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Municipality of Anchorage
Streamlining Development Process

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Chapter 1: Executive Summary

Purpose

Development processes that work well – that is, that meet the stated goals and needs of a jurisdiction – are essential if communities are to become what they are envisioned to be. This project responds to the need identified by the Municipality of Anchorage and the Cook Inlet Housing Authority for a more comprehensive strategy to improve and streamline housing and community development processes.

- **Three formal surveys**
- **One informal poll**
- **Speed mapping workshops**
- **Root cause workshops**
- **Staff interviews**
- **Small group discussions about what's working/what's not**
- **Customer-focused process hackathon**

This project is geared toward the following outcomes:

1. Dramatically reduce lead times for development reviews
2. Increase cross-functional communication and resolve policy and process conflicts quickly
3. Create mutual understanding of customer needs and staff needs
4. Enhance collaboration and partnerships between internal and external stakeholders
5. Identify root causes of problems and ground recommendations in their resolution
6. Embed efficient regulatory processes that encourage new housing & community development.

This report is intended to clarify expectations, needs, gaps, and steps to enhance the organization's approaches to its work, so it can more effectively and efficiently achieve its development goals. In particular, it is focused on understanding and addressing whether and how regulatory processes and land use and development codes are affecting the ability of developers to build units, and how the city can move from a focus on regulation to a more active role in assuring that needed development, in particular housing development, occurs.

Approach

The project approach was multifaceted. It brought together ideas from staff, managers, senior leaders, customers, and other jurisdictions. The project included:

Each of these tools was used to elicit understanding of where Anchorage is today with respect to its development processes, and where it needs to be in the future.

Major Recommendations

Anchorage has staff and leaders who care and who want to do the right thing. However, they are working in a system that has multiple barriers to effective work. Some of those barriers relate directly to work processes – to how planning and review processes are carried out, for instance. Others are related to the broader realm of overall organizational effectiveness and need to be explored by looking at how leadership, strategy, workplace climate, customer understanding, and expectation management are being handled. Communication breakdowns and barriers stretched across many areas, and is an underlying foundational challenge.

We encourage readers to dive into the details provided in this report for more information. The ideas presented are comprehensive. They cannot all be addressed at once and Anchorage is advised to prioritize the work that is suggested within, approaching it in manageable components that can be iteratively addressed.

For the recommendations in this report, we focused first on identifying the key factors that characterize success from the customer's point of view. If Anchorage's process can deliver against these factors, then it can be said to have well-functioning processes and management approaches. Table 1-1 lists the key success factors, which were derived from the surveys, workshops and other sources of input solicited from staff and customers.

TABLE 1-1: KEY SUCCESS FACTORS FOR ANCHORAGE DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES

1. Understandable codes
2. Effective training and educational materials
3. Readily available help and information
4. High-quality applications
5. Quick submittal step
6. Effective internal communication and alignment
7. Reasonable requirements (codes, standards)
8. Accurate work (reviews, inspections)
9. Complete work (reviews, inspections)
10. Consistent feedback/interpretations on applications and inspections
11. Reasonable processing times, accurately forecast
12. Equitable treatment of applicants
13. Implementation of community goals and values

The recommendations below represent the next steps Anchorage is advised to take to more effectively address its key success factors. They are organized by recommended timing (start now to start doing within 90 days) and by process (planning, permitting, inspections, or overall management).

NOTE:
Should Anchorage find it helpful, a matrix of key success factors vs recommendations could be developed and discussed. Such a matrix would help highlight actions that have a positive affect against multiple success factors, as well as help identify where additional actions might be needed.

START DOING NOW

PLANNING PROCESS

1. **Evaluate the leadership and mentorship responsibilities of the Planning Department Director position.** This position is pivotal. An effective leader can strengthen the whole department, create momentum towards community goals, grow staff's capabilities and cohesion, and be a trusted sounding board for the development community.

2. **Establish a policy for unified Planning Department recommendations and conditions of approval that are based on Code requirements**. The Planning Director should encourage internal collaboration in determining the Department's position on a land use application. After all internal points of view have been expressed, a singular recommendation should be made. Applicants should easily be able to track a requirement or a condition of approval back to the legislative source. Administrative latitude should be used judiciously by the Planning Director, and should be discussed during staff meetings as part of the unified recommendation.

3. **Develop the framework for a retooled pre-app system and a marketing elevator pitch for the new system to improve trust and increase participation and buy-in from referral agencies.** Approach all affected parties (internal and external) as customers of the current planning process. Address their concerns, incorporate their needs, demonstrate facilitative leadership.

4. **Hold an internal review of the process for long-range plans and implementation of those plans**. Identify where timeframes slide, where the process grinds. Develop draft process concepts to allow greater velocity, quicker idea-to-implementation. Identify resources needed to manage both the planning process and implementation of those plans, including new positions, project managers, contractors, etc. Identify ways to achieve meaningful community input without deadlocking a process. Identify ways to engage staff, leadership and the Assembly in policy direction.

5. **Institute a quarterly code amendment process- led by the Current Planning Manager - to fix various code issues that are identified during entitlement and zoning processes.** Reach out to private sector experts, identify their proposed fixes. Keep a shared Code in the office to red-line language in real time as issues arise to document needed changes. Use the "red-line" Code to inform future code amendments.

PERMITTING PROCESS

1. **Review the barriers to filling the Development Services Director/ Building Official position.** There appears to be an institutional obstruction to filling this position, potentially centered on the position being an executive (non-represented) position as opposed to merit-based position. Consider separating the Building Official responsibilities (adjudication of Code-related issues) from the Development Services Director position (managerial responsibilities for the Department.)

2. **Reduce or eliminate computer lock-out.** Having to log-in every 5 minutes is borderline absurd, negatively affecting customer service, staff efficiency, and morale. Identify ways to maintain security, including the feasibility of biometric (fingerprint) authentication. At a minimum, increase the amount of time before computers lock, from 5 to 15 minutes, and increase the required time to update passwords.

3. **Establish periods of uninterruptable work time** for reviewers to decrease cycle times and increase accuracy and completeness of reviews while maintaining reasonable availability at the counter for customers.

4. **Strengthen submittal requirement check-lists**, clarifying requirements for both intake staff and applicants.

5. **Return (do not accept) applications that are not complete**, since they inevitably cause extra rounds of review and clog the system

6. **Allow drop-off of simple, over-the-counter applications** (no customer waiting in the building for the review).

7. **Establish protocol on acceptable review comments**, focusing them on code requirements (is the code met?) and away from personal opinions or preferences. . Establish expectations for code citations in review comments.

8. **Reconsider how to handle walk-throughs.** Shift service to a specific counter and/or time slot, to reduce reviewer interruptions and impacts on more complex intake needs. Consider training intake staff to handle a broader range of walk-throughs.

9. **Establish resubmittal requirements.** Assure that comments on review rounds are complete, clear, and communicated to both applicants and to intake staff. Require complete resubmittals that address all comments provided by staff. Reject resubmittals that are not complete.

10. **Assess the success of the deferred submission policy** with input from Inspectors and Permit Technicians. Determine the underlying interests and motivations and adjust the policy as needed.

INSPECTION PROCESS

1. **Arrange a series of Inspect-alongs** with leadership staff, Permit Technicians, Plans Reviewers, and influential industry people.

2. **Hold a series of meetings between Permit Techs, Plans Reviewers, and Inspectors to identify gaps in information and items that cause inefficiency or frustration**. Identify and prioritize solutions to present to leadership staff

3. **Establish process for resolving different interpretations of code between Plan Reviewers and Inspectors.**

4. **Draft an elevator pitch regarding the importance of being ready for an inspection request.** Explain the problems that arise when inspections are called-in for projects that are not ready, when non-permit holders call for an inspection. Provide meaningful metrics – time lost, additional overtime required, delays to ongoing projects, effects on project that are ready for inspection, etc.

5. **Talk about the problem.** Utilize the inspection crew to repeat the problem statement with customers, elected officials, influential industry people.

6. **Draft a revised inspection policy**. Focus on reversing the stated problems, making the inspection process more efficient and the service improvement for projects that are ready for inspection.

7. **Identify software solutions that can assist the inspection policy.**

ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT PROCESSES

1. **Re-invigorate Anchorage's mission and vision with respect to development processes.** Involve staff, managers and customers in this exercise. Widely communicate the results.

2. **Consider the physical arrangement of departments and staff.** Departments appear to be physically isolated – down locked corridors lined with empty offices of former colleagues that have been laid-off. The physical isolation can contribute to the silo effect. Condensing some functions may enhance communication and reinforce cohesion within staff.

3. **Charter a cross-functional, cross-departmental team of managers** who come together at least twice monthly specifically to a) identify and resolve unclear or conflicting review policies and standards, b) educate each other on the purpose and value of individual department policies, c) lead, monitor and adjust process improvement initiatives and d) identify and jointly address emerging complex cases and situations.

4. **Discussion about new policy should involve all affected parties** – internal and external. Discussions regarding new policy should involve staff and customer awareness. The end result – a new policy, procedure, etc. – should not come as a surprise. Reaching-out to gain input is also a useful relationship building technique.

5. **Review the overarching purpose of technology allowing staff be effective customer service agents, deliver services efficiently, and be connected to up-to-date information.** Identify gaps and barriers to this fundamental goal in everyday situations. Identify potential solutions, prioritize, and start implementing.

START DOING WITHIN 90 DAYS

PLANNING PROCESS

1. **Fill the Planning Manager position.** Filling this position brings consistency and stability. Filling this position is important to the long-term viability of the Municipality's current planning function.

2. **Implement a revised Pre-Application process.** Building on the outreach to customers, re-establish current planners as the primary conduit between applicants and the Municipality. Leverage pre-apps to identify and resolve issues that would otherwise cause an application to stumble. Facilitate good communication and better understanding.

3. **Understand and communicate the goals of adopted long-range plans.** Identify strategic messaging to communicate the goals and objectives regarding of adopted long-range planning for leadership, staff, Assembly members, and others.

4. **Hold a theoretical project charrette.** Led by a combination of Current and Long-Range Planning and including private-sector expertise, use a specific property to generate project concepts that fit within community plans and policies. Then, identify regulatory barriers to the concept, aspects of zoning, design guidelines, or the process that stand in the way. Start with a simple, small to medium parcel. Use the exercise to prioritize code amendments.

5. **Develop an approach to gather regular feedback on performance** from customers, including surveys, focus groups and/or an advisory group.

PERMITTING PROCESS

1. **Fill the Building Official position on a full-time basis.** Filling this position brings consistency and stability. Filling this position is important to the long-term viability of the Municipality's permitting function.

2. **Continue to identify and improve checklists, handouts, and application forms so that expectations and needs of the Municipality are clear.** Collaborate with applicants to identify education/training needs, and begin to design a program to address those needs.

3. **Collaborate with applicants to clarify gaps in communication with staff and how to address them.** Do the same internally with staff, to address internal gaps in communication.

4. **Commit to full participation by relevant review departments during pre-submittals** or subsequent post-review meetings. Clarify expectations and purpose of these meetings, and develop minimum standards for recording and reporting the contents of meetings with applicants to ensure an accurate record is maintained.

5. **Evaluate ways to improve structural review turnaround times.** This includes assessing which structures should be reviewed, how deeply they should be reviewed, risks of keeping vs shifting the review approaches, ways to reduce those risks, and how to staff the review function. Structural reviews currently take the longest amount of time, and the permit process can go no faster than the slowest step.

6. **Develop an approach to gather regular feedback on performance** from customers, including surveys, focus groups and/or an advisory group.

7. **Review and evaluate core competencies for intake staff and reviewers, and develop a plan to address any identified gaps.** Assure that pay grades for intake staff, in particular, reflect the expectations of those positions and are not set too low.

8. **Consider implementing a "hot line" or "question of the day" function** to improve staff access to applicants while protecting reviewers from interruptions.

INSPECTION PROCESS

1. **Gain political support and leadership backing before implementing a revised inspection policy.** Make sure the problem is at the forefront, is accepted as a real problem. Make sure the new policy will "stick" when the first complaint is made.

2. **Continue to talk about the problem** and how the new policy is helping, how its being implemented.

3. **Incorporate strategic messaging** as a routine element during every customer contact.

4. **Review technology-based obstacles with leadership staff.**

5. **Develop an approach to gather regular feedback on performance** from customers, including surveys, focus groups and/or an advisory group

ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT PROCESSES

1. **Strengthen understanding of the priorities** and focus of the development processes, as well as understanding of progress and results, by **crafting or revitalizing department-level plans with specific project and performance objectives and metrics**. Assure these are in alignment with the new mission and vision. Identify strategic messaging regarding permit review for leadership staff and Inspectors to convey.

2. **Identify key "lean" opportunities, empower staff and managers to execute the changes,** and put supports for continuous improvement and innovation into place.

3. **Institute Point-of-Service and annual feedback mechanisms (surveys and focus groups) for customers.** Use results to assess performance and stimulate thinking about potential service improvements. Track progress from year to year.

4. **Document specific examples of hardware and software needs**, and how they impact business performance. Collaborate with IT to resolve.

5. **Monitor and track escalation of issues to managers**, and design tools and policies to mitigate escalation. This should include protocols for "de-escalating" items that are nevertheless brought to managers or senior leaders.

6. **Clarify and begin tracking a broader set of key performance metrics**, so that successes, challenges and expectations are clear and grounded in data.

⏰ START DOING WITHIN A YEAR

PLANNING PROCESS

1. **Assess the codified submission requirements regarding the level of design refinement at each step of the process.** Involve the applicant and design community. Where possible, shift desired high levels of design detail to a documentation phase after planning approvals have been granted.

2. **Assess the sequence of approval conditions being generated after a board decision has been made.** Shifting recommended conditions of approval to prior to a board decision will require better referral agency participation, but may make for clearer decisions.

3. **Develop a staff training program** – how to be a great planner. Focus on facilitative leadership and ability to guide an applicant through the approval process, predict issues, minimize surprises, resolve conflicting requirements/requests, and providing clear guidance to review boards.

4. **Identify ways to assist the Assembly's policy development regarding planning matters.** Become invaluable as facilitators, as topic experts, community outreach specialists, and as strategic process partners to enable implementation of new ideas.

PERMITTING PROCESS

1. **Implement a fee rebate for high-quality new residential and new commercial plans that require two or fewer rounds of review.**

2. **Hire a technology power user, housed within Economic and Community Development, to rapidly assist with technology issues, particularly software issues**. This person would be expected to learn the business needs deeply, and to learn the software well enough to provide first line support for fixes and enhancements.

3. **Evaluate the feasibility of hiring an on-call company to assist with reviews during peak periods.**

4. **Evaluate the feasibility of assigning a "project manager" – a single point of contact, for major applications.** Depending on expectations, this could range from a senior level intake staff person to a reviewer.

5. **Conduct an independent, in-depth evaluation of the expedited permit process, and whether/how to modify it.** While it saves review time, it is currently resulting in situations in the field that are difficult to manage and costly because inspectors are finding that units are not being built to code.

6. **Develop better web-based information and useful materials, ensure that this information is easy to find.**

7. **Implement a stronger training/education program for applicants.**

8. **Consider performing a more in-depth lean analysis for the intake process and to the review process, to identify additional ways to reduce cycle times at the micro-scale level.**

9. **Develop example "high quality" submission templates as models for the development community.**

INSPECTION PROCESS

1. **Evaluate the accountability structure for third-party reviews.** The current system appears to offload code compliance responsibility, and the associated liability, from third party reviewers to the Municipality. The Municipality may be better suited to address the accountability structure, leaving liability with third party inspectors. The Municipality may also want to explore required real estate disclosures for properties that have received third-party reviews.

ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT PROCESSES

1. Institute internal workplace climate feedback mechanisms (surveys and focus groups) for staff and managers.

2. Delve further into needs associated with professional development of staff, and how best to meet those needs.

3. After considering and implementing key process and communication improvements, reassess staffing levels and where additional staffing may be needed to increase efficiency and effectiveness.
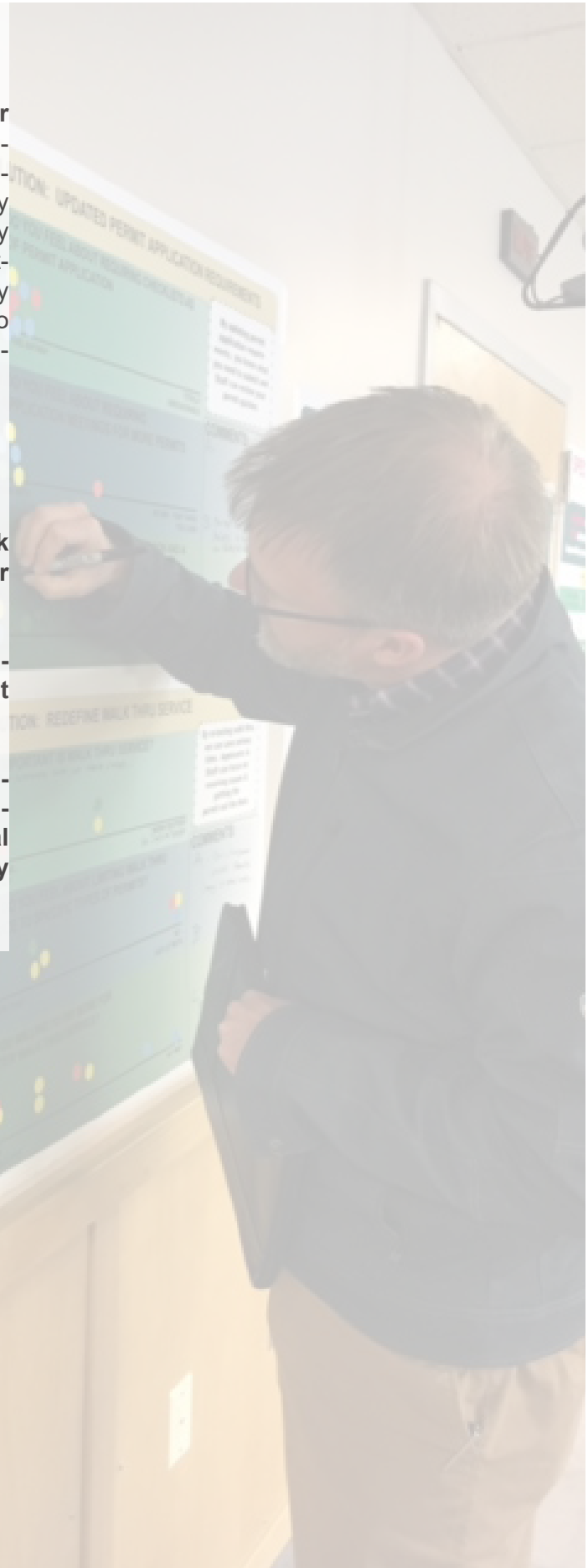
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CHAPTER 2: SURVEY FINDINGS

PURPOSE AND DESIGN

To help guide subsequent on-site workshops and assure broad representation in this Anchorage study, BendonAdams and Karen Harrington Consulting prepared and distributed three formal surveys early in the project:

1. **A staff and manager survey**
2. **A senior leadership survey**
3. **A customer survey**

In addition, staff comments were collected as part of an informal poll of ideas called Moments of Madness and Inspiration.

The surveys provided the opportunity for each group to anonymously assess performance against key development process attributes; identify critical success factors; characterize customer and staff expectations; and set a performance baseline. The service attribute questions were drawn from the project team's personal experience with development processes, previously developed surveys and from research on best practices. The surveys also included open-ended questions to allow individuals to provide additional feedback beyond that captured in closed-ended questions.

Beyond key development process attributes, the internal surveys included sections that took a broader, more systemic look at the organization. These sections (which drew from quality assessment tools available from the national Baldrige program) provided information on performance within the standard Baldrige evaluation categories:

- **Leadership**
- **Strategy**
- **Customer Focus**
- **Measurement, Analysis + Knowledge Management**
- **Workforce**
- **Operations**
- **Results**

EXECUTION APPROACH & RESPONSE RATES

The project team provided the Economic and Development Director with electronic links to each survey. The Director then forwarded the survey links to all staff, managers and leaders who participate in the planning, permits review, and inspections processes, along with an email explaining the purpose of the surveys and the deadlines. Similarly, the Director sent an email with the link to a sample of customers.

SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESULTS

The surveys closed in mid-June. This section provides a summary of the results. Full copies of the results can be found in Appendix A.

For the closed-ended questions, a five-point Baldridge scale was used:

- **Strongly agree (5)**
- **Agree (4)**
- **Neither agree nor disagree (3)**
- **Disagree (2)**
- **Strongly Disagree (1)**

NOTE: Areas of strengths are those with a high percent positive (those with a high proportion of respondents answering agree or strongly agree). Questions with averages in the 3 range or below suggest areas in need of more intensive improvement.

In 1987, Congress created the Baldrige Award to recognize achievements in making US businesses more competitive, and to develop a way to evaluate performance within and across organizations. Since then, use of the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence has expanded to health care, education, and government. Using questions from Baldrige tools provided a broader, more solid foundation from which to understand the organization as a system, including understanding the context within with the development work processes exist.

SENIOR LEADER RESULTS

The senior leadership group consisted of six respondents. Respondents could select more than one area of responsibility. Four of the respondents indicated that they represented permitting. Two respondents represented code enforcement and two indicated unspecified or other. Only one respondent represented the Land Use Planning section.

Across the Baldrige categories as a whole, the Leadership group gave the organization marks averaging 3.4 on the 5-point scale, slightly in the positive range. **The group rated the Strategy, Leadership, and Workforce Environment areas higher than the other categories. Much lower marks were given in the a) Customer and b) Measurement, Analysis and Knowledge Management areas (2.88 for each area).**

NOTE: One respondent started the survey, but only answered the first three sections, on Leadership; Strategy and Work. Because of the small size of this group, the loss of one respondent after the first three sections could have potentially skewed the averages of the remaining questions in comparison with the first three.

LEADERSHIP RESPONSES

Each respondent in the leadership group agreed that the leadership is ethical and demonstrates the organization's values. (Table 2-1) In addition, the respondents clearly believe that leadership asks employees what they think, creates a positive work environment, and has informed the workforce about the organization's mission. There is disagreement, however, concerning whether the workforce knows the organization's vision (where the organization is trying to go in the future). Half of the respondents disagreed with this statement and only a third agreed. Only half the respondents agree that the leadership team shares information about the organization.   If the staff do not understand the organization's vision, or if information about the organization is not shared when needed and appropriate, it may be difficult for staff to clearly understand expectations and as a result, performance may suffer. In addition, morale and engagement may be negatively affected.

TABLE 2-1. LEADERSHIP SCORES – LEADERSHIP TEAM

LEADERSHIP	AV RATING	% AGREE	% NEITHER	% DISAGREE
Our workforce knows our organization's vision (where it is trying to go in the future).	2.83	33.3%	16.7%	50.0%
Our leadership team shares information about the organization.	3.67	50.0%	33.3%	16.7%
Our workforce knows our organization's mission (what it is trying to accomplish).	3.83	66.7%	33.3%	0.0%
Our leadership team creates a work environment that helps our employees do their jobs.	4.00	66.7%	33.3%	0.0%
Our leadership team asks employees what they think.	4.00	66.7%	33.3%	0.0%
Our leadership team is ethical and demonstrates our organization's values.	4.33	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Group Average	**3.78**			

STRATEGY RESPONSES

In the Baldrige categories, the senior leader group rated the organization the highest on strategy. (Table 2-2) The senior leaders clearly feel that the organization encourages innovation (83% agree). Similarly, two thirds of the respondents believe that the leadership team plans for the future.

An equal number feel that the organization is flexible and quickly makes changes when needed; however in this case one-third disagree that the organization is flexible. If the organization is not flexible when needed, it may be difficult for it to respond to unique circumstances or to adjust to meet changes in customer or workforce expectations over time.

Only half the respondents agree that employees know the organization's plans that affect them, and know if they are making progress; the other half neither agreed nor disagreed. These two areas, in particular, may benefit from further exploration by the leadership team. The weaker areas here may correlate with the weaker areas under Leadership, in that they appear to be related to communication and understanding of expectations and direction.

TABLE 2-2. STRATEGY SCORES - LEADERSHIP TEAM

STRATEGY	AV RATING	% AGREE	% NEITHER	% DISAGREE
As our leadership team plans for the future, we ask our employees for their ideas.	4.00	66.7%	33.3%	0.0%
Our organization encourages totally new ideas (innovation).	4.17	83.3%	16.7%	0.0%
Our employees know the parts of our organization's plans that will affect them and their work.	3.83	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%
Our employees know how to tell if they are making progress on their workgroup's part of the plan.	3.83	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%
Our organization is flexible and makes changes quickly when needed.	3.67	66.7%	0.0%	33.3%
Group Average	**3.90**			

CUSTOMER FOCUS RESPONSES

There appears to be limited agreement on how well the employees are serving the organization's customers. (Table 2-3) This area, along with Measurement, Analysis and Knowledge Management, had the lowest overall average score.

All of the leaders perceive that employees do not ask the customer if they are satisfied with their work. Likewise, the leadership group as a whole does not believe that the employees can identify the organization's most important customers (0% agreed). Only one respondent agreed that the employees can identify their own most important customers. Knowing who the customer is, and having a clear picture of customer expectations, is a first and central step to success with results.

TABLE 2-3. CUSTOMER SCORES – LEADERSHIP TEAM

CUSTOMERS	AV RATING	% AGREE	% NEITHER	% DISAGREE
Our employees know who their most important customers are.	3.00	20.0%	60.0%	20.0%
Our employees regularly ask customers what they need and want.	3.40	40.0%	40.0%	20.0%
Our employees ask if their customers are satisfied or dissatisfied with their work.	2.40	0.0%	40.0%	60.0%
Our employees are allowed to make decisions to satisfy their customers.	3.20	40.0%	20.0%	40.0%
Our employees also know who the organization's most important customers are.	2.40	0.0%	40.0%	60.0%
Group Average	**2.88**			

MEASUREMENT, ANALYSIS AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

This area is tied for the lowest average rating from the leadership group. Only one respondent agreed that employees know how to measure the quality of their work or know how the organization is doing. (Table 2-4) The leadership team does not appear to feel that employees have all the information they need to perform their duties; know how data is used by the organization; nor how information related to quality can be used to make positive changes to their work. This is another area that requires concerted effort to correct.

As with other opportunities identified here, gaps in communication may be contributing to these challenges, resulting in lower employee performance. Further, without a few key metrics against which to judge success, neither employees nor managers can know when a "win" is occurring. These results may be correlated with the perceived lack of understanding of who the customer is and what the customers' expectations are, since key metrics need to reflect customer expectations. If staff and/or leaders do not know who the customer is (or do not agree on who the customer is), they cannot define customer expectations. If they cannot define customer expectations, they cannot with confidence define key metrics associated with customer satisfaction.

TABLE 2-4. MEASUREMENT AND ANALYSIS SCORES – LEADERSHIP TEAM

MEASUREMENT AND ANALYSIS	AV RATING	% AGREE	% NEITHER	% DISAGREE
Our employees know how to measure the quality of their work.	3.00	20.0%	40.0%	40.0%
Our employees can use this information to make changes that will improve their work.	3.20	20.0%	60.0%	20.0%
Our employees know how the data they use in their work fit into the organization's overall data on improvement.	2.60	0.0%	60.0%	40.0%
Our employees get all the important information they need to do their work.	2.80	0.0%	80.0%	20.0%
Our employees know how our organization as a whole is doing.	2.80	20.0%	40.0%	40.0%
Group Average	**2.88**			

WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT RESPONSES

In some cases, leaders appear to have a fairly strong consensus that the organization has a positive workplace environment. (Table 2-5) They all agree that managers and the organization care about the workforce, and nearly all agree that the workplace is safe.

