the Kirkland Municipal Code (KMC) Section 3. The Director of Public Works serves at the pleasure of the City Manager. As a registered professional engineer (PE) in the State of Washington the City Engineer has certain statutory authority mandated by State Law. That statutory authority pertains to a Washington Registered Professional Civil Engineer (PE) being in responsible charge of approval of legal subdivision maps, surveys, and parcel maps as well as approval of infrastructure plans for various public works in the City of Kirkland. The Kirkland Municipal Code (KMC) further defines the Director of Public Works/City Engineer authority in Sections 12, 18, 19, and 27 detailing additional authority and responsibilities related to development review.

### Basic Function

The basic function of the Development Engineering Group includes the review/approval of various improvements required as a part of private development. The Engineering Group is the designated engineering team that reviews improvements that are required of private developments including both private and publicly owned infrastructure and landscape improvements. In addition, inspection of all development related infrastructure construction including onsite and offsite grading under direction of the City Engineer is within the Development Review Engineering Group's responsibilities.

Capital Improvement Projects by the City are not a functional responsibility of the Development Engineering Group. Plans for utility lines owned by the City (water and sewer) are reviewed when necessary by other groups within Public Works Department. The development review group coordinates such review by those utility groups. Gas Company, cable, and electrical power lines are not the direct responsibility of the City Engineer; however, coordination and permitting for

implementation of joint and separate trenches is a significant responsibility of the Development Engineering Group. Overall the engineering review is a portion of an integrated process and flow of work that involves Planning, Fire/Building, and Public Works.

The city’s website very correctly describes the function of the Engineering Group:

*“The Development Engineering Group reviews, permits, and inspects the construction of water, sewer, storm drainage utilities, right-of-way improvements, and erosion control associated with the development of private property. New connections, reconnections, and repairs to water, sewer, and storm drainage; and digging in the public right-of-way is also overseen by the Development Engineering Division. We also maintain the "Pre-Approved Plans" standards book and oversee the maintenance of private storm water detention systems.”*

### Activity

The six-year activity level for all new City Development appears to have been near its highest level during 2006/2007. The decline of the general economy during the years since has resulted in a decline in Public Works permit levels as illustrated in Table 24 below. There was an increase of activity due to a major annexation in 2011. Permits approved by the County prior to the annexation remain and may possibly activate during 2013. In addition there is an apparent increase in the rate of development activity from the lowest year of 2010. As can be seen in the Fire/Building chapter of this report, there have been significant increases in activity in 2012, partially due to the annexation but also likely increased economic activity.

**Table 24  
Public Works Activity Levels Valuations**

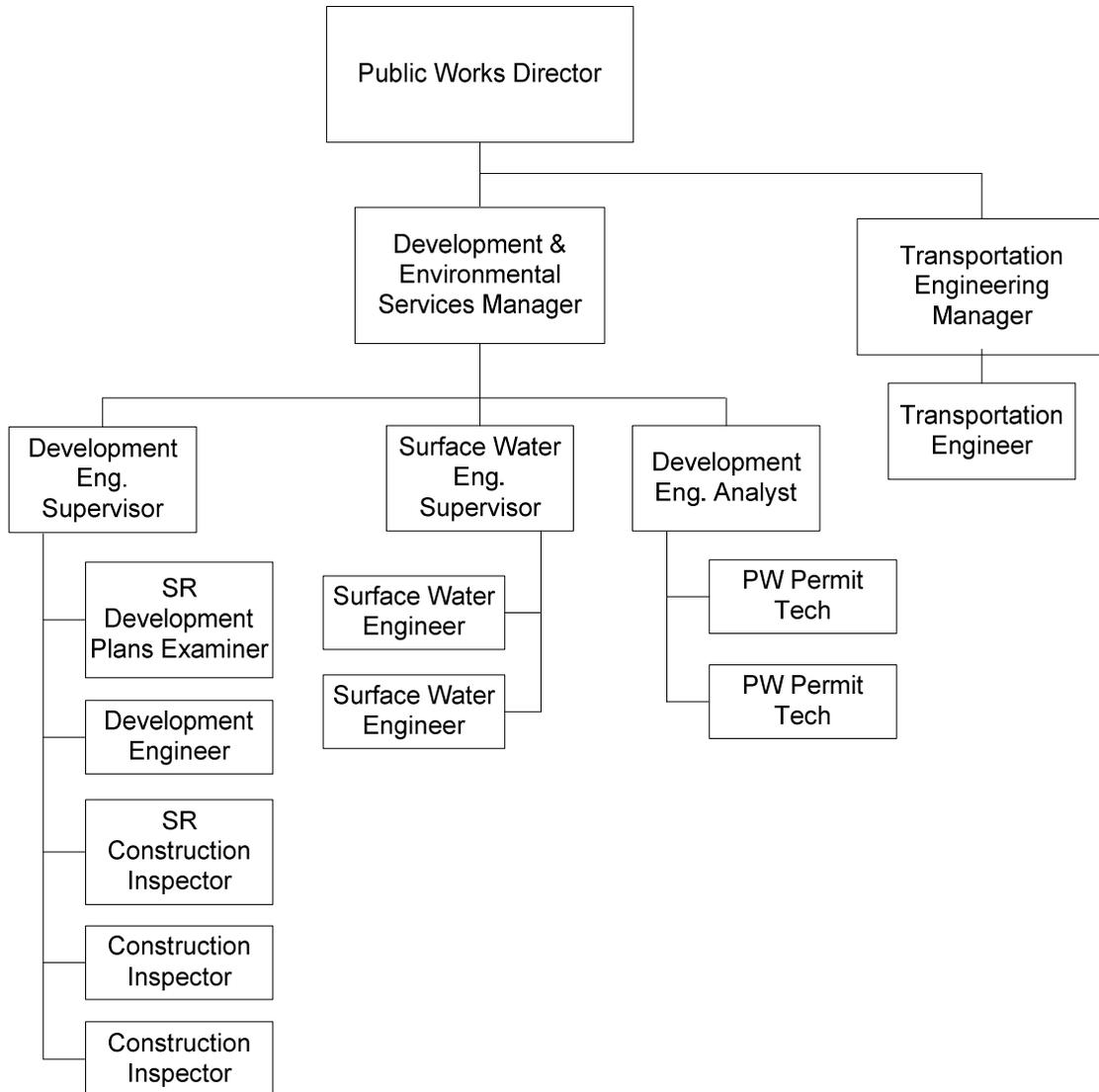
Year	Public Improvement	Pvt Storm Drain	Total
2005	\$6,271,303.00	\$1,957,934.00	\$8,229,237.00
2006	\$5,583,234.00	\$1,400,156.00	\$6,983,390.00
2007	\$5,311,513.00	\$1,396,185.00	\$6,707,698.00
2008	\$4,420,427.00	\$1,452,031.00	\$5,872,458.00
2009	\$3,396,546.00	\$1,515,924.00	\$4,912,470.00
2010	\$2,260,414.00	\$815,767.00	\$3,076,181.00
2011	\$6,371,897.00	\$1,831,288.00	\$8,203,185.00
2012	<i>Estimated*</i>		<i>\$10,000,000.00</i>
2013	<i>Estimated</i>		<i>\$5M to \$7M</i>
2014	<i>Estimated</i>		<i>\$5M to \$7M</i>

\*This estimate includes both activated County (annexation area) permits and schools constr.

## Organization

The Development Engineering Review Group is shown in Figure 26 and listed in Table 26. The additional Public Works Staff (Surface Water Utility and Transportation) engaged in Development Review are also listed below in Table 25.

**Figure 26**  
**Development Engineering Group Organization**



**Table 25  
Development Engineering Review Staff**

Position	Number of Staff	Responsibilities	Reports to	%
				Dev. Rev.
DPW&City Engr Manager	1	Plans, organizes, and directs entire PW Department (100+ staff). Approves final maps, plat, plans	City Manager	5
Development Review (Jammerman)	1	Supervises/coordinates all PW Devel. Review staff & processes, attends Joint departmental Development (DRC) meeting. Supervises PW Surface Water Engr. and Environmental groups	DPW	90
Development Engrg Supervisor (Burkhalter)	1	Supervises plan check and Field Inspection staff	Manager of Dev. Rev.	100
Senior Plans Examiner (Reed)	1	Plan check/field review complex projects	Devel. Engr. Supervisor	100
Development Engr. (Vartanian)	1	Engr plan check, Elect plan review	Devel. Engr. Supervisor	100
Construction Inspectors (Christ-Sr>) (Gunter&Pray)	3	Construction & Environmental inspection	Devel. Engr. Supervisor	100 =3FTE
Development Engrg. Analyst (Coleman)	1	Development Records mgmt.; <i>Energov</i> permitting system coordination; Group budget prep and mgmt	Manager of Dev. Rev.	100
Permit Technicians (Ayers & Corp)	2	Permits issuance including R/W encroachment. OTC permits at counter	Manager of Dev. Rev.	100
Sub Total	10	Staffing for Development Engineering Group (incl DPW)		8.9 FTE
		Additional Development Review Staff in PW Dept.		
Surface Water Engrg. Supervisor (Gaus)	1	Supervises and direct WQ staff, (5 staff total); City wide NPDES program	Manager of Dev. Rev.	20
Surface Water Engineers (Rush, Jones)	2	NPDES compliance reviews, storm runoff and SD requirements	Surface Water Supv.	50 ea.= 1 FTE
Transportation Engineer (Nguyen)	1	Circulation model management, Traf. Impact Fee determination, traffic review and conditions for development	Manager/Transp.	85
Transportation Manager (Godfrey)	1	Manages city wide traffic and transportation planning program for Kirkland	DPW	5
Total FTE Development Rev.		Public Works Dept. development review		11 FTE

## B. POSITIVE FINDINGS

The Public Works Department Development Review team has incorporated many Best Practices in their day-to-day operations. We were very pleased to find that this operation stands out as one of the best we have seen among the many organizations reviewed by the Zucker Team. The following list includes several of our findings.

- Staff is committed to help all applicants solve problems and issues associated with their individual project.
- All the Public Works staff participating were cooperative, forthcoming, and helpful during this study.
- Team work with Planning and Building Departments is good. No “silo” issues between Public Works and other departments were evident.
- Experienced staff with long-term history and personal knowledge of Kirkland.
- Several staff have professional engineering registration in the Department.
- Easy access to all development staff on the same floor in City Hall including Planning and Building Departments.
- There is a strong ethic among all PW staff to assure the highest quality of improvement in the City of Kirkland.
- The development review team is solely dedicated to the review effort, and do not have capital project or other responsibilities.
- The entire Development Engineering Group including inspection is in the same building on the same floor and is co-located in the same building with the Transportation and Water Quality Groups in Public Works as well as the Planning and Building Departments.
- All development grading work for both onsite and offsite is plan reviewed and inspected by this group.
- The GIS used by the city with its various links to Google Earth and other programs is very useful to the Engineering Review program and is one of the best we have seen.
- *Blue Beam* plan electronic plan check software along with large dual monitors is available to the Public Works Dept.

## C. ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES

### Cost Recovery

The subject of cost recovery for development review is discussed in other sections of this report along with specific recommendations. There are just over two full time equivalent (FTE) staff engaged with development review that are budgeted in Surface Water and Transportation groups.

**187. Recommendation: Consider inclusion of all FTE Development Review PW staff in any staffing model used for future fee study and analysis.**

### **Counter Access Policy**

Discussion elsewhere in this study deals with the need for a common front counter design and reception function. Concerns expressed by several Public Works staff indicates that the priority demand to respond to the front counter often interferes with ongoing plan reviews and other work thereby adding to the turnaround time to review plans. At the same time the excellent reputation currently enjoyed by Public Works is due in part to the high level of service provided at the public counter.

We have found that the policies for each department pertaining to hours of operation and other business access to the public counter vary. While the implementation of joint counter evolves, the three departments have an opportunity to create a uniform policy for public counter operations in the near term. This can be accomplished through the Development Review Committee II. Hours of operation, access for applications, project inquiries and information, and other business can be subjected to a policy that is the same for all departments without waiting for the creation of a new counter. For example if there could be some restriction to public access after 4 pm or on certain days of the week, the staff could be more productive without severely impacting the good service currently being provided.

**188. Recommendation: The DRC II as a part of its regular meeting agenda should develop a uniform policy for public counter hours and operations. Consideration should be given to maintaining a high level of public service and allowing some access limitations that provide for staff to concentrate on expeditiously completing reviews of ongoing submittals.**

### **Inspection Services**

One of the most important functions of any engineering development review program is field inspection services. If inspection is unable to verify and assure that all the various project plans, conditions, and other city requirements then the work of the planners and other development review staff cannot be effective. Additionally the City needs assurance that all public infrastructure is constructed in accordance with its requirements and standards.

With its limited staff and the broad range of development requirements in Kirkland it is essential that each inspection staff member have expertise and versatility in the several disciplines all related to the City's requirements

Kirkland has two full time regular inspection staff plus an additional full time contract inspector at the present time. Inspection staff numbered 3 FTE's during the 2006/07

years when there was over \$5M/yr of new public improvement work being permitted. At that time, the demand for special LID and other water quality inspection appears to have been lower than at the present. In addition, the ROW inspections for franchise utility work were being handled with that staff at that time. It is our view that there is currently an inadequate level of inspection for both franchise utility lines (ROW inspection) or the city's Surface Water or water quality program. It is also our understanding that the contract inspector will not be extended beyond May 2013. A Right of Way (ROW) inspector has been approved for hire to start in February 2013. It is also evident that one of the reasons that inspections for surface water requirements is not keeping up with demand is due to the fact that the inspectors have not had the technical training necessary to perform this work.

The level of new construction completed in 2009/10 ranged from \$5M to \$3M per year. It also appears that the amount of work for 2012 is increasing and may exceed levels experienced in 2005/06/07. Allowing the contract inspection to expire to bring the full time regular staff to two staff may not be appropriate at this time to accommodate the City's basic construction inspection needs. If the apparent increase in construction/permit activity is sustained, then the City should continue to utilize the services of the contract inspector with the inspection team beyond the May 2013 date. If the value of new construction permits exceeds the approximate rates of \$3-5M/year an additional contract inspection staff member is warranted. If the County contract cannot be extended then contract inspection from consulting firms in the area should be considered.

**189. Recommendation:** Monitor the permit activity level and maintain an option to continue contract inspection services beyond May 2013. Continue the contract inspector position if the sustained rate of permits issued exceed \$5M per year.

**190. Recommendation:** Add the approved ROW inspector to the inspection team at the earliest date, preferably starting February 2013. Include training and assignments for both ROW and Surface Water quality in addition to normal construction inspection for this position.

