



DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PROCESS IMPROVEMENT REPORT

WASHINGTON COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION

February 15, 2011

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY— DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PROCESS IMPROVEMENT REPORT

This report is the culmination of a study conducted by LUT staff to identify efficiencies and inefficiencies within Washington County's development review process and associated customer service practices. Although some aspects of this report focus initially on LUT's Development Services Division, since it plays the central role in the development process, even those aspects can potentially serve as models for improvement within all divisions, ultimately to better integrate all functions within the department.

This report was not intended to identify all process improvement opportunities or to set out a finite plan of limited duration. Instead, this report lays a foundation for ongoing and continuous improvement initiatives for the development review process department-wide. *In sum, this report is the start of LUT's improvement process, not the end of it.*

Study Participants

The report's recommendations are based on interviews with department staff, customers, and the staff of six jurisdictions.

Four categories of improvements

The findings are organized into four categories of opportunities for improving the County's development review process:

- A. Leadership/Management**—addresses such issues as attitude and culture, department structure, workload and capacity
- B. Financial**—addresses funding, fees, and other potential revenue sources
- C. Accurate Applications & Consistent Reviews**—suggests tools to enable customers to submit more complete applications and to enable staff to standardize and streamline application acceptance and review
- D. Information Technology & E-Business**—recommends centralized improvements to software and policies for its department-wide use

The above categories are further defined in Section III of this report, which contains a summary of the issues followed by recommended objectives for addressing the issues.

Next steps

The report concludes with a section that discusses "next steps." Major points are:

- A staff committee or committees should be established to implement these recommendations and build on this initial work.
- It will be important to continue to reach out to our customers and seek their input during this ongoing process improvement program. The report recommends periodic "Development Forums" as a primary tool, as well as surveys.
- A major issue for implementing the report's recommendations is how to pay for it. Staff will need to balance this process improvement work with their other duties; this will be particularly difficult for staff who work in areas that do not receive general fund support.
- This report is the start of LUT's improvement process, not the end. The subsequent, ongoing process will provide all of LUT's divisions with additional opportunities for improving their portions of the development review process, as well as additional opportunity for a comprehensive review of LUT's entire development process.

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I. INTRODUCTION

This report is the culmination of a study conducted by staff within Washington County's Department of Land Use and Transportation (LUT). The purpose of the study was to identify efficiencies and inefficiencies within Washington County's current development review process and associated customer service practices and to lay a foundation for an ongoing department-wide process improvement program. Previous studies (the Morale Study and the Crawford Report) have identified the need to examine the development review process. This report begins that examination.

This report was not intended to identify all process improvement opportunities or to set out a finite plan of limited duration. Instead, this report lays a foundation for ongoing and continuous improvement initiatives for the development review process department-wide. *In sum, this report is the start of LUT's improvement process, not the end of it.*

Goals of this study were to examine opportunities to:

- *Ensure that procedures and interpretations are effective, consistent with state law, and best facilitate the County's planning goals.*
- *Remove artificial obstacles and inconsistencies that unnecessarily magnify the "complicated" nature of the development review process.*
- *Clarify necessary staffing levels, optimal department structure, and appropriate fees.*
- *Help bring our processes into alignment with local best management practices.*
- *Simplify and streamline the process for both internal and external clients.*
- *Ensure consistent delivery of quality customer service.*
- *Guide a subsequent, ongoing development review improvement process that continues and builds on this initial study.*

Aspects of this report focus largely on the portion of LUT's development review process that is conducted by LUT's Development Services Division (Current Planning Services and Building Services). As the "threshold" where development normally begins and a central cog in the remainder of the development process, Development Services provides a window into activities that occur within the overall department. Development Services also engages in a high degree of customer interaction and thus provides significant opportunities for study of customer service activities that translate universally. Lastly, aspects of Development Services face unique financial challenges that threaten the division's overall functionality.

The report's conclusions that are specific to Development Services can serve as a model for engaging more specifically LUT's other divisions in the subsequent, ongoing department-wide process improvement program. This subsequent program will provide time for identifying issues and opportunities for improving their portions of the development review

process as well as additional opportunity for a comprehensive review of LUT's entire process, from a customer's first contact at the Development Services front counter to the issuance of occupancy permits and beyond into the maintenance phase (such as for roads and sidewalks).

II. STUDY PARTICIPANTS

Recommendations within this report are based upon input and suggestions gleaned through personal interviews with a significant cross-section of department staff and a broad range of applicants, consultants, and other customers. In addition, staff of six different jurisdictions within the region were interviewed. It should be noted that for this initial study, personal interviews would be used to gather information instead of using surveys. Although specific questions and areas of interest were outlined to guide these interviews, emphasis was placed on a conversational approach that allowed a freer sharing of ideas than might have been achieved through the survey method.

Customers

Customers interviewed included private engineers and surveyors, architects, planning consultants, and builders, as well as landowners who have undertaken the application process without the help of a consultant. The 12 customers interviewed represented interests within a wide range of project types including, but not limited to, single rural dwellings, wineries, churches, schools, and small and large commercial and residential developments.

Staff

Staff input was gathered via a combination of personal interviews and written comments from 32 employees representing a range of work groups and divisions, specialties, classifications, and levels of experience within the department. Comments were gathered from members of *Development Services, Engineering/Surveying Services, Operations & Maintenance Services, Capital Project Management Services, Long Range Planning Services, and Administrative Services*. (Appendix D, section 3, "Staff Comments," provides a general summary of the comments of these 32 staff members.) In addition to the input of these 32 employees, this report also incorporates other staff input related to potential process improvements. One example: recent research about how current planning functions are funded by local jurisdictions (Appendix B) and thoughts about the challenges of Washington County's funding strategy for its Current Planning functions (Appendix A).

Jurisdictions

Jurisdictions represented within interviews were Yamhill County and the cities of Hillsboro, Tigard, Tualatin, Beaverton, and Portland (a total of 17 interviewees).