However, 40% did not agree that the workforce is committed to the organization's success or that employees cooperate and work as a team. Only 20% agreed that leadership encourages and enables professional development. These lower scores and split opinions regarding the workplace may be reflective of a situation wherein high performance would be challenging even in the presence of "good processes." By their nature, development processes are cross-functional in nature; without high-functioning cross-functional teams and teamwork, such a process is less likely to run well, frustrating both staff and customers. If some employees are not committed to success, it can negatively impact the process directly, and also indirectly if other team members believe a colleague is not contributing fully and thus becomes dissatisfied or if conflicts arise. If employees do not have or cannot develop the skills they need for their current positions or "the next job" it can impact their ability to contribute even when process steps are known, particularly if the work is complex.

TABLE 2-5. WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT SCORES – LEADERSHIP TEAM

WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT	AV RATING	% AGREE	% NEITHER	% DISAGREE
Our employees cooperate and work as a team.	3.40	60.0%	0.0%	40.0%
Our leadership team encourages & enables employees to develop their job skills so they can advance in their careers.	3.20	20.0%	60.0%	20.0%
Our employees are recognized for their work.	3.80	60.0%	40.0%	0.0%
Our organization has a safe workplace.	3.80	80.0%	20.0%	0.0%
Our managers and organization care about our workforce.	4.40	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Our workforce is committed to our organization's success.	3.80	60.0%	40.0%	0.0%
Group Average	**3.73**			

OPERATIONS RESPONSES

The leadership team expressed significant concerns about the organization's processes for doing work. Concerns were also expressed about the ability of staff to improve the process. Similarly, the leadership team is split on whether the organization is prepared to handle emergencies, with 40% of the respondents suggesting the organization is not prepared and 40% believing it is ready. If the organization does not have good processes in place; if staff do not have what they need to do their jobs; and if staff do not understand how to improve the processes, clearly performance and the ability to meet customer and management expectations will be compromised. Of equal concern is relatively low percent of respondents indicating the organization is prepared for emergencies, since a lack of preparedness could compromise worker safety and/or the ability to continue operations.

TABLE 2-6. OPERATIONS SCORES – LEADERSHIP TEAM

OPERATIONS	AV RATING	% AGREE	% NEITHER	% DISAGREE
Our employees can get everything they need to do their jobs.	3.20	40.0%	40.0%	20.0%
Our organization has good processes for doing its work.	3.20	20.0%	60.0%	20.0%
Our employees can improve their personal work processes when necessary.	3.40	40.0%	40.0%	20.0%
Our organization is prepared to handle emergencies.	3.00	40.0%	20.0%	40.0%
Group Average	**3.20**			

RESULTS RESPONSES

With one exception, there is unanimous agreement that the organization obeys laws and regulations, and exhibits high ethical standards. (Table 2-7) None of the respondents disagreed with the statement that the department is a good place to work, although two respondents were neutral. Similarly, there is general agreement that the organization helps its employees help their community.

The leadership team did express concerns about the ability of the organization to remove things that get in the way of progress (0% agreeing) and that the employee's work products meet all the requirements (20% agreeing). These results are consistent with others in the survey, with a similar question about flexibility receiving low ratings, and with a perception that staff do not know their customers and are not gathering information on customer needs. The organizational risks are similar to those mentioned earlier: low performance due to barriers, lack of focus and lack of knowledge of key customer requirements.

Finally, and perhaps most revealing, only one member of the leadership team expressed that the organization's customers are satisfied with staff's work. Sixty percent of the leadership team could neither agree nor disagree when asked if employee's customers were satisfied with their work, and only 20% agreed. This is an expected outcome if staff also do not know or agree on who their primary customers, what the customer's expectations are, and what management's vision and expectations are.

TABLE 2-7. RESULTS SCORES – LEADERSHIP TEAM

RESULTS	AV RATING	% AGREE	% NEITHER	% DISAGREE
Our employees' work products meet all requirements (management's and customers' expectations and specifications).	3.00	20.0%	40.0%	40.0%
Our employees' customers are satisfied with their work.	3.00	20.0%	60.0%	20.0%
Our organization knows how well our organization is doing financially.	3.20	40.0%	40.0%	20.0%
Our organization has the right people and skills to do its work.	3.40	60.0%	20.0%	20.0%
Our organization removes things that get in the way of progress.	2.40	0.0%	40.0%	60.0%
Our organization obeys laws and regulations.	4.00	80.0%	0.0%	20.0%
Our organization practices high standards and ethics.	4.00	80.0%	0.0%	20.0%
Our organization helps our employees help their community.	3.80	60.0%	40.0%	0.0%
Our employees believe our organization is a good place to work.	3.80	60.0%	40.0%	0.0%
Group Average	**3.40**			

SERVICE ATTRIBUTE RESPONSES: IMPORTANCE AND PERFORMANCE

When considering key service attributes, none of the managers indicated than an attribute was unimportant. (Table 2-8) More than half agreed that most service attributes were essential. Of those, 80% indicated the following were essential:

- Accurately reviewing applications
- Consistently applying codes during reviews
- Consistently applying codes during inspections
- Treating applicants consistently

However, senior leaders also had a high level of agreement that performance was not yet in the excellent range for those same for attributes, with 0-40% agreeing that current performance was excellent.

TABLE 2-8: KEY SERVICE ATTRIBUTE RATINGS – SENIOR LEADERS

	IMPORTANCE			PERFORMANCE		
	Essential	Important	Not Very Important	Excellent	Good	Not So Great
Accurately assessing whether applications are complete and ready for review.	20%	80%	0%	0%	60%	40%
Accurately reflecting community priorities in land use or other codes.	40%	60%	0%	0%	80%	20%
Accurately reviewing applications.	80%	20%	0%	20%	60%	20%
Communicating needs and issues to customers during the review process.	60%	40%	0%	20%	20%	60%
Communicating standards and requirements to customers before the submit applications.	60%	40%	0%	20%	0%	80%
Consistently applying codes during inspections.	80%	20%	0%	0%	60%	40%
Consistently applying codes during reviews.	80%	20%	0%	40%	20%	40%
Effectively managing multiple pending applications.	40%	60%	0%	20%	60%	20%
Engaging the community during land use or other code development.	60%	40%	0%	20%	80%	0%
Issuing approvals in a reasonable amount of time.	40%	60%	0%	0%	60%	40%
Quickly reviewing applications.	40%	60%	0%	20%	60%	20%
Responding quickly to requests for inspections.	40%	60%	0%	40%	60%	0%
Treating applicants equitably.	80%	20%	0%	40%	40%	20%
Writing codes that are understandable.	60%	40%	0%	0%	40%	60%
Writing codes that protect the community while allowing reasonable developments.	60%	40%	0%	0%	40%	60%

OPEN ENDED RESPONSES FROM SENIOR LEADERS

The leadership team was asked three open-ended questions:

1. **When you think about the development review process, what gives you the greatest sense of pride?**
2. **What is the most important thing you would change if you could, to make your job and the jobs of your colleagues, easier?**
3. **What is the most important thing you would change if you could, to better meet the needs and expectations of your customers?**

When asked what gave them the greatest sense of pride, the most common response related to professionalism and consistent application of the codes. One response appreciated the dedication and technical expertise of the organization's employees.

Changes to make jobs easier generated several suggestions, including:

- Hiring more staff
- Improving communication
- Rejecting partial or incomplete applications
- Resolving hardware and software issues
- Preventing applicants from bypassing staff's application
  of the code and permitting process by going directly to the directors

Suggestions for changes that would better meet the needs and expectations of the customers included:
- Hiring additional staff, particularly review and inspection staff
- Clearly communicating the City's expectations to the customers and holding customers to the minimum standards

STAFF AND MANAGER RESULTS

Respondents to the staff and manager survey included 49 employees, including staff from Permitting, Land Use Planning, Code Enforcement and Other / Unspecified. Approximately 45% of the respondents work in Permitting, 20% in Land Use Planning, 22% in Enforcement. The remainder (18%) are uncategorized. One person started the survey and did not get past the first question, so effectively 48 people completed the survey.

As with the leadership group, the staff group was asked a series of questions in the seven Baldrige categories: Leadership, Strategy, Customers, Measurement and Analysis, Workplace Environment, Operations, and Results. The questions were very similar to those asked of the managers. In like manner, they were also asked questions regarding service attributes, job match, and three open-ended questions.

> **Overall, the workplace climate received the highest average score, 3.84. Leadership and Customers also received higher marks (3.76 for both categories}. The Strategy category received the lowest rating (3.24). The Measurement and Operations categories each averaged 3.46 on the 5-point scale.**

A comparison of the overall averages of the staff and managers, in comparison with the senior leaders, by Baldrige category, is provided below in Figure 2-1. In comparison with the senior leadership group, the staff group gave the organization slightly higher marks than the leadership group in most cases across the Baldrige categories. Areas in which the staff scored the organization higher on average were: Customers, Measurement and Analysis, Workplace, Operations and Results. Areas where the results were lower than senior leaders were Leadership and Strategy (although the difference in the Leadership category was negligible). Categories where there was at least a half point scoring difference included: Strategy, Customer, and Measurement and Analysis. Because these scores may represent real differences in perception, conversations to explore the sources of the differences and their significance more fully are encouraged.

FIGURE 2-1.

Comparison of Sr. Leader and Staff/Manager Average Score by Baldrige Category

Category	Staff/Mgr Rating	Sr. Leader Ratings
Leadership	3.76	3.78
Strategy	3.24	3.90
Customer	3.76	2.88
Measurement & Analysis	3.46	2.88
Workplace	3.84	3.73
Operations	3.46	3.20
Results	3.64	3.40

LEADERSHIP RESPONSES

At least half of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with each statement on leadership. (Table 2-9) Staff agree that they know the organization's mission (83.3%) and that the leadership team demonstrate the organizations' values (76.6%). In contrast with the senior leaders' results, more than 80% of the staff indicate they know the organization's mission, the highest score in this grouping; however, a lower proportion were familiar with the vision. The highest proportion of neutral or negative responses related to the organization asking what employees think, with over 40% of the respondents in the neutral or negative columns. If the organization does not ask its employees for their opinions, it can result in lost opportunities for improvement ideas as well as result in lower morale and performance. While the rating on this group of questions was relatively high, opportunities for further improvements exist.

TABLE 2-9. LEADERSHIP SCORES – STAFF AND MANAGER SURVEY

LEADERSHIP	AV RATING	% AGREE	% NEITHER	% DISAGREE
My organization asks what I think.	3.42	56.3%	22.9%	20.8%
My organization's leaders share information about the organization.	3.63	64.6%	20.8%	14.6%
My senior leaders create a work environment that helps me do my job.	3.67	68.8%	12.5%	18.8%
I know my organization's vision (where it is trying to go in the future)	3.73	64.6%	25.0%	10.4%
I know my organization's mission (what it is trying to accomplish)	4.06	83.3%	12.5%	4.2%
My senior (top) leaders are ethical and demonstrate our organization's values	4.06	76.6%	19.1%	4.3%
Group Average	**3.76**			

STRATEGY RESPONSES

In comparison with the leadership group's responses, staff expressed a higher level of concern about the organization's strategic capabilities. (Table 2-10) Only half the respondents felt the organization encourages new ideas and only 40% stated that they know the parts of the organization's plans that impact them and believe that the organization can make changes quickly. The only statement that received more than 50% agreement was staff's ability to tell they are making progress. Even there, the proportion of staff replying in the neutral or negative response categories was over 40%. It appears that a lack of communication between leaders and staff; lack of opportunities for staff input; and lack of clarity around expectations and what constitutes success may be impeding the performance of the organization.

TABLE 2-10. STRATEGY SCORES – STAFF AND MANAGER SURVEY

STRATEGY	AV RATING	% AGREE	% NEITHER	%DISAGREE
My organization is flexible and makes changes quickly when needed.	3.06	39.6%	27.1%	33.3%
As it plans for the future, my organization asks for my ideas.	3.15	43.8%	31.3%	25.0%
I know the parts of my organization's plans that will affect me and my work.	3.26	40.4%	40.4%	19.1%
My organization encourages totally new ideas (innovation).	3.33	50.0%	22.9%	27.1%
I know how to tell if we are making progress on my work group.	3.42	58.3%	22.9%	18.8%
Group Average	**3.24**			

CUSTOMER FOCUS RESPONSES

Staff believes they have a much better understanding of their customers than the leadership group feels they have. The average score by managers and staff for this question set was 3.76, whereas the average score for the senior leaders was 2.88. (Table 2-11) The vast majority of staff (75%) indicate that they know who their most important customers are. Only one respondent indicated that they did not. This is in stark contrast with the opinion expressed of the leadership group. More than half (56%) of the staff indicated that they knew who the organization's most important customers are; only 8% indicated that they did not. The majority of the staff (69%) indicate that they are allowed to make decisions to satisfy customers and 67% regularly ask customers what they need. Only a third of the staff report they ask customers about their level of satisfaction, however. Approximately half of the staff could not agree or disagree that they ask the customer about their satisfaction.

The source of the disparity in customer scores between the senior leaders and the manager/staff group are not apparent through the survey instrument. It may be that senior leaders are not as familiar with the daily work and approaches of the staff as they might be, and therefore are making their assessment without the benefit of full knowledge of the work processes. It is also possible that there is a gap or difference of opinion between the senior leaders and the manager/staff group regarding who the customers are, and that difference may be emerging in the survey results. Regardless, a misalignment or misunderstanding of this magnitude is important to resolve. The two groups are more in agreement regarding a lack of feedback from customers regarding satisfaction, which increases the risk that the organization is missing the mark when it comes to understanding customer expectations and then meeting them.

TABLE 2-11. CUSTOMERS – STAFF AND MANAGER SURVEY

CUSTOMERS	AV RATING	% AGREE	% NEITHER	% DISAGREE
I know who my most important customers are.	4.10	75.0%	22.9%	2.1%
I regularly ask customers what they need and want.	3.98	66.7%	29.2%	4.2%
I ask if my customers are satisfied or dissatisfied with my work.	3.25	33.3%	47.9%	18.8%
I am allowed to make decisions to satisfy my customers.	3.73	68.8%	22.9%	8.3%
I also know who my organization's most important customers are.	3.73	56.3%	35.4%	8.3%
Group Average	**3.76**			

Measurement and Analysis Responses

Only 25% of the staff/manager respondents agree that they know how the organization is doing, about the same percentage as in the senior leader survey. (Table 2-12) Three-fourths of the staff agree that they know how to measure the quality of their work, whereas only 20% of the senior leaders indicated the same. As with the difference in strategy scores, the cause is not readily apparent in the survey, but the root causes may be similar and should be explored further.

In spite of indicating they know how to measure the quality of their work, many staff (more than two-thirds) indicated they do not know how such data fits into efforts to improve. This is in keeping with the senior leadership team, which scored this element low as well. This situation may be occurring because the organization does not yet have a strong culture of improvement. Organizations with a strong culture of improvement typically have regular venues for discussing performance metrics, as well as opportunities for staff to build their capability and understanding of how to approach and carry out process improvements. If these elements are missing, it is less likely that attempts at process improvement will occur, must less be sustainable.

Table 2-12. Measurement and Analysis – Staff and Manager Survey

Measurement and Analysis	AV Rating	% Agree	% Neither	% Disagree
I know how to measure the quality of my work.	3.90	75.0%	22.9%	2.1%
I can use this information to make changes that will improve my work.	3.79	68.1%	27.7%	4.3%
I know how the data I use in my work fit into the organization's overall data on improvement.	3.23	31.3%	52.1%	16.7%
I get all the important information I need to do my work.	3.35	52.1%	22.9%	25.0%
I know how my organization as a whole is doing.	3.04	25.0%	52.1%	22.9%
Group Average	**3.46**			

WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT RESPONSES

Average scores for the staff/manager group were highest for this category of questions. (Table 2-13) Staff are committed to the success of the organization: more than 90% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement regarding commitment to the organization's success. Most staff also indicate that they have a safe work environment (79%) and they work as a team (75%).

Staff recognition scores were much lower, with only 57% of the respondents indicating that they are recognized for their work, and this statement received the lowest average score. Similarly, only 52% fell that leadership encourages them to develop their job skills. On a closely related statement, only 62% of the staff indicated that the bosses and organization cared about them. In fact, this statement (along with the recognition statement) had the highest number of staff indicate they strongly disagreed. As mentioned in the leader section, if employees do not currently have, or are not encouraged to develop the skills they need, it can negatively impact their ability to carry out their work well.

TABLE 2-13. WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT – STAFF AND MANAGERS

WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT	AV RATING	% AGREE	% NEITHER	% DISAGREE
The people I work with cooperate and work as a team.	3.81	74.5%	10.6%	14.9%
My bosses encourage me to develop my job skills so I can advance in my career.	3.59	52.2%	30.4%	17.4%
I am recognized for my work.	3.53	57.4%	29.8%	12.8%
I have a safe workplace.	4.04	78.7%	14.9%	6.4%
My bosses and my organization care about me.	3.66	61.7%	27.7%	10.6%
I am committed to my organization's success.	4.40	95.7%	4.3%	0.0%
Group Average	**3.84**			

OPERATIONS RESPONSES

Only 47% of the respondents indicate they can get what they need to perform their jobs (40% of senior leaders agreed), and over a third (34%) disagreed that they have what they need. (Table 2-14) Only about half the staff (51%) agreed that the organization has good processes for doing its work. Thirty percent could neither agree nor disagree about the quality of the process. This may indicate that processes are not fully formed, standardized, or communicated. Further, it indicates staff are likely struggling to do the right thing in the absence of the supports and equipment needed to run the process well.

Nearly two-thirds indicated they could improve their work processes when necessary. However, in other sections of the survey, staff had indicated they did not know how data fit into improvement of processes. Further, many indicated they did not ask customers about satisfaction with their work. This presents a dilemma. In the absence of data that corroborates staff and manager intuition about how to improve processes and in the absence of customer feedback about expectations and satisfaction, staff risk modifying processes in ways that do not actually improve them. If if they do improve the process, they will not have a gauge as to efficiency or effectiveness of the changes (that is, they will not be able to tell, more than anecdotally, whether the change really made a difference). Finally, they may modify processes in a way that actually increases, rather than decreases, customer dissatisfaction.   While this result may indicate a willingness to modify processes, which is a positive, essential trait, the risks of failure will be higher if the other information is not also in place.

Slightly more than half indicate the organization is prepared to handle emergencies, with many undecided. The reasons for the reticence to agree could be explored to expose any possible lack of understanding of what to do in emergencies and to verify that all hazards have been addressed with emergency planning and procedures.

TABLE 2-14. OPERATIONS – STAFF AND MANAGERS

OPERATIONS	AV RATING	% AGREE	% NEITHER	% DISAGREE
I can get everything I need to do my job.	3.23	46.8%	19.1%	34.0%
We have good processes for doing our work.	3.36	51.1%	29.8%	19.1%
I can improve my work processes when necessary.	3.68	63.8%	27.7%	8.5%
We are prepared to handle emergencies.	3.57	57.4%	29.8%	12.8%
Group Average	**3.46**			

RESULTS RESPONSES

According to staff, Anchorage is a good place to work: 83% of the respondents agreed with this statement. (Table 2-15) Staff believes that the organization practices high ethical standards (74%) and obeys laws and regulations (79%).

Although many staff indicate they do not ask if customers are satisfied with their work, approximately two thirds (64%) feel that their customers are satisfied with their work and that their work meets all the requirements (66%). However, staff can have more confidence in their judgment, and the organization as a whole will be more likely to meet expectations and increase satisfaction, if customers and the organization work together to more clearly define needs and critical success attributes.

Only one in five respondents (19%) believe that the organization removes barriers that get in the way of progress. Thirty-eight percent of the respondents believe the organization does not remove barriers. Staff do not appear to have confidence that the barriers they face will be addressed. This could affect motivation to improve, and result in a stasis in performance. If communication between staff/managers and senior leaders is

poor or non-existent with respect to major barriers, it can further erode staff trust in the ability to change. Finally, staff does not feel that they know how the organization is doing financially. This measure generated the largest "strongly disagree" response (11%). A lack of understanding of the financial situation of the organization can contribute to confusion regarding what types of investments in resources and improvements are possible, the importance of improving in ways that don't involve cost increases, and a sense of unease in general.

TABLE 2-15. RESULTS – STAFF AND MANAGERS

RESULTS	AV RATING	% AGREE	% NEITHER	% DISAGREE
My work products meet all requirements (my managers' and my customers' expectations and specifications)	3.77	66.0%	25.5%	8.5%
My customers are satisfied with my work.	3.74	63.8%	29.8%	6.4%
I know how well my organization is doing financially.	2.81	27.7%	34.0%	38.3%
My organization has the right people and skills to do its work.	3.49	59.6%	23.4%	17.0%
My organization removes things that get in the way of progress.	2.72	19.1%	42.6%	38.3%
My organization obeys laws and regulations.	4.13	78.7%	19.1%	2.1%
My organization practices high standards and ethics.	4.00	73.9%	23.9%	2.2%
My organization helps me help my community.	3.83	70.2%	21.3%	8.5%
My organization is a good place to work.	4.23	83.0%	12.8%	4.3%
Group Average	**3.64**			

SERVICE ATTRIBUTES: IMPORTANCE AND PERFORMANCE

Table 2-16 summarizes and compares the importance of key service attributes, as identified by staff, and compares them with opinions regarding current performance. Those items felt to be of most importance to staff and managers for success (70% or more rated as "essential") included:

- Accurately reviewing applications
- Consistently applying codes during reviews
- Engaging the community during land use or other code development
- Treating applicants equitably
- Writing codes that are understandable
- Writing codes that protect the community while allowing reasonable developments

Staff feels there are huge gaps, however, between importance and performance on these attributes, with a low percentage indicating excellence against those same attributes.

TABLE 2-16: KEY SERVICE ATTRIBUTE RATINGS – STAFF AND MANAGERS

	IMPORTANCE			PERFORMANCE		
	Essential	Important	Not Very Important	Excellent	Good	Not So Great
Accurately assessing whether applications are complete and ready for review.	58%	40%	3%	13%	59%	13%
Accurately reflecting community priorities in land use or other codes.	52%	43%	5%	10%	61%	12%
Accurately reviewing applications.	73%	28%	0%	15%	60%	13%
Communicating needs and issues to customers during the review process.	56%	44%	0%	15%	67%	13%
Communicating standards and requirements to customers before the submit applications.	65%	35%	3%	8%	65%	13%
Consistently applying codes during inspections.	68%	22%	0%	32%	59%	14%
Consistently applying codes during reviews.	82%	21%	0%	28%	43%	13%
Effectively managing multiple pending applications.	27%	78%	0%	10%	67%	13%
Engaging the community during land use or other code development.	71%	34%	5%	22%	56%	12%
Issuing approvals in a reasonable amount of time.	35%	65%	3%	21%	66%	13%
Quickly reviewing applications.	34%	61%	2%	15%	53%	13%
Responding quickly to requests for inspections.	36%	59%	0%	35%	57%	14%
Treating applicants equitably.	74%	19%	0%	26%	54%	13%
Writing codes that are understandable.	80%	20%	3%	8%	5%	13%
Writing codes that protect the community while allowing reasonable developments.	71%	27%	2%	5%	75%	13%

Open Ended Responses for Staff and Managers

The staff and managers were asked the same three open-ended questions as senior leaders:

1. **When you think about the development review process, what gives you the greatest sense of pride?**
2. **What is the most important thing you would change if you could, to make your job and the jobs of your colleagues, easier?**
3. **What is the most important thing you would change if you could, to better meet the needs and expectations of your customers?**

When asked what gave them the greatest sense of pride three common themes emerged:

- Customer Focus/Results
- Quality of Work
- Teamwork

Staff took pride in helping the community get through a complicated process and in the level of service provided to the public. Providing accurate information was stressed in several comments. Several staff took pride in happy customers. Another took pride in the fairness of the system.

Numerous staff take pride in the high quality work that is provided by staff. Getting it right the first time, quality end product, and accurate plan reviews were common messages and important sources of pride for staff. In addition, several staff stressed the teamwork aspect of staff's work. "We are a team." One staff member complimented the employer for trying to improve by using its employee's opinions.

The question concerning changes that would make your job easier generated 39 specific suggestions. Better IT support and improved software capacity were high on the list of improvements sought by staff. Staff noted a number of specific software problems with the current system. In addition, four staff members mentioned the need for better IT support. Better internal communications was an improvement suggested by several staff. One of the more important concerns expressed was staff capacity. Staff recommended increasing the budget, adding staff and improving staff training.

Changes that would better meet the needs and expectations of the customers resulted in 35 suggestions. Numerous suggestions were offered concerning work process. Interruptions was a concern for some staff. Others offered specific process improvements. Several staff offered improvements in the area of customer communication, including providing better customer training to improve the quality of submittals. One staff recommended the establishment of a day and time for pre-application meetings. As with the previous question, hiring more and better-qualified staff was a common suggestion. Training was brought up a couple of times. Cross training the long-range and current planners was recommended by one staff. Another suggestion was to train staff so that there is consistent interpretation and implementation of the code.

CUSTOMER SURVEY RESPONSES

The vast majority of the respondents (93%) have submitted either a Land Use or Building Permit application with in the past 12 months. Almost half of the respondents (46%) were contractors while architects made up 15% of the respondents. Engineers and building owners each accounted for 10% of the respondents. In general, the respondents appear to understand the City review processes and have experience in dealing with the development process in Anchorage. The full set of responses is available in Appendix A of this report.

A total of 42 individuals responded to at least a portion of the survey. A total of 12 responded to the Land Use Planning questions and 30 responded to the Building Permit and Inspection questions.

FEEDBACK ON LAND USE PLANNING SERVICES

A little over half of the 30 respondents submitted a Land Use Application to the City. However, the majority of the respondents (71%) chose not to respond to questions concerning the City's Land Use Planning services. The 12 that did respond expressed significant concerns about the City's land use planning services. Only one statement regarding service quality attributes (information of the status is readily available) exceeded 50% agreement from the respondents.

Only 8% of the customers that responded to the survey believe that the Department applies the land use code consistently. (Table 2-17) Only a third feel that the land use code is understandable and only a quarter believe it is reasonable. The belief that the land use code is being applied inconsistently may be the result of several internal and external factors and should be a concern of the organization. Customers in other jurisdictions have indicated, for instance, that consistent, fair applications of rules and regulations is key to customer satisfaction. In a like manner, customers cannot prepare applications well if they do not understand the code, and codes perceived to be unreasonable may result in continuous conflict with staff and escalation of concerns to senior leaders.

TABLE 2-17. KEY CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS FOR PLANNING – CUSTOMER RATINGS

CODE	AV RATING	% AGREE	% NEITHER	% DISAGREE
The City applies the land use code consistently and fairly to everyone.	2.42	8.3%	41.7%	50.0%
The land use code is understandable.	3.00	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%
The land use code is reasonable.	3.00	25.0%	50.0%	25.0%

There is general and widespread dissatisfaction with the land use application process by the customer group. Specifically, only one respondent agreed that "overall the land use application process works well". (Table 2-18) Over 90% of the respondents could not agree. Only a third of the customers believe that the submittal requirements are reasonable; are easy to understand; that the directions are clear; and that they know what to expect during the process. Concerns were also raised about how long it takes to obtain land use approvals. Information on the status of applications was the only measure that received fair ratings with just over half of the respondents agreeing that the information is available.

TABLE 2-18. LAND USE APPLICATION PROCESS CUSTOMER RATINGS

PROCESS	AV RATING	% AGREE	% NEITHER	% DISAGREE
Overall, the land use application process works well.	2.64	9.1%	36.4%	54.5%
The submittal requirements for land use applications are reasonable.	3.08	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%
The submittal requirements for land use applications are easy to understand.	3.00	33.3%	25.0%	41.7%
The directions on how to submit a land use application are clear.	3.00	33.3%	25.0%	41.7%
I know what to expect during the land use application review process.	2.83	33.3%	25.0%	41.7%
The time it takes to obtain land use approvals is usually reasonable.	2.83	33.3%	25.0%	41.7%
Information on the status of my land use applications is readily available.	3.36	54.5%	27.3%	18.2%

Customers generally believe that staff member professionally and objectively deal with conflicts with only 17% disagreeing. (Table 2-19) Unfortunately, 80% report that their application has had glitches. Respondents indicated concerns about the time it takes to get questions answered, the easy of communication with staff, the accuracy of the information they receive from staff, and the time estimates provided by staff.