**191. Recommendation:** Initiate a comprehensive training program for inspection staff with the following objectives: Cross training in all disciplines including ROW; Surface Water Quality requirements including LID (Low Impact Drainage); along with updated construction methods for grading paving, and highway structural improvements

## **Project Managers**

Kirkland has a designated planner in charge during the planning and entitlement phase and a building plan checker in charge at the building phase. However, this system is not as clear as it should be and the way engineering and tree issues get resolved has

been an issue. Part of our suggested program is to train staff to assume greater degrees of responsibility and expertise by instituting a designated “Project Manager” system for key projects moving through the Kirkland system. At the present time it appears that the Manager of Development Review serves in this role for all PW development projects. A project manager can be designated for selected projects in the early stages of a project during the DRC meeting process. Any staff member from Public Works, including Surface Water and Transportation can be designated and thereby participate during the full range of development review work for that project. This need not be done for all projects, but can be a benefit for both training and enhancing the process. A key objective that should also be included in this suggested system is to reduce overall review times.

**192. Recommendation: Designate a Public works “Project Manager” for selected development review projects to participate during the full development review process.**

### **Records/GIS/Electronic Files/Scan**

Public works permit staff have been progressing with scanning the Public Works development files and map records into a digitized file that can be used throughout the entire City. They initially attempted to outsource the scanning process but found that much of that work was not usable without substantial correction and modification. It was determined that any outside contractor would not have enough knowledge to properly establish a usable file by simply scanning documents

The result has been that the process in Public Works to develop a complete and usable electronic (ie. paperless) records and file system has been progressing slowly. The permit tech performing the scanning/filing is only able to do this work on a periodic basis due to the priority demand for permit issuance. The files being digitized are only the Public Works documents and plans. It is unclear if there is a cross-departmental master system for the ultimate storage and use of these digitized files.

As stated elsewhere in this report the Kirkland GIS records system is excellent. However some GIS records/files such as utility lines are not available to the developers and their engineers. The stated reasons for this omission are related to security particularly for the City water system. As a result staff has to frequently provide this information upon request to help engineers and others develop their plans accurately thereby adding time to the overall review process.

**193. Recommendation: Coordinate with the City Clerk’s Office to make sure that an integrated paperless master filing system for all city development records and plans is developed, and that each department enters its scanned files into a common system.**

**194. Recommendation:** Expedite the digitizing of the files and records. Consider retention of temporary staff to work in City Hall offices under the direct supervision of the permit tech to assure that the scanning/digitizing process is performed according to the city's needs.

**195. Recommendation:** Set a deadline or certain date for the conclusion of establishing a functional City wide digitized electronic file and records system

**196. Recommendation:** Evaluate the benefit of providing increased access to GIS utility line information by qualified professionals. Consider increasing access to the City's GIS system by utilizing a password system for engineers and planners that have been vetted and pre-qualified by the City

### **Supervision and Management**

The Development Group Manager often works directly at the front counter assisting applicants with their particular application. This extraordinary level of service has no doubt contributed to the positive responses we have received from the development community and others about the high quality of service by the Public Works staff. It is our suggestion that lower level staff assume this work ethic practice so that the positive benefit of good quality service can be maintained for the City's development customers. Simply stated the Manager of Development needs to develop a tradeoff of his workday time by replacing time at the front counter with time to bring other development staff to the fore.

**197. Recommendation:** The Manager of Development Review and the Public Works Director work together to develop a plan that takes into consideration how the Manager can accomplish the twin goals of bringing up the direct experience level of staff by trading management time for counter time and maintaining the current high service level provided to development clients. To include assigning project level responsibility to staff, with oversight, to help them gain firsthand experience with broader development issues outside of their normal assignment.

### **Staff Longevity and Training**

Many of the staff in the Public Works Development team have more than 15 and some have as much as 25 years of working experience, most in the City of Kirkland. This is obviously an advantage for the benefit of processing reviews in the near term. It presents a dilemma in that it is likely that future staff retirements by many of those key staff can leave the City at about the same time. It is reasonable to expect that

within the next four to five years many of those highly experienced individuals will no longer be available to the City.

It is imperative that the next tier of management and supervisory staff commence with appropriate training for management, supervision and advanced technical work. Part of that training can be accomplished by having that next tier of staff begin to assume a greater degree of responsibility for processing development projects to allow them to be engaged at an advanced level.

There are recommendations elsewhere in this report pertaining to allocation of resources for staff training. It is particularly important that training for Public Works Engineering include preparing individuals to succeed to upper management levels in the relatively near future. It may be appropriate for example for an individual to be given responsibility for carrying a project through to its conclusion as a project manager rather than working in the narrower confines of their regular assignment

**198. Recommendation: Include training specifically oriented to prepare lower level Public Works staff to assume greater management and leadership roles in the near future.**

### **Staff Training/Technical Electronic Plan review**

Discussion elsewhere in this report deals with the specifics of the need to improve the web based permitting system, EnerGov. It is clear that while technical issues exist with the startup of that system, hands on staff training is also very necessary.

The City also has available the *Bluebeam* electronic plan check system. It is being used in the all the departments including to a limited degree in Public Works. The procedure for the use of this system is summarized as follows:

- *Bluebeam* software is used by development reviewers (BLD, PW, PCD & FD) as a communication and review tool when electronic permit applications are made. All electronic permit applications are received via FTP site.
- Development Review Committee (DRC) group members are notified to access the server to evaluate the application for completeness. A Plan Reviewer from each department does a quick review of the application to determine if it is complete for review.
- The application file is moved electronically from the server (holding area) to the plan review case and is available for first review by each department. (Depending on the size or urgency of review, the plans can be separated to allow concurrent review by each department, e.g. civil, tree and building).
- Each department has a responsibility to coordinate different types of permits to approval stage. e.g. a grading permit will have the PW engineer assigned to be the coordinator/contact person and provide communication with the applicant

and all other departments to finalize plan review efforts. Each reviewer will provide mark-up comments on the plans. The City's comments appear as the top layer on each page/sheet in different colors. The software also creates a continuous list of corrections and comments. This list can be used by the design consultant to provide a response and input back to the reviewers. All markups from the departments show up on one set of plans and are flattened (fixed as a layer) and saved. Then these plans are uploaded to a FTP site (under their application/permit number) to be accessed by the applicant. The lead plan reviewer will make the notification to the applicant, usually via e-mail.

- After corrections are picked up by the design team; plans are resubmitted back to the FTP site (under the permit number). Second review of the submitted plans is continued in a timely manner by all departments waiting for comments when the new design is deemed approved, conditions and fees are created for the permit by each department. Review lines are signed off by each department. The approved/final plan set is attached with an electronic stamp and flattened. A copy of the approved plans set is moved to the FTP site. The permit tech is notified by the lead Plan Reviewer that the application for the permit is approved and proper notification should be made to the applicant.
- The applicant downloads a copy of the approved plans and is responsible for printing copies of plans for construction and site inspections
- It is our observation that the *Bluebeam* program could be used to a higher degree for Public Works plan review. More formal training and hands on experience by all the plans examiner staff will ultimately result in greater use and can result in more expeditious plan check turnaround times. There is discussion in the "Process Issues" section of this report about the compelling need to shorten plan review turnaround times. At the present time, the Public Works staff is teaching themselves how to use *Bluebeam* software. It may be more effective if expert formal training is brought in and used to bring all the plans examiners as well as other Public Works staff to higher proficiency levels. Additionally, an evaluation should be conducted to ensure that Public Works staff has all the appropriate hardware and software or "plug ins" to assure the best compatibility with electronic plan submittals specifically for engineering construction and grading plans.

**199. Recommendation:** Assure that direct staff technical training on the use of the EnerGov system keeps pace with the mandatory upgrading and de-bugging of that system.

**200. Recommendation:** Bring expert training for the Public Works development review staff on the effective use of the *Bluebeam* program for engineering plan check.

**201. Recommendation:** Assure that all PW staff including Transportation and Surface Water Quality staff engaged in development plan review have large dual monitors along with appropriate computing hardware/software/plugin to facilitate *Bluebeam* electronic plan reviews.

### **Supervision of Transportation Staff**

The Transportation Engineer currently devotes approximately 70-85% of his time to development review. Traffic operations and longer term transportation planning are critical and essential elements of the development approval process for both Planning and Engineering. The question is can this function operate more effectively if it was operating directly in the Development Review Group.

There is no indication that making such a change would enhance review turn around time or that there has been any difficulty with securing timely response and participation by Transportation in the development review process to date. We have not seen any silo issues or inadequate participation by Transportation. The Transportation Engineering Manager has expressed his policy of cooperation with the Development Review team.

**202. Recommendation:** Retain the current organizational structure for Transportation to participate in the development review process

### **Tree Removals/Trimming**

It appears that management of the City's tree preservation program for street trees has become a stepchild to the overall development and maintenance efforts. It would help if the tree preservation requirements were modified to take into account the needs to properly stage construction and grading with new development. The existing requirements have caused conflicts that unnecessarily hinder construction and do not materially save or preserve more trees. There are also conflicts between the requirements of new development and maintaining existing trees by an individual property owner not engaged in any new development work. Any work, trimming or removal of an existing tree requires a permit after review by the Field Arborist who works in the maintenance group. The permit is processed by the permit tech in Public Works Development. It is possible the "Project Manager" system recommended below may help reduce some of the apparent confusion for tree issues with new development. However, there is still a problem when an individual citizen or property owner needs to trim or remove an existing tree.

The permit tech at the public counter in City Hall is most often the first stop for an individual desiring to obtain a permit for tree work. There is an inevitable delay related to getting the permit request and information and coordinating a field review when necessary since the Field Arborist works out of the Public Works Operations

offices and not in City Hall. It doesn't help either by placing the burden on the individual citizen attempting to comply with the City's tree regulations to travel to the Public Works Operations center to get their permit. It may be possible that the permit tech at the public counter and the Field Arborist have a special communication link that would allow the applicant to have communication with both at the same time from the public counter.

**203. Recommendation: Public Works Operations and Permit Processing should develop a communications link and system to facilitate the timelier processing of tree permits for non-development applications. Include consideration of available electronic media as well as possible City Hall public counter office time for the Field Arborist.**

**204. Recommendation: The Deputy Planning Director should lead a review of the City's tree regulations by a team that includes Planning, the Field Arborist, a Professional Landscape Architect, and Construction Inspection and Permit staff representatives with the objective to modify the regulations without compromising the tree preservation goals of the city**

## **D. POLICY AND REGULATION ISSUES**

### **Pre-Approved Plans Document**

The Public Works Department maintains a "Pre-Approved Plans" manual with specific policy and design details pertinent to Kirkland's infrastructure improvements. It is a well-organized and comprehensive document including policies and regulations as well a design details for infrastructure facilities. The contents include 8 separate sections as listed below and it is updated annually.

- 1) Public Works Policies; 2) Water System; 3) Sanitary Sewer; 4) Storm Drainage;*
- 5)LID Storm; 6) Roadway;7) Erosion Control; 8) Traffic Signals*

The document is large, (479) pages, and is one of the most voluminous we have seen. The document is more than a typical standard plans compendium. It also serves as a Policy and Procedure Manual (PPM), which is very useful to both staff and the development community. We were advised that many of the standards and details have evolved over the years in response to input from many sources including maintenance, outside contractors, and other staff. It is possible that some of those changes and plan details are outdated.

It is our concern that there may be minor design details of various improvements unique to the City of Kirkland that have no significant impact on the function of the facility when compared to standard designs required by the County or nearby cities. This feature can also add to the time it takes for the City to complete a plan review

and to achieve corrections to a submitted plan to conform to the specific Kirkland Standard. While there may be any number of very good reasons that justify a unique standard for some facilities in Kirkland it is also very possible that the Pre-Approved Plans document could be simplified and even reduced in volume by incorporating plans that are the same as those used by other agencies in the region.

We have also observed that cities have benefited by partnering with developers, local engineers and architects to improve and update their standard plans manuals. The objective is to have those plans be in greater conformance to the plans used in the region without compromising any of special needs of the City of Kirkland and/or incurring significant cost to update the manual.

**205. Recommendation:** The Public Works Director should consider requesting the participation of local developers, engineers, local agencies, and architects to partner with the City of Kirkland to convene and provide a comprehensive update/revision to the Pre-Approved Plans Manual during the next update cycle.

## E. PROCESS ISSUES

### Inspection Procedures and Equipment

The City policy provides that calls for inspection that are received up to 3 pm on the day prior will be responded with inspection service. Calls for inspection are currently received from three separate sources. They include *EnerGov*, voicemail at the city hall, and “*My Building Permit.Com*”. An inspector receives and sorts out the calls each morning and sets up the run sheets for all inspections for the day. It would be desirable if all inspection requests could be concentrated through fewer communication media. Public Works staff has indicated that *EnerGov* would be preferable system for calls for inspection if it allowed the caller to leave a phone number for possible follow up. It is also apparent that inspection staff responds to late and last minute calls for inspection to the point that the 3pm prior day deadline may become meaningless. This may not be a problem when workload is low, but will ultimately become a problem to be able to effectively cover the most important inspections each day when volume increases. This is obviously another area where extraordinary service can both help and hinder the Public Works review program.

The field inspection staff have computers and portable communication available while in the field. Each inspector has a laptop and docking station with a large monitor in the office. Because of the problems with *EnerGov*, there is no access to plans or other data while they are in the field. This equipment is underutilized at the present time. They also have smart phones with 3G connectivity. Electronic field communications equipment such as lap top computers should be available in the field as standard equipment for each inspector. A system, which permits plans to be accessed and viewed in the field along with voice communication to the office, can expedite

inspections and help avoid errors particularly with ROW and Surface Water inspections.

**206. Recommendation:** Assure that training for all inspection staff is up to date on the effective use of field communications and computing equipment

**207. Recommendation:** Develop run sheets based on calls for inspection on the calls made prior to 3pm on the day before the requested inspection in compliance with the city policy for inspection requests. Incorporate a return call phone number into the *EnerGov* calls for inspection service as soon as possible.

### **Plan Review Turnaround Time**

The time for completion of a first review of submittal of engineering plans is currently about four to six weeks in Kirkland. The majority of this work is review of Land Surface Modification (LSM) permits. As mentioned in other sections of this report, the total amount of time in Kirkland is greater than the review first check turnaround time that we have found to work well in many jurisdictions. It is also our understanding that the review times in Kirkland are within the norm for this region. Inasmuch as Kirkland has a well-developed process for preliminary or pre-application review a shorter formal plan check time for Public Works engineering review should be fairly easy to achieve without compromising the quality or thoroughness of the formal review.

Several of the forgoing Public Works recommendations for development review have outlined how review time frames can be reduced. Additionally as the volume of work is trending to increase in the coming year, reducing review time will materially contribute to maintaining a good workflow through the department without having projects “bog down”. At some point, adding staff can be part of the solution to keeping up with the workload demand. However, it shouldn’t be the first step taken to reduce the review times. Kirkland has the opportunity in our view to clearly be the regional leader in terms of providing expedient reviews for projects submitted for development approval.

Here is a partial re-listing of previous recommendation subjects that can all have a material effect on reducing review time:

- EnerGov- several recommendations related to improving this system are essential.
- Traffic Concurrency database update.
- Simplify/Update Pre-Approved Plans.
- Training- particularly for electronic plan reviews.