The interviews between LUT staff and the staff of the six jurisdictions that were conducted as part of this study provide solid groundwork for comparing the County's processes and performance against that of other regional jurisdictions ("benchmarking"). These interviews, however, were informal and conversational in nature. These interviews enabled staff to elicit ideas about how LUT's processes compare with the processes of other jurisdictions, ideas for improvement, and areas for future study and comparison through more formal, written surveys to be conducted later in the subsequent stages of LUT's improvement process. For this reason, it was determined that benchmarking activities could best be addressed in the ensuing phases of the process improvement program, through developing

and administering written surveys to obtain more specific comparison with other jurisdictions as well as customer feedback.

III. OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

Four categories of improvements

The findings of this report related to opportunities for improving Washington County's development review process are organized into the following four categories:

- A. Leadership/Management**—addresses such issues as attitude and culture, department structure, workload and capacity
- B. Financial**—addresses funding, fees, and other potential revenue sources
- C. Accurate Applications & Consistent Reviews**—suggests tools to enable customers to submit more complete applications and to enable staff to standardize and streamline application acceptance and review
- D. Information Technology & E-Business**—recommends centralized improvements to software (and policies for its department-wide use) that will enable better-coordinated services, simplified project tracking both internally and externally, interlinked fee management, and customer-friendly e-business capabilities that increase convenience for customers and may ultimately reduce demands on staff

"Issue Statements" and "Objectives"

Each of these four broad categories of opportunities for improvement contain an "Issue Statement" that summarizes the issue. The issue statement is followed by recommended objectives (which might also be considered strategies) for addressing the issue. Although each recommended objective is included under only one category to eliminate redundancies, many are interdependent and impact several areas. Some objectives suggest initiatives or strategies that will be ongoing, while others are one-time tasks. Each objective is indicated as either "ongoing" or "one-time."

Suggested Priority: #1, #2, #3—Critical, Essential, and Desirable Objectives

A "suggested priority" column to the right of the objectives indicates a sense of timing for each objective, for when they should be initiated. The priorities indicate three different time-frames:

- #1: "Critical" objectives:** "Critical" objectives are the highest priority objectives that should begin immediately. Some of these are initiatives that are already underway. Others are new ideas that are "low hanging fruit" that could reap fairly quick returns with less effort.
- #2: "Essential" objectives:** "Essential" priorities are medium-term objectives to initiate before the long-term objectives but after the immediate ("critical") objectives. Compared to #1 priorities, these will require more staff time and effort, which presents challenges during a time of reduced staff. These may also need further study to clarify them or more fully develop them, and/or involve County Commissioner policy issues (such as some of the funding objectives), which will require decision-making at the appropriate level to be followed by direction to staff.

- #3: *“Desirable” objectives*: These are longer-term objectives to initiate after the critical and essential objectives. These desirable objectives are needed for LUT to become the most highly functional department possible that provides the best customer service possible.

Focus on Development Services Functions—As a Start

As noted previously, aspects of this report focus largely on the portion of LUT’s development review process that is conducted by LUT’s Development Services Division. Development Services is the “threshold” where development normally begins and is a central cog in the remainder of the development process since it coordinates development activities for the entire department. Thus, Development Services provides a window into activities that occur within the overall department. The report’s conclusions that are specific to Development Services can serve as a model for engaging more specifically LUT’s other divisions in the subsequent, ongoing department-wide process improvement program. This subsequent program will provide time for identifying issues and opportunities for improving their portions of the development review process as well as additional opportunity for a comprehensive review of LUT’s entire process, from a customer’s first contact at the Development Services front counter to the issuance of occupancy permits and beyond into the maintenance phase (such as for roads and sidewalks).

A. Leadership/Management

“Establish a work environment that values, integrates, and supports staff members and customers, welcomes ideas, and encourages communication.” (Private engineer)

Issue Statement:

A strong, effective leadership/management team that agrees upon a common philosophy and common goals is essential to a well-coordinated development review team and process. Skilled leadership is also vital to strategic coordination of resources that balances staff workload against capacity to process it.

Management/leadership also plays the primary role in establishing office culture and shaping prevailing staff attitudes that ensure both job satisfaction and more consistent delivery of exceptional customer service. While isolated cases of a “staff attitude” were called out by customers interviewed, many were largely complimentary of staff. Of particular positive impact were staff interactions that helped customers to view the review process, however complicated, as meaningful, and where staff exhibited a “can-do” approach in helping applicants understand regulations and how to meet them. Training, provided under management’s direction, can reinforce such helpful attitudes and impart a common philosophy that makes them the norm department-wide.

Leadership/Management – Recommended Objectives:

OVERALL	SUGGESTED PRIORITY
1. Provide cohesive direction and endorsement of improvements outlined within this report, as approved by the Board and the Director, department-wide. <i>Ongoing.</i>	#1
2. Clarify the County's and LUT's mission, philosophy, and organizational goals related to development review that set parameters for staff to follow. These should balance County codes, customer service, and resources. As part of this, evaluate the extent to which the County seeks to be proactive and cutting edge with development/permitting issues and services versus waiting for other jurisdictions to set the standard. <i>One-time.</i>	#1 <i>Some info. exists: County & LUT mission statements, Board philosophy, REACH</i>
3. As a follow-up to the initial survey work that was done with six local jurisdictions to prepare this report, create and administer a written survey to development services sections of regional jurisdictions to further compare LUT's processes with other jurisdictions ("benchmarking"). The purpose of this survey/benchmarking will be to compare more specifically the processes and results of other jurisdictions with our processes and results. This provides additional opportunities to learn how other jurisdictions perform or improve upon functions similar to our own, and opportunities to see where we excel. Regular (such as yearly) administration of the survey will also enable us to monitor progress and track trends. The survey should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a clear set of questions that result in a clear set of answers that can be easily and directly compared and quantified (avoid open-ended questions); • Include content related to key issues raised within jurisdictional interviews conducted as a part of this study as well as other topics of interest to the department; • Be updated and administered on a regular basis (such as annually) so that trends and improvement can be tracked. • Jurisdictions that were surveyed as part of creating this report and should be surveyed in the future are: Beaverton, Hillsboro, Portland, Tigard Tualatin, and Yamhill County. Clackamas County and Gresham might also be included. <i>Ongoing.</i>	#2 <i>Appendix D, section 2, "Jurisdiction Comments," provides background for this future written survey.</i>
4. Strive to prevent relatively small issues from escalating and throwing the system off track. When these arise, seek to resolve them at the lowest possible levels and ensure supervisor follow-through to see that staff follows existing policies and guidelines. As part of this, consider senior roles and to what extent senior staff should act as supervisors, bear responsibility, and exercise discretion. <i>Ongoing.</i>	#1
CULTURE, STAFF ROLE, AND ATTITUDE	
1. Establish a work environment that values, integrates, and supports staff members and customers, welcomes ideas, and encourages healthy, productive communication (not just top-down, but "organic"—within and throughout the department). <i>Ongoing.</i>	#1 <i>This study is a start.</i>
2. Build a "big-picture" department-wide perspective among the department's divisions. Accomplish this in part by encouraging cohesive interactive work between different divisions and work groups rather than working within "silos." The key is to enable staff to understand not only the scope of their own responsibilities, but how their actions affect or depend upon other staff involved in all other phases of the development process. <i>Ongoing.</i>	#1