TABLE 2-19. PLANNER INTERACTIONS - CUSTOMERS RATINGS

STAFF	AV RATING	% AGREE	% NEITHER	% DISAGREE
Planners handle conflicts professionally and objectively.	3.25	41.7%	41.7%	16.7%
Planners respond to my questions quickly.	3.00	27.3%	45.5%	27.3%
Planners provide accurate information to me.	2.91	18.2%	54.5%	27.3%
Planners estimate my review time(s) reasonably well.	2.83	16.7%	58.3%	25.0%
It is easy to communicate with the planners during my land use reviews.	2.75	16.7%	50.0%	33.3%
There are usually no major glitches or surprises from the planners during my review(s).	2.08	8.3%	8.3%	83.3%

Land use planning customers were invited to make specific comments about their concerns and to suggest changes to the process. A total of 16 comments were received. Three respondents recommended that the Department go back to the previous version of the Title 21 Code. Several comments related to inconsistent information or inconsistency from one review to the next. At least one respondent felt that staff does not value the knowledge of design professionals and one expressed concerns about the timelines for review.

BUILDING PERMIT AND INSPECTION SERVICES

Thirty individuals responded to the questions concerning the City's Building Permit Process, although only 14 indicated they had submitted an application for a building permit in the past 12 months. Similar to the Land Use process, only four measures exceeded 50% agreement from the respondents. For all other questions, the percentage of respondents agreeing with the statement fell below 50%.

Seventy-three percent of the customers feel that the Department does not apply the building codes consistently and fairly to everyone. (Table 2-20) Over a third of the customers (37%) report that the requirements for building in Anchorage are understandable and just under a third believe the requirements to build are reasonable.

TABLE 2-20. KEY CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS FOR PERMITS – CUSTOMER RATINGS

GENERAL ENVIRONMENT	AV RATING	% AGREE	% NEITHER	%DISAGREE
The City applies building and related codes consistently and fairly to everyone.	2.03	16.7%	10.0%	73.3%
The requirements for building in Anchorage are understandable.	2.83	36.7%	20.0%	43.3%
The requirements for building are reasonable.	2.77	30.0%	23.3%	46.7%

In terms of the application process itself, only 5 respondents (17%) indicated that the City's building permitting and inspections processes are working well. (Table 2-21) Sixty-seven feel that the processes are not working well. The ratings for the time requirement to obtain a building permit mirror that for the overall process. The time it takes to obtain final approval rated much higher but is still below 50%. Only a quarter (27%) of the customers state that they know what to expect during the permitting and inspection processes. Customers indicated concerns about the submittal requirements in terms of being reasonable and understandable. Only 40% feel that the submittals are reasonable and understandable. Only half indicate that the application directions are clear. Information on the status of building permits and inspections faired a bit better as well as inspections being performed on schedule.

TABLE 2-21. PERMIT PROCESS RATINGS FROM CUSTOMERS

PROCESS	AV RATING	% AGREE	% NEITHER	% DIS-AGREE
Overall, the building permit and inspections processes work well.	2.14	16.7%	16.7%	66.7%
The submittal requirements for a building permit are reasonable.	2.97	40.0%	26.7%	33.3%
The submittal requirements for a building permit application are easy to understand.	2.90	40.0%	20.0%	40.0%
The directions on how to submit a building permit application are clear.	3.20	50.0%	30.0%	20.0%
I know what to expect during the permitting and inspections processes.	2.70	26.7%	30.0%	43.3%
The time it takes to obtain a building permit is usually reasonable.	2.07	16.7%	16.7%	66.7%
The time it takes to final approvals (CO's, letters of approval) is usually reasonable.	3.03	44.8%	27.6%	27.6%
Inspections are usually performed according to schedule.	3.47	56.7%	33.3%	10.0%
Information on the status of my building permit applications is readily available.	3.30	56.7%	20.0%	23.3%
Information on the status of my inspections is readily available.	3.30	50.0%	26.7%	23.3%

Respondents do not appear to feel that staff handles conflict in a professional or objective manner – less than a third agree. (Table 2-22) The majority of the respondents (67%) report that major glitches and surprises from staff during the review is common. Approximately a quarter (27%) of the respondents do not believe that they receive complete and comprehensive comments from the reviewers. And as with Land Use Planning Services, customers indicated concerns about the time it takes to get questions answered, the ease of communication with staff, the accuracy of the information they receive from staff, and the time estimates provided by staff.

TABLE 2-22: PERMIT STAFF INTERACTIONS - CUSTOMERS RATINGS

STAFF	AV RATING	% AGREE	% NEITHER	%DISAGREE
Staff handles conflicts professionally and objectively during permitting and inspections.	2.87	30.0%	36.7%	33.3%
Staff responds to my questions quickly during permit review and inspections.	2.60	30.0%	16.7%	53.3%
Staff provides accurate information to me during permitting and inspections.	2.60	23.3%	30.0%	46.7%
Reviewers provide complete, comprehensive comments to me.	2.70	26.7%	30.0%	43.3%
Staff usually estimates my permit application review time reasonably well.	2.40	20.0%	20.0%	60.0%
It is easy to communicate with the appropriate staff during permit review and inspections.	2.60	23.3%	23.3%	53.3%
There are usually no major glitches or surprises from the staff during my review(s).	2.07	13.3%	20.0%	66.7%

Building Permit and Inspection customers were asked two open-ended questions. The two questions generated 48 comments. When asked what works best, the majority of the customers expressed favorable comments about the staff (8 comments) and on-line aspects of the submittal process (6 comments). Several comments noted that the intentions of staff and the process were good, but also expressed concerns about follow through.

When asked if they could change one thing, 26 of the 41 respondents (62%) replied. Most of the concerns (10) related to either the time it took for review and permitting or the time it took to get applications into the system. Several respondents are concerned about waiting for staff to perform an initial review, and with only one intake station. Several (3) suggested a third-party review process instead of going through the City's process, and one person suggested scrapping the current system and replacing it with one that is similar to Eagle River or Girdwood.

Respondents also suggested potential solutions to problems, including:

- Assigning a permit manager for each application to coordinate review responses and enforce timeline standards
- Having more than one intake lines, one for first-timers and another for those familiar with the process
- The ability to receive zoning approval prior to full building application
- Uploading inspection reports immediately when completed and approve
- Providing a time estimate for when reviews will be completed
- Insuring that all review and inspection comments reference back to the specific code section specifying how the proposal violates the code section
- Creating flexible partial approvals within the new electronic permitting system

Moments of Madness and Inspiration Summary

In May 2017, the project team held a Kickoff Meeting with Anchorage and a representative of the Cook Inlet Housing Authority. After the Kickoff and before the June Blitz Week, the project team invited staff to keep diaries of their "moments of madness and inspiration" – recording real-time what they were thinking and seeing as process problems and opportunities as they worked. A few staff provided comments late, and those are incorporated here as well. The responses are organized in broad themes to help the reader see trends in the information.

Work Procedures
The following Work Procedure related comments are noteworthy:

- Numerous staff expressed concerns about the time commitment and lack of a process to schedule and conduct walk-throughs. One specific suggestion was to have customers sent to Zoning first to start the walk-through process.
- Interruptions were also a major concern of staff. There is a general expression that frequent interruptions are cutting into staff productivity. Several staff suggested creating a block of time where they can work without interruptions from phone calls, e-mails and walk-throughs.
- Staff expressed concerns about customers being allowed to jump ahead in the queuing system either by going around staff to managers or through an express review. "Any expedited work should be by extra resources", suggested one respondent.
- Having adequate time to perform reviews and having knowledgeable people set the review timelines was also expressed as a concern; as well as not getting reviews on-time from other departments.
- It appears that submittals are not required to indicate where a comment is addressed requiring extra review time.
- Technicians seek improving the ability to open plan sets they are taking in for a permit.
- Staff suggested changes to the phone system; first, creating a central operator and, second, having outgoing calls reflect the desk the call is coming from.
- Having a consistent and mandatory file checkout system for anyone checking out a file.

Technology and Software
The following Technology and Software related comments are noteworthy:

- The inability of the current software systems to manage critical information is inadequate. It appears that it is taking staff too long to retrieve and manage data from the Hanson and Avolve systems. One comment pointed out "a database is what empowers management to make good decision".
- Several comments were received about the difficulty in using Hanson especially the number of required keystrokes.
- It appears the Kronos does not integrate well with PeopleSoft software.
- The short time duration (approximately 5 minutes) before computers require a password generated numerous comments and appears to waste staff time.

Equipment Needs
- The following Equipment Needs related comments are noteworthy:
- Updating AV equipment in meeting rooms and more color printers were suggested by staff. The current AV equipment is adversely impacting staff's ability to make presentations.
- Two suggestion requested the upgrading of the current "bar" phones.

People and Personnel Issues
The following People and Personnel related comments are noteworthy:

- Forces from outside the department can impact the services of Developmental Services and are unavoidable constraints to the work environment.

- The organizational structure of the Municipality, with its strong mayor form of government, results in changes in top leadership.
- It is also noted that decisions by other departments impact the performance of Developmental Services.
- Stress is often unavoidable, but adversely impacts staff. Changes in staffing policies can inadvertently shift work to other staff creating stress. One comment concluded, "In making decisions, the administration needs to be aware and concerned with the effects their decisions have on employees".
- One suggestion called for improving the way the Municipality recruits and selects new building inspectors focusing on the best qualified.
- Another suggestion is to tell the department's story more consistently; repeating the goals and mission.

CUSTOMER ISSUES
The following Customer related comments are noteworthy:

- Some customers appear to find ways to circumvent the process and receive special treatment.
- Customers do not have an incentive to submit better work and often rely upon reviewers to catch their mistakes. Providing then an incentive such as faster reviews may provide them with an incentive to submit higher quality work.
- At times, customers submit inadequate structural drawings that have not been reviewed by the design team's in-house engineers.

WORK QUALITY
The following Work Quality related comments are noteworthy:

- Alaska does not require a license to design a house, at times resulting in poor designs.
- Small project often require engineering but the cost is often too great.

TRAINING
The following Training related comments are noteworthy:

- The requirements to be a Permit Technician may be too high and contribute to shorter longevity.
- Training in technical writing may improve the quality of review comments.
- Training in GIS is not provided and departmental GIS provides limited assistance.

CODE RELATED ISSUES
The following Code related comments are noteworthy:

- The standards in the new stormwater manual go beyond the MS4 requirements and will result in increased development costs. It may be more reasonable to revise the existing documents.
- Code committees have the authority to modify or waive code requirements that may be beyond their area of expertise.
- Currently, the Municipality does not have a good method to prevent property owners from draining water onto adjacent properties. Before and after contour drawings are recommended.
- Soil information for home design is not required and, therefore, some homes are built on unknown soils.

SAFETY AND SECURITY
The following Safety and Security related comments are noteworthy:

- Security is needed at public meetings, such as Planning and Zoning Commissions. A June 5th incident was highlighted.

General Comments

The following General Comments are noteworthy:

- Institute "fun days" similar to snow days.
- Create a means to save budget surplus.
- Rearrange folders so that the most current are most accessible.
- Reconsider the Stormwater review fees. They seem disproportionally high.
- Recognize planning credentials such as AICP.
- Improve integration between Planning and Public Transportation

Overall Survey Conclusions

The survey instruments identified some areas of strengths, but also a number of apparent opportunities for improvement. In using the results, Anchorage should keep in mind that surveys provide a snapshot of an organization and are reflective of the respondents' opinions, but do not in and of themselves provide definitive recommendations for addressing issues and gaps. We strongly recommend further conversations to discover and address the root causes of the gaps, and comparisons of the survey results with the results of other analysis conducted as a part of this study for corroboration (or not).

Strengths

First, the good news. The surveys have identified a host of areas in which the organization is performing good to well. Employees have a strong commitment and desire to see the organization succeed and to serve the citizens of Anchorage. They are dedicated to the mission of the organization and see themselves as a team. Both the leadership and employees set high ethical standards and live up to those standards. Employees are engaged in their work and want to see improvement. The organization has provided a favorable work environment and employees believe that this is a good place to work. Employees have a generally favorable opinion of the leadership. In short, the organization has a good foundation from which to build.

Opportunities for Improvement

The survey and staff comments have yielded areas for future growth in performance. Six common themes emerge. These areas are related to internal communications, customer engagement, staff capacity, staff morale, staff training and alignment, performance measurement, and operational process improvement.

Internal Communication: Vision, mission, the customer, and expectations are unclear.

Several of the lower rated statements in the survey indicated the lack of knowledge or understanding of the organization. For example, the leadership group indicated that staff does not understand the vision and mission of the organization; does not know their own or the organization's most important customer; does not know the part's of the plans that affect them and their work; does not know how their performance information fits into the organization; and does not know how the organization is doing financially.

Solution: To capitalize on the commitment staff reports, it is incumbent upon the leadership group to rethink what, when, and how to communicate of the staff. This includes the vision, mission, and customer expectations as well as day to day leadership and management expectations. We recommend doing an internal "stakeholder communication analysis" to identify key groups, key information, and when, how, and how often to provide information.

CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT: UNDERSTAND CUSTOMER NEEDS AND COMMUNICATE ORGANIZATION NEEDS TO CUSTOMER.

In addition to concerns about understanding who the important customers are, concerns have been expressed about customer satisfaction with the services they receive. Both the leadership and staff groups indicated that customers are not asked if they are satisfied or dissatisfied the services they receive from the organization. Customers are not asked what they need and want for the process. The leadership group does not believe that the customers are satisfied with the services they receive. In addition, there are significant gaps between essential service attributes and reported performance. These conclusions are further born out in the customer survey.

Superior organizations work hard to understand the perspective of the customer, because it is step one in understanding what will lead to success from their perspective. The organization may benefit by exploring ways to engage the customer more fully in the process. Listening to and understanding the needs of the customer is a vital first step. Customers must also understand the needs and perspectives of the organization. Superior organizations find ways to let customers know the expectations of the organization and help customers find efficient means to assess their services.

SOLUTION: Similar to the internal stakeholder analysis, an external stakeholder communication analysis could be of value in identifying how best to gather customer feedback on a regular basis. Many tools, such as eNewsletters, surveys and stakeholder steering committees could be of value.

STAFF CAPACITY: REVIEW EXISTING STAFF LEVELS AND WORKLOAD TO DETERMINE NEED.

Comments from the open-ended questions indicate that both leaders and staff have concerns about staffing levels.

SOLUTION: Staffing needs can be addressed with four basic strategies: quickly filling vacant positions; seeking new positions through the budget process; finding innovative ways to obtain additional staff resources (temporary staff, consultants, cooperative agreements with neighboring jurisdictions, interns, etc.); and gaining efficiencies on how you do work (for example, using lean tools to identify ways to do more with fewer staff). Obtaining additional funding is always difficult in the public sector. Several jurisdictions have moved to enterprise funds either fully or partially to fund development review functions. Some have avoided the need for additional staff by exploring how to more efficiently deliver the services.

STAFF MORALE: CONSISTENT EFFORT NEEDS TO BE MADE TO ENSURE THE ORGANIZATION CULTIVATES AND MAINTAINS HIGH STAFF MORALE.

The survey indicates the employees believe that the organization is a good palace to work, however, they point out that the organization does not ask them what they think. Too many staff have expressed that the "bosses" and organization does not care about them and staff recognition may be a bit lacking. Further, there is general agreement that the organization does not remove barriers that get in the way of progress. Less than half of the staff indicate that they get everything they need to do their job. Consistent effort needs to be made to ensure the organization cultivates and maintains high staff morale. Low morale can contribute to low performance levels, exacerbating issues such as poor processes, poor communication, and unclear expectations.

SOLUTION: We encourage Anchorage to understand more deeply the relationship between the morale issues and the other issues identified here. It is possible they are highly correlated and that addressing the other issues will improve morale. It is also possible that there are other independent variables (such as specific workplace conditions or personnel policies) that are a source of challenges with morale.

STAFF TRAINING AND ALIGNMENT OF POSITIONS: SUPPORT STAFF TRAINING AND ANALYZE EXISTING JOB DESCRIPTIONS TO ENSURE ALIGNMENT WITH CURRENT NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS.

Although staff training was not mentioned in the open-ended comment section of their survey, the leadership group reported in the closed-ended questions that they do not believe that they encourage staff to develop their job skills. In addition, the leadership group reports that staff's work products do not meet all requirements. The need for staff training was a common issue raised in the staff survey comment section. Both staff and customers raised concerns about consistency of reviews from project to project and from reviewer to reviewer. Typically, inconsistencies and failure to meet work requirements call into question the training processes of an organization.

SOLUTION: Staff training on work processes, along with more standard work approaches, could help address the challenges reporting in the survey. The organization may further benefit from a comparison of whether existing job descriptions and duties are fitting well with today's position needs and expectations: misalignment between existing duties and current needs, indicate a need to update job descriptions as well as assure that training for today's needs is appropriate.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT: MEASURE PERFORMANCE, PROVIDE FEEDBACK TO STAFF, AND SET PERFORMANCE STANDARDS.

If you are not measuring how you are doing, it is difficult to tell how you are doing. There appears to be significant disagreement between the leaders and staff concerning staff's ability to understand how to measure work quality. Employees do not appear to know how performance information is used to improve the organization, and they lack information about how the organization is doing. There does not appear to be an information feedback loop since it is reported that employees do not get all the information they need to do their work.

SOLUTION: If not already developed, performance standards related to timeliness, completeness, accuracy, reliability, and reasonable cost need to be developed and discussed monthly with staff. Without this, assessment of efficiency and effectiveness will only be anecdotal, and the organization is not in a very strong position to tell the story of its successes and challenges.

OPERATIONAL PROCESS IMPROVEMENT: THE EXISTING PROCESS DOES NOT WORK WELL AND NEEDS TO BE IMPROVED.

The surveys have raised concerns from leadership, staff and customers about the underlying code foundation, as well as the processes used to review development proposals, be they land use applications or permits.

SOLUTION: The comments sections of each of the surveys (leaders, staff and customers) generated numerous suggestions on how to improve the process ranging from eliminating the process to obtaining more staff, cross training staff, better equipment, better communications, etc. For specific operational improvement recommendations, see the Executive Summary of this report .

Notes:

OVERVIEW

SPEED MAPPING WORKSHOPS

The Speed Mapping sessions occurred on Day 1 of the Blitz Week. Participants included key staff from the organization. These sessions provided staff and the project team with **a better understanding of the big picture view of Anchorage's development process. Participants built system maps called SIPOCs (Supplier, Input, Process, Output and Customer) to generate this big-picture view and to clarify expectations and current performance.** Gaps between expectations and current performance then became candidates for consideration as issues on Day 2, during the Get to the Root Workshops. This section summarizes the work that took place on Day 1.

> NOTE: In the SIPOC exercise, suppliers are those who provide Inputs (information, documents, resources, etc.) that are needed to carry out a process. The process is the sequence of tasks or steps taken to transform an Input into an output (for instance, to transform an initially submitted permit application into an approved permit after review). Outputs are the goods or services provided to customers at the end of the process. In the case of review processes, such as those addressed here, applicants can play two roles: suppliers when they provide and submit an application, and customers when they are waiting for and then receive a permit to construct. Figure 3-1 shows an example of a SIPOC map, using Deli Sales.

GET TO THE ROOT WORKSHOPS

The Get to the Root workshop built on the work done on Day 1 during the Speed Mapping Sessions. More specifically, each breakout group reviewed the issues identified during the Speed Mapping, and selected 1-2 issues to further explore on Day 2 during the Get to the Root Sessions. The primary objective of the Get to the Root Sessions was to clarify why these particular issues and challenges were present. **By identifying the root causes, any solutions proposed would have a higher probability of addressing the source of the problems, instead of just the symptoms of the problems. By addressing the source of the problems, the likelihood that the solutions will work well increases.**

INTERVIEWS

One-on-one interviews with ten key staff members on Day 3 helped **clarify challenges to work processes.** Staff were able to openly discuss areas where break-downs occur, where systems are lacking, where deficiencies in technology or training or staffing affect their efficiency and effectiveness. The objective here was to **gain an unfiltered insight into the inner workings. Differences between the actual work happening day-to-day basis and the official job descriptions were also revealed.**

PROCESS HACKATHON EVENT

Blitz week ended on Day 5 with a summary presentation to industry professionals of the work accomplished and initial findings from Days 1, 2, and 3. Planning, design, contracting, and construction professionals joined senior Municipality staff to **review major items in need of retooling within the Planning, Permit Review, and Inspection functions.** Participants were also able to **add their own perspective** to the mix, comment on the systems needing the most attention, and talk with leadership staff.
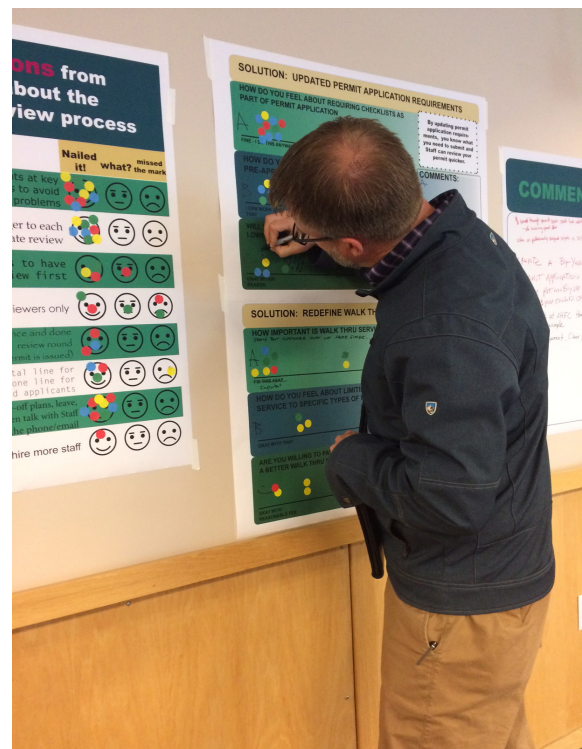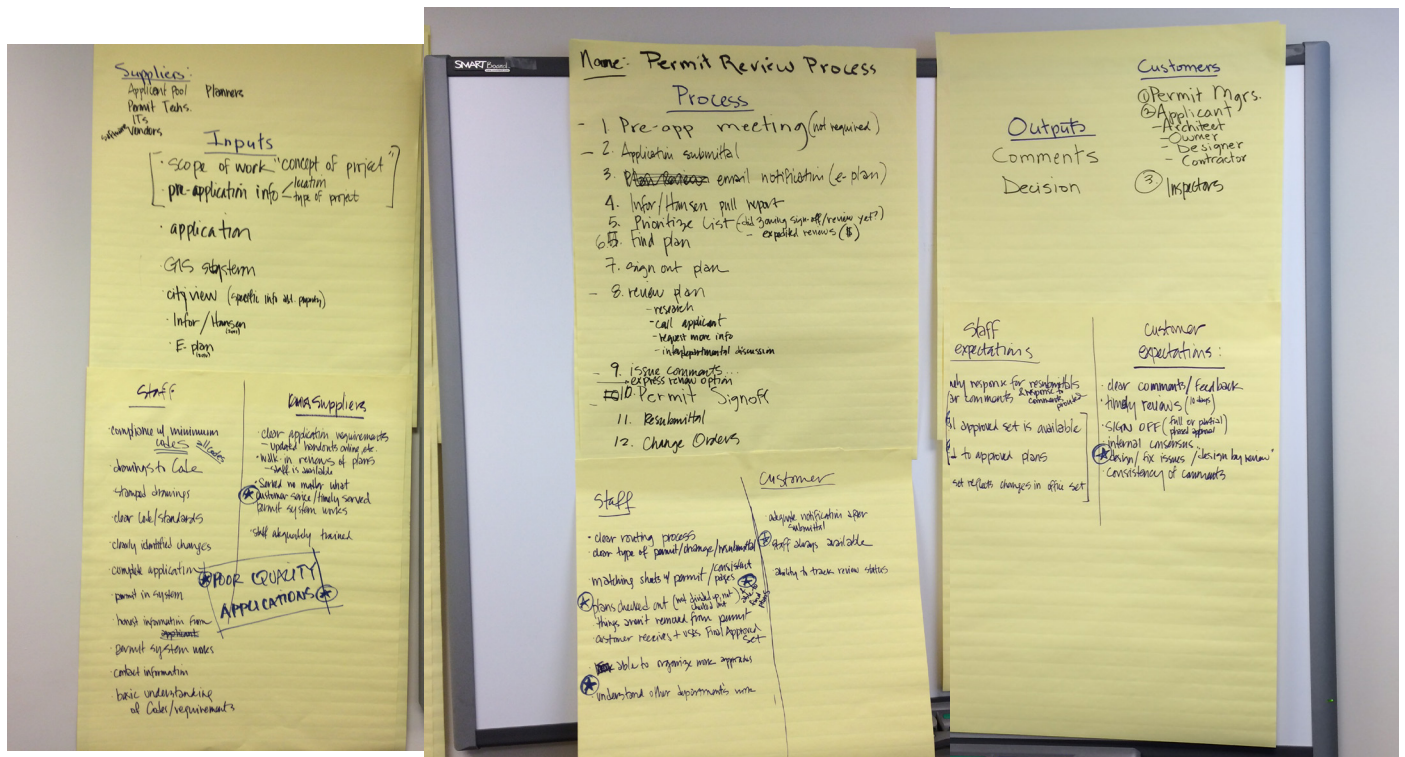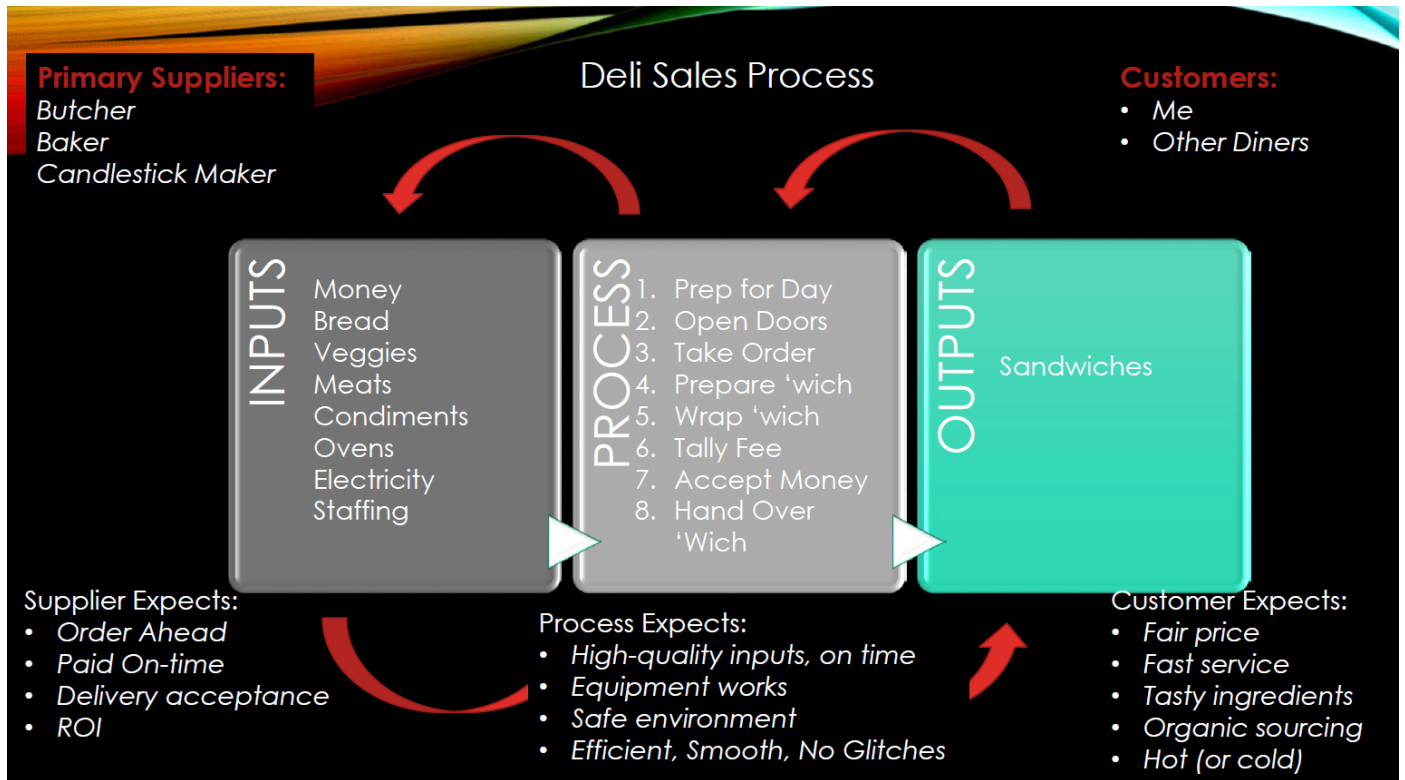
FIGURE 3-1: EXAMPLE SIPOC MAP

LAND USE PLANNING

This section provides results and key findings from the Speed Mapping, Get to the Root, Interviews, and Hackathon as it relates to the Land Use Planning Process.