- Tree Permit modification/coordination.
- Public counter hours and access policies.
- GIS access for qualified professionals.

Table 26 below suggests a phased plan to achieve significant reduction in the Public Works infrastructure (LSM) plan review time that will be consistent with the adoption/implementation of the previous recommendations in this report.

**Table 26  
Public Works Review Times**

<b>Time Period</b>	<b>First Review - (90% of submittals)</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Check</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Check</b>
Existing Schedule	4-6 wks/35 work days	14 days	5 days
Goal-Jan to June 2013	4-5 wks/25 work days	10 days	3 days
Goal-July to Sept. 2013	3-4 weeks/20 work days	7 work days	2 days
Permanent Goal/Schedule Starting Oct. 2013	15 work days	5days	next day

**208. Recommendation:** Achieve the goal of completing Public Works first review improvement plan check to three weeks (15 work days) for at least 90% of LSM submittals by October 2013 or sooner.

### **Transportation Review and Concurrency Process**

The traffic impact development review varies for SEPA (State Environmental requirements) and non-SEPA work. A brief description of the concurrency process follows for SEPA qualified projects.

*Applicants are encouraged to request a pre-application meeting with all departments to define general scope, code requirements and to get feedback from staff. Before a development can proceed, it must pass the traffic concurrency test.*

*The applicant traffic engineer provides a description of the development project, land use type, size, location, driveway locations and trip generation information along with the concurrency test application and fee to Public Works. The project*

*is then incorporated into the EnerGov system. A traffic concurrency test result memo is prepared with a copy to the planner and the applicant. An up to date database for the concurrency process becomes increasingly important as this review progresses. If the project does not pass, the concurrency test will tell which system intersection(s) do not conform and what will be necessary to mitigate the problem.*

*The applicant then proceeds with their SEPA and building permit process and submits a traffic impact analysis for review by the City. Planning and the Building departments create their own SEPA and Building permit cases on EnerGov. However, there's no link between the different permits within EnerGov.*

Turnaround time for reviewing the traffic study and providing a staff report and recommendation to the Planning department is about two weeks but could take longer if there are outstanding issues have not been reconciled. An up to date concurrency database could possibly help shorten this time.

A planner schedules a meeting for the project and sends out information to impacted parties for review and comments. If there are questions about traffic then they are typically responded to prior to the hearing.

A Transportation representative typically attends the SEPA hearing.

**209. Recommendation:** All development review staff including Transportation and Surface Water should receive a weekly list of active permit applications that identifies the Project Manager, the staff involved and a short project description.

**210. Recommendation:** Update the Traffic Concurrency Data Base as soon as possible. Incorporate it within the *EnerGov* system after the other issues with *EnerGov* have been resolved



## VIII. EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS

Two confidential questionnaires were completed by many of the employees in the Development Services Departments as shown in Table 27.

A short, closed-ended questionnaire (shown in Appendix B) was completed at two staff meetings by 61 employees and collected by the consultants. The raw scores and tallies of this survey are also shown in Appendix B.

A longer, 15-page questionnaire (shown in Appendix C) was completed by 24 employees and mailed or emailed to the consultants in San Diego to assure confidentiality. In most of our studies, only half of the employees that complete the short questionnaire take the time to complete the long questionnaire. Information obtained from these questionnaires was essential to our analysis.

**Table 27**  
**Number of Employees Responding to Questionnaires**

Function	Number of Short Questionnaires	Average Response to Short Questionnaire	Number of Questions With Averages Under 3.0	Number of Long Questionnaires Received
Building Division	17	3.60	4	14
Fire Division	4	3.28	12	
Management	7	4.21	0	6
Planning & Community Development	21	3.85	1	18
Public Works	12	3.71	3	11
Total	61			49

The short questionnaire also asked employees to list pet peeves and give suggestions for improvements. These comments were used as part of our analysis for this report but remain confidential.

The short, closed-ended questionnaire consisted of a series of statements to be rated by the respondents. Responses were tallied and averaged and the raw scores are displayed in Appendix B. The statements were designed to elicit the mood and feelings of each employee about overall division or department excellence. For each of the 37 statements, the employee was asked to respond as follows:

- |                       |                    |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 1 – Strongly Disagree | 4 – Somewhat Agree |
| 2 – Somewhat Disagree | 5 – Strongly Agree |
| 3 – Neutral           | 6 – Not Applicable |

Generally, the higher the rating (i.e., 4's and 5's) the better the employee perceives the subject area and the more excellent the division or department.

We've conducted this survey in many building, fire, planning and public works departments and divisions. Generally, a score below 3.0 is an indication of issues that need to be addressed. We like to see average scores in the high 3's and 4's. We believe that the scores give a reasonably accurate assessment of the employee's view of their division or department. The seven managers scored the highest with an average score of 4.21. It is common the managers believe their organization is performing better than do the employees. The average score for the Building Division was 3.60, the average Planning and Community Development was 3.85 and the average for Public Works was 3.71. Overall these are good scores indicating a generally positive employee attitude.

Questions with average scores below 3.0 are discussed below.

### **Building Division**

The Building Division had scores below 3.0 on four questions.

- *#1. Our Division seeks to identify problems quickly. (2.94)*
- *#14. We have an efficient records management and documentation system in our Department. (2.61)*
- *#16. I have enough time to do my work as it needs to be done (2.61).*
- *#27. We are doing the right amount of Long Range planning. (2.78)*

Question 1, 14, and 16 all relate to management issues. We noted that Question 1, and 14 were also scored low by the Fire Division. Both of these Divisions are in the same Department and report to the Director of Fire and Building. We speculate that some of these issues could relate to the large Fire Department and large span of control of the Director of Fire and Building. Nevertheless, these are serious issues that need to be addressed, particularly Question 1. Hopefully, Question 14 can be addressed by the new Energov permitting system. In other parts of this study, we will also make organizational recommendation that can assist in this area.

**211. Recommendation:** The Director of Fire and Building should meet with the staff of Fire and Building to discuss Questions 1 and possible solutions. It may be useful if this takes place in a facilitated retreat setting.

Question 16 addresses staffing issues. Eleven of the 18 employees, or two thirds indicated they do not have enough time to do their work. We will address this issue in other parts of this report that indicate staffing issues.

## **Fire Division**

The Fire Division had average scores below 3.0 for 12 Questions. Four of these questions reflected only one person so we have not given them significance. However, four of the questions relate to four employees. These questions all relate to organization and management issues that need to be addressed by the Deputy Fire Chief.

- *#1. Our Division seeks to identify problems quickly. (2.25)*
- *#2. When problems are identified, our Division moves quickly to solve them. (1.75)*
- *#6. Managers in our Department encourage and advance new ideas from employees. (2.50)*
- *#8. Management in our Department discusses objectives, programs and results with employees regularly. (2.25)*
- *#14. We have an efficient records management and documentation system in our Department. (1.50)*
- *# 17. I am kept abreast of changes that affect me. (2.25)*
- *# 22. Permit and development processes in the City are not unnecessarily complex nor burdensome on the applicant. (2.25)*
- *# 37. The Code Compliance program in the Division is effective*

**212. Recommendation: The Director of Fire and Building and Deputy Fire Chief should review the eight employee questions with low scores and develop a strategy to address them. A facilitated employee retreat may be in order to gain more insight into the issues.**

## **Management**

The seven managers had no average scores for any of the questions below 3.0. Additionally, the average scores for each manager ranged from a low of 3.97 to a high of 4.52. Managers normally score higher than their employees; however, these are some of the highest scores we have seen in our many studies.

We did notice that four of the seven managers scored 2 on Question 16, “I have enough time to do my work as it needs to be done.” We generally feel that low scores from managers on this question can be troubling. When managers feel they are short of time, often the management tasks suffer and in turn the organization suffers since the completion of management tasks are critical for the organization. All seven

managers have enough staff that they should be able to delegate adequate functions to solve their time problems. As such, we suggest that City Management meet with this management group to discuss the time issue and also, as needed, provide courses on management delegation.

**213. Recommendation: City Management should meet with the Development Services managers to discuss workload and delegation issues, and offer training as appropriate.**

### **Planning and Community Development**

Planning and Community Development had an average score below 3.0 for only one question. Eight of the 21 employees answered this Question either 1 or 2.

- #7. *We have a strong emphasis on training in our department. (2.85)*

Planning is a rapidly changing field and by its very nature is designed to look ahead and be in a leadership role. As such, good staff training is essential. We normally suggest that a minimum of 2% of the employee personal costs and 5% of employee time be devoted to training as outlined in this study.

**214. Recommendation: The Planning Director should discuss Department training needs as part of a staff meeting or staff retreat and address employee concerns.**

### **Public Works**

The Public Works Department had average scores below 3.0 for three Questions.

- #7. *We have a strong emphasis on training in our department. (2.83).*
- #14. *We have an efficient records management and documentation system in our Department. (2.25).*
- #16. *I have enough time to do my work as it needs to be done (2.58).*

Four of the 12 employees commented on training indicating a possible need for management to examine how training is distributed in the organization.

**215. Recommendation: Public Works management should examine how it distributes time and money for training of staff.**

Fire, Public Works and Building all commented on the records management and document system. Care should be taken to see that Energov is designed to gradually address this issue.

The staffing issue are examined in other parts of this study.

## **IX. CUSTOMER PERCEPTIONS**

In today's environment, governmental performance is measured by customer satisfaction. In order to determine the Development Services performance, we used several techniques consisting of interviews with the Mayor and City Council members, three customer focus groups, and a mail survey to applicants.

The intent of this customer input was to elicit views and opinions on positive and negative aspects of activities and to seek ideas for change that will improve and enhance Development Services. However, as would be expected, the focus was on perceived problems.

In considering the results, the reader must bear in mind that, unlike documents and statistics, the views expressed by individuals are subjective and may reflect personal biases. Nonetheless, these views are at least as important as objective material because it is these people, with their feelings and prejudices that work with or are often affected by City activities. A second important consideration is that in analyzing the material, it may not be as important to determine whether a particular response is "correct" as it is to simply accept a response or try to determine why customers feel the way they do. Tom Peters, the noted management consultant, has said that in relation to customer service, "Perception is everything." In other words, perception is reality to the person holding the perception.

It should be noted that the purpose of this chapter is to report on the customer input so that the reader of the report can view the comments as customer perceptions without our editing. These comments are not the conclusions of the consultants. Using our methodology as described in Figure 1 and Section B of Chapter II, the customer comments are taken as one form of input to be merged by input of others and our own judgment. Our specific response is in the form of the various recommendations included in this report.

### **A. MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL**

We met the Mayor and six City Council members in individual confidential meetings in order to gain a perspective on the governmental direction for the City and the Development Services functions. There was not unanimous opinion on all topics but a few points of interest follow. Topics are arranged alphabetically.

#### **Comprehensive Plan**

The Comprehensive Plan is "beautiful" and in two years there will be a major up-date to the Plan. The Plan relates to the Growth Management Act which calls for infill and higher densities that many citizens do not want. These issues need to be addressed as part of the update process. Additionally, the Plan and Zoning Ordinance need to be

together. Citizens have not been adequately engaged. The Shoreline Plan did engage lots of citizens and was a success.

The Neighborhood Plans are part of the Comprehensive Plan and some of the 15 plans are out of date. It takes two years to revise a Neighborhood Plan, which is too long. Given the lack of resources to update all the plans, a way to do less costly plans or even eliminate them needs to be found.

## **Design Review**

Design Review is good.

## **Downtown**

This area has been studied too much – time to move on.

## **Economic Development**

Three years ago the Council changed and is more open to economic development. Totem Lake is one of 25 designated centers in four counties and is seen as a key development area that can accommodate more height and density. Needed will be infrastructure improvements, solving flooding issues and big zoning changes.

## **Organization**

Many communities have merged the development related functions, particularly Planning and Building and some include Public Works. The problem is that no one is accountable to all the issues. A few specific issues included

- **Building**  
Maybe Building should be a separate department.
- **Fire**  
Some feel Fire should be separated from Building. Fire Prevention is not as prominent as it should be.
- **Planning**  
Some feel Planning is excellent, others say no and feels they play gotcha games. Planning was not well rated in the citywide survey. Some feel it may be top heavy. The Director is highly esteemed.
- **Public Works**  
Public Works is seen as excellent. Helps applicants get to yes. However, some feel they don't know how to handle big projects.

## **Processes**

Various comments related to the process included:

- **Arborist**  
The Contract Arborist was a problem but it has been changed.
- **Best Practices**  
the City should strive to meet Best Practices
- **Complaints**  
Council hears lots of complaints but it is hard to pin down. Some say City is easy to work with, others say City is difficult to work with. Developers who work all over the region say Kirkland is fine. Complaints may be from the one-time-users.
- **Customers**  
Some feel process is unfriendly and is too much about what you can't do. Staff needs to understand they are in the customer service business. Before the recession the staff were the biggest hand holders in the region, but this has changed.
- **Electronic Plans**  
These have been helpful and developers like the on-line permitting.
- **Predictability**  
There is a lack of predictability and consistency in the process.
- **Timelines**  
Some see as slow, others okay as related to other communities.

## **Staff**

The City is lucky to have many long-term staff, some of whom live in the City. Staff is paid well. Some see the need for more staffing but others feel staff is more than adequate. The use of part time staff and consultants is viewed favorably.

## **Zoning**

The Zoning Code is out of date and needs to be easier and simpler. Redmond totally re-wrote their Zoning Code but Kirkland does not have that kind of money. There are conflicts between Zoning and the Comprehensive Plan and they need to match. Staff needs to get ahead of the curve.

## **B. FOCUS GROUP - APPLICANTS**

Sixteen people who had been applicants in the City's development and permitting process met in two groups on October 30 and 31 in Heritage Hall for two hours. The meeting was held in confidence and no staff members were present. The groups included architects, builders, designers, engineers, developers, homebuilders, land developers, landscape architects, and planners. Focus group comments are included below. Topics are arranged in alphabetical order.

### **Appeals**

There should be a fee for appeals. If staff originally supported the application, they should also do so on the appeal to the Hearing Examiner.

### **Building**

Some staff are arbitrary and when pressed simply say, "because I can.". Slowness in issuing building permits is the number one issue in Kirkland. Applicants should have a choice to contract out.

MyBuildingPermit.com seems to work well in other communities but not in Kirkland.

### **Conditions**

In Redmond if staff misses something they will let it pass. In Kirkland, new items keep getting added until the very end.

### **Coordination**

It is not clear if Planning or Building take responsibility to pull things together.

### **Density**

The Planners have supported higher densities but the community often does not.

### **Design Review Board**

Some feel the Board adds little value.

### **Developers**

There needs to be separation and different processes for developers and Mom and Pop's.

### **Duncan Milloy**

This contract consultant to the City of Kirkland is very helpful in solving problems.