<p>3. Set goals and provide training for customer service levels that reflect the department's mission to improve the quality of interaction between staff and customers and to improve customer perception of staff and "staff attitude" overall. Consider in part, goals/training relative to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing proactive customer service; • Encouraging high ethics and professionalism; • Avoiding operating as if we are "complaint-driven" only (responding only to "squeaky wheels"); • Considering our processes and services through the eyes of our customers and the public, especially when dealing with new or "mom and pop" applicants who are unfamiliar with our process; • Encouraging a "team approach" between staff members and in dealing with customers, and promoting a culture of friendliness, trust, and willingness to help (considering both internal and external "customers"); • "Getting it right" with the customer from their first interaction with the department, conveying a solid understanding of our development review process, its full requirements and their purpose and intent. <p><i>Ongoing.</i></p>	<p>#2 <i>Some customer service training has been initiated.</i></p>
DEPARTMENT STRUCTURE	
<p>1. Improve communication and collaboration between all divisions of the department and foster integration of their work. One example: Long Range Planning and Development Services' Current Planning section. <i>Ongoing.</i></p>	<p>#2 <i>Work on LR and CP relationships is already underway.</i></p>
<p>2. Evaluate a return to "one-stop shopping" capabilities, where necessary staff members from all divisions of LUT are present in one convenient location. When the Public Services Building was originally developed, such "one stop shopping" existed in the building. Over time as services expanded and other facilities were developed (such as Walnut Street and CWS building), that capability was lost. One alternative to consider is having representative staff of all development-related divisions located in one location (presumably the PSB, which is also convenient to transit for our customers). <i>One-time.</i></p>	<p>#3 <i>(This is ranked #3 due to the expected expense involved. Also, accomplishing objectives that are higher ranked may lead to suggestions for a "one-stop shop.")</i></p>
DEPARTMENT EFFICIENCY—WORKLOAD, CAPACITY, AND REVIEW TIMING	
<p>1. Maintain necessary staffing levels to address workload, customer service demands, and time constraints, such as state-mandated timelines. (Example: County compliance with state-mandated land use review times is increasingly at risk due to lack of review staff in Current Planning. The County bears risk of state enforcement actions if these deadlines are compromised.) <i>Ongoing.</i></p>	<p>#1</p>
<p>2. Where decreased review timeframes are desired, consider resources needed to accomplish that. <i>Ongoing.</i></p>	<p>#3</p>
<p>3. To provide needed Current Planning front counter service and enable existing staff to process workload, including providing adequate time and attention to general customer service inquiries and needs, either allocate additional funding or reduce counter hours. <i>One-time.</i></p>	<p>#1 <i>Being considered as potential 2011-12 budget strategy.</i></p>
<p>4. Consider using interns as a supplemental staff resource, recognizing that they require effective supervising which requires staff time. <i>Ongoing</i></p>	<p>#2</p>

5. Consider combining reviews. Find out whether various staff work groups do or could conduct concurrent reviews and increase this practice where feasible. (Potential examples: plan review, grading permit review, traffic engineering review, access permit review.) This has the potential to reduce confusion among staff as well as improve customer service. <i>One-time.</i>	#3
6. Consider combining permits. Investigate whether certain permits can be combined. (One example: right-of-way access permit and grading permit, to allow simultaneous construction of public road access and onsite private road.) This has the potential to reduce confusion among staff as well as improve customer service. <i>One-time.</i>	#3

B. Financial

“Good customer service is not cheap.” (Staff member)

“General Fund support equates to economic development in that it allows provision of both excellent customer service and reduced fees—two things that attract developers.” (City of Hillsboro, Current Planning staff member)

Issue Statement:

Based upon recommendations from staff, customers, and the practices of our neighboring jurisdictions, objectives below attempt to address discrepancies between:

- staff’s capacity to process workloads and customer service needs (including customer service improvement), and
- funding/financial resources.

Additionally, objectives below seek to initiate better coordination of financial processes (including policies, practices, and software) that currently vary widely from division to division. One example: the collection and management of fees.

While some objectives apply department-wide, others address monetary constraints within particular divisions. One major issue has to do with the challenges faced by Current Planning that make its continued operation as a strictly fee-dependent division very problematic. Challenges to its operation as an “enterprise fund” include:

- County development trends indicate a marked shift from the large urban developments of the peak years to primarily rural development; infrequent urban development consists mostly of small infill residential and commercial projects which often come with complexity and sometimes controversy.
- Rural development and small infill development applicants often have little or no experience with land use and development processes and regulations.
- The above trends generate a significant need for increased “hand holding” (time-consuming customer service) with today’s customers.
- The reduction in big urban development comes with a significant drop in income from their associated fees – fees that have been expected to subsidize activities that generate inadequate income to cover the true cost of their processing.
- In the past, big urban development essentially subsidized general inquiries unrelated to imminent land use or building permit applications. (Recent tracking suggests that about 50% of customers to the front counter visit with such general inquiries).

- The dramatic decrease in large urban development applications has both decreased revenues while also exposing the County's inadequate or nonexistent fees for other activities. And some of these activities are both much-needed and time-consuming (example: "hand-holding" to assist inexperienced customers and encourage development).
- Today's economy has created the need for planning staff to act in an "economic development" role in that staff spends much time trying to assist developers and banks in salvaging previously approved projects with no additional fees generated.
- Fees have been frozen and existing approvals have been extended without additional fees charged.