SPEED MAPPING RESULTS FOR LAND USE PLANNING

Process Steps and Expectations

The primary process steps identified during this workshop session for the Land Use Planning Process stretched from initial policy and code development through notice of zoning action:

START TO FINISH

1. Ideas
2. Policy development (Long Range Planners)
3. Adoption of code amendments (Current Planners)
4. Identify need for Land Use approval
5. Hold pre-application meeting
6. Accept application
7. Determine completeness
8. Assign to planner
9. Route and review
10. Reconcile conflicting comments
11. Prep for hearing
12. Issue staff report
13. Host hearing
14. Facilitate board decision
15. Resolution prepared and then signed by Chair
16. Resolve conflicting conditions of approval
17. Update plan to reflect final conditions
18. Record Notice of Zoning Action

STAFF'S PERCEPTION OF THE CUSTOMERS' EXPECTATIONS FOR HOW THE PROCESS WILL WORK INCLUDE:

- Reasonable review timeframe
- An affordable process
- Staff who understand the process
- A process that goes smoothly
- Referral comments that are included in the final decision
- Good communication; no surprises
- To be informed throughout the process

Staff rated performance against expectations lowest for reasonable review timeframe (1 out of 5) and keeping applicants informed throughout the process (2 out of 5). They felt stronger areas were the smoothness of the process and referral comments being included in final decisions (both 4 out of 5).

STAFF'S OWN EXPECTATIONS FOR THE PROCESS INCLUDE:

- Transparent and equitable Code amendment process
- Codes that are easy to understand and apply
- Agencies who provide thoughtful comments
- Community Councils that provide comments
- An end product that will achieve Community Goals

Staff rated each item as either 2 or 3 on the 5-point scale, with agencies providing thoughtful comments and the end products achieving community goals both rated at 2.

INPUTS, SUPPLIERS AND EXPECTATIONS

Inputs are information, requirements, documents, services, good or other resources that are needed to run a process. The staff team identified the following as inputs to the land use planning process:

- Pre-application submission requirements
- The Land Use Code (Title 21)
- Customer inquiries/lobbying
- Plans from building permit process
- Stamped approved plan sets
- Notice of Zoning Actions
- Referral agency comments
- Reconciled plans from applicants
- Formal comments from Neighborhood Councils
- Rationale behind policy decisions

Other key inputs to the planning process, not identified during the exercise but included here for purposes of completeness, include: the adopted land use plan; the zoning map; staff resources; funding; and technology. All of these help supply the planning process with the information, documents, and resources needed to run the process.

Suppliers are the individuals, companies, committees or others who are responsible for providing the inputs to the process. A major supplier in the Land Use Planning process is the land use case applicant, who provides a primary input – the land use application. While not explicitly identified during the mapping exercise, other key suppliers to the land use planning process include the Assembly, senior leaders in the organization, and community members and groups. These suppliers provide information in the form of feedback and decisions as the plan and code are developed and implemented.

IN GENERAL, STAFF'S PERCEPTION OF THE EXPECTATIONS OF SUPPLIERS TO THE PLANNING PROCESS INCLUDE:

- Accurate, consistent information from staff
- For staff to be prepared
- Quick response times
- Presence of all referral departments at key meetings

In rating performance against expectations, staff felt that the biggest gap was in the presence of all referral departments in key meetings. This item received a rating of 2 out of 5 by staff. A key strength was in timeline for responses, which staff rated at 4.5 out of 5.

STAFF'S OWN EXPECTATIONS OF SUPPLIERS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

- Complete and accurate documents
- Approved septic and well permits
- Plans/concepts submitted 5 days prior to pre-application meeting
- Code interpretations will turn into code amendments
- The rationale behind policy and past interpretations of the code will be understandable

Staff in this group also identified an expectation outside of the Land Use Planning Process, but which is important – that as-built plans will be provided by applicants for certificates of occupancy.

In rating performance of suppliers against expectations, the biggest gap was in the pre-application process, scoring a 1.5 out of 5 points. A strength was code interpretations turning into code amendments (4 of 5 points).

OUTPUTS, CUSTOMERS, AND EXPECTATIONS
Outputs are the products, services, or decisions that come about as a result of the process. Staff identified the following outputs from the land use planning process:

- Answers, education, clarity
- Pre-application notes
- Notices to the public
- Staff memos
- Notices of zoning actions
- Zoning comments on permits
- Non-conforming determination letters
- Code interpretations

Customers are defined as those who receive and use the outputs from the planning process. Staff identified a variety of customers, including the public, consultant, property owner, developer/contractor, land use review, Mayor and Administration, review Boards and Commissions, current planning, long range planning, utility, districts, and agencies.

STAFF FELT THESE CUSTOMERS EXPECT:

- Reliable information
- Transparent rationale behind recommendation
- Knowing about interpretations (awareness, reliable issuance)

Staff felt meeting the customer's expectation for knowing about the interpretations was the weakest point at this time (1 out of 5 points), while being transparent was being met more effectively (3 out of 5 points)

STAFF EXPECTATIONS OF THE CUSTOMERS INCLUDED:
- Consistency
- Documentation of internal information
- Correct responses from the customer on comments and recommendations

PERFORMANCE WAS RATED HIGHEST ON CONSISTENCY (4) AND LOWEST ON RESPONDING CORRECTLY TO COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS (2.5 OF 5 POINTS).

GET TO THE ROOT FINDINGS FOR LAND USE PLANNING

Based on the process analysis on Day 1, the Planning group decided to conduct its root cause analysis on why pre-application meetings are not working well, and why there are disconnects between long-range planning and implementation.

Issue #1: Pre-Application Meetings are Not Working Well

Staff consider the current state of pre-application conferences to be useless – internally and externally. They see the current state as potentially harmful in that applicants may be led to believe they received good guidance. In reality, applicants possibly didn't hear from all agencies and may be in for a surprise during the application review. Staff explored abandoning the system under the concept "stop doing what's not working."

Staff believe a pre-app system can be beneficial to applicants and staff, believe it should be rescued, and know it should be retooled. A successful pre-app can minimize the time it takes for a project to gain approval. More importantly, a successful pre-app can minimize surprises by identifying major issues early in the process before a project is designed. Staff believe a successful pre-app system can benefit all involved.

The planning staff focused on the root causes underlying why pre-application meeting are not working well.

Issue #1 Pre-Application Conference Meetings Not Working Well	
Root Cause Topic	**Root Causes**
METHODS OF WORK (PROCESSES)	Staff are busy.
	Staff lacking time to prepare for a pre-app meeting.
	No set times for pre-app meetings.
	Don't know when these will occur – can't manage schedule.
	Policy or decision to hold a pre-app made outside (of department).
	Staff not interested in listening to requirements from other departments – seen as waste of time.
	"Project may change . . . so I'll wait"
	Not a "real" project, fishing expedition only.
	No info provided leads to: no research before leads to: poor answers leads to: no value.
	Not all agencies show up
MATERIALS / PRODUCTS	No or limited information submitted by applicant.
	No or limited information sent out to referral agencies prior to meeting.
	Site visits not be done.
	No or limited documentation of meeting.
	No formal report sent out to all participants.
	Limited knowledge/access to prior pre-apps on project.
EQUIPMENT	No information about project within meeting invite.
MEASUREMENT	No tracking of Pre-apps.
	Intuition that Pre-Apps help process, but no data

PEOPLE / CULTURE	Accepting culture – Okay for an applicant to submit less than 100%.
	Adversarial culture – Muni seen by applicants as adversarial; not helpful.
	Lack of Accountability culture / Withholding culture – Agency does not need to attend a pre-app meeting to have their section of code enforced. "Why attend if I get a second bite at this later?"
	No Customer Focus – Many agencies don't see their role as helping the customer.
	Lack of Perceived Value –
	Not all staff / work groups believe pre-apps are important.
	Applicants don't place a value on Pre-apps.
	Leadership does not place a value on Pre-apps.
	Different works units have different priorities (pre-apps not a priority)
	No or little understanding of goal / purpose of a pre-app.
	Little or no training for new staff on importance of and how to have a pre-app meeting.
	Lack of Admin. Staff to coordinate pre-app meetings.
	Attendance sparse – not all the right people attending pre-app meeting on both sides.

Potential solutions proposed by staff during the workshop sessions included:

DEVELOP A "VALUE STATEMENT" FOR PRE-APPS
- Simple description of the value of a successful pre-app meeting
  - Limiting surprises
  - Identifying major issues early, prior to de signs being solidified
  - Saving time / headaches in review
  - Applications closer to approvable.
- Describe the threat of not doing a pre-app
  - Longer review
  - Confrontation in review
  - Headaches and drama

OUTREACH TO CUSTOMERS
- Understand potential value from customer perspective

ESTABLISH VALUE / SUPPORT WITHIN LEADERSHIP RANKS
- Value proposition
- Consistent priority structure across agencies
- Reflect / track value to overall process

CREATE STRUCTURE TO PRE-APP SYSTEM
- Set schedules, weekly meetings
- Assign a value – charge nominal fee for pre-app service.
- Design a template and protocol for pre-application meeting
- Use a checklist of required information for pre-application
- Screening – no information, no pre-app meeting
- Rotate agencies in/out to minimize time commitment (vs. value of knowing other dept issues)
- Assign specific staff to set-up, coordinate meetings
- Assign case number
- Coordinate comments, resolve conflicting guidance
- Produce a unified coordinated record, issue to customer and all participants.
- Install better way to track, research prior pre-apps.

SONNET TO DEVELOP DRAFT PRE-APP SYSTEM FOR INTERNAL REVIEW AND THEN PRESENTATION TO CHRIS SCHUTTE

Issue #2: Disconnection Between Long-Range Planning and Implementation

The Planning Group discussed the "disconnect" between long-range plans and the direction of leadership and elected officials. This was an off-shoot of the pre-app discussion. There's a significant belief that the reasoned advice of the professional planners is not heeded, not valued, not sought-out. This is highlighted by outside-sponsored code amendments that "go around" the process. The group explored the root causes of this situation.

Issue #2 Disconnect Between Long-Range Planning and Implementation	
Root Cause Topic	**Root Causes**
METHODS OF WORK (PROCESSES)	Little or no feedback from customers or current planners on needed code fixes.
	Code seen as imperfect, but no routine clean-up system
	Substantive code amendments require a lengthy process with multiple check-ins, multiple places for process to be hijacked or slow to a crawl.
	Long-Range not part of visioning process by elected officials.
	Long-Range plans take longer than the political cycle.
PEOPLE / CULTURE	Hangover from last code re-write – the consultants observed a lingering trauma over the last major code re-write; that it was long, tedious, not a great process
	"New" Code (4 years old) is seen as static. The code . . . is usually a preface to the explanation why something can't be done.
	Long-range planning has little practical value to leadership or elected officials.
	Long-range is not seen as a resource for generating or facilitating ideas to fruition.
	Confusion regarding ownership – the consultants observed staff holding significant ownership over the results - it manifests as a weight that burdens the staff.
	Little or no appreciation on staff for political motivations – The consultant sensed the motivations of politicians are perceived by staff as anti-community, corrosive, violating community interest.

The discussion on pre-application meetings then shifted to strategies to improve the relevance and value of long range plans to the elected officials. The Planning Group focused on some immediate steps, centered on the pending Land Use Plan Update nearing completion. Steps proposed by staff during the workshop sessions included:

DELIVER ACTIONABLE, ACHIEVABLE, IMPLEMENTABLE RECOMMENDATIONS WITHIN THE LAND USE PLAN UPDATE.

(continued on next page)

CREATE POLITICAL MOMENTUM FOR LAND USE PLAN UPDATE
- Solicit important political allies
    - LWP Group
    - Community Councils
    - BOMA
    - Chamber of Commerce
- Leverage allies with the Mayor and Assembly
- Develop an "Elevator Speech"
    - Include methods for the Mayor and Assembly to take quick action.
    - Method for action repeatable, ability to focus on various areas, issues.
    - "Be present" for internal meetings with the Mayor

HOLD YOURSELF ACCOUNTABLE – ENLIST AN "ACCOUNTABILITY MANAGER" TO MAKE SURE LONG-RANGE PLANS REMAIN RELEVANT AND IMPORTANT.

USE THE LAND USE PLAN UPDATE AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE RELEVANCE AND IMPORTANCE TO COMMUNITY VALUES AND VISION AND THE RESOURCE THAT EXISTS WITHIN STAFF.

INTERVIEW FINDINGS FOR LAND USE PLANNING
The project team interviewed ten staff to learn more about challenges and opportunities for improvement. As a part of this discussion, the interviewees were invited to comment on whether/how their positions or others might be shifted to be more in alignment with Anchorage needs. This section highlights those conversation points and ideas that were relevant to the permitting process.

BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE LONG-RANGE PLANNING

Velocity: Long-Range planning issues can take a long time to manifest. The drawn-out nature of long-range planning can be frustrating to members in the community who want to see quick progress. It can be especially problematic if the political cycle is shorter than the long-range planning cycle. Long-Range planning could have a more impactful role as problem solvers – addressing deficiencies in the Code, assisting boards and elected officials achieve policy goals. This is not to suggest the community's long-range planning be purely driven by political issues-of-the-day. But, being more politically aware and being able to deliver solutions on a quicker timeframe can elevate the role of long-range planning in the organization. **A review of the timeframe and required process for long-range planning items** is recommended. **Identifying Municipality challenges that the long-range team can assist with is recommended.**

Code Amendments: Title 21 (the Code) is described as the "new" code (although it is four years old) and there appears to be r**eluctance surrounding amendments**. The process is possibly daunting and the memory of the comprehensive re-write seems to linger. Codes should be stable and reliable - constantly amending a code can feel chaotic and be difficult for staff, applicants, boards, and the public. But, reluctance to amend the code, no matter the source or reason, can be just as damaging. A stagnant code allows frustrations to build. Opportunities to make small edits to the code can lessen the Code's perceived inertia, re-engage private-sector experts, and provide meaningful change.

There appears to be **little routine feedback on the everyday performance of the Code.** Internal and external customers likely have a list of corrections, clarity items, etc. If not in-place already, **a routine red-line code amendment process should be considered.** This is also an opportunity to bolster relationships with external customers by interviewing them to obtain their red-lines.

Topic-based code amendments should also be considered. Focus on a desired outcome – say a mixed-use project on a specific property with commercial space and 10-15 residential units. Identifying the regulatory barriers could reveal a set of beneficial code amendments. There appears to be significant interest and knowledge in the private-sector that could be accessed with the right approach. **Limiting the scope is important to keep the amendments manageable.**

Some consideration on the process for proposing, reviewing, and adopting code amendments may be useful. **Elected and appointed officials should be focused on the broad policies, the desire outcomes, while the professional staff deal with the actual code language.** Board-level wordsmithing can turn simple amendments into a long, drawn-out process. It is in this context that stagnation becomes satisfactory.

BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE CURRENT PLANNING

Unified Purpose: The independent nature of individual departments – fiefdoms – was a recurring

theme. **Some staff appear ambivalent about the performance of other departments.** This allows staff to simply show up to work, trade their time for a salary, and accomplish the tasks that happen to emerge in front of them without inspiration.

Some staff expressed disrespect for other departments/functions. These comments highlight the need for **better understanding of other departments' responsibilities and challenges, more appreciation for their regulations and overall purpose, and more cohesion on an interpersonal level**. This theme came up during interviews of planning, review, and inspection staff (not just planning). "Fiefdoms" was also an aspect of outside customer feedback.

It appears that the **current planners are not supported by other departments as well as they could be.** Referral departments are maybe responding in a way that preserves their future flexibility or are just intentionally not participating. The pre-application discussion was very revealing – Some departments appear to be withholding their participation in order to protect their position rather than assist the larger mission. This puts current planners in a difficult customer service position. As the primary interface with applicants, c**urrent planners are being intentionally handicapped with less than full information and participation.**

Ideally, **staff should be focused on the larger mission of the organization** as opposed to protecting their turf. Techniques to convert staff's perception of time spent to an investment rather than an expenditure should be explored. This can seem daunting, but is an achievable task.

The abundant facilities may play a role, allowing various groups to be physically isolated and develop into separate, individual teams each with their own micro-culture. In a sense, the fox hole becomes department / function and staff start protecting their department / function rather than the larger mission. **Physically condensing and/or mixing functions is worth examining.**

Cross function teams are worth exploring. Teams of staff across departments focused on current planning or permit review may generate greater appreciation for each other's role and some competition to perform better than another team. Cross-training plan review staff and inspection staff

is difficult (double training, certifications, etc.) but could **improve understanding and possibly address seasonal workload issues.**

Establishing a merit pay system based on goals for the organization may also help, provided those goals are related to the service expectations of the department and are clearly communicated to staff. A year-end bonus based on the performance of the larger team can create greater accountability between departments.

Planning Department Director: The Director position should be a source of leadership and mentorship for planning staff. This position also is responsible for human resource issues and guiding staff towards success. The leadership/ mentorship/guidance role is possibly being neglected due to various factors. The lack of leadership can lead to staff feeling left on their own, morale issues, and overall department drift.

Current Planning Manager: The Current Planning Manager is responsible for the distribution of cases to the current planners, schedules, the quality of analysis, and the consistency and professionalism of the staff recommendations and presentations. The position is currently filled with an "acting" Planning Manager. Concerns about this include

- The Current Planning Manager position brings **stability to the current planning function of the organization.** Current planners have a high degree of customer interface – with both applicants and elected and appointed officials. This level of contact shapes opinions about the health and professionalism of the organization. **Stability and a strong ethic regarding consistent, professional handling of planning applications builds a healthy report with customers. Having the position unfilled for extended periods of time can degrade these relationships.**
- Potential applicants **may be deterred by the possibility of being terminated in relatively short order due to potential shifts in political landscape,** particularly if there is a need for them to relocate to Alaska. They may also be concerned about undue political influence on what might otherwise be viewed as a non-political position.
- Potential applicants may also be deterred by

the salary. **The increased responsibilities and potential for political exposure are potentially not being perceived as being valued correctly.**

Unified Voice: It appears that the Planning Department d**oes not coordinate its external message or recommendations on projects as well as it could.** An applicant can receive differing direction during a pre-application meeting from various planning staff. The Department can issue multiple, conflicting recommendations on a project from various internal factions. This practice reveals philosophical divides within the Department and **can make the Department appear in disarray and without any leadership.** This practice can have long-term harmful effects on the credibility and respect for the department within the community.

Code Based Recommendations: It appears that the Planning Department has **inconsistent internal controls to ensure recommendations are tied back to code standards**. Certain standards require use of professional latitude. Used sparingly and respectfully when called for by a project or issue, this latitude can be very effective – customers will seek the guidance of the planning department. Used randomly, this latitude can be seen as disrespectful or a brazen disregard for the rule of law.

Some customers believe that a staff person can "make it up" – invent standards with no repercussion. Just a few occurrences can severely undermine the credibility of the Planning Department and of the organization. **This encourages applicants to ignore or avoid staff guidance.** Some staff are seen as worse than others, creating further animosity between staff and customers. Current Planning supervisors are seen as not doing enough to counter this practice, creating morale issues within staff and integrity issues with customers.

This practice can also **lower the perceived value of a staff recommendation with elected and appointed boards.** Many of these customers experience presentations only by a few current planners and don't interface with other department staff. They may assume all staff have the same make-it-up approach. A lower respect for the professionalism of staff can have long-term effects showing up in budget decisions, staffing decisions, general support, etc. down the road.

STAFF MORALE

Interviewed staff acknowledged that **staff morale affects innovation on even small items.** The discussion regarding pre-applications is a good example. Staff readily acknowledged the current system is broken. And, staff readily acknowledged the value of a re-tooled, comprehensive pre-application program. **Staff is desirous of change and capable of imagining new systems and ways to retool inefficient programs.**

The willingness to innovate, to raise and pursue ideas is lacking. This is possibly a hangover from past administrations and leadership styles. Sometimes the best operational improvements germinate from the staff closest to the issue and successful organizations learn to foster this innovation. Encouragement, support, and reinforcement from the leadership ranks will result in everyday improvement ideas coming forward.
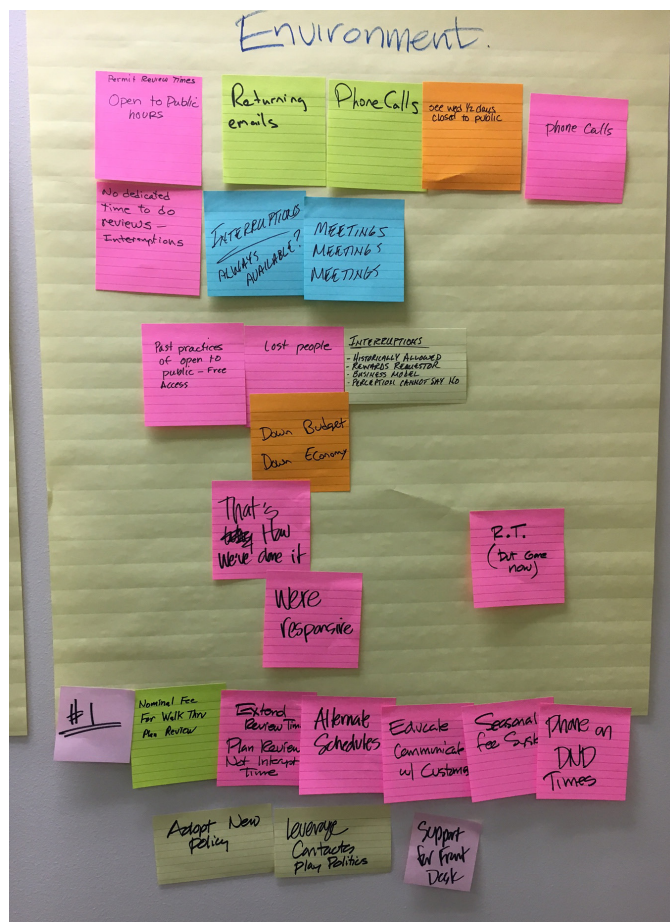
NING

For the Hackathon, the project team took key points from earlier staff and customer input, and asked for additional in-person feedback from the development community. Feedback from the Planning posters is summarized below. For each table. The number of points (dots), indicating the views of the development community, are provided within the tables.

What we heard from STAFF about the planning process:				
	Nailed it!	What?	Missed the mark	Comments/ Notes
Customers expect rationale behind planning recommendations	12	0	0	
Staff needs to be more aware of internal policy & past interpretations	10	0	0	
Pre-application process not working	4	1	3	3 dots between "Nailed it!" & "what?"
Customers want reliable information	10	0	0	
Customers want a quick, smooth, no-surprises process	8	0	0	
Customers expect staff to know process & give reliable guidance	10	0	0	
The built result should reflect community goals	7	0	0	
Everyone needs to know about Land Use Code interpretations	6	1	0	

What we heard from YOU about the planning process:				
	Nailed it!	What?	Missed the mark	Comments/ Notes
In practice, the new Code sometimes discourages re-development	10	1	0	Question about "Code"- which one? TZI?
Level of technical detail needed for planning application sis too high	3	2	0	1 dot between "Nailed it!" & "what?"
Too many surprises & glitches during review	7	0	0	
Some review comments are not related to Code compliance	5	1	1	-Entitlement processes? To TZI? -1 dot between "Nailed it!" & "what?"

MOA Development Process Improvements

	Nailed it!	What?	Missed the mark	Comments/ Notes
The Land Use Code is not applied consistently and fairly	4	2	0	
Takes too long to review planning applications	9	0	0	
Level of collaboration between staff and applicant is too low	4	2	0	
Land Use Code is not always reasonable	7	1	0	Interpretation of the land use code?

Solutions from YOU about the planning process:				
	Nailed it!	What?	Missed the mark	Comments/ Notes
Face to face communication & collaboration is important	10	0	0	Direct/personal - I am not good without the face-to-face contact
Include Land Use Code references with comments	8	3	0	
Enforce Land Use Code consistently	9	3	0	Interpret rather than enforce
Value the opinions of professionals	10	0	0	
Recognize the challenges in development through clear guidelines & Land Use Code Amendments	9	1	0	
Collaborate with applicants at key points in the process to avoid surprises & solve problems	11	0	0	

General Comments on Planning:

-Assign staff to coordinate pre-app process
-Enforce Title 21 when it comes to landscape requirements (roads need landscape within projects)
-Train/indoctrinate staff to clearly state what is code required versus something they'd like you to consider (commissions too)
   • Yes. Eliminate "I feel you should..." type statements/requests
   • **This had a dot of agreement
-Backend requirements based on over-representative LA in site plan review. Show more than required- then must install, can't change LA in site plan review
-When the applicant & MOA both have valid & defensible code interpretations, who wins? Who can this be appealed to? Is there a defined, consistent process? (not ZEBA)
-When code has a clear or unintentional defect, staff should provide a quick and reasonable fix & work-around- this will help everyone involved
-Only require pre-apps for complicated projects (this had a dot of agreement)

PERMITS

This section provides results and key findings from the Speed Mapping, Get to the Root, Interviews, and Hackathon as it relates to the Permit Process. Several subgroups considered the permitting process; their contributions are combined below.

SPEED MAPPING RESULTS FOR PERMITS

Process Steps and Expectations
The primary existing process steps identified during speed mapping for the Permitting Process started with pre-application and ended with permit issuance. The process has multiple options, including walk-ins (considered at the counter), express (where fees are paid to expedite review),

START TO FINISH

1. Host pre-application meeting (voluntary)
2. Submit application and send email notification
3. Staff checks for completeness
4. Staff assigns permit number and routes
5. Staff prioritizes applications
6. Reviewers find and sign out plan
7. Reviewers check for compliance
8. Counter review of small projects
9. Review by discipline for larger projects
10. Staff issue comments via Infor
11. Staff negotiate with applicants regarding comments
12. Applicant resubmits revised plans/comments
13. Cycle continues until application compliant
14. Staff issue permit and collect fees
15. Staff provide approved field plan set
16. Change orders undergo submission and review

Staff indicated that customers want the following as a part of the process:

• Adequate notification after submittal
• Staff always available
• Ability to track and review permit review status throughout process

A key challenge was felt to be the expectation that staff are always and quickly available.

STAFF'S OWN EXPECTATIONS FOR THE PERMIT PROCESS INCLUDE:

• Complete submittals from applicants
• Clear routing process
• Clear type of permit or stage of permit review (ex: change order, resubmittal)
• Plans are checked out
• Plans can be quickly located
• Submitted plans are complete – pages are not removed
• Customer receives and uses final approval plan set in the field
• Plans that show complete detail,
• Understanding of other departments' work

Gaps in performance against these expectations included lack of consistent checking out of plans; the ability to find plans quickly; and understanding of other department's work.