## **Expedited Process**

Kirkland doesn't really have an expedited process. Some say you can expedite residential but not commercial.

## **Fees**

If timelines were shorter and reviews consistent, many developers would be willing to pay more fees.

## **Forms**

Many of the forms are confusing.

## **Height of Buildings**

The current rules may leave a house in a hole, which has an undesirable visual effect and may cause drainage problems. It would be nice to have some leeway and common sense in the rules but most think it would be impossible to change the rules.

## **Land Surface Modification Permits (grading permits)**

These may be approved but don't seem to carry over to the Building Permit.

## **Neighbors**

Most developers meet with the neighbors before they apply.

## **Other Communities**

Some said Redmond is the best, others said it is awful. The same was true for Bellevue. It seems to depend on whom the planner is you talk to. Kirkland is better than King and Snohomish counties, Seattle, and Bellevue.

## **Planning**

There is too much kicking the can down the road when they see an issue. Planning is highly dependent on which staff you get. Applicants will avoid some staff if possible. Unlike Public Works, planners slow things down and create problems. Some of the functions are comfortable in blaming Planning for problems. However, many feel that the Planning Department is broken.

## **Pre-Submittal**

Public Works provided notes but others do not. The usefulness of this meeting depends on which staff attends. What happens at the pre-submittal often does not carry through to the rest of the process.

## **Process**

The group meeting used in Kirkland is good.

## **Progressive Review**

This works well for Building but not as well in Public Works.

## **Public Works**

Public Works in Kirkland is great. They use common sense and are pragmatic. Transportation can be difficult.

Bonding can be a bit punitive. The construction standards document is okay.

## **Short Plats**

These get bogged down and take too long for approval.

## **Timelines**

Timelines are too long. Buildings may take six to nine months. The stated five weeks for a single-family house never happens. Staff doesn't look at plans until the end of week five. In Kirkland, if one person says no, everything stops.

## **Trees**

A major issue in Kirkland has been the way trees are handled. The Arborist has been very biased and can stop everything. Public Works has had to give in to Planning. Suggestions included:

- Have mitigation measure when a tree needs to be removed, i.e. fees or planting additional trees.
- Have solar access and home gardens as part of the tree analysis.
- Talk to the development industry about any changes in policy. The industry was not involved in the recent Urban Forestry study.
- If you do short plat or building permit the two tree rule does not apply but it should.

## **Website**

The website is confusing and you should be able to fill out the forms on the website.

## **Zoning/Comprehensive Plan**

There is confusion regarding which takes precedence. However, it now appears to most that Zoning normally takes precedence over the Plan.

The Zoning Code needs to be streamlined and simplified. It is very difficult for single-family houses. Parts of the Code are in conflict with City objectives.

## **C. FOCUS GROUPS – CITIZENS**

Seven citizens who represented a variety of Kirkland neighborhood associations met on October 30<sup>th</sup>. for two hours at the Houghton Room in City Hall. The meeting was held in confidence and no staff members were present. Focus group comments are included below. Topics are arranged in alphabetical order.

### **The Future**

Some feel that Kirkland will need to change as it becomes a larger City requiring a different mind-set. There are three distinct districts of downtown, Totem Lake, and Kirkland Park and Ride. Issues include:

- How to get from park and ride to Totem Lake.
- The City's overall goals are not clear.
- Some citizens want more input on decisions but many realize citizens mostly get involved when there is a specific project.
- There is a need for better infrastructure, particularly for traffic.
- There was no traffic study done for the Houghton area.

### **City Council**

The City Council is seen as responsive to citizen concerns and works hard to communicate. The City has lots of list serves. The Council and department heads go to three neighborhoods per year.

### **Notices**

The notices that go to citizens can be a bit obscure. Suggestions include:

- Getting the right words in the subject line.
- Reference access to more detailed files.
- List the neighborhood on the email
- Providing a better project description
- Once projects are underway it is hard to get data on what is going on.

### **Planners**

Some feel that planners reach out to the community but most feel they do not.

### **Public Works**

Public Works is seen as great. They try to find win win solutions.

## **Silos**

The workers are seen as being in silos and should work better together.

## **This Report**

Focus group members want to see the results from this report and effort.

## **Trees**

While trees are important, there needs to be a balanced approach.

## **D. CUSTOMER SURVEYS**

An email survey was used in this study to obtain applicant customer input. The survey was sent to 500 applicants for development approvals or permits. Forty surveys were returned for a return rate of 8.0%. This is below our normal return rate of 15 to 20% but can still provide some insight into Development Services activities.

The survey and responses to the surveys is Appendix D. Question 4 through 26 were designed so that checking a “Strongly Agree” or “Agree” category is a sign of a satisfied customer. A “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree” is a sign of a dissatisfied customer.

Normally, when negative responses of “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree” exceed 15%, the responses indicate an area of possible concern. Less than 15% normally indicates this category of question is satisfying the customers. Percentages higher than 15% but below 30% are areas that should be examined for possible customer service concerns. Negative percentages of 30% or higher indicate areas needing early attention since roughly one third or more of the customers have concerns about service.

Some believe that only customers who have problems will return a survey of this type. While it is likely that customers with problems may be more likely to return the surveys, our experience with this and dozens of similar surveys indicate that they still produce valid information. For example, we’ve worked in other communities where the negative responses seldom exceeded 15%.

It should also be noted that a survey of this type is not a scientific, statistically controlled sample. Nevertheless, when respondents express concerns, they are indications of problems that need to be addressed.

The questionnaires also asked applicants to indicate suggestions and areas for improvement. These comments are also included in Appendix D. Many of the comments were very complimentary concerning Development Services.

A summary of the responses that exceed our 15% threshold are shown in Table 28. The “Not Applicable” category was excluded from this calculation. Only nine of the

23 questions had negative responses above our 15% threshold and only two questions exceeded our 30% threshold. Three questions exceeded 15% negative for Building, five questions exceeded 15% negative for Engineering with three of these exceeding 20%, none of the questions exceeded 15% for Fire, all nine questions exceeded 15% for Planning with four exceeding 20% and two exceeding 30%.

In spite of these negative scores, these are some of the better responses that we have seen in our many studies. The biggest concern shown by this survey is with plan review turnaround times, Questions 10, 12, and 13. This corresponds with other findings discussed in other parts of this report. Planning should be particularly concerned with Question 12 with 35.7% negative and Question 13 with 34.6% negative.

**216. Recommendation:** The DCR II should hold a series of discussions related to how to best address customer timeline concerns.

**217. Recommendation:** The Planning Director should meet with the Planning staff and managers that handle development applications relating to how to best address customer timeline concerns.

**Table 28  
Responses to Customer Email Survey**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Building</b>	<b>Engineering</b>	<b>Fire</b>	<b>Planning</b>
4, I understand the City's Development Review and Plan Check processes. They are straightforward and not unnecessarily cumbersome or complex				20.7%
5, When making an application, I have generally found the City staff to be responsive and helpful				16.7%
6, Staff provides prompt feedback on incomplete submittals				24.0%
10, Plan checking turnaround time is acceptable	20.0%	20.8%		26.7%
11, Codes and policies are applied by staff in a fair and practical manner		16.7%		22.6%
12, The turnaround time for review and approval or disapproval of my applications was not any longer with Kirkland than other cities or counties where I have filed applications	22.9%	26.1%		34.5%
13, If project processing is delayed, the delay is typically justifiable. Projects are not delayed over minor issues	20.7%	28.6%		37.0%
16, The conditions of approval or plan check corrections applied to my project were reasonable and justified		16.9%		16.7%
17, The City staff was easily accessible when I needed assistance in resolving problems				15.4%

The Questionnaire also addressed the Planning Commission, City Council, and Hearing Examiner. Responses for all three were favorable. However, when asked if the input from the hearing was useful the responses turned negative. They were 79% negative for the City Council, 62.5% negative for the Planning Commission, and 75% negative for the Hearing examiner. This could be an indication that all three bodies could do a better job of explaining their actions to applicants.

**218.** *Recommendation:* The City Manager should share the results of the customer survey with the City Council, Planning Commission, and Hearing Examiner.



# Appendix A

## Persons Interviewed

**Attorney's Office**

Robin Jenkinson, City Attorney

**Building Division**

Tom Phillips, Building Official

Clell Mason, Building Inspections Supervisor

Inspectors

Office Tech Group

Permit Techs

Plans Examiners

Steve Lybeck, Permit Tech Supervisor

Tom Jensen, Plan Review Supervisor

**City Manager's Office**

Kurt Triplett, City Manager

Marilynne Beard, Deputy City Manager

**Design Review Board**

Scott Reusser, Chair

**Economic Development**

Ellen Miller-Wolfe, Economic Development Manager

**Finance Department**

Tracey Dunlap, Finance Director

**Fire Division**

J. Kevin Nalder, Fire Chief

Helen Ahrens-Byington, Deputy Fire Chief

Jim Crowe, Deputy Fire Marshal

Grace Stewart, Fire Marshal

Dave Walker, Assistant Fire Marshal

**Inspection Staff**

Plan Review Group

## **Houghton Community Council**

Rick Whitney

John Kappler

## **Information Technology**

Brenda Cooper, Director

Lindsay Talbott

IT/Energov Committee

## **Planning Commission**

Mike Miller, Chair

## **Planning Department**

Eric Shields, Planning Director

Paul Stewart, Deputy Director

Nancy Cox, Development Review Manager

Dawn Nelson, Planning Supervisor

Angela Ruggeri, Senior Planner

Caryn Saban, Senior Office Specialist

Christian Geitz, Asst Planner

Craig Salzman, Code Enforcement Officer

David Barnes, Planner

Desiree Goble, Planner

Joan Lieberman-Brill, Senior Planner

Janice Coogan, Senior Planner

Jeremy McMahan, Planning Supervisor

Jon Regala, Senior Planner

Judd Tuberg, Code Enforcement Officer

Prins Cowin, Admin. Supervisor

Sean Leroy, Planner

Teresa Swan, Senior Planner

Tony Leavitt, Associate Planner

**Public Works**

Ray Steiger, Director of Public Works

Rob Jammerman, Development and Environmental Svcs Manager

Vandana Sheth, Management Analyst

Bill Reed, SR Development Plans Examiner

Dave Godfrey, Transportation Engineer

Jeff Pray, Construction Inspector

Jenny Gaus, Surface Water Engineer Supervisor

John Burkhalter, Development Engineering Supervisor

Katy Coleman, Development Engineer

Kelli Jones, Surface Water Engineer

Philip Vartanian, Development Engineer

Stacey Rush, Senior Surface Water Engineer

Terri Corps, Permit Technician

Thang Nguyen, Transportation Engineer

Tom Christ, Senior Construction Inspector

Wes Ayers, Permit Technician

# **Appendix B**

## **Employee Short Questionnaire**

**City of Kirkland, WA**  
**Development Services Organizational Review**  
**EMPLOYEE QUESTIONNAIRE**

Please check your **function**:

- Building
- Fire
- Planning and Community Development
- Public Works
- Other (list) \_\_\_\_\_

In the boxes below, enter the appropriate number for each statement according to this guide.

- |                     |                  |
|---------------------|------------------|
| 1 Strongly Disagree | 4 Somewhat Agree |
| 2 Somewhat Disagree | 5 Strongly Agree |
| 3 Neutral           | 6 Not Applicable |

- 
- |   |     |
|---|-----|
| 1. Our Division seeks to identify problems quickly.   | [ ] |
| 2. When problems are identified, our Division moves quickly to solve them.  | [ ] |
| 3. Our Division has an effective process for listening to citizen or client concerns.                                       | [ ] |
| 4. The concern for employees in our Division is more than lip service.  | [ ] |
| 5. Good service is the rule rather than the exception in our Division.  | [ ] |
| 6. Managers in our Division encourage and advance new ideas from employees.   | [ ] |
| 7. We have a strong emphasis on training in our Division.   | [ ] |
| 8. Management in our Division discusses objectives, programs and results with employees regularly.                          | [ ] |
| 9. There is free and open communication in our Division between all levels of employees about the work they are performing. | [ ] |
| 10. Employees in our Division treat citizens with respect.  | [ ] |
| 11. Our Division encourages practical risk-taking and supports positive effort.   | [ ] |
| 12. Our Division has a clear sense of what its programs are trying to accomplish.   | [ ] |

**City of Kirkland, WA**  
**Development Services Organizational Review**  
**EMPLOYEE QUESTIONNAIRE**

1 Strongly Disagree	4 Somewhat Agree
2 Somewhat Disagree	5 Strongly Agree
3 Neutral	6 Not Applicable

- 
- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| 13. We do our jobs very well in our Division  | [   ] |
| 14. We have an efficient records management and documentation system in our Division.   | [   ] |
| 15. I am satisfied with the type of leadership I have been receiving from my supervisor in our Division.  | [   ] |
| 16. I have enough time to do my work as it needs to be done.  | [   ] |
| 17. I am kept abreast of changes that affect me.  | [   ] |
| 18. There is good teamwork and communication between the different departments, divisions or organizations conducting development review, plan checking and inspection in the City.                   | [   ] |
| 19. I am aware of standard turnaround times in our Division for processing plans and permits as communicated by my supervisor.  | [   ] |
| 20. I am able to meet standard turnaround times for processing plans and permits in our Division as communicated by my supervisor.  | [   ] |
| 21. The City has a clear and coordinated development review and plan checking process.  | [   ] |
| 22. Permit and development processes in the City are not unnecessarily complex nor burdensome on the applicant.   | [   ] |
| 23. Application review in the City is undertaken in a consistent manner   | [   ] |
| 24. Applications are reviewed in the City in a timely manner.   | [   ] |
| 25. It should be the policy of the City and its employees to assist any applicant in completing his/her application, see that it is complete as soon as possible, and process it without undue delay. | [   ] |
| 26. It should be the policy of the City to make the development and permit process as pleasant and expeditious as possible.   | [   ] |

**City of Kirkland, WA**  
**Development Services Organizational Review**  
**EMPLOYEE QUESTIONNAIRE**

1 Strongly Disagree  
2 Somewhat Disagree  
3 Neutral

4 Somewhat Agree  
5 Strongly Agree  
6 Not Applicable

- 
- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| 27. We are doing the right amount of long range planning.                   | [   ] |
| 28. The Planning Commission works well and is effective.                    | [   ] |
| 29. The Design Review Board works well and is effective.                    | [   ] |
| 30. The Hearing Examiner works well and is effective.                       | [   ] |
| 31. The Public Works Division has clear construction standards.             | [   ] |
| 32. The Comprehensive Plan is good.   | [   ] |
| 33. The Zoning Ordinance is good.   | [   ] |
| 34. Building permits are reviewed in a short and timely way.                | [   ] |
| 35. Building inspections are held the next day after requested or sooner.   | [   ] |
| 36. Public work permit applications are reviewed in a short and timely way. | [   ] |
| 37. The Code Compliance program in the Division is effective.               | [   ] |

Please briefly answer the following:

38. Please list any “pet peeves” or concerns about your Department, Division, or the City as related to the functions of the Development Services Organization.
39. Please provide at least one suggestion or recommendation for improvement related to your Department, Division, or the City as related to the functions of the Development Services Organization.
40. What are you most proud of in relation to your Department or Division?