Also, certain financial issues noted above in the context of Current Planning have sweeping implications department-wide. For example, increased numbers of inexperienced applicants evidenced within the land use review stage (or even earlier as in the case of a Plan Amendment through Long Range Planning) will carry forward a need for increased customer service levels within every division and every aspect of the process. Result: a need for department-wide funding to cover that need. The departmental goal to meet growing customer service needs takes time and resources—"good customer service is not cheap."

Also, three years of staff reductions to address budget shortfalls have already strained capacity to maintain adequate customer service levels and to process workload efficiently and within state mandated timelines. Exploration of strategies other than further staff reductions is therefore recommended to address current financial obstacles. Increased or new fees or other funding alternatives, such as general fund support, need to be reexamined.

A comparison with other jurisdictions indicates that Washington County is one of only three jurisdictions that considers its Current Planning function as an Enterprise Fund and not General Fund (see Appendix A). Portland and Yamhill County are the other two. Portland has large fees (one example: it generally charges for anything beyond 10 minutes at its front counter) and reduced office hours for customers. Yamhill County's Current Planning function is assisted by some solid waste funding. Even so, it struggles to operate on its current fees and will be seeking fee increases.

Five options for addressing Current Planning's ongoing budget shortfall are:

1. Continue to reduce expenditures by reducing staffing. This strategy has been pursued for the last 4 years. The result, Current Planning staffing has in four years been reduced by almost 50%:

Current Planning FTE (Full Time Equivalent) Staffing Levels

Fiscal Year	FTE
2007-2008	32.05
2008-2009	30.05
2009-2010	26.05
2010-2011	22.95
2011-2012	18.35*

* FTE is actually 16.55, since 1.80 FTE are working for other LUT divisions.

Thus, if staffing is reduced further in the future, levels of service will need to be reduced significantly. Further staff reductions will also be crippling to our ability to retain our good

pool of staff talent and expertise. Further reductions could also further compromise our ability to meet state-mandated review deadlines, exposing us to risk of enforcement actions.

2. Attempt to increase revenues through fee increases and new fees. This strategy may have negative consequences for development activity that Washington County wants to encourage.
3. Supplement Current Planning with General Fund support beyond what it currently receives (which supports Code Compliance). This could be for specific activities such as Development Assistance, costs associated with Measures 37 and 49, frozen or waived application fees, or rural planning (see next item).
4. Fund Current Planning's rural planning functions with General Fund support. One possible solution to Current Planning's funding would be to fund the rural planning section from the General Fund. With the recent downturn in the economy, much of the work that is being done by Current Planning is outside of the Urban Growth Boundary in the rural area. Traditionally, the fees associated with applications in the rural area have been kept artificially low and subsidized by the large, urban subdivisions, now largely a thing of the past.
5. Fold Current Planning entirely into the General Fund, with all of its revenues then going into the General Fund. Since all of Current Planning's revenues will go back into the General Fund, the level of General Fund support under this strategy is nowhere near 100%. The overall budget gap for Current Planning funding is, mid-point in Fiscal Year 2010-11, approximately \$200,000. This \$200,000 gap could, however, rise in the future, particularly if the significant infusion of Road Fund support changes. Also, this level of support would not enable any ability to increase resources in the future when economic conditions improve and demands increase.

Financial – Recommended Objectives:

GENERAL FUND SUPPORT	SUGGESTED PRIORITY
1. To address Current Planning's ongoing budget crisis and enable Washington County to attract customers and development (by not increasing fees or further reducing staff levels), consider providing additional general fund support so that Current Planning is not dependent virtually entirely on fees for its funding. As part of this, consider the constraints listed in the above issue statement. Also, see Appendices A, B, C for supporting information.) <i>One-time</i>	#1 <i>Some work underway as part of 2011-12 budget prep.</i>
CURRENT PLANNING FEES—IF GENERAL FUND SUPPORT IS NOT PROVIDED	

<p>1. Consider the need to offset with general funds, guaranteed financial losses caused by required activities where fees are lower than known costs. If this general fund support is not provided, then increase the fees to recover the cost (for those fees not capped by the State). <i>One-time</i></p> <p>2. EXAMPLE #1: Land use appeals cost Current Planning much more than the \$250 maximum fee allowed by state law. The minimum appeal costs to Current Planning are over \$5,000, based on estimates of \$3,626 for Hearing Officer, \$884 for Current Planning staff, and \$500 for County Counsel. And, \$250 is the <u>maximum</u> fee—for Citizen Participation Organization leaders the state-mandated appeal fee is \$0. Current Planning must currently pay the difference out of fee income from other applications, causing a significant deficit and detriment to dwindling resources. (The estimated cost to Current Planning of processing land use appeals for the last three years has ranged from over \$25,000 to over \$45,000.) Again, this \$250 maximum fee is set by the state. To change it will require change at the state level.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EXAMPLE #2: application fees have been frozen the last two years and extensions of land use approvals automatically extended without fees. Fiscal year 2011-12 may be the third year in a row with no fee increases. While not increasing fees is a decision made to help our customers, a result is that staff cost of living increases have not been covered and staff provides ongoing work on extended projects without payment for such, resulting in further budget gaps. 	#1
<p>2. If general fund support of to Current Planning is not increased, examine the County's current fee structure and increase existing fees in light of needs to recapture actual costs of working with customers and processing applications. This would need to include a time factor—the amount of staff time involved with customers who are exploring opportunities and options prior to submitting an application. NOTE: As stated above, certain fees such as those for land use appeals are governed by state law, therefore discussion at state level would be necessary to change those fees. <i>One-time</i></p>	#2
<p>3. Consider developing and applying new fees. Potential new fees include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fees for general and preliminary counter assistance, such as in excess of ten minute visits (Portland's model). This would enable us to accommodate the level of service desired by customers without increasing fees to subsidize it. This might consist of a tiered system of fees, such as for preliminary application assistance—with graduated charges based upon set parameters such as meeting durations and numbers of staff that attend the meeting; Fees for pre-application conferences. (Note: our pre-application conference format should be upgraded to include more comprehensive input from various work groups/divisions/agencies consistent with local models, and fees charged accordingly. Also: our pre0application meetings are voluntary; some jurisdictions make pre-application meetings mandatory—or at least certain pre-application meetings. Fees for Director's Interpretations (as a formal land use action); Fees for staff research/written information; Fees for re-submittals/incomplete applications; Fees to cover administrative costs not covered by current fees, such as charges for credit card payments, grant work, SDC collection for other agencies.) <p><i>One-time</i></p>	#2
<p>4. Discontinue existing Current Planning fee reductions for combining more than one land use action into a single land use application, where after the first application, the fees for subsequent applications are reduced by 50%. (Note: No local jurisdictions interviewed allowed such fee reductions.) <i>One-time</i></p>	#2

