

II. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

A. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

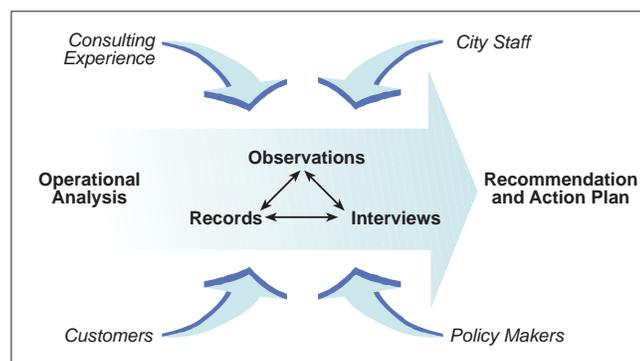
This study was initiated by the City for an Organizational Evaluation of the Development Services functions.

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	
ISSUES RELATED TO ENTIRE DEVELOPMENT SERVICES FUNCTION						
Organization Issue						
2.	Use a staged approach to re-organizing	City Manager	25	1	X	
Customer Service						
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
Development Review Committee (DRC) and DRCII						
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	
Economic Development						
16.	Planners to review approach to economic development	Economic Development Director	31	2	X	
Fees						
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	
Office Space						

#	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
Performance Evaluations						
25.	All employees to receive annual evaluation	Human Resources	39	2		X
Timelines/Performance Standards						
26.	Implement new performance standards re timelines	Development Services Managers	42	1		X
Technology						
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	
Website						
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
FIRE AND BUILDING DEPARTMENT						
Organizational Issues						
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
Policy Issues						
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
Processing Issues						
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	
Fire Bureau Activities						
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
Inspection Activities						
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
Plan Review						
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
ORGANIZATIONS						
Design Review Board						
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	
Hearing Examiner						
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
Houghton Community Council						
112.	Use strike out and bold text for changes in policy documents	Deputy Planning Director	98	3		X
Planning Commission						
113.	Commissioners to attend APA training sessions	Deputy Planning Director	99	3		X
PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT						
Organizational Issues						
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	
Administration						
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	
Code Enforcement						
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	
Land Use Management (Current Planning)						
Organizational Issues						
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	
Policy Issues						
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	
Process						
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	
Policy and Planning Division (Long Range Planning)						
Organizational Issues						
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	
Policy Issues						
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 compete 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	
Process						
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	
Urban Forestry						
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
PUBLIC WORKS						
Organization Issues						
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
Policy Issues						
205.	Local developers to review Pre-Approved Plans Manual	Development and Environmental Services Manager	200	3		X
Process Issues						
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	
EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS						
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	
CUSTOMER PERCEPTIONS						

#	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.