INPUTS, SUPPLIERS AND EXPECTATIONS
Inputs are information, requirements, documents, services, good or other resources that are needed to run a process. The staff team identified the following as inputs to the permitting process:

• Pre-applications
• Scopes of work
• Applications
• CityView information
• Infor/Hansen technology system
• E-plans technology system
• Plans and calculations
• Plats/maps
• Internet, Google Earth
• GIS information
• Internal process for complaints/negotiation
• Education
• Tech updates
• Tech Vendors
• Original and revised (resubmitted) plans
• Land use reviews
• Political directives
• Homebuilders
• 3rd Party Reviewers (for about 1/3 of new homes)
• Mandated initial review timelines

Suppliers are the individuals, companies, committees or others who are responsible for providing the inputs to the process. A major supplier in the permitting process is the permit applicant, who provides a primary input: the permit application, documents and plan set. The staff identified the following additional suppliers to the permitting process: planners, permit techs, IT staff, software vendors, Infor software, admin staff, land use reviews, codes (Title 21/23), IBC code, office equipment, GIS department, designer/architect/contractors, Anchorage Assembly.

KEY EXPECTATIONS OF SUPPLIERS FOR STAFF, AS IDENTIFIED BY THE TEAMS INCLUDED:

- Time to test Infor software upgrades
- Sales of ICC books
- Accurate comments on plans
- Access to plans reviewers before and during reviews
- Clear communication about requirements
- Consistency
- Smooth silent process, with no issues
- Compliance with Assembly guidance and direction
- Current, updated handouts online
- Walk-in reviews of plans
- Good customer service
- Fast service
- Permit system (technology) that works
- Staff is adequately trained

The teams considering the permit process did not rate all of the expectations for suppliers. However, they identified **the biggest pain point as an expectation that applicants will receive good customer service and would be served in a timely way during reviews, even if their applications were not really ready to take in.**

Staff also have their own expectations for suppliers. If for instance, they are provided with incomplete or highly non-compliant plans, that impacts their ability to do their work well and quickly. If technology systems are not up or not meeting key requirements, work is also negatively affected.

THE STAFF TEAMS WORKING ON THE PERMIT PROCESS HAVE THE FOLLOWING EXPECTATIONS OF THEIR SUPPLIERS:

- Responsive IT staff
- Admin staff know the system, fee structure and customer service basics
- Minimal interaction from Planning staff
- Clear Title 21 entitlements
- Amendment process to resolve conflicts between Titles 21/23
- Good communication
- Clear expectations for timelines
- Ability to participate in Policy discussions
- Staff updates
- Support from leadership
- Leadership that will manage staff overreach and hold staff accountable
- Leadership that knows and follows laws and regs
- Leadership that has continuity and consistency
- Compliance with minimum codes
- Drawings are to code
- Stamped drawings
- Clear codes and standards
- Clearly identified changes on plan sets
- Complete applications
- Permits applications/plans are input into software system
- Permit system (technology) works
- Contact information is included in permit set
-

In rating performance against the expectations, key strengths included leadership that knows and follows laws and regs (4.5 out of 5 points), as well as management support of staff (4/5). Gaps included responsiveness of IT (1.5/5), ability to participate in policy discussions (1.25/5), and knowledge level of the admin staff (2.5/5).

OUTPUTS, CUSTOMERS, AND EXPECTATIONS
Outputs are the products, services, or decisions that come about as a result of the process. Staff identified the following outputs from the permitting process:

- Plans review comments in Infor, by discipline and online
- Notices to applicants
- Online decisions
- Flags for inspectors
- Deferred submittals (truss design)

Customers are defined as those who receive and use the outputs from the permitting process. Staff identified a variety of customers, including: applicants, homeowners, architects, engineers, designers, contractors, developers, inspectors, anyone walking in the door, and permit managers.

Staff felt customers expect:

•
• Permits to be issued immediately
• Variances/flexibility/latitude
• Reasonable costs
• Priority status/categorization.
• Answers
• Clear comments and feedback
• Timely reviews
• Sign off on permit – partial or complete sign-off
• Internal consensus between departments
• Design by review, with staff providing ways to resolve non-compliant design
• Consistency of review process and in comments
• Ability to find files (system for racking)
• Complete details on the plans, so inspectors know what to look for

The expectation that staff will assist the customers through "design by review" was felt to be the most significant source of challenges.

Staff expectations for what customers will provide to them include:

• Timely response to staff comments (timely resubmittals)
• Clear comments
• Final approved set is available and complete
• Build to approved plans
• Field set accurately reflects office set
• Complete design (all calculations/internally reconciled)
• Honesty
• Plan ahead before submittal
• Include Core 404 permit
• Respect process to resolve disputes
• Professional behavior
• Inspectors read plans and notes (instead of just calling the reviewers)
• Inspectors use approved plans
• Inspectors learn and use Infor Software
• Understand seasonal backlog
• Factual understanding of what is actually going on.

The specific items the first group of staff rated customers highest on include: including the Core 404 permit; professional behavior; inspecting from approved plans; and reading the plans and notes (4/5 for all items). **Gaps between expectations and performance were felt to be highest on understanding the impact of the seasonal backlog (1/5), and bad behavior of a few customers, factual understanding of what's going on, and respecting the process for dispute resolution (all of which rated 2/5)**. The second group of staff identify major issues associated with assuring that projects are built to approved plans and that the field set reflects changes made in the office set.

Root Cause Analysis for Permitting

The teams analyzing the permit process selected two factors to investigate during the root cause analysis. These issues were felt to present significant pain points in the process, to be feasible to address and to have the potential for major positive impacts if they can be successfully resolved.

The issues selected were:
 Issue #1: Poor quality permit applications
 Issue #2: Permit reviews that take too long

• Participants also identified several factors that cause problems for permit review, which could be analyzed further in the future:
• Customer service issues
• Plans being checked out, resulting in items not being replaced in the plan set and an inability to locate plans
• Lack of understanding of other departments work
• Availability of staff
• "Design by Review"
• Challenges keeping the office set and field set matched
• Issues with building to the approved plan set

ISSUE #1: POOR QUALITY PERMIT APPLICATIONS

Staff commented on multiple occasions about the impact of poor quality applications on their ability to do work well. **Poor quality applications "jam up" the system because they require more time for initial review, and because they cycle through the system multiple times.** Applicants who submit high quality applications suffer as well, because staff time is necessarily diverted to deal with the poor quality cases. **Essentially, poor quality applications negatively impact those customers who submit high quality work just as much**, if not more, than they impact staff and those who submitted the incomplete or lower quality applications.

To help determine how best to deal with poor quality applications, the team first identified some of the root causes of poor quality applications:

Issue #1 -- Root Causes of Poor Quality Permit Applications

Root Cause Topic	Root Causes
METHODS OF WORK (PROCESSES)	Directives/pressure to take in all applications
	No standards for what goes on each sheet
	Codes are written by those who don't implement them
	Unclear requirements for submittal
	Incomplete submittals
MATERIALS	Confusing terminology
	Unclear requirements
	Checklists not followed
EQUIPMENT	Software routes incorrectly
	No copy machine for the public
	Lack of training on software
MEASUREMENT	System tracks, but not evaluation by staff
PEOPLE	Applicants push ahead in the queue
	Applicants use wrong forms
	Applicants are pressured to meet deadlines
	Staff take in incomplete applications
	Staff take shortcuts
	Staff lack knowledge
	Staff route incorrectly
	Staff lack/incorrect communication back to applicant
	Staff and applicants lack training and knowledge
	Staff and applicants are reluctant to change
	Staff and applicants are misinformed on requirements
WORK ENVIRONMENT	The construction season is short
	Lack of code books, scales, etc. for applicants to use

STAFF SUGGESTIONS FOR INCREASING THE QUALITY OF POOR QUALITY APPLICATIONS INCLUDED THE FOLLOWING:

- **CONSISTENT MESSAGES FROM MANAGEMENT** about walk-in protocols and standards for assessing application acceptance for review
- **NO MORE SHORT CUTTING OF THE PROCESS** by applicants going to upper management rather than through the system (that is, management support for protocols and standards)
- **CLEAR SCHEDULE** that is structured and communicated internally and externally
    - Appointment times
    - Defined walk in times
    - Uninterrupted plan review times
- **REQUIRE CHECKLISTS** as part of application submittal, to aid applicants as well as intake staff in verifying completeness prior to accepting for review
- **REQUIRE PRE-APPLICATION MEETINGS FOR MORE PERMIT TYPES**
- **PROVIDE POSITIVE INCENTIVES** to submit complete, high quality applications
    - Quicker review time if qualify
    - Quicker review time if complete and re
      spond to pre-application meeting
    - Look at fee reduction as incentive
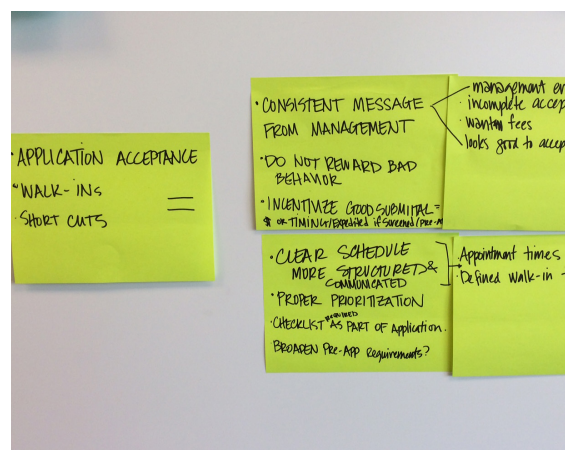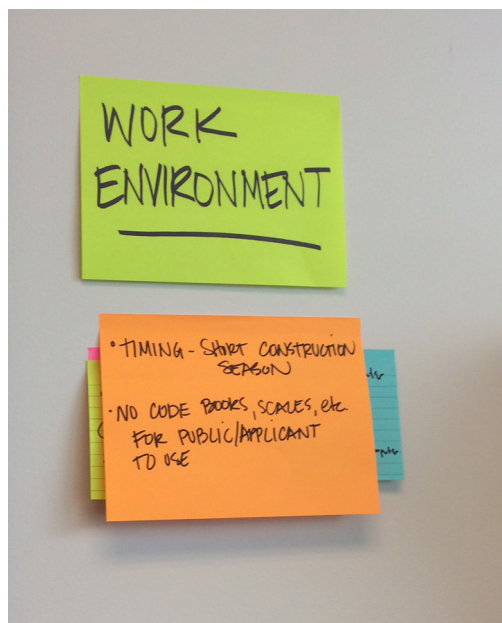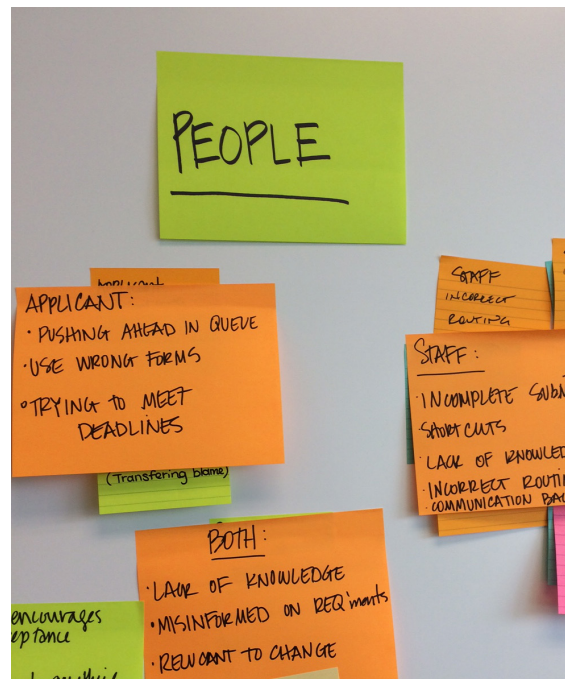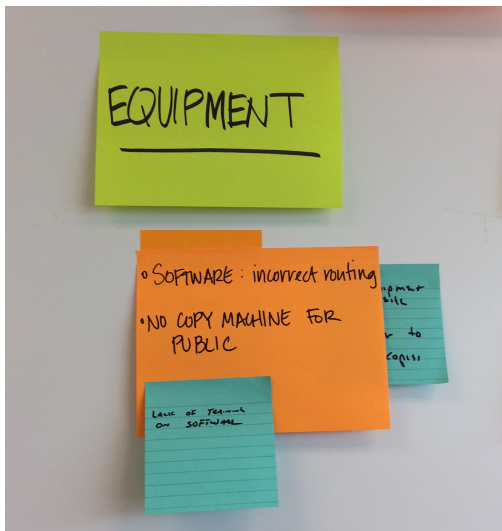
Issue #2: Permit Reviews Take Too Long

Staff are very aware that permit review times are a source of angst. When permit reviews take longer than desired, staff become stressed as work backlogs and pressure from customers who need approvals increase. Customer dissatisfaction and escalations of issues from staff to managers can increase as well. One of the staff teams focused on identifying the root causes of long permit review times.

Issue #2 -- Root Causes of Permit Review Timelines that are Too Long

Root Cause Topic	Root Causes
Methods of Work (Processes)	Lack of consistency between reviewers
	Lack of clarity on what should be reviewed
	Lack of understanding by front desk staff of how long reviews take
	Email resubmittals to reviewers circumvent the process
	Disparities in level of review effort/sense of what we should review and how thoroughly
	Incomplete submittals taken in
	Incomplete resubmittals taken in
	Prioritizing small projects for review
	Expedited review requests
	Walk-throughs are significant work component
	Can't say no
	Providing "free consulting" to applicants
Materials	Cannot find plans
	Lost/misplaced drawings and files
	No funds for RFID system
Equipment/Machines	Computers lock up
	Too many steps/clicks in Hansen
	Lack of IT support of business needs
Measurement	Missing information on submittals
People	Jumping ahead of others in the queue
	Perception that we cannot say no to requests at any time
	Attitude: this is how we have always done it
	Ill unformed owners
	Staffing levels and availability vs workload
	Special requests from supervisors
	Priorities organized by others
	Design stamp by other engineer
	Good customer service/efficiency
	Poorly prepared designers
	Staff too rushed to make sure submittals/resubmittals are complete and compliant
	Concerns about staff accountability between depts..
	Lack of trained staff to cover for vacations
	Management wants to please customers

Work Environment	Interruptions (emails, phone calls, open to the public hours, meetings, lost people)
	No dedicated time to do reviews
	Down budget and economy

POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS PROPOSED BY STAFF DURING THE WORKSHOP SESSIONS INCLUDED:

- **CHANGE WALK-THROUGH PRACTICES:**
    - Charge a nominal fee for walk through review
    - Adopt a more specific policy/protocol
- **EXTEND REVIEW TIME EXPECTATIONS**
- **DESIGNATE UNINTERRUPTED PLAN REVIEW TIME**
    - Alternate schedules for staff
    - Put phone on Do Not Disturb during review times
- **INCREASE WORK EFFICIENCY BY CHANGES IN TECHNOLOGY:**
    - Educate and communicate technology requirements to IT
    - Lengthen time before computer locks system to more than 5 minutes
    - Changes practices for front desk sign in to improve security and to increase time before computer lock-out
    - Allow increases in accepted file sizes (?)
- **ADOPT A SEASONAL FEE SYSTEM** to recognize seasonal work load and encourage changes in the patterns of submissions
- **ADOPT AND CONSISTENTLY IMPLEMENT CLEARER POLICIES AND PROCEDURES REGARDING:**
    - Types of resubmittals
    - Paper or digital resubmittals
    - Joint meetings with applicants
    - Customer service expectations (i.e. does staff print copies for applicants?)
    - Assessing completeness for each type of permit
    - Checking out plans
    - Protocol for identifying clarifications and corrections on plans
    - Tracking of resubmissions to gather quantitative data
    - Common comment system
- **SUPPORT FOR FRONT DESK**
    - Clarify and provide essential training
    - Set policies for intake and completeness

INTERVIEW FINDINGS FOR PERMIT REVIEWS
The project team interviewed ten staff to learn more about challenges and opportunities for improvement. As a part of this discussion, the interviewees were invited to comment on whether/how their positions or others might be shifted to be more in alignment with Anchorage needs. This section highlights those conversation points and ideas that were relevant to the permitting process.

BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT BY THE BUILDING OFFICIAL (BO)
Lack of a full-time BO: Hiring a full-time BO is felt to be one of the most important near-term steps Anchorage could take to improve its development processes by one of the interviewees. Currently, Anchorage does not have a full-time person in the Building Official position. Because of this, the acting BO has had to focus on fighting fires and dealing with customer complaints, which takes time away from providing the overall leadership and direction needed for the building department. This may become even more problematic as Anchorage tries to improve its processes because the need for management time, attention and direction for change will often increase in the early days of any major shift in operational practices.

Escalated complaints: It appears the majority of the complaints brought to the acting BO are not felt to be valid, taking time away from higher-value tasks. Anchorage would be served well by analyzing the nature of these complaints more fully – tracking their type and frequency, and how they came to the BO's office - and then developing tools and practices to divert those that are not valid or that do not require BO intervention. **Because these requests represent an escalation of issues, addressing them will likely have a positive and cascading impact throughout other levels of the development review staff.**

BO hiring: The BO is currently approved by the Assembly, and the position is not always advertised openly. Further, the range of skill sets felt to be appropriate for the BO may be hindering hiring.

- Potential applicants may be deterred by the possibility of being terminated in relatively short order due to potential shifts in political landscape, particularly if there is a need for them to relocate to Alaska. They may also be concerned about undue political influence on what might otherwise be viewed as a largely technical position: enforcement of the building code. Changing the BO position to a merit position would help address these concerns.
- Without an open application process, it is possible that Anchorage will not be aware of the full range of qualified applicants, and could miss a suitable applicant.
- Anchorage may want to reconsider the initial range of technical knowledge needed by a BO, to help expand the pool of potential applicants. Opening the position to applicants trained in construction management, construction science, building construction, architecture, engineering fields, certified plans examiners, certified inspectors, or other related fields, combined with a requirement to obtain the ICC Building Official certification within a specified period of time, may help open the door to a wider range of applicants while keeping expectations for competency high.

BO responsibilities: It appears that current BO responsibilities **may not be broad enough to effectively manage the development process**. To help assure end to end efficiency and effectiveness, the team suggests that Anchorage place three functions fully under the BO: application intake, plans review for building code compliance, and building inspections.

BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE USE OF TECHNOLOGY
As in the workshops with staff, **technology emerged as a pain point in the interviews.** The sources of the issues and barriers are multiple. In some cases, the challenges deal with design issues in the current permits system technology. Others include lack of staff and technology support. There is currently not a technology staff person or "power user" assigned to or a part of the development groups, and the IT department per se does not provide the type and level of service needed for staff to effectively use its

equipment. This affects staff's ability to work well on a day to day basis. Further, there does not appear to be a mechanism in place for the development groups and IT to identify and then collaborate to meet the strategic technology needs associated with carrying out development processes well over the long run. However, network uptime is felt to be excellent.

CHALLENGES WITH QUEUE MANAGEMENT
At this time, there does not appear to be an effective queue management system in place for permits review. This was mentioned by several interviewees as a gap. Building review staff and referral agencies would benefit from developing a basis and policy for distinguishing queue priorities and for handling exceptions to the normal queueing expectations. Without this, reviews will be less coordinated than needed, and review times will be negatively impacted.

MISPLACED PERCEPTIONS OF REVIEW EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS
Perceptions of the speed and effectiveness of the review processes in Anchorage are felt to vary significantly. Those who may only operate in Anchorage are perceived to have a more negative view of the review processes, while those who work in multiple jurisdictions have a more positive different view. To help address this, **Anchorage may want to combine education on other jurisdictions with a conversation on expectations within Anchorage.** The end result desired would be a more community-based agreement on what constitutes appropriate review and inspection times.

GAPS IN INTERNAL COORDINATION AND COMMUNICATION
Increasing coordination and communication between staff within and across departments is felt to be one of the most important near-term steps to take by multiple department staff. The project team recommends that the Development Director establish a standing inter-departmental committee (including all referral agencies) that meets weekly to:

1. identify and resolve policy issues and conflicts in code enforcement on a near-real time basis
2. agree on, implement and monitor queue priorities and conflicts
3. educate each other about the substance and need for different departments review standards

4. identify and develop support for other process improvements and their implementation

Further, placement of the intake staff, building review staff and building inspectors under the BO, as suggested above, will help assure that staff from beginning to end of the building review process work in coordination with one another.

STAFF MORALE

Interviewed staff acknowledged that staff morale affects the ability to do work well in some cases. In particular, there was a sense that prior administrations assumed staff were in the wrong when complaints were wrong, and this has led to the development of a number of "protective" behaviors. Interviewees mentioned the need to **identify ways to improve the workplace, and then to implement them fairly and consistently.** Current outreach efforts by senior leaders, including elected officials, are felt to be having a positive effect, overall, in helping to change this situation.

REVIEW PROCESS BARRIERS

Interviewees identified several barriers to effective reviews. The impact of interruptions was mentioned several times as a problem. Suggestions for improvements included: allowing staff to block time and work without interruption; changing how walk-ins are handled; broader access to the check in/check out database, for all referral agencies; reconsidering how to handle resubmittals so as to free up tech time and allow more direct access to reviewers; allowing same day drop-off of plans (so customers don't have to wait). **As with the BO, a high number of escalations to review managers was also mentioned, and the project team again suggests exploring the type and frequency of these escalations combine with strategies to decrease their number.**

STRUCTURAL REVIEWS AS A PINCH POINT

While respecting the need for effective structural reviews, multiple staff expressed concerns about how long commercial structural reviews take, late starts on these reviews, and their impact on the review process. Staff levels were felt to be a contributing factor (with one position currently open and only one structural steel reviewer; however, the very detailed approach to review was also considered to be a barrier. Other options for handling structural reviews were felt to exist, although they were not explored during the

limited time available in the interviews. Nevertheless, because of the importance of these reviews as well as their impact on the review process, the project team strongly recommends delving further into the options for handling structure reviews more efficiently. Even if the rest of the permit process is optimized with respect to efficiency, if structural reviews remain far behind others in the completion of their reviews, it is possible that no significant reduction in overall review cycle times will occur (the review process cannot go any faster than the slowest review group).

INSUFFICIENT OUTREACH AND TRAINING

The quality of incoming applications, combined with developer understanding of expectations, can have an enormous impact on Anchorage's ability to quickly review permits. **Expanded use of outreach and education to guide applicants is an area that interviewees felt would be of value** in this regard. In like manner, **internal training opportunities**, to help assure staff have a sufficient level of knowledge at all steps of the process (particularly intake), and so they understand the importance of reviewing to the codes (avoiding personal comments not based in code) was also felt to be of value.
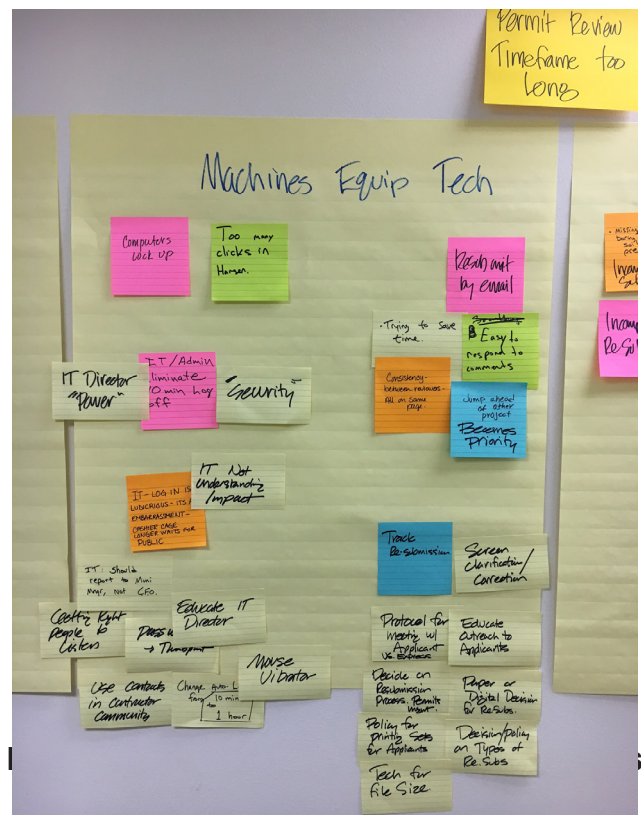
For the Hackathon, the project team took key points from earlier staff and customer input, and asked for additional in-person feedback from the development community. Feedback from the permits posters is summarized below. For each table. The number of points (dots), indicating the views of the development community, are provided within the tables.

What we heard from STAFF about the permit review process: (numbers represent development community responses to staff concerns)				
	Nailed it!	What?	Missed the mark	Comments/ Notes
Customers need consistent and reliable answers	10	0	0	
Software is holding us back	6	0	0	**3 dots for "Need parallel reviews of permit disciplines"
Address seasonal backlog	6	1	0	
Customers expect staff to redesign their project for compliance	0	1	7	
Strengthen relationships between staff and customer	10	0	0	
Staff is expected to be available	8	1	0	Be prepared & don't take up staff time on brainstorming
Permit applications lack required information	2	4	1	
Permit process takes too long	10	1	0	

What we heard from YOU (customers) about the permit review process:				
	Nailed it!	What?	Missed the mark	Comments/ Notes
Too many surprises & glitches during permit review	3	2	0	
Some review comments are not related to Code compliance	7	2	0	
Reviewers frequently do not provide complete & clear comments	10	1	0	
Takes too long to get a permit	10	1	0	
Applicants do not know what to expect during permit process	1	3	0	
Staff does not handle conflict constructively	5	2	2	
There are not enough review staff	5	2	0	**3 dots next to "structural- no wood const."
Requirements are not always understandable	8	1	0	

Solutions from YOU (customers) about the permit review process:				
	Nailed it!	What?	Missed the mark	Comments/ Notes
Collaborate with applicants at key points in the process to avoid surprises & solve problems	14	0	0	
Assign a permit manager to each application to coordinate review	14	0	0	
Allow applicants to have zoning review first	5	2	0	
Prefer third party reviewers only	3	4	3	
Once and done (try for one review round before permit is issued)	9	1	0	-No "new" comments after 2nd or 3rd reviews -Don't kick out partial reviews just to clear the desk
1 submittal line for first-timers & 1 line for experienced applicants	4	4	0	-Maybe?
Allow applicants to drop-off plans, leave & then talk with staff over the phone/email	13	0	0	
Hire more staff	3	2	0	

SOLUTION: Redefine Walk Thru Service By re-tooling walk thru, we can save serious time. Applicants and staff can focus on resolving issues & getting the permit out the door.			
1. How important is walk though service? Continuum: Important (10)------Not Important (1)	Important (10)	(5)	Not Important (1)
	12	2	1
Comments: -Not a transparent process. Promotes "camping" at permit center -Very important, but customer must not abuse either			
2. How do you feel about limiting walk thru services to specific types of permits? Continuum: Okay with that (10)------Let me in (1)	Okay with that (10)	(8)	(4)
	2	4	1
Comments: -System needs to allow for phased project delivery			
3. Are you willing to pay more for a better walk thru service? Continuum: Okay with reasonable fee (10)------No Way (1)	Okay w/ reasonable fee (10)	(8)	(5)
	4	3	4
Comments: - Create an orientation program for the walk through			

SOLUTION: Updated Permit Application Requirements By updating permit application requirements, you know what you need to submit and staff can review your permit quicker.			
1. How do you feel about requiring checklists as part of a permit application? Continuum: Fine- I do this anyway (10)------Totally unreasonable (1)	Fine- I do this anyway (10)	(7)	Totally Unreasonable (1)
	14	1	0
Comments:			
2. How do you feel about requiring pre-application meetings for more permits? Continuum: I can work with that (10)-----No way- it takes too long (1)	I can work with that (10)	(4)	No way- that takes too long (1)
	9	3	0
Comments: Pre-app need a strong process with accountability on both/all sides			
3. Will you pay a higher fee during busy season and a lower fee during slow season? Continuum: Okay w/in reason (10)------No way (1)	Okay (10)	(8)	(4)
	3	2	2
Comments: -10 IF there is value to the owner- faster -8 if it means more staff to support reasonable review times for all -1- not fair to builders/developers who do a lot of projects year-round & have their "ducks in a row"			

General Customer Comments on Permit Review
- Funds earned through permit center should fund additional staff-- self-sustaining permit office
- Value on professionally designed projects vs. DIY permittees
- Create a bi-yearly permit application orientation course put on by MOA
• You could charge for it
• Look at AHFC home-buyer classes for example
• Transparent, clear, informed
- Need to be able to respond to comments online- systems are not up-to-date (comment in response to this: "it's a waste of time")
- Make a standard of timeline for reviews
- Process for walking through project. Designated staff? Time?
- I disagree with the "certified compliance" permit process- this leads to field inspection problems when deficiencies are identified. Bad process.