5. Evaluate how we process refunds. For example: limit percentage of fees that are refundable when an application is withdrawn (as with Portland's 50% rule). NOTE: This could apply department-wide. <i>One-time</i>	#2
6. Evaluate whether it would be cheaper to use County Counsel staff to hear land use cases instead of a Hearing Officer (as at City of Portland), and thus enable associated fees to better cover costs. <i>One-time</i>	#3
7. Apply and collect fines more consistently and aggressively. Examples: Code Enforcement and Code Compliance fines. <i>Ongoing</i>	#2
8. Conduct a comprehensive review of other jurisdictions' fee models. <i>On-going</i>	#2 <i>Preliminary work in Appendix D</i>
OTHER REVENUE SOURCES	
1. Seek opportunities to utilize grant funding as an additional funding source, such as by establishing a continual process for researching and applying for grants. As part of this consider where this work should be coordinated (LUT's Administrative Services perhaps? Or County Administrators Office?) <i>Ongoing</i>	#2
INTEGRATED FEE PROCESSING	
1. Investigate and evaluate establishing coordinated electronic fee processing system(s) that are interlinked department-wide, as well as clear directives for their use. While currently there are challenges to this (high costs that would be difficult to absorb), as technology changes costs may come down and it may be more feasible. <i>One-time</i>	#3
2. Create a "Universal Rate Sheet" that reflects fees for department-wide development review and permitting services from start to finish. Also incorporate rates of other agencies such as Clean Water Services. <i>One-time</i> .	#?
3. Ensure that board adopted rates are consistently applied department-wide. <i>Ongoing</i>	#2
4. Examine how we bill for our services, department-wide (considerations include: implementation of the Cost Plan, staff billing rates, opportunities for single billing to LUT vs. individual payments to LUT work groups). <i>One-time</i>	#3
ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE	
1. Evaluate adequacy of the department's accounts receivable infrastructure. This may relate to the desire for integrated fee-processing above. <i>One-time</i>	#3

C. Accurate Applications and Consistent Reviews

"Our role is as a tour guide through the process." (Yamhill County staff member)

Issue Statement:

We have a variety of customers—some are familiar with our processes and others are not, some submit well-prepared applications and some do not. Properly working with this range of customer types, providing needed online resources, and ensuring that the customer submits an accurate, well-prepared application are the foundation stones for ensuring a streamlined development/permitting process overall.

The following objectives suggest resources to help fine-tune applications at the front end. Based upon input from staff, customers, and neighboring jurisdictions, objectives recommend materials that not only help our customers to achieve complete applications but also assist staff in more readily confirming application completeness. Objectives further

suggest adoption of policies and training aimed at common agreement on what constitutes completeness.

Notwithstanding improved application materials, significant customer/staff interaction will remain necessary to varying degrees in order for many of our customers to fully understand and provide application requirements. To address a spectrum of such needs, recommendations include ways to provide improved access to staff for basic existing services (such as staff availability for front counter service and phone calls) and new fee-based meeting options for meetings provided at an applicant's request (such as for design assistance requested by the applicant or for meetings that the County may not be able to provide for free in the future). These borrow from Portland's model for providing services absent general funding to support it. For example, in Portland, meetings at no cost to the applicant are generally limited to ten minutes at the counter. Objectives below also encourage better-coordinated interdivisional and interagency interaction.

Integral to application completeness and consistent reviews are clear and objective regulations and policies. Where code language is unclear to customers, staff, or both, consistent interpretations as to completeness and compliance are difficult to guarantee. Objectives below address these issues as well.

Accurate Applications and Consistent Reviews – Recommended Objectives:

PRELIMINARY ASSISTANCE—MATERIALS	SUGGESTED PRIORITY
<p>1. Improve specific application forms and use of checklists to clearly specify materials/information required, to standardize information received from customers and improve tracking by staff of necessary submittal items. Consider combining applications and checklists. Providing separate checkboxes for applicant and staff next to submittal requirements on applications could:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help the applicant to inventory necessary information; • Expedite and increase consistency of staff's completeness review; • Reduce the number of documents/brochures either must consult to achieve this. <p><i>One-time, with ongoing maintenance</i></p>	<p>#2 <i>Work is in progress to improve use of checklists in Current Planning.</i></p>
<p>2. Provide additional educational brochures or other handouts that clarify the process, as well as brochures to inform applicants early about issues that frequently generate controversy when they come as surprises. (Example: In Development Services, provide brochures about second kitchens/commercial kitchens to clarify any basis on which they may be allowed vs. not allowed and applicable building and CDC standards.)</p> <p><i>One-time, with ongoing maintenance</i></p>	<p>#2 <i>A start: Current Planning is identifying all existing brochures & handouts.</i></p>
<p>3. Consider developing and maintaining lists of consultants for distribution to applicants. Note: To limit bias/liability, list should include an ongoing invitation to all consultants to be added, as well as a disclaimer noting that the list is informational only and does not constitute a County preference or recommendation of particular consultants. <i>One-time, with ongoing maintenance</i></p>	<p>#3</p>
<p>4. Provide a "Universal Estimate Sheet" to each customer, reflecting expected total costs for review of the proposed project from start to finish, across all divisions and agencies (based upon the department-wide uniform rate sheet noted within this report under the list of "Financial" objectives). <i>One-time</i></p>	<p>#3</p>