**Figure 27**  
**City of Kirkland**  
**Building**  
**Employee Questionnaire**

	Emp #1	Emp #2	Emp #3	Emp #4	Emp #5	Emp #6	Emp #7	Emp #8	Emp #9	Emp #10	Emp #11	Emp #12	Emp #13	Emp #14	Emp #15	Emp #16	Emp #17	Emp #18	Ave
#1	3	4	4	2	4	4	5	2	1	1	1	4	2	2	2	4	4	4	2.94
#2	4	4	3	1	4	3	4	2	2	1	4	4	2	2	2	3	5	4	3.00
#3	5	4	4	3	5	4	5	2	4	1	4	3	4	3	3	4	5	3	3.67
#4	4	4	5	2	4	4	5	2	4	3	5	5	3	4	1	5	5	5	3.89
#5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	3	5	5	5	4.72
#6	4	4	5	1	4	3	5	2	3	1	4	4	2	3	3	3	5	4	3.33
#7	5	3	5	1	4	4	4	2	5	1	4	5	1	3	5	4	5	3	3.56
#8	2	4	5	2	4	3	5	2	5	1	4	4	4	4	4	3	5	4	3.61
#9	5	5	5	2	3	3	5	2	2	1	1	5	4	4	2	4	5	5	3.50
#10	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	4	4	4	5	5	5	4.72
#11	4	3	5	2	3	2	4	4	3	4	2	5	3	3	3	3	N/A	2	3.24
#12	3	4	4	3	4	2	5	4	3	4	2	4	5	4	2	4	5	2	3.56
#13	5	4	5	2	5	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	2	4	1	3	5	4	3.89
#14	2	2	4	2	5	4	4	4	2	2	1	4	1	2	1	1	5	1	2.61
#15	4	5	3	1	3	3	5	2	2	1	5	4	2	2	1	5	5	4	3.17
#16	2	5	3	2	4	2	2	2	3	4	1	2	5	1	1	2	4	2	2.61
#17	4	4	3	2	4	3	4	4	2	2	2	4	5	2	3	1	3	5	3.22
#18	3	5	2	3	4	4	5	4	4	4	1	4	1	3	4	3	5	2	3.39
#19	5	2	4	4	5	5	5	5	4	4	3	N/A	5	2	4	3	5	2	3.94
#20	4	N/A	3	5	4	2	4	4	3	4	3	N/A	5	4	4	4	5	3	3.81
#21	3	3	4	4	5	3	4	4	4	2	5	5	5	3	2	2	5	3	3.67
#22	2	3	3	5	4	3	2	4	1	2	4	4	4	3	2	3	5	3	3.17
#23	4	N/A	3	4	5	3	4	4	3	2	5	2	5	3	2	3	5	3	3.53
#24	4	3	3	4	5	2	4	4	3	4	5	2	4	3	4	N/A	5	3	3.65
#25	4	5	5	4	5	5	5	4	3	2	3	5	4	4	4	5	5	4	4.22
#26	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	3	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	4	4.72
#27	N/A	3	N/A	N/A	N/A	4	2	N/A	3	3	1	N/A	3	N/A	3	N/A	N/A	3	2.78
#28	N/A	3	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	4	N/A	3	3	2	N/A	3	N/A	3	N/A	N/A	3	3.00
#29	N/A	3	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	4	N/A	3	3	3	N/A	3	N/A	3	N/A	N/A	3	3.11
#30	N/A	3	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	3	N/A	3	3	3	5	3	N/A	3	N/A	N/A	3	3.10
#31	N/A	5	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	4	N/A	3	4	5	N/A	3	N/A	3	N/A	5	3	3.80
#32	N/A	3	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	3	N/A	3	3	3	N/A	3	N/A	3	N/A	5	3	3.20
#33	N/A	3	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	4	N/A	3	3	1	2	3	N/A	3	N/A	5	3	3.00
#34	3	3	3	5	5	2	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	2	4	3	5	4	3.72
#35	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	4	5	4	5	5	4.72
#36	N/A	3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	5	N/A	4	3	5	N/A	3	N/A	3	N/A	5	3	3.78
#37	N/A	5	5	N/A	4	3	4	N/A	3	2	5	4	4	3	3	3	5	2	3.67
Ave	3.86	3.83	4.07	3.04	4.34	3.33	4.19	3.46	3.24	2.78	3.46	4.14	3.38	3.10	2.84	3.54	4.94	3.30	3.60

**Figure 28**  
**City of Kirkland**  
**Fire**  
**Employee Questionnaire**

	Emp #1	Emp #2	Emp #3	Emp #4	Ave
#1	3	2	1	3	2.25
#2	2	1	1	3	1.75
#3	3	4	1	4	3.00
#4	3	4	3	3	3.25
#5	4	5	4	5	4.50
#6	2	3	2	3	2.50
#7	N/A	4	5	3	4.00
#8	2	2	2	3	2.25
#9	4	4	3	2	3.25
#10	3	5	5	5	4.50
#11	1	4	3	4	3.00
#12	1	3	4	4	3.00
#13	4	4	4	2	3.50
#14	1	2	1	2	1.50
#15	3	2	5	2	3.00
#16	5	2	4	3	3.50
#17	2	2	2	3	2.25
#18	4	5	4	2	3.75
#19	4	3	4	5	4.00
#20	5	4	4	5	4.50
#21	4	4	4	3	3.75
#22	2	3	1	3	2.25
#23	4	4	2	3	3.25
#24	4	4	4	5	4.25
#25	5	5	5	2	4.25
#26	5	5	5	3	4.50
#27	3	N/A	2	3	2.67
#28	N/A	N/A	1	3	2.00
#29	N/A	N/A	1	3	2.00
#30	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	3.00
#31	N/A	4	5	3	4.00
#32	N/A	N/A	3	3	3.00
#33	N/A	N/A	2	3	2.50
#34	5	4	4	3	4.00
#35	5	5	4	5	4.75
#36	N/A	4	N/A	3	3.50
#37	2	3	2	3	2.50
<b>Ave</b>	<b>3.28</b>	<b>3.55</b>	<b>3.06</b>	<b>3.24</b>	<b>3.28</b>

**Figure 29**  
**City of Kirkland**  
**Manager**  
**Employee Questionnaire**

	Emp #1	Emp #2	Emp #3	Emp #4	Emp #5	Emp #6	Emp #7	Ave
#1	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.00
#2	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	4.71
#3	4	3	4	5	4	4	3	3.86
#4	5	4	5	1	5	5	5	4.29
#5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.00
#6	5	5	5	1	4	4	4	4.00
#7	4	4	4	3	3	4	3	3.57
#8	4	2	5	4	5	5	3	4.00
#9	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	4.86
#10	5	5	4	5	5	4	5	4.71
#11	5	4	4	4	4	5	2	4.00
#12	5	4	4	5	5	5	4	4.57
#13	4	5	5	4	5	4	4	4.43
#14	4	2	4	3	5	4	4	3.71
#15	5	3	5	3	4	5	4	4.14
#16	2	2	4	2	2	4	5	3.00
#17	5	4	3	4	5	5	5	4.43
#18	3	5	4	5	N/A	5	5	4.50
#19	5	4	5	4	N/A	N/A	5	4.60
#20	4	4	5	3	N/A	N/A	5	4.20
#21	4	4	4	5	N/A	4	5	4.33
#22	4	3	2	3	N/A	4	3	3.17
#23	4	4	3	4	N/A	4	4	3.83
#24	4	4	2	3	N/A	4	4	3.50
#25	5	4	5	5	4	5	5	4.71
#26	5	4	5	5	5	4	5	4.71
#27	3	N/A	N/A	4	4	5	3	3.80
#28	3	N/A	N/A	4	5	4	4	4.00
#29	4	N/A	N/A	4	N/A	4	4	4.00
#30	4	N/A	N/A	5	N/A	5	5	4.75
#31	4	N/A	N/A	5	N/A	N/A	5	4.67
#32	3	N/A	N/A	5	5	4	4	4.20
#33	3	N/A	N/A	5	5	4	3	4.00
#34	4	4	3	3	N/A	2	3	3.17
#35	5	5	5	5	N/A	5	5	5.00
#36	3	N/A	N/A	5	N/A	N/A	3	3.67
#37	3	4	3	4	5	5	4	4.00
<b>Ave</b>	<b>4.16</b>	<b>3.97</b>	<b>4.21</b>	<b>4.03</b>	<b>4.54</b>	<b>4.42</b>	<b>4.16</b>	<b>4.21</b>

## Figure 30 City of Kirkland Planning Employee Questionnaire

	Emp #1	Emp #2	Emp #3	Emp #4	Emp #5	Emp #6	Emp #7	Emp #8	Emp #9	Emp #10	Emp #11	Emp #12	Emp #13	Emp #14	Emp #15	Emp #16	Emp #17	Emp #18	Emp #19	Emp #20	Emp #21	Ave
#1	2	5	N/A	3	4	1	5	4	1	4	3	4	5	5	5	4	4	4	3	5	3	3.70
#2	1	4	N/A	3	4	1	5	4	1	4	3	3	3	4	5	4	3	4	3	5	2	3.30
#3	4	4	3	2	5	2	4	4	1	5	2	5	2	4	5	5	4	4	5	4	4	3.71
#4	2	4	4	5	4	1	5	5	5	4	3	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	4	4	3	4.10
#5	3	3	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	N/A	2	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	4.55
#6	1	4	4	3	4	1	5	4	1	N/A	5	4	3	4	5	5	4	5	3	4	3	3.60
#7	2	2	4	2	3	2	4	3	1	N/A	4	4	2	3	2	4	3	4	3	3	2	2.85
#8	1	3	4	4	3	1	5	4	1	5	5	4	2	3	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	3.52
#9	1	2	4	3	4	1	5	3	2	3	4	4	3	4	5	5	5	5	4	3	4	3.52
#10	5	4	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	4	5	5	4	5	4	3	5	4.62
#11	2	3	4	2	5	2	5	5	2	4	4	4	4	3	3	5	4	4	5	4	2	3.62
#12	3	4	5	3	5	4	5	5	1	N/A	5	4	3	5	5	5	4	5	5	4	2	4.10
#13	5	4	5	4	5	5	4	5	4	5	5	4	4	4	5	5	4	5	4	5	4	4.60
#14	4	4	5	2	3	4	4	3	1	N/A	1	4	4	2	2	5	4	4	5	4	1	3.30
#15	3	5	4	5	5	1	5	5	3	5	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	4	4.33
#16	2	4	5	5	2	2	4	4	1	2	3	4	4	5	5	4	3	4	4	2	4	3.38
#17	4	2	5	4	4	1	5	5	1	N/A	4	5	4	4	5	4	4	4	2	5	2	3.70
#18	5	3	4	3	3	3	5	4	1	2	4	N/A	4	4	5	4	5	4	3	4	2	3.60
#19	4	N/A	N/A	2	4	3	5	5	5	4	5	N/A	5	4	4	4	5	N/A	4	3	2	4.00
#20	3	N/A	N/A	5	3	3	4	N/A	2	3	4	N/A	5	3	5	3	N/A	N/A	3	N/A	2	3.43
#21	3	3	N/A	1	3	2	4	4	1	3	3	5	4	4	4	4	5	4	5	5	3	3.50
#22	2	4	N/A	1	3	2	4	3	1	2	2	5	4	5	5	4	4	4	3	4	2	3.20
#23	2	3	N/A	2	4	2	4	4	2	N/A	4	5	3	3	4	4	4	4	3	4	2	3.32
#24	4	2	N/A	4	3	4	5	4	4	N/A	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	5	3	4	3	3.89
#25	1	4	4	5	3	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	2	5	4	5	5	4	4.33
#26	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	4.71
#27	1	N/A	N/A	3	2	2	4	5	2	3	3	4	4	4	2	4	5	4	5	3	N/A	3.33
#28	4	4	N/A	2	3	4	5	5	3	3	4	5	4	4	4	5	5	5	N/A	3	N/A	4.00
#29	4	N/A	N/A	3	4	4	5	5	3	3	4	N/A	4	4	4	5	5	5	N/A	4	4	4.12
#30	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	N/A	5	5	5	5	5	5	N/A	5	5	4.95
#31	N/A	N/A	N/A	4	3	3	3	N/A	2	N/A	4	N/A	5	N/A	5	N/A	5	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3.78
#32	4	4	N/A	3	3	4	5	5	4	N/A	3	5	4	4	5	4	4	4	3	4	4	4.00
#33	4	4	4	3	3	4	5	5	2	5	4	4	4	3	5	5	4	4	5	4	3	4.00
#34	4	N/A	N/A	3	3	2	3	4	2	4	4	N/A	4	3	5	4	4	N/A	3	3	2	3.35
#35	4	5	N/A	4	3	4	3	N/A	5	4	4	N/A	5	N/A	4	N/A	N/A	N/A	5	5	N/A	4.23
#36	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	3	2	3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	5	N/A	4	N/A	5	N/A	N/A	3	N/A	3.50
#37	1	5	4	N/A	4	3	5	4	N/A	4	2	N/A	3	N/A	4	N/A	4	4	N/A	5	N/A	3.71
Ave	2.97	3.67	4.33	3.33	3.70	2.78	4.54	4.36	2.60	3.84	3.72	4.48	3.97	4.00	4.43	4.36	4.37	4.42	3.87	4.06	3.03	3.85