INSPECTIONS

Speed Mapping Results for Inspections

Process Expectations
The speed mapping exercise for Inspections focused on the expectations of customers and staff. The Inspection staff first started with describing the expectations of their customer. Inspection staff receives input from customers primarily from direct communication with customers on-site and from complaints. When a customer calls for an inspection, staff believes the customer is expecting same-day service and for the inspection to pass – a favorable outcome. Customers expect staff to be always and quickly available, for exempt permits to be reviewed in the field, and for staff to bring a professional approach.

Inspection staff feels their customers are looking for them to verify buildings are built to plan, to trust the work even if codes are not met, to catch all violations and unforeseen conditions, and provide professional feedback during field inspections.

Inspection staff indicated that customers want the process to have the following traits:
- The process is fast and affordable
- There is consistency between inspectors
- Inspectors are able to be flexible
- Inspection process results in a good product built with high quality
- Client has a good customer experience
- There is a high level of professional respect
- Inspectors are able to explain code issues well
- Inspectors are available

Inspection staff rely on various suppliers within the Municipality, including IT staff, information databases, plan reviewers, permit technicians, leadership staff, and the Anchorage Assembly. Inspection staff have expectations regarding these internal suppliers. They expect technology to work, to be updated and have IT supporting the inspection functions. They expect their vehicles to work. They expect accurate information to be provided on the permit. **Inspectors expect consistency from leadership staff and for workloads to be kept reasonable. Inspection staff also have expectations for the process.** Staff expect permits to be properly is-

sued, that the plans are correct, that an accurate field set is on-site when they arrive, and that projects are compliant with codes.

Inspection staff expects the process to have the following traits:
- Inspections are called-in prior to the work being done
- Projects are ready to be inspected when the Inspector arrives
- Outcomes are reached in a professional manner
- There a high level of respect for all the professionals involved
- Inspectors expect applicants to follow-up on CCOs (Conditional Certificate of Occupancy).

Inspectors want their customers to see them as helping, educating, and troubleshooting. Sources for customers to know what to expect include published, adopted policies of the Municipality, handouts, the website, and direct communication. **A key challenge was felt to be the expectation that staff are always quickly available.**

Outputs
Outputs are the products, services, or decisions that come about as a result of the process. Primary outputs of the inspection process were identified as:
- A compliant, useable building.
- Decision on inspection (pass/fail)
- Decision on occupancy
- Occupant load certificate
- Certificate of Occupancy
- Education on codes.

ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS RESULTS FOR INSPECTIONS

Issue #1: Contractors Request but are Not Ready for Inspections

When contractors who are not ready schedule inspections, it causes problems similar to what happens when poor quality applications are submitted and accepted for review: it slows the entire system down. The caller's request, while accepted, will most likely result in a rejected status, and they will need to have a second round of inspections. In Anchorage, this problem is apparently common, and includes calls for inspections on projects that should not have even started because they do not yet have a permit. Meanwhile, on the sidelines, those who are actually ready to have an inspection are waiting as staff time is diverted unnecessarily. Pressures rise and no one is very happy.

Issue #1 Project is Not Ready for Inspection	
Root Cause Topic	**Root Causes**
METHODS OF WORK (PROCESSES)	Applicant can proceed without permit – no fees, no consequences
	Contractors can call for any type of inspection
	Contractor is not ready for inspection
	Inspections requested before work is ready to be inspected
	Inadequate information provided at counter
	Issued plans are not complete
	Permit application not complete
	Plans not accurate – not reflecting what they are actually building
	Not able to find all information on permit.
	Able to short-circuit process online and through exempt permits.
	Pressures on contractor from owner, subs, the "big boss," etc.
	Need to meet deadlines or face damages
	In a hurry – need to move crew/tools to other projects.
	Contractor may be over budget
EQUIPMENT/MACHINES	Software does not link permit to address
	Cannot easily access information
	Cannot always connect
	Information not accessible
	Software can by bypassed
	Software is not complete, is limited
	Informational not entered correctly or communicated
	Inspection request option is available before permit is issued
	Customizable software that facilitates work without permit
	No IT support, IT staff not available.
	No software training
	No standard approach to software input

PEOPLE	Permit Tech not asking questions
	Permit Tech turnover and lack of training
	Front counter not checking if all required info is provided
	Applicant not being truthful
	Permit request not properly filled-out
	Some don't know code or requirements
	Some don't care and hope Inspector doesn't notice
	Third party reviewer not being held accountable
	Not sure who to call for help

STAFF SUGGESTIONS FROM THE WORKSHOP TO HELP RESOLVE THIS PROBLEM INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

- Things that will have a **high impact** that can be **done in a month**
    - Bring upper management into field on inspection
    - Set up meetings between Inspectors and Permit Techs.
    - Have Permit Techs shadow Inspectors
    - Sponsor education – proactive, work shops, memos, gain feedback
- Things that will have a **high impact** and can be **done in a few months**
    - Adopt a clear inspection policy.
    - Change Software to restrict who/when can call for inspection. Limited to projects with an issued permit. Only permit holder /contractor / administrator can call for inspection
- Things that will have a **high impact** and can be **done by the end of the year**
    - Compile report for the Assembly: List and length of reports – time requirements for inspections 3rd party exempt projects vs. non-exempt.
- **Things to continue working on**
    - An IT person that reports to Jack. Assigned to the Inspection group once a week or for a few months to get system working right.
    - Incentives for inspections being called when project is ready – fee reduction, re fund, etc.

INTERVIEW FINDINGS FOR INSPECTIONS

The project team interviewed ten staff to learn more about challenges and opportunities for improvement. As a part of this discussion, the interviewees were invited to comment on whether/how their positions or others might be shifted to be more in alignment with Anchorage needs. This section highlights those conversation points and ideas that were relevant to the Inspection process.

PROJECTS NOT READY FOR INSPECTION

A significant amount of time is wasted going to projects that are not ready to be inspected. There are various formal and informal policies that contribute to this, but the end result is **serious decline in efficiency and morale issues.** Inspectors also feel pressure to approve the work after they arrive at a site that isn't ready. Various political and public relations pressures are potentially interfering with the technical nature of building inspections.

TECHNOLOGY

"Fighting technology" was a common theme from Inspectors. The system is not just not helping, the system is **considered harmful to day-to-day work.** Inspectors do not trust the technology and are attempting to perform their jobs despite the tools given to them. They are individually finding work-arounds to shield them from recurring technological mishaps. Inspectors are duplicating work, reprinting entire permit files. **The current approach to supplying Municipality Inspectors with helpful Technology is broken – It is a significant barrier to success.** There is also the feeling that nobody is listening or caring about the effects the technology is having on the Inspectors. This feeling of being abandoned may be more impactful to morale and work efficiency than the technology itself.

DEFERRED SUBMISSIONS

Deferred submission is a technique used by the plans review function to expedite reviews. The review times appear lower as more of the permit review is deferred. The Inspectors see this system as totally broken. Most often, no actual subsequent submission occurs **leaving Inspectors to manage a quasi-plans review along with their inspection.** This usually occurs after the structure is built and places Inspectors in a lose-lose scenario with their technical function leveraged against a political or public relations function.

THIRD-PARTY REVIEWS

"Exempt" permits (a.k.a. third-party reviews) are widely considered a free-for-all. The quality and consistency of information are lacking and Inspectors have little to go on during inspections. There is typically no resource (such as a plans reviewer) to call for technical issues. **The Inspectors have a very low opinion of the Exempt permit system and have little trust that the plans have been reviewed to a proper standard.**

PLANS REVIEW / INSPECTION RELATIONSHIP

Some friction between office staff and field staff exists. Some of this may stem from the deferred submission approach to shortening review times. There also may **not be enough recognition and respect for the pressures and responsibilities of the two functions.** Ideally, office staff and field staff would work hand-in-glove.

HACKATHON FINDINGS FOR INSPECTIONS

What we heard from STAFF about the inspection process:				
	Nailed it!	What?	Missed the mark	Comments/ Notes
Inspections requested before permit issued	1	6	0	
Software does not work well	5	0	0	
Accurate field sets are not onsite	2	1	0	- office set and field set are different - online sets? Some builders do this for sub-contractors
Permits are issued with inadequate reviews	3	3	0	
Customers want affordable and fast inspections	9	0	0	
Staff does not have a reasonable workload	9	0	0	1 dot by "too much!"
Customer expects consistency between inspectors	11	0	0	
Customer wants flexibility for in the field decisions	8	3	0	

What we heard from YOU about the inspection process:

	Nailed it!	What?	Missed the mark	Comments/ Notes
Timely inspections are important	10	0	0	
Inspection reports should be emailed immediately	6	1	0	1 dot between "Nailed it" and "What?"
There are not enough inspection staff	0	4	1	
Inspection staff sometimes contradict each other	9	0	0	

Solutions from YOU about the inspection process:

	Nailed it!	What?	Missed the mark	Comments/ Notes
Upload inspection reports immediately	9	0	0	software issue
Assure all comments & requirements relate back to the Code	12	0	0	
Be flexible on Code interpretations	7	4	0	
Use third party inspectors	6	3	0	Prof. engineer should be able to approve certain inspections: bottom of hole, footings, etc.
Honor previous inspections when multiple inspectors are involved	8	2	0	
Project partner (city staff) through entire process	12	0	0	

SOLUTION: UPDATE INSPECTION POLICY
**Limiting inspection requests to when it is ready for review allows staff to respond quicker when you are REALLY ready

1. How do you feel about only allowing permit holder to call for an inspection?	Fine- I do this anyway		Totally Un-reasonable	
	2	2	2	

Comments:
-re-educate contractors

2. How do you feel about requiring a permit to be issued before an inspection can be requested?	I can work with that		No way- that takes too long	
	3	1	4	

Comments:
-System needs to allow for phased project delivery

3. How many premature calls for inspection are allowed before there are consequences?	1 request	5 requests	8 requests	
	2	3	1	**no respondents marked 10 or unlimited

Comments:
-Depends on the knowledge of the customer. Process can be unclear & punitive for less experiences owner-builders.
 -Educate users (written in next to a dot for 1 request before a consequence)

General Comments on Inspections
-Be REASONABLE on code interpretations
-phased permits
-Better customer service
-Decisions agreed upon during designed and permitting are challenged or not accepted during inspections. This is very costly to resolve during late construction.

CHAPTER 4: DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BEST PRACTICES

BACKGROUND

Building a more efficient, effective, and responsive development review process can seem elusive at times. It is clear that what it takes to be successful today is different from what it took in the past. How organizations do things needs to constantly evolve over time.

The starting point is to identify areas of opportunities for improvement, agree on priorities, and set targets for improvement. This study has identified current strengths and opportunities for improvement based on manager, staff, and customer feedback. This chapter will explore how other jurisdictions undertake development review, to provide additional ideas for Anchorage. It includes:

> • Three case studies. The case studies were selected because the three jurisdictions are considered to be leaders in the field and to have superior processes in place.
>
> • A summary of common characteristics shared by those with excellent development review processes, based on a literature search. It includes specific examples from a sampling of jurisdictions.
>
> • A self-assessment tool which the project team developed, called the Process Improvement Checklist. This will allow Anchorage to quickly assess which best/good practices it has in place, and how deeply those are deployed in the organization.

Deploying a method or program that's been tested and found successful increases the chances that you'll accomplish your goals. We know that best practices work, saving time, using internal resources more effectively, helping with staff morale and increasing customer satisfaction.

Replication is always a concern. Even when an approach or technique is rigorously evaluated, it's seldom possible to exactly reproduce it. Commu-

nities are different in size, character, culture, etc.; all of which affects the likelihood of replicating a technique successfully. In addition, some programs work because of the individual skills or experience of those who implement the program; a circumstance that is difficult to reproduce. In selecting which best practices to implement, Anchorage should consider factors such as the following:

- **Fit with your community and government structure.**
- **Appropriateness to your goals.**
- **Fit with the philosophy and values of the organization.**
- **Staff training and experience.**
- **Resources needed to implement.**

CASE STUDIES

HENDERSON, NEVADA

Henderson is the second largest city in Nevada with a current population of approximately 302,070. It is one of the fastest growing cities in the country and is, as one might expect, one of the country's busiest plan review operations with approximately 200 counter transactions each day. Henderson has 123,889 housing units with a median home value of $219,400. Its median household income is $63,120. On average, the City is adding over 1600 housing units each year.

In 2000, Henderson created a one-stop Development Services Center (DSC) that brought together employees from 6 different city departments to coordinate plan reviews, inspections, and provide permit services. The DSC has a small administrative staff that oversees and coordinates the review and permitting process. All of the departments involved in the plan review process are fully housed in one building to insure close coordination.

Henderson has developed an efficient, effective and responsive plan review process that is widely recognized as one of the best in the country. The City points to the following process features as contributing to its success:

- **PLACING CUSTOMER FIRST** – The DSC places the customer first and involves the customer at all levels of the review process. The city has created an Advisory Committee that provides advise on fee changes, IT issues and process changes. In addition, they provide educational classes and materials for customers, such as Homeowners Night and 101 Training, which instruct homeowners and developers on how to access the review system and get more out of the review process.
- **ONE-STOP SHOP** – All reviewing departments are located in one building. Review staff are cross-trained and rotate between their departments and the intake function. The DSC has a queuing system which automatically calls for additional staff when the system detects that a customer has been waiting more that 10 minutes and a supervisor is notified when the wait is longer than 20 minutes. Applications are assigned to a project planner who guides the application through the review process.
- **USE OF ENTERPRISE FUND** – Applicant's fees support Henderson's review process. The city is careful to ensure that the fees are sufficient to support the review function. The advantage of the enterprise fund is that it provides the city with flexibility to procure new technology and to contract with consulting firms to provide backup when the number of reviews increase beyond staff's capacity.
- **SUPPORT FROM DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY** – The DSC has work hard to gain the support of the development community. This support is largely due to the DSC meeting its service goals 99% of the time. Developers know they are paying for quality service.
- **DEDICATED IT SUPPORT** – The IT department has staff that is dedicated fulltime to the DSC. These staff have an intimate knowledge of the entire review process and have joined with the DCS staff in taking responsibility for the success to the review process.
- **CENTRALIZED RECORD KEEPING** – The City Clerks office has developed a highly proficient records management system that supports the DSC function.
- **MOTIVATED EMPLOYEES** – The DSC enjoys a high level of morale and employees are motivated to do a good job for their customers. This high level of morale is partially due to the compressed workweek, excellent workspace, an efficient process, the empowerment of employees to make decisions, high degree of trust of employees by supervisors and a real sense of purpose.

TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA

Tallahassee is home of the State capital and two major universities, Florida State University and Florida A&M. It had a population of 189,907 in 2015. At that time the City had 85,199 housing units and a 2015 median housing value of $177,900. Plan reviews are performed by the City's Growth Management Department that processed 167 permits for new construction the first quarter of 2017 and 413 new construction permits in 2016.

Similar to Henderson, the Growth Management Department is a one-stop shop, organized in three sections:

1. **LAND USE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES** – which comprises four plan review teams organized by geographic area. The review team is responsible for the actual review of proposed developments.
2. **DEVELOPMENT REVIEW ADMINISTRATION** – which is responsible for the overall review process, helping customers navigate the system, and improving the overall process.
3. **BUILDING INSPECTIONS** – which handles permitting and inspections.

Each plan review team has two planners, an engineering technician, an environmental inspector, and is lead by a civil engineer.

Tallahassee has a unique first step in its process, requiring all applications obtain a Land Use Compliance Certificate to determine if the proposed development meets the zoning requirements and to specify the specific approvals that will be required for the proposed development. They further divide applications into smaller projects that only require staff approval (Type A) and larger more complex projects that are reviewed by the Development Review Committee (Type B).

Tallahassee does not fund the Department through an enterprise fund; however, the Department's management approach resembles that of an enterprise. Its building inspection unit is funded from inspection fees.

What sets Tallahassee apart from other cities is its commitment to advanced technologies in the review process. The Department has 8 informa-

tion technology positions that are either involved in development and support of the review process or the management of departmental records. The city built upon existing information systems starting with its permit tracking system (Permits Plus) that was followed closely with an interactive voice response system. Staff have air cards on laptops to access the Permits Plus system in real time. The city utilizes Accela's Velocity Hall system for simple permits and automated reporting system to distribute critical information to review staff. The city has recently acquired ProjectDox that allows applicants to submit plans online and intake staff to review documents for completeness at intake. The City also scans all applications into their EDMS to insure all documents are available to staff in electronic format.

The City participates in Florida's Benchmarking Consortium and uses performance measures to help manage the operations. Efficiency and effectiveness measures are tracked and reported as part of the annual budget process.

San Diego, California

San Diego has undergone major organizational changes impacting its plan review process. In 2000, San Diego consolidated all development related functions into the newly created Development Services Department. In 2006, the Department reorganized again and currently reports directly to the Mayor's Office, removing it slightly from the City Council overview.

San Diego is the second largest city in California with a population over 1.3 million. The city has 522,410 housing units with a median value of $463,300. On average, the Development Services Department issues approximately 722 permits each month.

As with the other two examples, San Diego has a one-stop approach and cites increased coordination, customer ease, facilitating a predictable process and better resource allocation as its main benefits. Proposed projects are shepherded through the process by an assigned project manager that act as the central point of contact, manage changes to the proposed project, resolve conflicts, and acts as a substitute for any unavailable reviewer.

The following characteristics contribute to the overall success of San Diego's development review process:

- **Educating the Customer** – San Diego holds regular training sessions, predominately for the development community, to go over changes to the regulations, new processes and services, common problems, and any new submittal requirements.
- **Use of Enterprise Fund** – As with Henderson, the department operates with an enterprise fund that supplies the entire department's operating budget. The Department asserts that the enterprise approach to funding forces the Department to be attentive to changes in the volume of work. The Fund allows them to charge a fee that matches the time requirements and demand for service. San Diego transitioned into an enterprise fund over a four-year period.
- **Business Approach** – The Department periodically undertakes time motion studies to ensure fees meet the true cost of operation. Due to the desire to keep fees low, they seek out cost saving opportunities to forestall any fees increase and any new IT product must demonstrate a positive return on investment.
- **IT Support** – Although the Development Services Department does not have dedicated IT support, the IT staff have intimate knowledge of the plan review process and the technologies used by the Department.
- **Seeking Customer Input** – The City uses three survey instruments to gain customer input into the review process. The department annually contracts with an outside consultant to perform a confidential survey of its customers. In addition, the Department takes part in a citywide citizen satisfaction survey, and has "pick-up" survey forms strategically located throughout the department.
- **Measuring Results** – Outstanding individual employee performance is recognized through the Recognition and Reward Program with rewards being gift cards, etc. A Balanced Scorecard approach is used for setting goals and designing performance measures. Measures are tracked monthly.
- **Customer Advocacy** – In 2004, the Department hired a community and customer ombudsperson to serve as a customer advocate. The position assists customer access the De-

partment's services and works with the Department to resolve issues on proposed projects

COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF EXCELLENT DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PROCESSES

OPENNESS TO CUSTOMER AND COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Excellent review processes willingly seek out customer and community feedback and adjust the organization and review process based upon relevant comments. They employ a variety of means to obtain feedback, including customer surveys, exit interviews, and 3rd party evaluations or audits.

- Denver includes a link on all external staff emails to a customer service survey.
- Hanover Co. (VA) conducts exit interviews with customers 1 to 2 months after they complete the review process.
- Roseville (CA) staff periodically meets with customers and internally to determine what is working and what is not.

BIAS FOR CHANGE AND IMPROVEMENT

Excellent review processes understand that change is a continuous and necessary process. They create an internal culture that expects and accepts continuous improvement. They revisit and reevaluate the process at least every ten years. Often a sponsor or champion is required to bring about organizational change.

- In 1998, Henderson (NV) Process Review Team identified over 100 process changes.
- In 2006 a business process engineering team in San Diego identified 133 needed improvements. In addition, the City reorganized with the DSD reporting to the Mayor's Office. The City conducted a similar review in 2000, creating the DSD.
- The Mayor of Louisville (KY) holds monthly conferences around the city to listen to developer and citizen concerns about city operations, including planning and development.
- In Columbus (OH) the mayor became so frustrated with their review process that he created a new department, which implemented a number of previously recommended process changes.
- In Oswego (NY) the mayor and Common Council split the planning functions between Commu-

nity Development and Engineering to speed up the development permitting process. According to the Mayor the City has "simplified and expedited the entire permitting and development process to support, accommodate and encourage investment by our small business owners and local contractors."
- Aurora (CO) has a policy to revise its development process every 10 years to reflect changing conditions and seek new input from stakeholders. Their 2011 comprehensive review yielded 50 improvement items.

REGULAR AND FREQUENT COMMUNICATION

Excellent review processes believe that it is their professional obligation to keep the applicant, City Council, and public informed. They use a variety of tools to keep stakeholders informed, including wed site, email, printed materials, social media, etc.

- Scottsdale (AZ) has an on-line resource center to guide citizens and developers through the planning and review processes.
- Henderson (NV) and Tallahassee (FL) provide on-line project tracking. Henderson provides on-line inspection scheduling for customers.
- San Diego posts a customer bill of rights in its intake area.
- San Diego and Henderson ask customers for their preferred method of communication; phone, email, etc.
- In Tallahassee (FL) residents can sign up for an email distribution list that will inform them when a public hearing is scheduled for a project within a certain distance from their property.

RELIABLE FUNDING THAT MATCHES DEMAND

Excellent review processes make a special effort to match fees with the actual cost of providing service. Enterprise funds are common. An enterprise fund achieves financial flexibility by collecting revenue for a service based upon fees that cover the long-term cost of providing that service. Any "excess" funds are placed in a reserve fund to cover any shortfalls due to economic downturns. Jurisdictions without enterprise funds often operate like a business.

- Henderson (NV) and San Diego have enterprise funds that full support their development review functions
- Tallahassee receives much of its operating funds from the general fund, but its building inspec-

tion unit is funded as an enterprise fund. The development prepares an annual performance management report that is part of the budget process.

- San Diego and Tallahassee conduct time motion studies to ensure that fees are meeting the cost of operation.
- Dallas (TX) operates with funding from an Enterprise Fund supported entirely from service fees. The Fund covers the cost of building inspection, current planning, engineering and GIS. The fund has allowed the City to implement technology improvements and to spread the revenue from multi-year projects across multiple budget years.

Heavy Reliance on Integrated Technology

Excellent review functions attribute much of their success to the use of technology. Features often include electronic submission, customer status reports, shared review comments, and performance ratings.

- Tallahassee did not purchase a comprehensive software package but instead expanded upon the systems already in place.
- Dallas has implemented the Electronic Plan Review System that allows applicants to submit plans and the issuance of permits electronically.
- Desk review staff in Calgary (BC) have oversized monitors for plan viewing. All field staff have tablets.

Close Relationship With IT Professionals

Excellent review processes have IT staff that are either permanently assigned or specialists with in the IT Department. IT staff need to knowledgeable about the review process and be invested in overall success of the review function.

- Tallahassee has IT positions within their Growth Management Department.
- Henderson has dedicated positions within its IT Department that have advanced knowledge of the development review process and that are invested in the success of the review process.
- San Diego emphasizes return of investment for all IT products that has created a close working relationship with the IT Department. IT staff have had to develop intimate knowledge of the review process to adequately assist the DSD.

One-Stop Shop

Excellent review processes find a way to integrate the four types developmental services; planning and zoning review, site plan review, engineering review, and permits and inspections. This integration is transparent to the customer. Most frequently this involves the co-location of all development functions into one space with a centralized intake function. Organizational structures range from an appointment of a review manager to full departmental mergers.

- Henderson (NV) Development Services Center is a one-stop shop with all development staff located on one floor. The DSC has a matrix organizational structure. The DSC has four staff that oversees the review process. The six reviewing departments preform the actual reviews, but are not organizationally part of the DSC.
- Tallahassee's Growth Management Department contains three sections, Land Use and Environmental Services, Development Review Administration and Building Inspections.
- San Diego has moved all development related functions into one department, Development Services Department.
- Columbus (OH) also has a one-stop shop with all development related functions in one location. It has merged its planning and building functions with engineering, transportation and utilities being separate departments.
- Scottsdale (AZ) has a one-stop shop with a centralized intake. Their web site has a link that lets the customer see in real time the availability of the service counter to reduce wait time. In addition, their site encourages on-line application submittal.
- Franklin (TN) recently started a one-stop – one-day service for smaller less complicated proposals. One day a week is reserved for the review and permitting of smaller projects. Frequently a permit can be issued within a couple of hours assuming all the information is provided. Previous to this change permits for small projects would require a week to review under their old first in, first reviewed policy.

Active Customer and Citizen Education
Excellent review functions spent the time and effort to train developers and citizens

- Carrollton (TX) holds a summer class for developers and interested citizens. As part of the class the City shares a "top 10" list of reasons why applications are denied.
- Louisville (KY) holds a full day workshop, Annual Development Conference, for practitioners and the public. The City also offers a Planning College where neighborhood leaders learn about planning and the development review process.
- San Antonio (TX) publishes a "Top 10" turn down list for applicants and offers a 6-hour building code academy.
- Henderson (NV) and Tallahassee (FL) conduct general education sessions on how best to navigate their review processes.
- San Diego (CA) holds several education seminars a year on special topics related to their review process. In addition, the City offers a number of Information Bulletins on specific aspects of their review process.

Use of Performance Measures
Excellent review processes believe that focusing on objective performance measures intensifies the effort of staff to meet measures and allows the organization to spot areas of improvement.

- San Diego has implemented a balanced scorecard approach to setting, tracking and managing performance measures.
- Tallahassee (FL) relies on a number of performance measures to help manage the operation of the Growth Management Department and participates in the Florida Benchmarking Consortium.
- Arlington (VA) tracks 11 annual housing goals with numerical targets through their annual Affordable Housing Targets report.

Focus on High Staff Morale
High morale is important to these organizations and they employ a number of techniques to maintain employee morale.

- Henderson (NV) assigns staff to a compressed workweek (four 91/2-hour days overlapping across the workweek).
- Henderson (NV) and Tallahassee (FL) provide staff with newer up-to-date facilities.
- Henderson has empowered frontline staff to make decisions.
- San Diego has implemented a formal program to recognize and reward employee excellence with the goal of encouraging outstanding performance.

Customer Advocacy
Excellent review processes often have an ombudsmen or similar position to assist customers access services.

- Henderson, Tallahassee and San Diego each have process managers that are responsible for the management and improvement of the review processes.
- San Diego has created a small business liaison / ombudsperson that serves as a mediator and problem solver. Specifically, the position assist customers find the right information and materials, suggests options for resolving issues on projects, and manages the in-house customer surveys.
- Fairfax County (VA) based upon a recent evaluation of their development review process that despite having an ombudsman position it was still difficult for staff to understand customer concerns due to the organization not having cross-functional expertise.
- Maricopa County (AZ) created an ombudsman office to provide support to citizens with unresolved concerns. The ombudsman's role is to improve information exchange and coordination between staff and customers.

Proficient Record Management System
The maintenance of records is a critical feature of an excellent review process. The ability to find accurate information quickly and efficiently is vital.