5. Provide clear information to customers about the different staff, their roles, and their phone numbers and email addresses that they will work with. This should be for each work group, division, or agency. While some information is already given to customers, make improvements to increase awareness on the part of the customer, especially up front early in the process. <i>One-time</i>	#2
PRELIMINARY ASSISTANCE—APPLICANT EDUCATION	
1. Provide educational online “workshops” that walk an applicant through the entire process. “Build your application” is already on our website. <i>Ongoing</i>	#1 Already begun, through “Build your application.”
2. Provide periodic “Development Forums” for our development-related customers, to announce recent and upcoming initiatives and events, provide helpful hints and tips, get feedback from our customers, build relationships between staff and customers. <i>Ongoing</i>	#2
PRELIMINARY ASSISTANCE—MEETINGS	
1. If General Fund support is not provided to supplement Current Planning’s front counter/general customer service support, then provide customers options for preliminary application assistance meetings that have graduated fees, based upon set parameters such as meeting durations and designated staff numbers/divisions to attend. (See “ <i>Financial</i> ” section for more details). <i>One-time</i>	#3
2. Provide expanded, more comprehensive pre-application conferences that would be attended by workgroups/divisions/agencies other than Current Planning, consistent with local models. To pay for the additional staff involvement and time, there would probably have to be fees charged for such expanded pre-application conferences. (See “ <i>Financial</i> ” section for more details). (Currently, only Current Planning staff attend pre-application conferences and there is no charge. Most other jurisdictions charge for pre-application meetings. <i>One-time</i>	#3
3. Provide “Intake Meetings” for application submittal where staff provides cursory review with the applicant present to save corrections later in the process and ensure full, accurate payment of fees. <i>Ongoing</i>	#3
4. Expand provision of Spanish-speaking services. As part of this objective, survey staff who speak Spanish and keep that information readily available. <i>On-going</i>	#3
GENERAL ACCESS TO STAFF	
1. Better accommodate access to a “live body” via phone calls (as opposed to voicemail or recordings) and encourage all staff to be more accessible via the phone and the counter. (Published “ <i>general hours of availability</i> ” for higher level or specialized staff may help with this). <i>Ongoing</i>	#1
2. Within Building Services, develop a permit coordinator or liaison role among staff, where the staff person would serve as a primary contact and liaison to shepherd the applicant through the entire building permit process, answer questions, connect the applicant to other staff as needed, and maintain interdivisional records on project status. One way to achieve this is to potentially change the status of Building Services’ Permit Processing’s Administrative Specialist IIs to Permit Techs. This role might evolve over time—it could eventually include the entire Development Services process, starting with pre-application conference in Current Planning to building inspection in Building Services. <i>One-time</i>	#3
REGULATIONS, POLICY, AND TRAINING	
1. Standardize submittal requirements across divisions to a greater degree than exists currently. Examples: what is an acceptable plan size and do we accept electronic or hard copy (or, what is our preference?). <i>One-time</i>	#3

2. Standardize what constitutes a complete application. Through staff and applicant training, define and create better understanding of what is a complete application and what must be submitted. Determine what is really needed and pare down current code requirements to only the essentials. Doing this would address the “thick application” scenario where customer submits lots of stuff rather than the stuff that is needed to review the development. It would also lead to increased consistency on the part of staff as to what the County’s specific, exact requirements and expectations are. Approaches could include using checklists, improved application forms and materials, and education. <i>One-time</i>	#3
3. Train staff to conduct completeness reviews applying the accepted standard for a complete application. <i>One-time, with ongoing maintenance</i>	#3
4. Hold internal meetings on a regular basis where all members of a workgroup discuss each case in order to achieve and maintain consensus as to consistent application of codes and standards and more consistent extent of findings and conditions. Beaverton does this. Also, some work on this is already underway in Current Planning, where meetings are periodically held to talk about applications among a group of staff that contains representatives of all groups involved in development review. While this objective will require staff time, this could both save staff time and applicant time. <i>Ongoing.</i>	#2 <i>Some work already occurs on this.</i>
5. Make code interpretations (Manager, Director, or Board interpretations) consistently and document them very well, so they are easily retrieved and used. This will improve consistently, help avoid findings on a case by case basis, and lead to resolving on-going issues. <i>Ongoing.</i>	#2 Currently working on this.
6. Make the CDC more user-friendly via use of lay terms, consistent terminology, reduction of cross-referencing, improvement of definitions, removal of outmoded sections/requirements, and clarification of “gray areas.” <i>One-time</i>	#3 <i>This is a resource issue, particularly for non-General Fund sections.</i>
7. Document and maintain internal interpretations of unclear elements of the Oregon Structural Specialty Code and the Oregon Fire Code. (This is a Building Services activity.) This will facilitate greater consistency on the part of staff. <i>Ongoing</i>	#2 <i>In process at Tri County level.</i>
8. Continue to monitor the extent of engineering reviews (especially fire and life safety) and follow the “Building Services Engineering Plan Review Guidelines.” This includes our policy for considering alternative designs not specified by code. <i>Ongoing</i>	#1 Already being done.
9. Continue to utilize the Building Official to resolve issues and disputes relating to the Building Code. <i>Ongoing</i>	#1
10. For cases where the Building Official is not able to resolve issues and disputes relating to the Building Code, put in place an Appeals Board as provided for in the ____ code, to be convened to resolve such issues and disputes. <i>One-time</i>	#1
11. Evaluate and address County code and process conflicts with state/federal requirements (such as FCC “shot clock” time limits for state and municipal review of wireless communications facilities). <i>One-time</i>	#3
COORDINATION (INTERDIVISIONAL AND INTERAGENCY)	
1. Convey an understanding of the complete application process (“big picture”) to all divisions to avoid disconnects and workgroups functioning in “silos.” As one way to accomplish this, better involve and integrate staff from various divisions, workgroups and agencies at key points in the process to achieve coordinated efforts. <i>Ongoing</i>	#2

2. Improve processes for handing off information from one workgroup/division to the next. <i>Ongoing</i>	#2
3. Develop an employee handbook to provide common direction, foster teamwork/collaboration, document processes and procedures, and improve consistency. As part of this, include the adopted philosophy and a diagram of the process. <i>One-time, with on-going maintenance</i>	#2 <i>Dev. Services is preparing "Procedures Manual."</i>
4. Use common language and terms department-wide. <i>One-time</i>	#1 <i>Terminology document exists and is updated.</i>
5.	#2