**Figure 31**  
**City of Kirkland**  
**Public Works**  
**Employee Questionnaire**

	Emp #1	Emp #2	Emp #3	Emp #4	Emp #5	Emp #6	Emp #7	Emp #8	Emp #9	Emp #10	Emp #11	Emp #12	Emp #13	Ave
#1	4	3	2	4	4	2	5	3	4	3	5	5	4	3.69
#2	4	4	2	4	2	4	5	4	4	4	5	4	4	3.85
#3	4	5	2	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	3	2	4.23
#4	4	3	3	4	5	3	5	4	5	4	5	4	4	4.08
#5	5	4	3	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	4.62
#6	4	3	2	4	5	4	5	5	4	4	4	4	2	3.85
#7	3	4	2	4	3	4	1	3	4	1	3	1	2	2.69
#8	3	4	3	3	5	4	5	5	4	2	3	3	4	3.69
#9	4	3	2	4	4	5	5	5	5	3	5	4	4	4.08
#10	4	5	2	4	5	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	4.46
#11	5	3	2	4	4	5	4	5	4	2	5	4	3	3.85
#12	4	4	3	5	4	4	4	4	4	3	5	3	3	3.85
#13	4	4	3	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	4	4	4	4.31
#14	2	2	1	4	2	1	2	1	4	2	2	3	4	2.31
#15	4	5	1	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	4.38
#16	2	3	2	3	1	1	1	5	4	4	2	1	3	2.46
#17	3	4	1	4	5	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	3.85
#18	4	5	2	4	4	4	2	2	5	4	4	4	3	3.62
#19	3	3	2	5	5	3	3	4	5	3	5	4	5	3.85
#20	N/A	4	3	4	1	3	3	5	4	5	4	2	4	3.50
#21	3	3	3	5	3	4	3	3	2	4	3	3	3	3.23
#22	2	3	1	4	3	3	3	4	2	5	3	4	4	3.15
#23	4	3	2	4	4	3	3	4	2	5	5	4	4	3.62
#24	4	3	3	4	1	3	3	5	3	4	3	2	4	3.23
#25	3	5	3	5	5	3	5	3	4	5	5	4	3	4.08
#26	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	2	3	4.54
#27	4	3	3	N/A	N/A	3	4	5	3	3	3	3	N/A	3.40
#28	N/A	3	3	N/A	N/A	3	3	N/A	3	3	3	4	N/A	3.13
#29	N/A	N/A	3	N/A	N/A	3	3	N/A	3	3	3	3	N/A	3.00
#30	N/A	3	3	N/A	N/A	3	3	5	3	5	3	3	N/A	3.44
#31	4	4	3	5	5	4	4	5	5	4	4	5	5	4.38
#32	4	N/A	3	N/A	N/A	3	3	N/A	3	4	3	3	N/A	3.25
#33	4	N/A	3	N/A	4	3	3	N/A	3	3	3	3	N/A	3.22
#34	N/A	N/A	3	4	2	3	3	N/A	2	3	3	3	4	3.00
#35	N/A	5	3	N/A	N/A	3	5	N/A	5	3	3	4	4	3.89
#36	4	4	2	4	2	3	5	4	5	4	4	2	5	3.69
#37	4	3	3	N/A	N/A	3	3	4	3	3	4	4	N/A	3.40
<b>Ave</b>	<b>3.71</b>	<b>3.70</b>	<b>2.49</b>	<b>4.21</b>	<b>3.73</b>	<b>3.51</b>	<b>3.78</b>	<b>4.13</b>	<b>3.92</b>	<b>3.76</b>	<b>3.92</b>	<b>3.43</b>	<b>3.70</b>	<b>3.69</b>



# Appendix C

## Employee Long Questionnaire

**City of Kirkland, Washington  
Development Services Organizational Review**

**EMPLOYEE QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Employee Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Job Title** \_\_\_\_\_

**Department** \_\_\_\_\_ **Division** \_\_\_\_\_

The following questionnaire is an important and essential part of the City's Development Services Organizational Review being conducted by Zucker Systems. The study is aimed at improving effectiveness and efficiency. Your ideas and thoughts are essential to the study. This questionnaire will supplement other work being undertaken by the consultants.

Please complete this questionnaire and return it to us **within one week**. You can do this in one of two ways:

1. The best way to complete the questionnaire is on line at [www.zuckersystems.com](http://www.zuckersystems.com). You will find the questionnaire under "links" on our website. If you have any problems call us at 619-260-2680.
2. You can also mail the questionnaire in a sealed envelope to Zucker Systems, 3038 Udall St. San Diego, CA 92106.

Take your time in answering the questions and be as complete as possible. You are encouraged to include attachments or examples. Note that all questions may not apply to you. In that case, simply skip that question.

Your comments may be merged with others and included in our report; however, the consultants will not identify individuals in relation to specific comments. Your responses and comments will be held in confidence. We have a specific clause in our contract with the City that says that the raw questionnaires and confidential data will not be seen by the City.

Thank you for your help.

Paul C. Zucker, President, Zucker Systems

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1. What do you see as the major **strengths** of the Development Services Organization and your Department or Division, the things you do well?

3. What do you see as the major **weaknesses** of the Development Services Organization and your Department or Division, and what can be done to eliminate these weaknesses?
  
4. What important policies, services or programs are no longer pursued or have never been pursued in relation to the Development Services Organization and your Department or Division that you feel should be added?
  
5. Do you feel any of the City's ordinances, policies, plans, or procedures related to the Development Services Organization and your Department or Division should be changed? If so, list them and explain why.
  
6. Are there any programs, activities or jobs related to the Development Services Organization and your Department or Division that you would eliminate or reduce and why?
  
7. How would you describe the goals or mission of your function, Department, or Division?
  
8. What would help you perform your specific duties more effectively and efficiently?
  
9. What problems, if any, do you experience with your records or files and what should be done to eliminate these problems? (Please be specific.)

10. Are there any problems in providing good service to your customers? If so, please list them and give recommendations to solve these problems.
  
11. Do you feel that the processing of applications and permits should be shortened, sped up or simplified? If so, what do you suggest? Or conversely, do you feel that you try to move development applications through the permit process too quickly? In either case, how would you suggest it be improved?
  
12. What suggestions do you have for improving communication in your function, your Department, Division or the City?
  
13. Do you have any difficulty in carrying out your function due to problems with other departments or divisions? If so, please explain and provide suggestions on how to correct these problems.
  
14. Have you received sufficient training for your responsibilities? If not, please comment and indicate areas you would like more training.
  
15. What functions are you currently handling manually that you believe could or should be automated? (Please be specific.)
  
16. What functions that are currently computer-automated need improvement? List your suggested improvements.

17. What problems, if any, do you have with the telephone system and what would you suggest to correct the problems?
  
18. What problems, if any, do you have with the email system and what do you suggest to correct these problems?
  
19. Do you have all the equipment you need to properly do your job? If not, please list what you need.
  
20. Please provide comments concerning good or bad aspects of the City's organizational structure for the Development Services Organization and your Department or Division. Provide any suggestions for improvement or changes.
  
21. Do you use consultants or should consultants be used for any of the Development Services Organization or your Department or Division functions?
  
22. If you use consultants for any of the Development Services Organization and your Department or Division functions what problems, if any, do you experience with these consultants and what would you recommend to correct this problem?
  
23. What changes, if any, would you recommend in relation to the City Council processes in relation to the Development Services Organization and your Department or Division functions?

24. What changes, if any, would you recommend in relation to the Planning Commission processes in relation to the Development Services Organization and your Department or Division functions?
  
25. What changes, if any, would you recommend in relation to the Design Review Board processes in relation to the Development Services Organization and your Department or Division functions?
  
26. What changes, if any, would you recommend in relation to the Hearing Examiner processes in relation to the Development Services Organization and your Department or Division functions?
  
27. What changes, if any, would you recommend in relation to the Code enforcement processes in relation to the Development Services Organization and your Department or Division functions?
  
28. What changes, if any, would you recommend in relation to the Public Works and Engineering processes in relation to the Development Services Organization and your Department or Division functions?
  
29. What changes, if any, would you recommend in relation to the Comprehensive Plan?
  
30. What changes, if any, would you recommend in relation to the Zoning Ordinance?



37. What changes, if any, would you recommend in relation to the City's computer permitting system?
  
38. Do relations between the office staff and inspectors work well? If not, what do you recommend to improve the relations?
  
39. Who is your direct supervisor?
  
40. List the names of the staff that you supervise.
  
41. List any other topics you would like the consultants to consider, or other suggestions you have for your function, Department, Division, or the City. Take your time and be as expansive as possible.

Note: We will interview many, but possibly not all, staff. If you would like a confidential interview we will try to do so. Let us know by phone, email or in person. Also, feel free to call us at 1.619.260.2680 or email to [paul@zuckersystems.com](mailto:paul@zuckersystems.com) to discuss any concerns or provide recommendations. When calling, ask for Paul.

# Appendix D

## Customer Survey

1. Please check off the types of development actions you have applied for through the City during the past 12 months.

		Response Percent	Response Count
Building Permit		89.2%	33
Planning Official Decision (Wireless, ADR, etc.)		2.7%	1
Sewer Connection		10.8%	4
Development (PUD)		8.1%	3
Lot Line Alteration		10.8%	4
Grading Permit		18.9%	7
Sign Permit		18.9%	7
Right of Way		16.2%	6
Alterations		24.3%	9
Design Review Board		10.8%	4
Subdivision		5.4%	2
Variance		8.1%	3
Planned Unit Development (PUD)		5.4%	2
	Other (please specify)		5

**2. Please indicate what the permit or approval was for.**

		Response Percent	Response Count
New single family		37.5%	12
Remodel or addition to single family		21.9%	7
New multifamily dwelling/condo		9.4%	3
Remodel or additional to multifamily dwelling/condo		0.0%	0
New commercial or industrial building		12.5%	4
Remodel or tenant improvement to commercial or industrial building		31.3%	10
Sign		15.6%	5
Right of Way		12.5%	4
Subcontractor work (plumbing, fence, landscaping, electrical, mechanical)		28.1%	9
Other (please specify)			6

**3. Please indicate how often you work with the City's development review and plan checking process.**

		Response Percent	Response Count
One time user of the development review and plan checking process		12.5%	5
More than one time user of the development review and plan checking process		87.5%	35
Type any comments here			3

**4. I understand the City's Development Review and Plan Check processes. They are straightforward and not unnecessarily cumbersome or complex in the functions of:**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable	Response Count
Building	28.2% (11)	<b>61.5% (24)</b>	2.6% (1)	5.1% (2)	0.0% (0)	2.6% (1)	39
Engineering	11.4% (4)	<b>48.6% (17)</b>	5.7% (2)	8.6% (3)	0.0% (0)	25.7% (9)	35
Fire	11.8% (4)	<b>47.1% (16)</b>	2.9% (1)	8.8% (3)	0.0% (0)	29.4% (10)	34
Planning	11.8% (4)	<b>52.9% (18)</b>	2.9% (1)	5.9% (2)	11.8% (4)	14.7% (5)	34

Type any comments here

6

**5. When making an application, I have generally found the City staff to be responsive and helpful in the functions of:**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable	Response Count
Building	<b>64.1% (25)</b>	28.2% (11)	2.6% (1)	2.6% (1)	0.0% (0)	2.6% (1)	39
Engineering	<b>34.3% (12)</b>	31.4% (11)	0.0% (0)	5.7% (2)	0.0% (0)	28.6% (10)	35
Fire.	<b>31.4% (11)</b>	28.6% (10)	8.6% (3)	0.0% (0)	2.9% (1)	28.6% (10)	35
Planning	<b>42.9% (15)</b>	28.6% (10)	0.0% (0)	11.4% (4)	2.9% (1)	14.3% (5)	35

Type any comments here

4

**6. Staff provides prompt feedback on incomplete submittals in the functions of:**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable	Response Count
Building	<b>36.8% (14)</b>	34.2% (13)	7.9% (3)	7.9% (3)	0.0% (0)	13.2% (5)	38
Engineering	26.5% (9)	23.5% (8)	8.8% (3)	5.9% (2)	0.0% (0)	<b>35.3% (12)</b>	34
Fire	24.2% (8)	27.3% (9)	12.1% (4)	3.0% (1)	0.0% (0)	<b>33.3% (11)</b>	33
Planning	24.2% (8)	<b>30.3% (10)</b>	3.0% (1)	15.2% (5)	3.0% (1)	24.2% (8)	33

Type any comments here

6

**7. In general, the City staff has provided good customer service in the functions of:**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable	Response Count
Building	<b>51.3% (20)</b>	43.6% (17)	2.6% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	2.6% (1)	39
Engineering	31.4% (11)	<b>40.0% (14)</b>	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	28.6% (10)	35
Fire	28.6% (10)	<b>40.0% (14)</b>	0.0% (0)	2.9% (1)	0.0% (0)	28.6% (10)	35
Planning	31.4% (11)	<b>45.7% (16)</b>	2.9% (1)	5.7% (2)	0.0% (0)	14.3% (5)	35

Type any comments here

4

**8. In general, the City staff anticipated obstacles early on and provided options where they were available in the functions of:**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable	Response Count
Building	<b>44.7% (17)</b>	28.9% (11)	13.2% (5)	2.6% (1)	0.0% (0)	10.5% (4)	38
Engineering	21.9% (7)	31.3% (10)	0.0% (0)	9.4% (3)	0.0% (0)	<b>37.5% (12)</b>	32
Fire	17.6% (6)	29.4% (10)	11.8% (4)	2.9% (1)	2.9% (1)	<b>35.3% (12)</b>	34
Planning	26.5% (9)	<b>41.2% (14)</b>	5.9% (2)	2.9% (1)	5.9% (2)	17.6% (6)	34

Type any comments here

3

**9. Development plan checking is complete and accurate. Additional problems did not surface later that should have been caught in the initial review in the functions of:**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable	Response Count
Building	44.7% (17)	34.2% (13)	7.9% (3)	2.6% (1)	0.0% (0)	10.5% (4)	38
Engineering	24.2% (8)	33.3% (11)	3.0% (1)	6.1% (2)	0.0% (0)	33.3% (11)	33
Fire	23.5% (8)	23.5% (8)	17.6% (6)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	35.3% (12)	34
Planning	26.5% (9)	35.3% (12)	5.9% (2)	5.9% (2)	5.9% (2)	20.6% (7)	34

Type any comments here

4

**10. Plan checking turnaround time is acceptable in the functions of:**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable	Response Count
Building	35.9% (14)	30.8% (12)	7.7% (3)	7.7% (3)	10.3% (4)	7.7% (3)	39
Engineering	25.7% (9)	25.7% (9)	5.7% (2)	8.6% (3)	5.7% (2)	28.6% (10)	35
Fire	25.7% (9)	31.4% (11)	11.4% (4)	2.9% (1)	0.0% (0)	28.6% (10)	35
Planning	34.3% (12)	28.6% (10)	0.0% (0)	8.6% (3)	14.3% (5)	14.3% (5)	35

Type any comments here

3

**11. Codes and policies are applied by staff in a fair and practical manner in the functions of:**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable	Response Count
Building	46.2% (18)	41.0% (16)	5.1% (2)	5.1% (2)	0.0% (0)	2.6% (1)	39
Engineering	25.7% (9)	31.4% (11)	2.9% (1)	8.6% (3)	2.9% (1)	28.6% (10)	35
Fire	25.7% (9)	34.3% (12)	8.6% (3)	2.9% (1)	0.0% (0)	28.6% (10)	35
Planning	25.7% (9)	40.0% (14)	2.9% (1)	17.1% (6)	2.9% (1)	11.4% (4)	35

Type any comments here

5

**12. The turnaround time for review and approval or disapproval of my application was not any longer with Kirkland than other cities or counties where I have filed applications for the functions of:**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable	Response Count
Building	30.8% (12)	<b>38.5% (15)</b>	2.6% (1)	10.3% (4)	10.3% (4)	7.7% (3)	39
Engineering	20.0% (7)	22.9% (8)	8.6% (3)	11.4% (4)	5.7% (2)	<b>31.4% (11)</b>	35
Fire	17.1% (6)	28.6% (10)	14.3% (5)	8.6% (3)	0.0% (0)	<b>31.4% (11)</b>	35
Planning	25.7% (9)	<b>28.6% (10)</b>	0.0% (0)	17.1% (6)	11.4% (4)	17.1% (6)	35