- Henderson has consolidated development related records management functions into the City Clerk's Office. Records management plays an important role in the development review process.
- In Tallahassee, applications are scanned into their electronic document management system reducing the number of hard copies that from 15 to 2.
- In 2015, Dallas launched their electronic document management system (OnBase) and is digitizing the department paper records.

EXPEDITED REVIEW

Expedited review is a premium service that will accelerate the building plan review and permit process. Typically it involves a single-review session with a consolidated team of plan reviewers that are empowered to make on-the-spot decisions and changes. The expedited team will include specialized reviewers that represent all review disciplines: zoning, building, structural, engineering, energy, fire, health, and any other required specialty services.

- San Diego offers expedited review for affordable housing projects.
- Tallassee provides expedited review for an increased fee at the request of the applicant.
- Austin (TX) offers expedited review for residential and commercial developments. Commercial projects over a certain size must certify worker protection standards are met. An additional fee of $488 for plan completeness check and an hourly rate of $1098 for residential and $1708 for commercial is charged.
- Phoenix (AZ) program is limited to projects with significant overall benefit to the community. Applicant must demonstrate adverse scheduling or financial impact to the project to be approved for expedited review.
- Santa Fe (NM) accelerates the review and waives certain fees for development projects that include at least 25% affordable housing.
- The Town of Marana's (AZ) emphasis is on sustainable jobs and commerce. Expedited review is provided to qualified non-retail enterprises that employ at least 25 individuals with wages of at least $40K annual or will create at least 25 new high paying jobs.
- Dallas (TX) has an interdepartmental Q-Team that will expedite the issuance of a permit for $1,000 an hour. The expedited review does not take time away from applications already in the system.
- Dallas (TX) also implemented a "Gold Card" program for qualified builders that have expert understanding of their development process dramatically reducing review time.
- San Jose (CA) allows expedited review for selective project types for a 50% surcharge over the regular plan review fees.

STREAMLINED REVIEW PROCESS

Excellent review functions take steps to make their process more efficient, more effective and more responsive.

- Charlotte (NC) has a Land Development Gatekeeper that checks applications for completeness.
- Specific performance improvement measures are shown on the Process Improvement Checklist.

PROCESS IMPROVEMENT ASSESSMENT TOOL

Anchorage can use the tool below to quickly assess relatively quickly which best practices it has in place, and how deeply deployed they are. Full deployment means the practice is consistently used throughout all departments involved with development review: it is a standard practice that everyone uses. Partially deployed means that some staff, or some of the departments, use this practice. However, it is not consistently used everywhere.

	Fully Deployed	Partially Deployed	Not Deployed	N/A
CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE				
Well-crafted, explanatory handouts, checklists, and other material for the public and developers.				
One-Stop Shop with centralized intake.				
The co-location of all review functions in one space or building.				
Easily accessible location with a central location.				
Plenty of parking.				
Consistency in the application of codes and standards.				
Reasonable turnaround times.				
Knowledgeable, helpful staff.				
Comfortable and functional waiting areas.				
Ability to view status of applications and inspections online.				
Electronic submittal, payments and communication with staff.				
Access to planner or reviewer "of the day" via phone, walk-in, email.				
Pre-submittal Q/A meetings with all relevant departments represented.				
Single point of contact for applications in progress (such as a city project manager or permit coordinator).				
Central location online to easily find well-organized relevant policies, codes, policies and forms.				
Ability to request inspections online.				
Ask customers their preferred communication methods, and implement tools that match customer preferences to the extent possible.				
Communicate early and often with stakeholders and applicants, particularly when changing processes or expectations.				
Prepare brief weekly progress reports on applications, updating the status of the review, which should then be available online.				
Provide online information on project status, codes, processes, forms, directions, etc.				

	Fully Deployed	Partially Deployed	Not Deployed	N/A
Use standardized review comment language, where possible.				
Create an advisory committee make up of developers, stakeholders, and citizens that can provide suggestions and recommendations to the Department.				
Implement point of service surveys of customers, as well as annual surveys of services.				
Periodically conduct exit interviews with applicant at the end of reviews and after all inspections are completed. An alternative would be periodic customer focus groups.				
Periodically arrange for third party evaluations or audits of processes.				
Hold periodic community meetings hosted by the Mayor or senior leaders to discuss what is going well and what is not.				
Conduct developer and stakeholder training on how to access the review process and common pitfalls.				
A "top 10" list indicating the most common reasons an application is rejected or sent back.				
LEADERSHIP, STRATEGY AND MANAGEMENT				
A single manager that is responsible for the overall development review function.				
Clear decision making authorities.				
Clear work expectations for all positions.				
Established and clear lines of communication within and between relevant internal groups/departments.				
Budget incentive program or other mechanism for department to keep a portion of its budget savings based on cost savings or meeting other types of performance targets.				
Regular, dedicated time to review and discuss performance targets, barriers and how to improve.				
Understanding of and support for professional development relevant to high performance of staff.				
An inter-department review committee to insure quality standards are met and to resolve inter-departmental disputes. This group may benefit from weekly meetings to assure needed changes are developed and agreed to quickly.				
Up-to-date plans and policies that reflect community values and needs.				
Bias for change; embedded opportunities for regular consideration of how to improve, or to evolve to meet changing conditions.				

	Fully Deployed	Partially Deployed	Not Deployed	N/A
FEES AND FINANCIAL PRACTICES				
Easy to understand fees that are based on actual review costs.				
Waive or reduce fees for proposals that achieve key city goals.				
An enterprise fund or other means to recover the full cost of the review.				
Maintain a 9 or 12-month budget reserve.				
WORK PROCESSES: OVERALL				
Specific goals and performance standards for key steps in the planning, code development and review processes.				
Periodically evaluation of what's working/what's not to improve process efficiency, effectiveness and responsiveness on a continuous basis (regular cycles of learning)				
Assignment of a project or case manager to shepherd the proposal through the review process from pre- application to land use approval (in the case of a land use application) or permit issuance (in the case of a permit application)				
Contracts with consultants or other jurisdictions to handle overload situations.				
WORK PROCESSES: PRE-SUBMITTAL				
Ability to meet informally to discuss potential projects.				
Joint meetings with applicant and key staff on complex projects.				
Move directly to intake if application is complete.				
Scheduled appointments for pre-submittals, to allow sufficient time for discussion.				
WORK PROCESSES: APPLICATION INTAKE				
Scheduling of intake for major projects, to allow sufficient time for completeness review.				
Reject applications that are not complete, and which therefore are not ready for review staff.				
Tracking of counter wait time based upon established standard; no longer than 15 minutes is preferred.				
A backup call procedure when wait times get exceed standard. Supervisor notified to assist if wait exceeds 30 minutes.				
Multiple options for submittal, including online and in-person.				
Multiple options for payment of fees, including online and in-person.				

	Fully Deployed	Partially Deployed	Not Deployed	N/A
Set and monitor targets for completeness reviews (date of receipt to date completeness review completed)				
Clear, consistently applied standards for intake.				
Require evidence of the appropriate land use approvals as a condition of submittal.				
Require submittal of checklists by the applicant, verifying that required documents have been included in the submittal package.				
Develop standard review group routing rules, and build into application forms if possible. (create default routings, which can be overridden by PC if needed).				
Develop standard case type/permit type triggers, and train staff and applicants on those triggers.				
Develop an integrated completeness checklist for intake staff, for planning cases and for building permits in particular.				
WORK PROCESSES: PERMIT REVIEWS				
Develop clear rules regarding when case/permit processing should be put on hold, and a mechanism for communicating quickly when a hold is put into place.				
Contracts with consultants or other jurisdictions to handle overload situations.				
Expedite reviews of high priority proposals, based on clear definitions of what constitutes a high priority proposal.				
The ability for developers to pay higher fees to expedite reviews.				
Set up a quick lane: Set aside a day or time to process and approve small project applications on the same day as submittal.				
Increase fees after the third unsuccessful re-submittal, or require a new permit application after if a fourth round of review is needed.				
Get it right the first time: assure that staff comments are complete, accurate, understandable and associated with the applicable code for every round of review.				
Only send review comments after all agencies have submitted comments at the end of each review round to allow staff to catch and resolve internal conflicts prior to communication to the applicant, and to assure applicants receive complete comments. (If substantial disparities exist in review times between groups, consider work rebalancing or this approach is unlikely to be acceptable to customers)				
Meet internal performance standards for timeliness at least 90% of the time.				

MOA Development Process Improvements

	Fully Deployed	Partially Deployed	Not Deployed	N/A
Do not differentiate between public sector proposals and private sector proposals, in terms of review standards and treatment.				
Provide frequent opportunities for cross-functional communication regarding queue priorities, emerging issues with applications, emerging issues with workload and other process management needs.				
WORK PROCESSES: INSPECTIONS				
Same day inspections if requested by 7:00 am.				
Consultants used as back up when inspections cannot be scheduled within one working day.				
Use of electronic devices in the field to instantly approve/disapprove an inspection.				
Require key contractor staff to be present during inspection.				
Red tag (stop work) on projects that are found to be working without a permit.				
Provide field staff with mobile electronic devices such as computers with air cards, printers, smart phones and digital cameras.				
Assure mobile devices are set up and functioning properly.				
Provide field staff with mobile electronic devices such as computers with air cards, printers, smart phones and digital cameras.				
WORK PROCESSES: FINAL APPROVALS				
Buildings: only allow temporary/conditional certificates of occupancy for scenarios in which the final grading and landscaping of the project cannot occur until spring due to the weather.				
Only allow scheduling of final building inspection after all other referrals' final inspections are passed.				
POST-CLOSURE PRACTICES				
Centralized location for all physical bonds involved with the development process.				
Centralized location for information regarding all post-closure conditions, whether from land use approvals or permit conditions. Ideally, track this information in the technology system.				
WORKFORCE PRACTICES				
Use highly qualified front counter staff that are empowered to resolve common issues and concerns.				

	Fully Deployed	Partially Deployed	Not Deployed	N/A
Cross-train staff to handle multiple review functions where feasible.				
Provide staff with continuing education and certification opportunities.				
MEASUREMENT, TECHNOLOGY AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT				
Use electronic systems that make the review process as paperless as possible.				
Have established protocols for handling documents and files that are not submitted electronically.				
Provide incentives to encourage submittal of plans and applications electronically.				
Issuance of simple permits online, without the need to come in and pick up the permit.				
Embedded technology staff who are also deeply familiar with business needs, or highly trained department software "power users", within the development review departments				
Take steps to assure the technology is an effective tool for staff, and that it does not inadvertently become a barrier to efficiency and effectiveness.				
Provide a single point of contact for software vendors.				
Log all issues encountered, and their resolution, so that an internal knowledge base is built and can be shared as FAQs.				
Assure that staff have immediate or near-immediate access to power users or IT staff who can answer questions or trouble-shoot when problems are encountered.				
Provide periodic training and refreshers on technology for all staff.				
Easy access to technology vendor and jurisdiction-specific manuals, videos and other training materials.				
Invest in and develop a superior GIS system. Ideally, integrate the GIS system with the permits management system.				
Provide staff with large screen, dual monitors so that electronic reviews are facilitated.				

Notes:

Appendix:
Open-ended survey responses

This appendix contains the open-ended responses to Anchorage's three formal surveys:

1. **Senior Leaders**
2. **Staff and managers**
3. **Customers**

Following these responses, the raw results for the Moments of Madness and Inspiration are also included. The Moments survey was informal, with staff able to add in one more ideas as they so choose.

For a summary of the survey findings overall, and to view the survey data tables, please refer to Chapter 1 in the report.

Leaders Survey Comments
(6 Respondents)

When you think about the development review system, what gives you the greatest sense of pride?

1. Consistent application of codes.
2. When I work with an applicant to find a resolution that is both reasonable and fits within the bounds of code.
3. Efficient processing.
4. The professionalism, dedication and technical expertise of our employees in delivering service while insuring code requirements are met, and treating everyone with dignity and respect in an equitable fashion.
5. Relatively low turnover rate.

What is the most important thing you would change if you could, to make your job and the jobs of your colleagues easier?

1. Building Official should not be an at-will position.
2. Too many folks try to bypass the code requirements and permitting process by complaining to the directors. It would be beneficial if applicants would just let the system work and submit things in a timely manner.
3. Communication.
4. Reject all partial/incomplete applications. We have enabled developers and builders to use us for "design by review." 2. Resolve hardware and software issues.
5. Hire more people.

WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING YOU WOULD CHANGE IF YOU COULD, TO BETTER MEET THE NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS OF YOUR CUSTOMERS?

1. Additional plan review and inspection staff.
2. I would better communicate the expectations of the Municipality and hold customers to a minimum standard. If we clearly communicate the requirements, more complaints could be easily mitigated.
3. Hire more people.

STAFF AND MANAGER SURVEY COMMENTS (48 RESPONDENTS)

WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT THE DEVELOPMENT REVIEW SYSTEM, WHAT GIVES YOU THE GREATEST SENSE OF PRIDE?

Customer Focus
1. Being able to help the community through a complicated process.
2. Accurate information provided to the public and applicants.
3. The level of service we provide.
4. When we can help someone get through the process "painlessly."
5. Customer service.
6. Professionalism of staff, knowledgeable, helpful.
7. Staff who make sure the customer gets what they need.
8. Fairness of the system; accuracy of information.

Customer Results
9. A pleased customer.
10. Happy customers.
11. A happy customer, even if they didn't receive exactly what they first were seeking.
12. We have few complaints - other than from chronic whiners, lazy developers / consultants, people who 'trade' on their former employment with the MOA, or "good old boy" that's not what we could do in the 1970s" customers.

Equipment / Technology
13. Going paperless.

General Comments
14. There is little pride in this system. Years of negative feedback have created a feeling of drudgery, and a perception that no matter what you do, people will be unhappy.
15. N/A In Transportation Planning.

Physical Space
16. We have a functional facility.

Protect Community
17. That there is a review system.
18. The thankless job we do to protect the community.
19. Safe building plans.

Quality of Work
20. Our reviewers are thorough.
21. Getting it right the first time.

22. Technical competence.
23. Accurate plan review.
24. A quality end product.
25. How accurately % quickly it's completed.
26. Hard work, fair treatment of customers, ability to adapt.
27. Accurately applying Code and Design Criteria to reviews.
28. When a project is designed and constructed properly and is approved with almost no required correction.
29. Accurate reviews in a timely manor.

Teamwork

30. Co works in plan review.
31. Over all, most of the people working here want to help and do a good job.
32. We are a team (MOA, Developer & Contractors).
33. The integrity of the people.
34. The fact that my employer is trying to improve by using its employee's opinions.

WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING YOU WOULD CHANGE IF YOU COULD, TO MAKE YOUR JOB AND THE JOBS OF YOUR COLLEAGUES EASIER?

Budget

1. Bigger budget

Customer Communication

2. Flow charts of permitting process for different projects that customers can view online (what to bring in for new deck, reroof detail, residential addition, etc.).

Customer Focus

3. As far as the "organization" when there is a problem there should be individual / advocate for the customer that is a 3rd party. Happy customers make the job easier.
4. End the special treatment many of the developers receive because of who they are or who they know.

Equipment/Technology

5. Have better IT program for the field inspectors.
6. Need good it support and fix our computers, tablets, and out dated phone.
7. Provide in-house IT management.
8. Improved software that meets our needs and performs as needed.
9. The computer resulting system used for inspections is cumbersome and temperamental. Does not appear that it is easy to manipulate for our needs. Or, is simply never manipulated for our needs because of unknown reasons. Many problems have been identified without update or correction.
10. Turn on the milestones in Hansen.
11. Better Wi-Fi connection throughout the city.
12. Better software training and use (In Design, GIS).
13. Use hardware & software that is reliable. IT staff on site (4700 Elmore) to fix issues. Otherwise go back to paper and scan inspections for electronic copy.
14. Faster and more accessible electronic databases or programs.
15. Invest in technology and software that works effectively, dependably, and consistently. Have the IT support at our office dedicated to serving our needs.

Internal Communication
16.   More interaction/communication between different work groups for better understanding of what other groups do and require.
17.   Have better communication and collaboration internally. We have strained relationships with some departments/sections.
18.   Regular cross agency work sessions to align goals and spending.
19.   More communications.
20.   Better communication between the teams.

Political Environment
21.   Political involvement.

Procurement
22.   Faster RFP processing by MOA Purchasing Dept.

Review Requirements
23.   Removal of exempt plan review.
24.   Improve the quality of permit submittals from the public.
25.   Filling in the reserved sections in the zoning code.

Staff Capability/Capacity
26.   Replace certain staff.
27.   Hands on training, rather than training that is trial by error. The Senior Planners should mentor new hires and junior planners to help them come up to speed and pitch in quickly.
28.   More training and resources to do the job (e.g., GIS support).
29.   Increase staff to reduce review times.
30.   More training for long range & current planning.
31.   Additional staffing to better assist the customer.
32.   We really need to make sure we keep a full staff. We went the last 10 months one reviewer short because we were afraid of hiring someone only to have to fire them if the building season slowed.
33.   Staffing. I manage a work group that is understaffed, leading to our development reviewer needing to take care of traffic safety complaints (non-development issues) in a specified area of the MOA

Work Climate
34.   Flexible work hours; telecommuting.

Work Process
35.   Streamline busywork.
36.   Streamline subdivision inspection process.
37.   Increase supervisor support of the codes that are in place, and staff implementation of those codes. The typical first answer when one customer has a complaint is to "change the code". A moving target is hard to hit.
38.   Have someone that answers the phone hotline to free up multiple people that currently cover the phones.
39.   Make "walk-through" permits on a specific day or part of a day.

WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING YOU WOULD CHANGE IF YOU COULD, TO BETTER MEET THE NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS OF YOUR CUSTOMERS?

Customer Communication
1.   Conduct better follow up. This is difficult to do with current workload.

2.   Education of customers about WHY codes and permits are needed.
3.   Work to change their perception of our department through education.
4.   Better communication with the public of our process.
5.   Educate them more.
6.   Educate them on what the code standards are.

Customer Results
7.   Quicker better service, more avenues to success.

Equipment / Technology
8.   Mobile inspection platform.

Internal Communication
9.   Better communication between plans, projects, permits and inspections. Don't ask for more than we need. Don't change the demands once the project is going.

Pre-App Meeting Process
10.   Establish a set date/time period each week for pre-app meetings, so that all agencies can lock that in on their calendars and provide a meaningful pre-app meeting for the customer. Also, have the customer provide a short narrative of what they are trying to find out and a to scale sketch of the site to help inform the reviewers prior to the meeting to help them prepare. This way everyone comes to the meeting prepared and the customer has received good informa tion to determine if they want and how to move forward with their project.

Review Requirement
11.   Filling in the reserved sections in the zoning code.

Staff Availability
12.   Work day hours.

Staff Capacity / Capability
13.   Hire more people in code abatement we only have two people and need at least 4.
14.   Provide sufficient staff to handle actual workloads.
15.   Replace certain staff.
16.   Hire a Building Official not associated with the community using the ICC job board.
17.   Better education of staff so that there is consistent interpretation and implementation of codes. Consistent application of codes creates an understanding between staff and customers and gets a better product from both.
18.   More staff.
19.   Better-qualified architectural plan reviewers. It would solve a lot of issues between inspectors and contractors.
20.   Additional staffing to better assist the customer.
21.   Cross train all long range and current planning planners.

Timeliness
22.   Quicker review process or change policy on review times.

Work Process
23.   Hold engineers accountable for delays due to poor quality work.
24.   Streamline subdivision inspection process.
25.   I would make specific timed inspections instead of just saying AM or PM.
26.   Have a more controlled sign out process for the permit folders so that it reduces the amount to time it takes to find the permit folder.

27.   Continue PI efforts.
28.   One service desk phone operator to gather info and provide guidance for right department.
29.   In "onsite water and wastewater" my supervisor does a great job in allowing our small group the
        flexibility to enforce the intent of the code when the letter of the code isn't working. If more depart
        ments could do this it would help the consumer.
30.   Get more information out to the consultants so they can better prepare for our reviews.
31.   Make it so I can perform plan reviews without being constantly interrupted by phone calls, and
        "walk-through" permits while I am reviewing plans. It is extremely difficult to complete consistent,
        accurate, and timely reviews when being interrupted.
32.   Less complicated process for resubmittal.
33.   We should probably consider forcing express reviews if the project goes through more than one
        review cycle.
34.   See above. Or, have hard and fast rules about 'no walk-in customers' periods to allow staff to maxi
        mize productivity during available hours.

NA
35.   Unsure.

CUSTOMER SURVEY COMMENTS
(41 RESPONDENTS)

LAND USE PLANNING SERVICES

IF YOU DISAGREED WITH ANY OF THE STATEMENTS ABOVE, PLEASE TELL US MORE ABOUT THE SOURCE OF YOUR CONCERNS:

1.   This survey doesn't even touch on the process by which you submit and review the documents.
2.   Inconsistent information and lost documents.
3.   Title 21 is convoluted and difficult to understand and find applicable provisions.
4.   The staff feels that other design professionals have no value.
5.   Land Use permit is required prior to clearing and grubbing. Within the MOA you can simply apply
        for a clearing and grubbing. It seems odd that you need full permit level documents before clearing.
6.   The city will often find new items in codes that were not enforced on previous jobs and start enforc
        ing them. Often comments will be made but no code reference is given, the comment is more of a
        critique or an opinion than identification of code violation. It can be difficult to get in contact.

WHAT WORKS BEST ABOUT THE LAND USE APPLICATION PROCESS?

1.   No plan review.
2.   When face-to-face communication is possible.
3.   Application form.
4.   Not much.
5.   Zoning plan review is the main part of this permit and this is one of the only departments that con
        duct reviews in a timely manner.

IF YOU COULD CHANGE ONE THING ABOUT THE LAND USE APPLICATION PROCESS OR THE LAND USE CODE, WHAT WOULD IT BE AND HOW WOULD YOU CHANGE IT?

1.   Go back to the old T21. Much more user friendly.

2. The submittal process and the time frames.
3. Revert back to the previous Title 21 code.
4. The staff's attitude forwards architects, engineers and contractors. Staff does not value or ac cept our knowledge.
5. I would like to see codes enforced on existing homes. Once the city started pushing back against over-burdensome codes then new construction would not be upproportionaly bearing the brunt.

Building Permit and Inspection Services

What works best about the building permit and inspections processes?

1. Getting emailed inspection reports shortly after they occur (except for electrical inspections-there is a long delay).
2. The underlying intention is best, (protect home owners/ purchasers) the follow through of this is extremely lacking.
3. Knowledgeable staff just not enough of them.
4. Being able to do things online and without staff.
5. Inspectors normally help schedule the inspection.
6. Most of the reviewers have good intentions.
7. Small projects that can be walked through in person.
8. Online viewing of comments.
9. Nice people.
10. Nothing.
11. Tech personnel and Zoning.
12. You should separate not lump Permit Review and Inspections together. The MOA Inspectors are far superior to plan review/permit staff.
13. The inspections are timely.
14. Inspections.
15. The people. The staff are the biggest help when working through permitting.
16. Staff is easy to work with.
17. Online information is available.
18. Filling out the initial form does appear to be easy, when it's still on my computer and before I've submitted. That's about it.
19. Not much.
20. Gretchen in Building Safety is AWESOME!
21. Online access.
22. Communication with Staff is very good

If you could change one thing about the building permit or inspections processes, what would it be and how would you change it?

1. Make Anchorage a Land Use Area with third party plan review and inspections.
2. The total lack of consistency and the blatant overcharging of fees and inspections (times). Properly educated/ trained/qualified/ and most importantly an efficient staff would be a great start and would help with consistency. This also could reduce the need/ pressure for the ins pectors to overcharge and misrepresent the time they spend per inspection.
3. Adding more permitting personnel would certainly cut down the wait time. Many times it's ex treme.
4. Let the contractor hire other professionals to plan review and inspections. Get certification from a registered engineer.

5. Drop paperwork and leave. No waiting to watch someone work. Discuss any issues by phone or email.
6. The process of submitting the documents and receiving the permit needs improvement. The time frame for reviews could also use some improvement in large and small projects.
7. Multiple reviews are a big problem.
8. Transparency of process and recognition of the professional liability, which remains with the architect and engineers.
9. Have a permit manager for each permit -someone from the muni to manage all comments and make sure departments respond timely and effectively.
10. Be flexible on code interpretation, there is more than one method to meet the intent of the code.
11. Treat the design professionals with respect. They took the time to obtain a license most of MOAs staff did not.
12. Only one good review, please not however many the plan reviewer wants
13. Inspections should be immediately uploaded/available when complete/approved. Not waiting for inspectors to upload days after completed.
14. Plan review and the permit center need to be more customer service driven and take far better care and concern for there paying clients. They are more interested in taking breaks or lunch than getting the job done. After wasting far too much time at the counter level one must elevate to a supervisor to see results in a timely manner. The MOA building department is not a fun place to go, no concern is given for the builder's time or the client's time, several projects have been delayed recently and when elevated they were cleared immediately and it should have happened at the counter level.
15. The overall timeline to receive comments and a permit.
16. Two submittal processes/lines. One for first timers/occasional permitting and another for people that know the process and use it frequently. We could potentially save a lot of time spent at the permit center if there was a quicker way to submit documents when you know what your doing.
17. Third party reviews for all classes of permits. Eliminate structural review staff altogether.
18. The time it takes for review. (Which I assume means staffing needs to increase) also below the 1-3 months is excessive. 1-1.5 months is acceptable. 2-3 months is excessive.
19. Possibly showing when permit review will be completed by.
20. Zoning, it would be advantageous if one could submit for a zoning review prior to full building application. It would remove the need for pre-application meetings, reduce cost, confusion and waste. Also, there needs to be more zoning reviewers available: both are consistently being plagued by questions regarding interpretations of the new title 21.
21. Anchorage should get rid of the entire building permit process. Go to the land use permit process used by Eagle River and Girdwood.
22. All plan review and inspection comments would be accompanied by the code section and specify what code is being violated and how.
23. As a developer I'm typically involved in permitting on a peripherally but it takes a long time to get a permit, much longer than in other places around the state and we have had inspectors approve construction elements in one project that we replicate in another project only to have a different inspector find the construction element unsatisfactory.
24. The length of time it takes to receive review comments. We recently submitted a project and it took 4 1/2 weeks to receive the first round of structural comments
25. Inspectors should honor the previous inspection when multiple inspectors are involved.
26. Speed up the review time and create more flexible partial approvals within the new electronic permitting system

ADDITIONAL CUSTOMER COMMENTS –
SUBMITTED AFTER THE CLOSE OF THE SURVEY

SUBMISSION ONE

MOA inspectors should either have or not have authority to approve issues in the field, but either way it should be published and the MOA should have to stand by it. It is not uncommon for the black and white world of plans, specs, and details to not work perfectly in the field and, as a result, it is not un-common for inspectors to work with contractors to install the best solution possible. In the case of EC as you know, the departure from 'design grade' and the ADA standard details was significantly more than 'tweaks', which is why the conclusion that was installed was reached.

It is our suggestion that developers and their civil engineers should have to completely detail all ADA plan slopes and elevations on the drawings, the MOA should review and when the plans are approved, then everyone should be on the same page. Civil engineers should not be able to design slopes to such a fine tolerance that any variation in the field means a substandard installation and reviewers should be instructed to watch for this. We can be very precise with grade and we (contractors) should be, but it is not steel…it is still dirt, concrete and asphalt.

SUBMISSION TWO

This permitting season has truly been the worst I have dealt with. My biggest frustration with the MOA permit process is MOA's unwillingness to come to the table. Now, individual departments do, but as a whole. There is no buy-in, no skin in the game.

As a civil engineer, my design is routed to six departments for review – Zoning, Traffic, ROW, Public Works, Stormwater, and Fire. Six departments – for one set of design drawings I am responsible for. Not just drawings – all the extra reports and agreements required as well.