D. Information Technology & E-Business

***"There are disconnects between divisions...
There are programs that make interoffice communication easier,
as in a doctor's office where each caregiver enters notes/updates that the next can
see. The county should have such a program." (Rural land use applicant)***

Issue Statement:

As stated in a “Leadership/Management” objective earlier, leadership is asked to determine the extent to which the County wants to be proactive and cutting edge vs. waiting for other jurisdictions to set the standard. Our standard for information technology begs this question. While all local jurisdictions interviewed use shared electronic tracking systems to some degree, many have yet to achieve functional electronic means for sharing work products and maximizing their potential for e-business. Portland’s tracking software is highly regarded by both customers and fellow jurisdictions. Even so, Portland Bureau of Development Services (BDS) is currently seeking a \$5.2 million dollar loan to upgrade their electronic systems. Portland appears to be the leader in E-business capability as well. Portland seeks to empower its customers to gather information themselves online – a process that the city views as a cost-effective strategy long-term.

Based upon Portland’s model, the achievements and goals of other jurisdictions interviewed, and staff and customer input, this section recommends centralized improvements to software (and policies for its department-wide use) to better-coordinate services, simplify project tracking both internally and externally, interlink fee management, and improve customer-friendly e-business capabilities. Desired results are to increase convenience for customers and reduce demands on staff and overhead.

Information Technology & E-Business – Recommended Objectives:

Information Technology & E-Business	SUGGESTED PRIORITY
1. Improve use of Permits Plus (or ultimately, other agreed-upon central software) uniformly department-wide, as a tracking tool. Within it, provide clear and helpful notes available to all staff as to issues about projects. This will require formalized training. <i>Ongoing</i>	#1
2. Establish (acquire or upgrade) coordinated electronic system(s) that are interlinked department-wide and allow greater customer access to enable: a. Interdivisional (and ideally interagency) sharing of work products; b. Internal and external status tracking; c. Coordinated electronic fee processing across all divisions (see “ <i>Financial</i> ” section); d. Reduced customer reliance upon meetings and phone calls that cut into staff’s ability to efficiently process workload; e. E-business such as electronic application submittal, electronic plan submittal and review, and E-payment (and phone payment) of application fees, plan review fees, inspection fees, and fee-based options for customers to meet with staff (as noted under “ <i>Financial</i> ” and “ <i>Accurate Applications and Consistent Reviews</i> ” sections). Also, realize overhead costs for such systems. <i>One-time</i>	#2 <i>E-Plan review research in process in Building Services.</i>
3. Provide a central repository (web portal/link, for example) where at any time staff and the public can report “gray areas,” conflicts, and errors within the Community Development Code (CDC), suggest clarifications/interpretations, etc. for County consideration when regular code updates occur. Example: City of Portland’s Long Range Planning staff maintains such a portal. <i>One-time</i>	#2

IV. NEXT STEPS

As described in the Introduction, the intent of this study was to lay a foundation for an on-going and continuous process improvement program. Thus, this report was not intended to identify all process improvement opportunities or to set out a finite plan of limited duration. *In sum, this report is the start of LUT's improvement process, not the end of it.* The recommendations contained in this study are a starting point.

The following suggestions are recommended to implement and build on these initial recommendations.

Follow-through and commitment

Much work went into this report, particularly identifying the issues and recommended objectives to address the issues. Customers, representatives of other jurisdictions, and LUT staff all devoted significant time and thought into this improvement program and its initial outcome—this report. During the process, participants, particularly staff, recognized the need for follow-up to the report and follow-through—that the report's recommendations be implemented and its work continue.

The Leadership/Management section of the report addresses this need in part. Staff who participated in this process also mentioned the need for LUT leadership to (1) assure staff that the report will be implemented and (2) empower the appropriate staff to get the job done. This ongoing work needs to be monitored and also remain inclusive of LUT operations as a whole.

Staff committee or committees

It is suggested that a committee or committees of staff be established to implement these recommendations and continue and build on this initial work. Two different approaches are:

- (1) form one committee that continues considering the larger development review issues and is divided into an appropriate number of subcommittees each with its own focus, with the larger committee also ensuring the sub-issues are integrated and “the pieces connected,” or
- (2) form an appropriate number of committees, each with a specific focus.

It is recommended that where committees or subcommittees are formed, that these should include members representing a mix of job classifications, divisions, and workgroups sufficient to provide insight from a variety of perspectives. Other membership issues that will need to be considered include how many staff to involve in the on-going process and which specific staff to involve.

Clarifying the objectives and identifying new ones

Some objectives are quite straight-forward and clear, while others will need clarification. Through further discussion and study, some objectives may evolve and/or need to be reconsidered. It may not also be entirely clear about whether an objective applies department-wide or to specific individual divisions or other work groups of the department.

In addition, in many cases the recommended objectives resulting from this initial study provide rather specific direction. These recommended objectives are not meant, however, to limit the innovation of those who carry the work forward. Rather, they serve as starting points or general targets for improvement.

Continuing outreach to our customers

It will also be important to continue to reach out to our customers and seek their input during this process, for reaction to proposed solutions and changes and to seek their ongoing input on new issues and feedback on “how are we doing?” One way to do this which has been discussed is for the County to conduct periodic “Development Forums” that would be open to all its development-related customers, including developers, contractors, engineers, architects, real estate professionals, and others. These Development Forums would be an efficient and inclusive way to get feedback and other input from our customers, as this process continues.

How to pay for implementation and this ongoing work?

A major issue that will need to be addressed in moving this improvement process work forward and implementing the recommendations of this study is how to pay for it. Staff who will be involved will need to balance this development review improvement process work with their other, “regular” duties. To find the time that will be needed to do this—and to do it well—will be challenging. And this will be particularly difficult for those staff who work in areas that do not receive general fund support but are funded entirely by fees.