Type any comments here 5

**13. If project processing is delayed, the delay is typically justifiable. Projects are not delayed over minor issues in the functions of:**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable	Response Count
Building	18.4% (7)	<b>26.3% (10)</b>	15.8% (6)	18.4% (7)	0.0% (0)	21.1% (8)	38
Engineering	8.8% (3)	20.6% (7)	17.6% (6)	14.7% (5)	2.9% (1)	<b>35.3% (12)</b>	34
Fire	11.8% (4)	23.5% (8)	23.5% (8)	8.8% (3)	0.0% (0)	<b>32.4% (11)</b>	34
Planning	17.6% (6)	<b>23.5% (8)</b>	8.8% (3)	20.6% (7)	8.8% (3)	20.6% (7)	34

Type any comments here 7

**14. Kirkland is just as fair and practical in its application of regulations as other neighboring cities or counties in the functions of:**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable	Response Count
Building	31.6% (12)	<b>52.6% (20)</b>	5.3% (2)	5.3% (2)	2.6% (1)	2.6% (1)	38
Engineering	23.5% (8)	<b>32.4% (11)</b>	8.8% (3)	0.0% (0)	5.9% (2)	29.4% (10)	34
Fire	17.6% (6)	<b>41.2% (14)</b>	8.8% (3)	2.9% (1)	0.0% (0)	29.4% (10)	34
Planning	17.6% (6)	<b>47.1% (16)</b>	8.8% (3)	5.9% (2)	5.9% (2)	14.7% (5)	34

Type any comments here 5

**15. Staff was courteous from the functions of:**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable	Response Count
Building	<b>69.2% (27)</b>	30.8% (12)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	39
Engineering	<b>51.4% (18)</b>	17.1% (6)	0.0% (0)	2.9% (1)	0.0% (0)	28.6% (10)	35
Fire	<b>51.4% (18)</b>	14.3% (5)	5.7% (2)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	28.6% (10)	35
Planning	<b>62.9% (22)</b>	17.1% (6)	0.0% (0)	5.7% (2)	0.0% (0)	14.3% (5)	35

Type any comments here 4

**16. The conditions of approval or plan check corrections applied to my project were reasonable and justified from the functions of:**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable	Response Count
Building	25.6% (10)	<b>53.8% (21)</b>	7.7% (3)	5.1% (2)	0.0% (0)	7.7% (3)	39
Engineering	14.3% (5)	<b>42.9% (15)</b>	5.7% (2)	8.6% (3)	2.9% (1)	25.7% (9)	35
Fire	17.1% (6)	<b>40.0% (14)</b>	14.3% (5)	2.9% (1)	0.0% (0)	25.7% (9)	35
Planning	14.3% (5)	<b>48.6% (17)</b>	8.6% (3)	8.6% (3)	5.7% (2)	14.3% (5)	35

Type any comments here 4

**17. The City staff was easily accessible when I needed assistance in resolving problems in the functions of:**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable	Response Count
Building	<b>44.7%</b> (17)	39.5% (15)	2.6% (1)	5.3% (2)	0.0% (0)	7.9% (3)	38
Engineering	24.2% (8)	<b>33.3%</b> (11)	3.0% (1)	6.1% (2)	0.0% (0)	<b>33.3%</b> (11)	33
Fire	21.2% (7)	30.3% (10)	12.1% (4)	3.0% (1)	0.0% (0)	<b>33.3%</b> (11)	33
Planning	27.3% (9)	<b>36.4%</b> (12)	3.0% (1)	12.1% (4)	0.0% (0)	21.2% (7)	33

Type any comments here 4

**18. I found the handouts supplied by the City to be useful and informative in explaining the requirements I must meet for the functions of:**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable	Response Count
Building	30.8% (12)	<b>33.3%</b> (13)	23.1% (9)	2.6% (1)	0.0% (0)	10.3% (4)	39
Engineering	17.1% (6)	28.6% (10)	17.1% (6)	2.9% (1)	0.0% (0)	<b>34.3%</b> (12)	35
Fire	14.3% (5)	22.9% (8)	28.6% (10)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	<b>34.3%</b> (12)	35
Planning	17.1% (6)	<b>28.6%</b> (10)	25.7% (9)	5.7% (2)	0.0% (0)	22.9% (8)	35

Type any comments here 3

**19. Inspectors rarely found errors in the field during construction that should have been caught during the plan checking process for the functions of:**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable	Response Count
Building	30.8% (12)	<b>33.3%</b> (13)	15.4% (6)	5.1% (2)	0.0% (0)	15.4% (6)	39
Engineering	17.1% (6)	25.7% (9)	17.1% (6)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	<b>40.0%</b> (14)	35
Fire	14.3% (5)	20.0% (7)	25.7% (9)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	<b>40.0%</b> (14)	35
Planning	22.9% (8)	<b>28.6%</b> (10)	20.0% (7)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	<b>28.6%</b> (10)	35

Type any comments here 6

**20. The City's website provides comprehensive and useful information for the functions of:**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable	Response Count
Building	15.8% (6)	44.7% (17)	28.9% (11)	5.3% (2)	0.0% (0)	5.3% (2)	38
Engineering	8.8% (3)	23.5% (8)	35.3% (12)	8.8% (3)	0.0% (0)	23.5% (8)	34
Fire	6.1% (2)	24.2% (8)	36.4% (12)	9.1% (3)	0.0% (0)	24.2% (8)	33
Planning	11.8% (4)	29.4% (10)	32.4% (11)	8.8% (3)	0.0% (0)	17.6% (6)	34

Type any comments here 4

**21. The Planning Commission treated me fairly.**

	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	7.5%	3
Agree	12.5%	5
No Opinion	15.0%	6
Disagree	0.0%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.0%	0
Not Applicable	65.0%	26

Type any comments here 2

**22. The Planning Commission members were courteous during the hearing.**

	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	5.0%	2
Agree	2.5%	1
No Opinion	15.0%	6
Disagree	2.5%	1
Strongly Disagree	0.0%	0
Not Applicable	75.0%	30

Type any comments here 2

**23. The City Council treated me fairly.**

		Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree		5.0%	2
Agree		2.5%	1
No Opinion		17.5%	7
Disagree		2.5%	1
Strongly Disagree		0.0%	0
<b>Not Applicable</b>		<b>72.5%</b>	<b>29</b>

Type any comments here 3

**24. The City Council members were courteous during the hearing.**

		Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree		5.0%	2
Agree		0.0%	0
No Opinion		15.0%	6
Disagree		2.5%	1
Strongly Disagree		0.0%	0
<b>Not Applicable</b>		<b>77.5%</b>	<b>31</b>

Type any comments here 3

**25. The Hearing Examiner treated me fairly.**

		Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree		2.5%	1
Agree		2.5%	1
No Opinion		17.5%	7
Disagree		0.0%	0
Strongly Disagree		0.0%	0
<b>Not Applicable</b>		<b>77.5%</b>	<b>31</b>

Type any comments here 1

26. The Hearing Examiner was courteous during the hearing.			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree		2.5%	1
Agree		2.5%	1
No Opinion		17.5%	7
Disagree		0.0%	0
Strongly Disagree		0.0%	0
Not Applicable		77.5%	31
Type any comments here			1

27. I found the input from the City Council useful in the hearing process.			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		30.0%	3
No		70.0%	7
Type any comments here			5

28. I found the input from the Planning Commission useful in the hearing process.			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		37.5%	3
No		62.5%	5
Type any comments here			4

29. I found the input from the Hearing Examiner useful in the hearing process.			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		25.0%	2
No		75.0%	6
Type any comments here			4

**30. Was your application ultimately approved?**

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		90.9%	20
No		9.1%	2
Type any comments here			4

**31. Four departments, divisions, or functions are most involved in development review and plan checking in Kirkland. They are Building, Engineering, Fire, and Planning. If you experienced coordination problems between any two departments, divisions, or functions, please list them below.**

		Response Percent	Response Count
Coordination problems between what?		100.0%	8
Coordination problems between what?		0.0%	0
Coordination problems between what?		0.0%	0

**Q1. Please check off the types of development actions you have applied for through the City during the past 12 months.**

1	We did not apply for the building permit.	Nov 20, 2012 7:35 AM
2	None in the past 12 months. Did four major development applications within the past five years.	Nov 16, 2012 1:51 PM
3	short subdivision	Nov 16, 2012 9:35 AM
4	plumbing and mechanical permits	Nov 15, 2012 3:50 PM
5	electrical permit	Nov 15, 2012 2:46 PM

**Q2. Please indicate what the permit or approval was for.**

1	Demolition	Nov 16, 2012 7:13 PM
2	Envelop remediation on Condominiums	Nov 16, 2012 6:41 AM
3	A custom storage shed/workshop	Nov 15, 2012 10:15 PM
4	light industrial new electrical service upgrade	Nov 15, 2012 3:00 PM
5	electrical service upgrade	Nov 15, 2012 2:46 PM
6	To remove a shake roof and install a composite material roof on my home	Nov 15, 2012 1:42 PM

**Q3. Please indicate how often you work with the City's development review and plan checking process.**

1	New to business in this municipality	Nov 16, 2012 7:13 PM
2	Generally, I really appreciate the staff and the willingness they have to work with me on my buildings and TI with the clients we have for commercial. They are helpful at the counter and on the phone for preap questions, etc	Nov 15, 2012 4:43 PM
3	3-4 permits per year	Nov 15, 2012 1:52 PM

**Q4. I understand the City's Development Review and Plan Check processes. They are straightforward and not unnecessarily cumbersome or complex in the functions of:**

1	Great staff. The city had a poor reputation for many years. A difficult City Council was replaced. Staff has always been top notch even when Council was poor.	Nov 16, 2012 1:51 PM
2	I generally on work with Building and occasionally with planning	Nov 15, 2012 4:43 PM
3	The individual interaction was great at the front counter with the Bldg & Public works Depts. Vacations, days off and holidays by plan review staff added a min. of 4-6 weeks in plan review to our overall time line. The planing staff was not helpful due to their individual work load, due to limitation of resource and timing they could provide due expressed direction from City Coincil.	Nov 15, 2012 4:04 PM
4	Neither dept knows what the other is doing. Took about 4 months to get through the whole process. I felt as though they were intentionally trying to delay the process.	Nov 15, 2012 2:08 PM
5	The Planning, & public works reviews I experienced on most recent project were incomplete requiring multiple resubmittals to address new requirements-	Nov 15, 2012 1:59 PM
6	Haven't had to do any engineering or fire stuff in Kirkland.	Nov 15, 2012 1:52 PM

<b>Q5. When making an application, I have generally found the City staff to be responsive and helpful in the functions of:</b>		
1	Great staff- good communication, helpful, looks for solutions.	Nov 16, 2012 1:51 PM
2	My experience with Planning staff has been dependent on the staff person who I am working with.	Nov 16, 2012 8:43 AM
3	Again- concise responses that would limit the requirements for multiple resubmittals would be appreciated.	Nov 15, 2012 1:59 PM
4	Haven't had to do any engineering or fire stuff in Kirkland.	Nov 15, 2012 1:52 PM

<b>Q6. Staff provides prompt feedback on incomplete submittals in the functions of:</b>		
1	LITTLE OR NO GUIDENCE,	Nov 19, 2012 1:57 PM
2	our submittals are NOT incomplete	Nov 16, 2012 8:43 AM
3	I haven't had any incomplete submittals	Nov 15, 2012 4:43 PM
4	The Planners at the Help Desk were very helpful and provided great information and problem solving. Our assigned Planner was frustrated w/ her work load and was curt regarding our questions on compliance issues, completion timelines and their general courteousness.	Nov 15, 2012 4:04 PM
5	In my most recent submittal- planning was delayed in responding to my submittal compared to Building, by more than a week, for which they apologized, and the building department commented on plannings slow response	Nov 15, 2012 1:59 PM
6	Haven't had to do any engineering or fire stuff in Kirkland.	Nov 15, 2012 1:52 PM

<b>Q7. In general, the City staff has provided good customer service in the functions of:</b>		
1	The best.	Nov 16, 2012 1:51 PM
2	In general staff was friendly.	Nov 15, 2012 2:08 PM
3	Haven't had to do any engineering or fire stuff in Kirkland.	Nov 15, 2012 1:52 PM
4	Katharine Durish and John are always helpful and provide excellent service.	Nov 15, 2012 1:47 PM

<b>Q8. In general, the City staff anticipated obstacles early on and provided options where they were available in the functions of:</b>		
1	Most of the staff has been there many years and is very knowledgable.	Nov 16, 2012 1:51 PM
2	Didn't provide options. This is the way it is. Do it.	Nov 15, 2012 2:08 PM
3	Haven't had to do any engineering or fire stuff in Kirkland.	Nov 15, 2012 1:52 PM

**Q9. Development plan checking is complete and accurate. Additional problems did not surface later that should have been caught in the initial review in the functions of:**

1	Fire review information is not coordinated with building inspectors. As an architect, it is VERY frustrating to have a contractor omit fire requirements (and get away with it) On projects where we are not involved with construction administration, we have no ability to enforce these requirements. So This lack of follow through makes us look bad as the architect and the city look bad because life safety items are not put in place on the project.	Nov 16, 2012 8:43 AM
2	Our firm does no development work	Nov 15, 2012 4:43 PM
3	There is always something that is found during construction but nothing out of the ordinary.	Nov 15, 2012 2:04 PM
4	Haven't had to do any engineering or fire stuff in Kirkland.	Nov 15, 2012 1:52 PM

**Q10. Plan checking turnaround time is acceptable in the functions of:**

1	Simple structure demolition permits should not take 6+ weeks to review.	Nov 16, 2012 7:13 PM
2	Not at all.	Nov 15, 2012 2:08 PM
3	Haven't had to do any engineering or fire stuff in Kirkland.	Nov 15, 2012 1:52 PM

**Q11. Codes and policies are applied by staff in a fair and practical manner in the functions of:**

1	There were several conditions of permit that were not applicable to our project. These were clarified in the field by the inspectors.	Nov 20, 2012 7:35 AM
2	haven't had any issues, but haven't dealt much with Engineering and Fire	Nov 15, 2012 4:43 PM
3	The iinitial Planning staff was helpful and provide assistance in applying the complicated criteria and solutions to ABE and the single family FAR. However during plan review there was another interpretation that was applied by the assigned reviewer. We the applicants need help and consistency.	Nov 15, 2012 4:04 PM
4	Fair, yes. Practical, no! In 34 years and jurisdictions from Kent to Everett I have never had so many different kind of inspections that don't need to be done.	Nov 15, 2012 2:08 PM
5	Haven't had to do any engineering or fire stuff in Kirkland.	Nov 15, 2012 1:52 PM

**Q12. The turnaround time for review and approval or disapproval of my application was not any longer with Kirkland than other cities or counties where I have filed applications for the functions of:**