As you know, I worked hard to develop, and work hard to maintain, good working relationships with MOA reviewers. My philosophy is to try to resolve it at the lowest level to start with. Most of them are willing to do the same. I don't have complaints there. I like that several reviewers, Traffic and Public Works are the two that come to mind, are thorough in their reviews – citing code, helping explain why they are asking. I'm hearing a lot of complaints from the rest of my design teams about the delay in time for other reviews – like 6-8 weeks for initial structural comments.

But, when it's a larger issue than our run-of-the-mill review comments. That's when I feel it all falls apart. Subdivision agreements, site plan reviews, etc. Fingers are pointed, excuses are made, and no effort to be part of finding a solution is made. The "us vs. them" attitude prevails.

I know the developers and their design teams (which I am part of) do not, as a whole, help with that prevailing attitude. I know that.

Why can MOA not assist in the process? If we aren't allowed to say it's because we are busy, short-staffed, or there's no money in our justification, why is MOA allowed to? I am also frustrated when departments cannot coordinate with one another internally, but make us do it. They are in the same building; can they not talk to one another without a go-between? (Your department works hard at this, but others do not.)

The attitude and the conversation between "sides" needs to change into a dialogue with shared re-sponsibility and commitment to finding solutions – for projects and the community as a whole. I don't know how to change that attitude though. You'd have to scrap us all, on both sides, and start over.

I think it would help if we could/would actually have a dialogue. Where MOA could not just say "no" but explain what is driving the "no", the root cause of concern. In turn, the developer side needs be to be

able to do the same – without being told they care not for our time or cost impacts. If we better understood the drivers on both sides, and actually cared about understanding them, to find a solution . . . maybe it's not what either side wants but is the best solution given all the constraints. (I think you work hard at this, but you are a minority.)

I also think there needs to be more staff not less. There is only one reviewer in many of the departments I have to deal with. If they are gone, no reviews happen. I believe, whole-heartedly, that they should be allowed to go on vacation. I also feel it's not fair that they have to then deal with all the work that didn't happen while they were away. There needs to be people to cross-train and cover each other. (My God, bigger government!)

And I also think certain staff should not be in the positions they are in. I often get asked to put in complaints so managers can address it, but I don't often do it because of the price I have to pay later. I'm not afraid to have it known I said it, but I don't want to pay for saying it. Because the retribution is real. I'm not sure how to fix that. As you know, I don't want to complain unless it is something big. I know that others are not the same.

Moments of Madness and Inspiration

In May 2017, the project team held a Kickoff Meeting with Anchorage and a representative of the Cook Inlet Housing Authority. After the Kickoff and before the June Blitz Week, the project team invited staff to keep diaries of their "moments of madness and inspiration" – recording real-time what they were thinking and seeing as process problems and opportunities as they worked. A few staff provided comments late, and those are incorporated here as well. The responses are organized in broad themes to help the reader in seeing trends in the information.

Work Procedures

General Concerns
1.   It takes 8 hours to process private development invoices every month. It is an involved process and an overly cumbersome task for the approximately 50 statements and letters that go out.
2.   As plan reviewers, we get our work load from a report called "Reviews in Queue"; information that the permit techs can included on this report is in the "assigned to" column, they can add the plan reviewers name that belongs to the project. Currently this is not happening every time they take a resubmittal, change order, alternate means that is routed for review causing each one of use to figure out who projects have something to be reviewed in. This wastes so much of the plan review ers time and it would be more efficient to know what work you have in then to be surprised that the work is here.
3.   It would be very helpful if the technicians can go back to opening the plan sets they are taking in for a permit to see what the project is and has been property identified on the application as to the scope of work and all pages are there for review.
4.   There is a system for checking out folder and plans that is not consistently being used, by all par ties in this building. This problem is not only in our department. Anyone can come down and pull a folder or plans and take it. if it's not checked out, then the rest of us that maybe looking for it, spend many hours wasted on looking for these folders and plans not checked out. It should be mandatory with consequences that folders and plans be checked out. This is to include the permit techs out front. There use to be a whole other system that employed people to control the folders and plans, and it didn't seem to be a problem.
5.   I really get tired of telling people that I can't get to their project today. Is there a way to stop this? I like and want to be able to review and approve plans, but there just isn't time enough in the day to get to everyone. It just wears me out having to tell this to people all day.

6.   I hate it when I get a submittal that does not have a written response to the comments that indicate exactly where in the submittal the comment was addressed. I waste so much time searching for where the comment was addressed when this is not provided.

7.   3rd party plan review for residential; the reviewers are not consistent and it appears are not taking the job serious. This makes us look bad and the general public, that we are here to protect, is getting an inferior product. It is costing the inspectors a lot of time; they are being accused of plan reviewing in the filed. The come to talk with us, to get our opinion, so when they write it up, the contractor/designer/engineer blows it off and they look bad. This type of plan review only passed due to political reasons, which shouldn't have happened, that is not what our service is for, we are here to protect the public and that went out the window in the political arena.

Walk-Through Procedures

8.   Make the walk-throughs stop or have them scheduled.

9.   I don't think doing walk-throughs is helpful or beneficial to reviewers. I wish it would stop or only be during certain hours.

10.   Make the walk-throughs stop.

11.   How many and how often should walk-throughs be done during the day? They are seriously a major problem for getting plan reviews done. I never know when the phone is going to ring. It's 9:05 and I'm on my second walk-through.

12.   Can we some how limit the number of walk-through permits? Ross and others say that doing them saves all kinds of time, but personally they only detract from the project I'm currently working on in my office.

13.   When a customer wants to walk-through a permit, they should always send them to Zoning first, if they turn them down, then the rest of the reviews would be a waste of our immediate time for a walk through.
      Interruptions

14.   It would be interesting to see how long we have to do uninterrupted plan review between phone calls to go to the front counter. It takes several minutes to get back into structural re view - at least for me. I can't just jump right back in.

15.   Do you know how crappy it is to either be constantly interrupted by phone calls to do walk-throughs? I hate it. I just want to do my work.

16.   I just want uninterrupted time to complete my reviews without phone calls, emails, and walk-through permits.

17.   I have grown to hate the sound of my phone. Can we set up designated phone hours so I can get more plan review done?

18.   How many phone calls should we take while we review? It is incredibly difficult to go back and forth with interruptions.

19.   Can we only take phone calls for half a day? Or let them go to voicemail and return them at a certain time period in the day?

Front Counter

20.   I've always wondered why members of the public can just show up at the Planning counter and expect to speak with a planner "right now". The planners are always busy working on their cases or meeting with petitioners and representatives. They tried to solve that problem by having a different planner be Planner of The Day each day, but that planner must then usually have to give up getting any other work done as they will be constantly interrupted by answering phones or being called up to the public counter.

21.   Walk-ins waiting to see specific individuals. A number of people come to Building Safety ex pecting specific employees to be available. Permit techs leave a message on the phone when employees are not at their desks, and then the client waits for the employee to return to his

desk to see the message. I propose that if an employee is not immediately available, the permit techs should suggest they call the employee and set up a time to meet, rather suggesting that they wait.

22.   There seems to be a lack of consistency and expectations of the front counter staff. The submittals are not stamped in, some people do things one way, others another.

EXPEDITED OR EXPRESS REVIEW

23.   I hate it when customers complain to management because their job is waiting on a review and then they get prioritized over all the people that have already submitted their projects. I feel that this is similar to doing walk-throughs. I've spent the majority of my morning being continuously called to the front to do walk-throughs while an expedited permit and all the others on the list are not being reviewed. I don't think that is fair to the people who have already submitted.

24.   Stop allowing people like Ron Thompson and other frequent flyers from getting their work looked at immediately. They have a history of doing this and it isn't fair to the other people who submit on time and wait for their review.

25.   Cutting in line in the review queue - expedited review. I believe cutting in line is unethical. Reviews should be done in the order they are received, except that smaller projects should be sandwiched in when there are larger projects under review. I believe it is okay to allow plan reviewers discretion in the review queue based on their knowledge of how long reviews will take. However, I do not believe we should allow expedited review unless these projects are handled outside the normal workflow resources. As currently practiced, we allow people to pay extra money to the muni to let people cut in line, which extends the review time for all projects downstream. That just seems wrong. If we allow expedited work, it should be done by added resources such as overtime or being sent out. Any expedited work should be by extra resources.

26.   Express plan review: Sometimes this is required, especially when engineers don't understand engineering concepts. It has a beneficial effect in this case. But express plan review can be stress ful, especially when engineers want to argue instead of resolve issues. It can also be stressful when a plan reviewer is uncertain of code requirements and needs time to delve into code issues. As we practice this today, owners can use this method to cut in front of other projects rather than as a way to resolve issues. Currently we allow express plan review on the first response to comments. I suggest we change this to the second response to comments. Often the first response does not really address the issues. By the second response the issues have crystallized and are easier to identify problems and get them resolved.

REVIEW DELAYS

27.   Delays in the review of a zoning or platting application in the Planning Department or reviews for a land use or building permit or private development submittal in Development Services can be due to tardy submittal of review comments or field inspections by staff in other departments. Applications get sent to the Traffic Department, Fire Department, Project Management & Engineering/Water shed, to the Health Department, etc. for input, and sometimes staff in other departments miss the targeted deadlines. Comments may be submitted late because maybe they only have one or two persons who do the reviews and someone was out on leave. However, it may also be that it's harder to keep a focus on quick turnaround times in departments that view these tasks as other du ties as assigned instead of as tasks primary to their department's core missions. While Planning or Development Services may be held accountable for the overall review times for any given appli cation, it is difficult for management in Planning or Development Services to insist upon more timely performance for work groups in outside departments.

28.   Deadlines: Structural review time is dependent on the quality of the work that is submitted. Some one without understanding complexities of structural engineering should not be setting deadlines for the review. It is true that deadlines are not the norm. But the same is also true of pressuring re viewers to get work done faster.

29.   Give the reviewers time to review. I'm not a walk-through engineer; I'm a plan review engineer. Or change my job description and I'll only do walk-throughs.

Phone System

30.   Create central operator to answer phone and redirect to appropriate party, or work unit. Or take caller information and forward on to someone.
31.   Outgoing calls should reflect the desk # from which the call is being made. Currently all say 343-8301

Technology and Software

General Concerns

32.   Development Services relies upon some key software systems to perform its duties (INFOR/ Hansen and Avolve) but inadequate IT support means that Development Services' staff works less efficiently trying to work around issues in these systems that could have been addressed and resolved with adequate support. We get good staff assigned from ITD but they are limited in how much time that they're allowed to work for Development Services. Development Ser vices used to have 2 dedicated positions in the department for database analysts/support -that got whittled down to one position some years ago and now there is no embedded IT analyst in the department. The ability to extract data quickly and accurately from a database is what empowers management to make good decisions -- data-driven analysis. When we have to make things works with less than full and complete data, we work less efficiently and staff can spend days click-click-clicking away trying to look up records in the database because there is no way to search and retrieve the desired information in an automated way.
33.   Up to 50% of my work time each week is devoted to extracting, moving and recording data from one system to another. There are projects that I would like to work on, but there is not enough time in the week due to outdated computer programs. Multiply that by every person in every department in the MOA and that is a ton of time and money not used efficiently. Efficien cy not only seems unimportant here, it is actually frowned upon when you offer suggestions to make things more efficient. Personally, that is a huge morale killer.
34.   SAP is a bad word with MOA employees. No one wants it. If I talk about how hopeful I am that we can streamline systems once SAP is online and how efficient we can be, let's just say it's not a comfortable situation in the room.
35.   Can the permit technicians add the "Inspections checklist" to the list of application details in Hansen when they are setting up the permit? If they are already adding things this would save the reviewers time.
36.   Get rid of the "other electrical" inspection request from the website!!! It is not compatible with carrying corrections forward in the software and is a useless description to have. This has been brought up numerous times over the last couple years and has yet to be resolved.
37.   There are so many separate systems, especially access databases, that need to be run and then put into the PeopleSoft system by hand, it is half of the day just to extract the information and put it where it needs to go for recording or analysis.
38.   Update web pages to reflect current code and our processes if they've changed.
        Hanson
39.   Why do I have to click so many times in Hansen? When I click save on multiple screens it asks me if I'm sure. Yes I'm sure!!
40.   Why are there so many mouse clicks in Hansen?? Why can't we just hit the enter button after we type in a permit number?
41.   IT support for our building, Hanson is garbage. Tablets are slow and glitchy; they lock up. I power mine off at the end of each day this helps but is far from good.
42.   Reduce the number of clicks in Hansen. I'm getting carpal tunnel. And seriously, how many verifications and yes, I'm sure it is really necessary? We're not launching weapons here.

43. There are frequently electrical permits that show up with the address of project being listed as "no property data" and the job location is not listed anywhere in Hansen. This makes locating the job a total hassle when it seems pretty easy for the front counter to simply list a location of the project in the work description.

SCREEN LOCK

44. Can we please lengthen the time before our computers require a password?
45. Please make the time until the lock screen requires a password longer.
46. Computers log off to soon during the day, I work in the field and do not see my tablet being an issue if it stays on.
47. I wish that my computer screen didn't lock every 5 minutes.
48. Please get our computers unlocked, I waste lots of time unlocking my computer. It's very frustrating!
49. Office computer logs off to soon, (there) needs to be an option to stay on longer tried of logging on so many times a day.
50. Stop the auto lock on the computer immediately.
51. Automatic computer screen lock after several minutes.
    City View
52. I wish that New CityView worked as well as the Old CityView.
53. City View is horrendously S L O W. And not user friendly for Land Use Review Section.
    Kronos
54. Time Cards. Kronos does not integrate with PeopleSoft. This means everyone's daily time entry needs to be hand keyed into PeopleSoft every week. This results in an increase of errors and 6-12 hours a week of time transferring information from one system to the other.
55. I wish that we could stop using Kronos to clock in and out and submit our timecards and go back to the way we did it previously.

EQUIPMENT NEEDS

56. Update the audio visual (AV) equipment at the Loussac Library for Staff presentations to PZC, Assembly and other municipal events. The existing AV equipment is inadequate.
57. Upgrade/replace AV equipment in Conference Room 170 in the Permit Center. It is difficult to turn on and use. Screen resolution is very poor. This is a long-standing issue.
58. Color printers. We only have one. We should have more. Color is very useful in highlighting comments on drawings and plans. I use the color printer almost exclusively to make my communications more readable. It seems like we should century-up and make color copying and scanning more available.
59. My bar phone was a great thing in the early 2000, this phone I have is outdated, customers have a hard time hearing me on this low budget phone.
60. The bar phone is not user friendly, it makes me not want to use it. I avoid using it.
61. Clean out storage closets and have one central location for office supplies
62. Working with Purchasing Department--there's got to be a better system????

PEOPLE AND PERSONNEL ISSUES

63. While the form of government and mayor's term of office is unlikely to ever change via a charter amendment, more could be done to improve leadership at the departmental level. Development Services has been without a permanent director for some years now. The department could really benefit from have an experienced, well regarded professional who implemented the code as written and held staff accountable for acting professionally and productively, with the director's own behavior and actions serving as a model for everyone else. With no permanent director in place, the department will just be that much more vulnerable to upheaval when the next mayor takes office.

64. Continuity in leadership could make a big difference. By being under a strong mayor instead of city manager form of government, Anchorage constantly undergoes changes in top lead ership. Just about the time that a new group of leaders has learned the ropes and come to a better understanding of some of the issues facing this department and other departments, there's a new group of leaders traveling the learning curve and trying to find quick ways to show improvements to the public before the 3 year term of office is up. That Anchorage's may or only serves 3 years instead of 4 as is more standard in the USA just makes the turnover problem worse.

65. Decisions can be made by other departments in the city that substantially affect Development Services' operations without involving Development Services staff in the collection and analy sis of data and business needs to make those decisions. For example, Treasury issues a RFP periodically to select a company to process credit card transactions for MOA. Nothing to say that Treasury doesn't or won't do a good job in selecting a new contractor but my concern is that Development Services started to require our customers to pay a credit card processing fee if they wanted to pay by credit card (that our department no longer pays and absorbssuch costs.) If the RFP process resulted in a different company being award ed this contract than the current processor, we would likely need MOA IT staff to work with the new vendor's IT staff to get our Hansen database system and other systems ready and configured to work in new ways to accommodate the new vendor's credit card process ing systems. Making such changes probably would require about 4 months lead time before changes were actually implemented and able to go live --- but don't know if Treasury would have such a time buffer built into contracts terminating the existing vendor and activating the new vendor to allow for a seamless change between vendor companies/credit card process ing payments here at the Permit Center. This is just an example of one contracting area that may require more involvement and coordination among departments instead of just one de partment leading the RFP process and writing a new contract. (And, again, this is just an example -- don't mean to pick on Treasury as they generally do a good job . but I'm concerned about how things could happen without adequate coordination and how staff turnover through out MOA can make institutional memory less than reliable and good in averting problems be fore they occur.

66. Stress - Effect of administration decisions on employees. Stress in this department is a health killer. Some stress is unavoidable due to the nature of our work, but some of the stress is directly related to Management decisions. If a mayor wants to cut positions or not fill vacant positions and then tells the public they should expect slower review and response times. The public does not listen. They still want instant turnaround. They still pressure employees. It gets worse as the time in review gets longer. The number and experience of employees need to match the types and quantity of work we get. This past year, not filling Mark Panilo's posi tion when he left created intense stress on all the plan reviewers, but especially on those that could do complex structural steel plan review. The decision to not fill his position seemed to have been based on the potential work, not on the current workload. It is not okay for supervi sors to say that the administration make decisions and employees just have to cope with the stress the decisions cause. In making decisions the administration needs to be aware and concerned with the effects their decisions have on employees.

67. Changing how new building inspectors are recruited. The best building inspectors are not only very knowledgeable about the building codes but also have solid interpersonal communi cation skills. Most cities take great care in recruiting and selecting new building inspectors, knowing how critical the right mix of skills is for successfully working with contractors, con struction crews and the general public. However, due to the union bargaining agreements, Anchorage is not always able to select building inspectors from a broad pool of potential appli cants. The most limited pool is for the selection of structural inspectors. Per the IBEW con tract, the first step in the selection process is to allow only existing municipal employees to be considered for structural inspector openings. In practice, this means that carpenters work ing for Facilities & Maintenance apply to become structural inspectors even though they may

have little or no experience working as a building inspector, perhaps no experience working with the public, and may not hold any building code certifications. For this limited process for hiring a new building process inspector to change, Anchorage needs to focus on changing some of these provisions in the relevant collective bargaining agreement when it is up next for re-negotiation. However, with Development Services not having a long serving, permanent director looking out for this opportunity to effect change and with most of the input into any new IBEW contract to our Employee Relations Department coming from the Municipal Light & Power utility -- these provisions repeated ly fail to change. There is also the problem with turnover in the Employee Relations Department so that the continuity and in depth knowledge that would be desirable on the MOA management side of collective bargaining negotiations is limited too -- also burden with the time pressures to renegotiate several contracts at the same time with staffing limitations. Somehow, for Anchorage to really evolve its practices, attention needs to be paid to details to ensure that Anchorage is able to recruit and hire the very best.

68.   Sharing stories - During, before or after "safety meetings" - a story of success, or difficulty, over coming the odds, persuasion, getting to goals. We could hear such stories once a month during the safety meetings. Let's hear more of how our people are coping with their tasks. And how we are or are having difficulty reaching municipal goals. Repeating those goals and the mission every so often would also be helpful.

69.   Let us work alternate schedules when the public isn't able to contact us so we can get some quiet, solid plan review time in.

Customer Issues

70.   I hate it when people believe we should treat their project with more urgency than other projects that have been on the list for much longer.

71.   Why do the repeat customers (designers, permitters, expediters) that complain always get special treatment? When I see management do this it makes me feel like I don't want to work here. I un derstand that you need to address the complaints, but the same people on many different projects are the repeat offenders.

72.   Customers (contractors, engineers, developers) come right to me, or go to Chris, instead of working up through supervisors and managers.

73.   Lack of quality in structural design submittals. For structural plan review this is the single biggest issue. Many engineers don't understand basic engineering principles. The problem is exacerbated by spreadsheets where results are given without any indication how the spreadsheet results were derived. The problem is also exacerbated by computers. Often the input is wrong. Often the input does not reflect the design shown on the drawings. Calculations skip steps but result with incorrect answers. The submittals are not reviewed by the in-house engineers before the work is submitted.

74.   Complaints from externals (often AHBA, also others) who do NOT have their facts straight. They hear something, and they automatically assume it is true, and complain. More often than not there are additional circumstances, and there is a valid reason behind the MOA actions that led to the complaint.

Work Quality

75.   There is no incentive for doing better work. Many engineers cut short their efforts by submitting in complete and incorrect work and rely on the muni plan reviewers to catch their mistakes. And the tell their clients that the muni doesn't know what they are doing. We need to give incentives for do ing better work. Something like faster reviews for engineers with a history of clean, complete, and accurate work, with no or only one iteration of comment and response. The plan review would go faster if such were submitted, and would not hold up review of other projects in the queue.

76.   House designers: There is no licensing requirement for house designers. The state regulates residential house inspectors. The muni regulates special inspectors. But there is no regulation

at all for house designers. Anyone with pencil and paper can do house design in Anchorage. There are a few good house designers, but there are many that are not. What engineering house designers know has typically come from review comments and interaction with muni plan reviewers. The quality of our plan reviewers doing residential review has fluctuated over time. Likewisethe quality of instruction given to house designers has varied with time.

77.   Designs for residential structures are poor, what can be done to improve or drive a quality con trol on designers?

78.   Small projects: This is a problem with no apparent solution. Small projects often require engineering. But engineers and other design professionals are not interested in doing work for small projects because they can make so much more working on larger projects. The engineers that take small projects generally are not good enough to be hired by better firms, so their quality of work is less.

Training

79.   Permit techs - over qualification: We are requiring the permit techs to have such high qualifi cations that they do not stay long. We need to rebalance the required qualifications to match what we actually require of them. I believe the current requirements were based on the as sumptions that we would have them do some plan review.

80.   Technical writing training for plan reviewers. Generally our comments could be better written. We use written comments as a means to communicate concerns to clients. Training in techni cal writing would improve the quality of our comments and communication.

81.   Staff have been told that they will not be able to rely on departmental GIS resources and that they must become more proficient with GIS. What is the plan for training staff to become profi cient in GIS. This is not a program that a user can just sit down and start using; it requires training.

82.   Don't set your new hires up to fail.

Code Related Issues

83.   Why is the Municipality seeking to adopt the "Anchorage Stormwater Manual" while trying to streamline permitting and reduce housing costs? It is understood that this document re places the existing Design Criteria Manual CH: 2 and the Drainage Design Guidelines. The proposed revision goes well beyond what is required by the Municipality to comply with the current MS4 permit. The Developer and Engineering community indicate that this revision will result in additional costs and will be in conflict with affordable housing initiatives. It would seem reasonable to merely revise the existing documents with compliance to the MS4 permit and foregoing a more complicated and potentially more expensive rewrite of existing requirements. http://www.muni.org/Departments/project_management/Pages/Publications.aspx

84.   We do not offer land use permit in the building safety service area. Review for all the Title 21 issues are tied to a Title 23 Building or Grading permit. When the work to be done is exempted from permit requirement by Title 23 there is no good way to have the Title 21 requirements reviewed. After much confusion we eventually require a Title 23 Building or Grading permit, but NA the Title 23 portion.

85.   Code committees: There is something wrong here. Before we adopt a new code we set up public committees to review and vote on changes. Generally this works okay, but it depends on who is on the committee. Sometimes the committees have voted to waive important code requirements, and because there was a majority vote we waive the code requirement in law. For instance, a prior senior plan reviewer who did not understand the concept of code-compli ant load paths (required by code), told house designers that they could ignore 1,000 pounds of uplift on shear wall hold-down anchors. Because our building official would not stop this practice, the matter was given to a structural code committee. They voted to codify this prac

tice. The code committee could not even give a justification for allowing this exemption to stand. There needs to be some kind of guidelines from muni Legal on the power of code committees to alter codes.

86.   Drainage across property lines is a big issue in Anchorage. We do not have a good handle on preventing neighbors from channeling water from their project onto adjacent properties. There have been a number of attempts to clarify and enforce P&P #5 and Building Safety Policy AG.26. I don't think these issues have yet been resolved. We are currently not requiring before and after contours on one and two-family lots. Accordingly, there are drainage issues on sloped lots that are not caught in plan review. I believe that before and after contours are required by P&P5, yet we do not require it on plot plans for houses.

87.   House design - no soils information is currently being required. There is currently no soils investigation requirement for houses. In other words we are allowing houses to be built on top of unknown soils. There could be substantial layers of peat beneath houses. In the past it was common to place non-organic fill on top of peat. If the foundation of a house does not get below the fill, no one would know about the peat.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

88.   Provide security at public meetings

89.   Security needed at public venue such as Planning and Zoning Commission meetings. An incident occurred on 6-5-17 at the Loussac Library Assembly Chambers where a Planning and Zoning Commission was being held. An individual entered the chambers, testified and then waddered off. The testimony given was not germane to the agenda item; it appeared the individual was disoriented. The individual wandered into and out of the meeting throughout the meeting and at one point wanted to speak after closure of the public hearing item. It is unclear what policies or procedures are in place to handle individuals who may be intoxicated or incapacitated and availability of security guard?

90.   These days it seems like a no brainer to have security personnel at all public meetings. however, the Land Use Plan map does have the potential to inspire extreme emotion in the public. I think it's critical. we saw an example of why at the June 5th PZC meeting. A gentleman who appear intoxicated and slightly unstable approached the microphone to speak after the Public Hearing had been closed. He started off with slurred speech talking about a subject that had nothing to do with the Public Hearing. The Chair told him the Public Hearing was closed. The man continued to try to speak, but was cut off by the chair. The man left the mic then. He then left the room. I didn't follow him after that, but it was a bit unsettling. He seemed like he had the potential to "lose it," and fortunately never did. He accepted getting cut off very gracefully. However, several staff were unnerved by his presence and worried that he might be dangerous. There was n no security guard in the room that I knew about or saw.

GENERAL COMMENTS

91.   Just like snow days, it would be great to have fun days on those gorgeous days, and make it up on those rainy Saturdays.

92.   Accounting: I don't know a lot about the accounting process, but it seems like we should be able to put a little away during good times to carry us over in the slower time.

93.   Folder Access: The arrangement of the folders on the shelves requires employees to almost always bend over. This is not safe and could lead to injury. Folders are arranged with the oldest folders at the top with the newest folders at the bottom. The folders requiring the least access do not require one to bend over. The folders that require the most access require one to bend over.

94.   Finding plans and folders: This is an on-going problem.

95.   Stormwater review fees: Fees for Storm Water review seem to be disproportionally high considering the work that is done by the department, especially for residential grading.

96.   Lack of recognition of planning credentials such as AICP

97. Need for Institutional Integration between Planning and Public Transportation Departments with Project, Management, and Engineering (PM&E) for Street Design. Over the past two years, and especially as we move toward implementation of the Land Use Plan, new levels of inter-Departmental coordination between Transportation Planning (AMATS), Long-Range Planning, and Public Transportation Planning have been reached. This level of institutional integration, communication, and cooperation is being championed by the Planning Director and Public Transportation Director, and at the staff level, and is very beneficial. In Planning, we are increasingly aware of the need for the same level of integration and cooperation between these Departments and Sections and the Public Works Department, Project Management and Engineering in particular. One example is that since 2005, we have had had an adopted Street Typology, with general guidelines for matching the street character with adjacent land use type, with early implementation calling for coordination between Planning and PM&E project managers to determine and apply, as practicable, the relevant street typology elements for individual road projects. However, without champions, implementation has never come to fruition in 12 years. Staff efforts in recent years to petition PM&E to include the Street Typology into the Revised Draft Design Criteria Manual did not receive a positive response. AMATS will soon be developing a Street Typology Map, but the challenge still remains how to institutionally integrate the Street Typology with street design. The Land Use Plan Map also designates Transit Supportive Corridors. These need to be addressed in the Design Criteria Manual as well.

98. Any suggestions or examples of best practices for specific steps of how to achieve institutional integration with PM&E would be much appreciated.