1	often quicker	Nov 21, 2012 4:37 PM
2	Kirkland almost always gets our permits back in great time	Nov 15, 2012 4:43 PM
3	City of Kirkland was FASTER than most local agencies I have worked with in the past	Nov 15, 2012 3:00 PM
4	Never been longer.	Nov 15, 2012 2:08 PM
5	Haven't had to do any engineering or fire stuff in Kirkland.	Nov 15, 2012 1:52 PM

**Q13. If project processing is delayed, the delay is typically justifiable. Projects are not delayed over minor issues in the functions of:**

1	Recent ROW permits held up because one person was out sick	Nov 19, 2012 1:57 PM
2	Lag time in review after requirements to apply to we're in place (ongoing expenses i.e. fencing, surveys, rentals, abatement, etc.) and permit/inspections were finished exponentially increased project cost and wasted both city and private resources.	Nov 16, 2012 7:13 PM
3	When projects are complete, there is often a delay in "calculating the final permit fee" this delay can often be 2 days or more	Nov 16, 2012 8:43 AM
4	If I have questions, I deal with these upfront before submittal to keep this to a minimum!	Nov 15, 2012 4:43 PM
5	Not sure if planning or building - two separate projects (contractors) for on the same school site. We could not pull our permit until the Master Plan for the other project was issued. This delayed out work (sidewalks) which I did not feel was necessary. Staff worked very hard to get the Master Plan through timely.	Nov 15, 2012 2:04 PM
6	Trivial items hold up project approvals- most city have the ability to add notes to plans to address insignificant and even significant requirements/requests. Requiring resubmittals for items that can be address easily is not a common practice by most jurisdictions.	Nov 15, 2012 1:59 PM
7	Haven't had to do any engineering or fire stuff in Kirkland. Haven't noticed any delays...yet.	Nov 15, 2012 1:52 PM

**Q14. Kirkland is just as fair and practical in its application of regulations as other neighboring cities or counties in the functions of:**

1	compared to Bellevue, the building department in Kirkland is miles ahead	Nov 16, 2012 9:46 AM
2	Kirkland is fair, but many municipalites have codes that are more constructive to the community. For instance, Seattle allows a sloped roof exception for roof height, this reduces the scale of homes from the right of way and creates a more interesting and varied streetscape. Kirkland should be more progressive in situations like these. (and they would not have so many box like flat roof homes built. This type of regulation only hurts the city and public. The city response when questioned about this is this is what "the people want" I simply do not believe this as few people really feel this way...	Nov 16, 2012 8:43 AM
3	City of Kirkland exceeded my expectations of being fair in its applicaiton of regulations as other neighoring cities	Nov 15, 2012 3:00 PM
4	Not a true statement with regard to some departments- except in comparison to Medina. Kirkland is the most difficult of the eastside cities. Issaquah requires a resubmittal on all projects- Sammamish is the eastside's gold standard, Redmond is extremely helpful and efficient and Bellevue's process is excellent	Nov 15, 2012 1:59 PM
5	Haven't had to do any engineering or fire stuff in Kirkland. Not as easy to get a permit from as Federal Way, but you kick Seattle and Bellevue to the curb.	Nov 15, 2012 1:52 PM

**Q15. Staff was courteous from the functions of:**

1	Great people.	Nov 16, 2012 1:51 PM
2	Help Desk was good. Assigned Planner less so.	Nov 15, 2012 4:04 PM
3	The staff was always courteous	Nov 15, 2012 1:59 PM
4	Haven't had to do any engineering or fire stuff in Kirkland.	Nov 15, 2012 1:52 PM

**Q16. The conditions of approval or plan check corrections applied to my project were reasonable and justified from the functions of:**

1	Building Dept can be a bit picky and inflexible. Not as customer friendly as the other departments but not bad....at least they do take the time to explain their issues.	Nov 16, 2012 1:51 PM
2	It has been a long time since I had a comment letter	Nov 15, 2012 4:43 PM
3	some of the conditions on the approval of my latest project were unbelievable. I have never had conditions remotely close to those I have just experienced even on projects in other jurisdictions with multiple Critical Areas on site. I had a project in Seattle with 5 types of critical areas that I submitted at the roughly the same time as a simple residential remodel/addition in Kirkland with no critical areas. The project in Seattle received a permit 4+ months faster than the project in Kirkland.	Nov 15, 2012 1:59 PM
4	Haven't had to do any engineering or fire stuff in Kirkland.	Nov 15, 2012 1:52 PM

**Q17. The City staff was easily accessible when I needed assistance in resolving problems in the functions of:**

1	The building inspector was very helpful.	Nov 20, 2012 7:35 AM
2	I haven't worked with fire or engineering	Nov 15, 2012 4:43 PM
3	Work loads were a problem in Planning. The work/review was delayed by Vacations, the Wed AM no contact period and Holidays.	Nov 15, 2012 4:04 PM
4	Haven't had to do any engineering or fire stuff in Kirkland.	Nov 15, 2012 1:52 PM

**Q18. I found the handouts supplied by the City to be useful and informative in explaining the requirements I must meet for the functions of:**

1	While the handouts are useful I have found that, at times, the volume of paperwork necessary seems excessive. In places (I am thinking here of SFR submittal requirements) it is not clear how many copies of a particular document are required, i.e. additional copies of the site plan are referenced/required in a number of places and it is not clear if these are concurrent or cumulative. If cumulative they could amount to 8 or 10 copies of the site plan.	Nov 30, 2012 12:31 PM
2	Several items were inapplicable to our project.	Nov 20, 2012 7:35 AM
3	Haven't had to do any engineering or fire stuff in Kirkland.	Nov 15, 2012 1:52 PM

**Q19. Inspectors rarely found errors in the field during construction that should have been caught during the plan checking process for the functions of:**

1	There were several boilerplate items that were stamped on our project that were not applicable to this small remodel project. The inspector in the field was very helpful to clarify what it was that we needed to do.	Nov 20, 2012 7:35 AM
2	Haven't started construction yet.	Nov 18, 2012 8:02 PM
3	I don't do the CA on my projects so I don't know about this	Nov 15, 2012 4:43 PM
4	We are still waiting for Bldg Permit Issuance.	Nov 15, 2012 4:04 PM
5	Philip the field inspector didn't pull any surprises out in the field and was extremely professional	Nov 15, 2012 3:00 PM
6	Haven't had to do any engineering or fire stuff in Kirkland.	Nov 15, 2012 1:52 PM

**Q20. The City's website provides comprehensive and useful information for the functions of:**

1	Haven't used it enough to comment	Nov 18, 2012 8:02 PM
2	I never use it	Nov 16, 2012 2:23 PM
3	no replacement for REAL PEOPLE WHO CAN ACTUALLY ANSWER QUESTIONS!	Nov 16, 2012 8:43 AM
4	They use the "My Building Permit" website.	Nov 15, 2012 1:52 PM

**Q21. The Planning Commission treated me fairly.**

1	I think the planning commission gives too much leeway to the somewhat ignorant vocal minority who oppose any type of planned growth within one of the more popular urban centers in close proximity to a thriving metropolitan area.	Nov 15, 2012 2:23 PM
2	Don't think I have ever had to testify before a commission.	Nov 15, 2012 1:52 PM

**Q22. The Planning Commission members were courteous during the hearing.**

1	I think the planning commission gives too much leeway to the somewhat ignorant vocal minority who oppose any type of planned growth within one of the more popular urban centers in close proximity to a thriving metropolitan area.	Nov 15, 2012 2:23 PM
2	Don't think I have ever had to testify before a commission.	Nov 15, 2012 1:52 PM

**Q23. The City Council treated me fairly.**

1	Current Council is great. Past Council was inept, subversive, biased- hence the law suit that I had to file against the city but that is in the past.	Nov 16, 2012 1:51 PM
2	I think the city council gives too much leeway to the somewhat ignorant vocal minority who oppose any type of planned growth within one of the more popular urban centers in close proximity to a thriving metropolitan area.	Nov 15, 2012 2:23 PM
3	Don't think I have ever had to testify before the City Council.	Nov 15, 2012 1:52 PM

**Q24. The City Council members were courteous during the hearing.**

1	Again. Current Council is wonderful.	Nov 16, 2012 1:51 PM
2	I think the city council gives too much leeway to the somewhat ignorant vocal minority who oppose any type of planned growth within one of the more popular urban centers in close proximity to a thriving metropolitan area.	Nov 15, 2012 2:23 PM
3	Don't think I have ever had to testify before the City Council.	Nov 15, 2012 1:52 PM

**Q25. The Hearing Examiner treated me fairly.**

1	I have my own audiologist.	Nov 15, 2012 1:52 PM
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**Q26. The Hearing Examiner was courteous during the hearing.**

1	I have my own audiologist.	Nov 15, 2012 1:52 PM
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<b>Q27. I found the input from the City Council useful in the hearing process.</b>		
1	not applicable	Nov 15, 2012 4:43 PM
2	NA	Nov 15, 2012 3:00 PM
3	I think the council is disconnected from reality when it comes to development procedures and development rights. They should not be a part of the process. The city staff is required to follow state and federal laws regarding permitting and they don't need an elected official with a political agenda disrupting the permit process. All public hearings should be in front of a Hearing Examiner.	Nov 15, 2012 2:23 PM
4	Multiple "Never Been There..." responses.	Nov 15, 2012 1:52 PM
5	Not Applicable	Nov 15, 2012 1:47 PM

<b>Q28. I found the input from the Planning Commission useful in the hearing process.</b>		
1	not applicable	Nov 15, 2012 4:43 PM
2	NS	Nov 15, 2012 3:00 PM
3	Multiple "Never Been There..." responses.	Nov 15, 2012 1:52 PM
4	Not Applicable	Nov 15, 2012 1:47 PM

<b>Q29. I found the input from the Hearing Examiner useful in the hearing process.</b>		
1	not applicable	Nov 15, 2012 4:43 PM
2	NA	Nov 15, 2012 3:00 PM
3	Multiple "Never Been There..." responses.	Nov 15, 2012 1:52 PM
4	Not Applicable	Nov 15, 2012 1:47 PM

<b>Q30. Was your application ultimately approved?</b>		
1	Haven't received approval yet.	Nov 18, 2012 8:02 PM
2	not applicable	Nov 15, 2012 4:43 PM
3	Fairly swiftly.	Nov 15, 2012 1:52 PM
4	Not Applicable	Nov 15, 2012 1:47 PM

<b>Q31. Four departments, divisions, or functions are most involved in development review and plan checking in Kirkland. They are Building, Engineering, Fire, and Planning.</b>		
<b>If you experienced coordination problems between any two departments, divisions, or functions, please list them below.</b>		
Coordination problems between what?		
1	Some confusion btw Bldg & Planning in re: who/whether or not GeoTech report requirement is triggered by Planning or Bldg. In some instances this has been a Bldg requirement but during my last visit/check Bldg deferred to Planning and indicated that if Planning did not flag it as a steep slope or other ECA then Bldg would not trigger geo-tech requirement (SFR)	Nov 30, 2012 12:31 PM
2	building and public works and planninga and licencing and	Nov 19, 2012 4:54 PM
3	Planning and Engineering	Nov 16, 2012 9:35 AM
4	fire and building inspection	Nov 16, 2012 8:43 AM
5	Initial Planning and Review Planning	Nov 15, 2012 4:04 PM
6	Planning and building	Nov 15, 2012 2:08 PM
7	Building and planning	Nov 15, 2012 1:59 PM
8	building and planning	Nov 15, 2012 1:34 PM

**Q32. Please add any comments or suggestions that you may have that will improve the process or customer service. Please give us at least one idea.**

1	The Architect was responsible for the permit on this project, and most of this is not applicable as we were not involved in the application process. However, overall I really thought the inspectors in the field were great. Building inspector Phillip Austin, in particular, was really helpful and pleasant to work with during the construction process. After working with him, I was very impressed with the city from our point of view as the general contractor on the project. Also, from our perspective, it is helpful that Kirkland has mainly one inspector looking at each project. Other building departments have different inspectors for each discipline, and too often we find ourselves caught between different inspectors views as to what is required. We had a good experience in Kirkland, and all of us felt it was primarily due to Phillip Austin's work.	Nov 20, 2012 7:35 AM
2	time is money.....	Nov 19, 2012 4:54 PM
3	Cross training ,so that when one staff member is out,the work still gets done.Everything should not come to a halt because one person is out of the office	Nov 19, 2012 1:57 PM
4	Sometimes it takes a bit too long to hear back from folks and sometimes I don't ever get a call back. It would be nice to get a response within 24-48 hours. Thanks	Nov 18, 2012 8:02 PM
5	Great City Manager. Great Economic Development Coordinator. Planning Staff is the best. Public Works staff is friendly, helpful and knowledgeable. Fire is very clear with standards that are required. Building is efficient, not as friendly but they do a good job. This is the best overall staff I've ever worked with in my 25 years of development in many jurisdictions.	Nov 16, 2012 1:51 PM
6	I install plumbing in 34 jurisdictions in the greater Seattle area and find the city of Kirkland to be one of the best departments to work with.	Nov 16, 2012 1:02 PM
7	please see above	Nov 16, 2012 8:43 AM
8	Please keep people knowledgeable about the existing buildings in the city of Kirkland. These are the ones we work in and it is imperative that someone know about the existing codes and conditions for these buildings. Vicki	Nov 15, 2012 4:43 PM
9	Streamline. The walkthrough process is cumbersome and not efficient. Very time consuming.	Nov 15, 2012 2:08 PM
10	The staff does a good job working within the codes. I think many codes are not fair	Nov 15, 2012 2:05 PM
11	Like working with the City of Kirkland. King County needs this survey.	Nov 15, 2012 2:04 PM
12	while aspects of the submittal process are excellent and the counter staff are excellent, the process of getting a review is too long, and when done is incomplete. I received comments on my drawings addressing issues that I not only had on the drawings from the original submittal but I had on the drawings on nearly every sheet in bold type surrounded in a box with a large black drop shadow. Finally in the 3rd review cycle I started using an orange highlighter on top of my response letters that identified all responses. I have a very frustrated owner who expected that we would be building during the summer and completing construction on their project in January and because of the review cycles they are not starting until January.	Nov 15, 2012 1:59 PM
13	Well, you could always lower the permit fees..... I don't have a lot of trouble getting permits in Kirkland. The Washington State Energy Code isn't superseded by local regulations (as in Seattle). If I could apply for full-review mechanical projects from my office (Carnation area), that might save me some gas and time. I believe they are working toward this goal now.	Nov 15, 2012 1:52 PM
14	We would like to have the ability to apply on-line (electronically) for fire permits as we currently now do for mechanical, plumbing, electrical, etc. Would save us time, gas, and money for travelling to Kirkland and back.	Nov 15, 2012 1:47 PM
15	Review time of submittal is unacceptable. Takes too long.	Nov 15, 2012 1:34 PM