The start of this improvement process, not the end

While work on some of the specific objectives within this study will reach completion, the development review improvement process itself should not. As noted earlier, this study was not intended to be exhaustive in scope, but to provide the foundation for an ongoing development review improvement process. New ideas and strategies that emerge as work proceeds will provide new opportunities for Washington County to move forward towards achieving its improvement process goals.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: *Challenges of Current Planning Operating as an Enterprise Fund*

Appendix B: *Funding Sources for Current Planning Functions—Area Jurisdictions (comparison table)*

Appendix C: *Preliminary “Benchmarking”—Preliminary Table Comparing Washington County’s Processes and Performance with Other Jurisdictions*

Appendix D: *Input Received from Interview Participants:*

1. *Customer Comments*
2. *Jurisdiction Comments*
3. *Staff Comments*

APPENDIX A:

Challenges of Current Planning Operating as an Enterprise Fund

Updated: December 8, 2010

Current Planning—considered an enterprise fund, but does not function as one

To operate as an enterprise fund; the goal is to recover 100% of cost with fee revenue. The reality is Current Planning (CP) does not function as such; our current recovery rate is approximately 53%. CP's revenues and fund balance are down due in part to previous decisions made beyond the division that reduced its revenue and fund balance:

- no fee increases,
- automatic extensions of land use approvals, and
- requiring the division to assume the cost of Measures 37 and 49.

As a result:

- Expenditures exceeded revenues for past 4 years, drawing down our reserves by \$2.0M.
- Monthly average draw on fund was approximately \$63,000 during FY 2009/2010. Trend continues for FY 2010/2011.
- At current rate fund balance June 30, 2011 = \$237,000.

Revenues down while demand and customer service needs are up

- There is increased activity that does not result in fees. Staff has spent significant time in the past two years responding to and assisting those impacted by loss of financial backing for projects and those impacted by foreclosure, yet we receive no revenue for this needed assistance that consumes much staff time.
- Many of the applications we now handle are for infill projects, which generate the most angst in the community and consume more staff time than new projects in other areas, yet generate relatively little in the way of development fees.
- Due to staff reductions and increased need for general assistance, many Current Planning staff whose time should be allocated to land use application review spend a considerable amount of time responding to general questions about zoning, and in general responding to persons who may never submit a land use application.

Development trends in Washington County and impacts on revenue

Future development in Washington County is expected to center more on small-scale development (infill, redevelopment) rather than large-scale greenfield development. Reasons: (1) the new economic realities of development and (2) regional emphasis on infill to minimize the need for UGB expansions. Under the enterprise funding model, this bodes ill for Current Planning and its ability to provide needed services during economically challenging times, when we particularly need to encourage development projects.

- Historically, large-scale development has "subsidized" smaller-scale development.
- Infill projects generate the most angst in the community and are subject to additional code standards, while generating relatively little in the way of development fees, and consuming more staff time than many other new projects.

Budgeting—short-term decisions and long-term impacts

Short-term budget decisions should not be made that undermine Washington County's longer-term future. One example: Succession planning. The Principal Planner and three of the five Senior Planners all have 20 years experience and may retire in the not-too-distant future. We need to retain and nurture our younger staff to adequately prepare them to assume those senior roles.

APPENDIX B:
Funding for Current Planning Services Functions—Area Jurisdictions

Updated: February 25, 2010

Jurisdiction	Enterprise Fund or General Fund	Notes*
Washington County	Enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Entirely enterprise fund with the following exceptions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ General Fund for Code Compliance function ➤ Long Range Planning is a separate section supported by General Fund ➤ Road Fund reimbursement for roughly 20% of one Senior Planner, for transportation work. Recent tracking shows that 56% of visitors to the CP Counter represent general inquiries that are not covered by the adopted fee schedule or the General Fund.
Yamhill County	Enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During boom years, lack of money was not an issue but they are now down to their last ½ million dollars. Due to current lack of funding, they will be considering fee increases—they cannot operate on current fees. Solid Waste is part of their department, so they do receive Solid Waste funding, which helps. Service counter closed 12:00 to 1pm daily and Wednesday afternoons, to conserve funds.
Portland	Enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Portland has significant fees for customer service beyond 10 minutes at counter: One-hour “Early Assistance” appointments (\$150-\$408), charges for written summaries of development standards (\$115 or \$345), “Design Advice” (\$1,501) and Pre-apps (\$2,680). These fees allow for customer service that cannot otherwise be provided absent general fund money. In 2009 the Bureau of Development Services (BDS) argued for General Fund money to maintain their level of customer service. (Requested GF loan of \$5.2 mil. to replace permitting/case tracking software with advanced Accela Government Software to simplify public and staff access to records. November, 2010 City Council approved plans for line of credit for this).
Hillsboro	General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is considered 100% general fund supported because fees go straight to the general fund. Cost recovery is about 17%. Hillsboro relates their Current Planning functions to economic development— to bring development, they need general fund support. The General Fund provision allows maintenance of both lower fees and higher customer service levels.
Beaverton	General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City Council's goal for cost recovery for Current Planning (through fees) is 60%. Due to decrease in land use application activity, actual cost recovery is currently less than 30%.

Jurisdiction	Enterprise Fund or General Fund	Notes*
Tualatin	General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land use application fees go into the general fund. • Cost recovery is extremely low right now—probably not even 20%. • Funding for public facilities, economic development funding, and a sizable urban renewal fund all go into planning. • Service counter closed during lunch hours, to conserve funds.
Tigard	General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General fund support has never been in question because current planning, like long range planning, is considered integral to the community. • Last year, Planning's projected fee support was 60%, but reality was only about 26-30% cost recovery. Land use application fees go into the overall general fund pool. • Service counter closed Mondays, to conserve funds.
Benton County	General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual 5% Planning fee increase • 20% cost recovery through fees & grants
Marion County	General & Lottery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planners are at 90%
Deschutes County	General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aspire to 100% fee support, but receive general fund support • On a reduced work week (36 hour)
Multnomah County	General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multnomah County (which, unlike Washington County, processes only rural land use applications – not urban ones) has adopted a 2011 budget that provides for \$1,226,902 in General Funds and \$128,127 in "other funds." • Service counter open only 4 days per week, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. only, to conserve funds.
Clackamas County	General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For Clackamas County (which does process both rural and urban applications, like Washington County), their documents report that land use application fees cover only approximately 55% of the cost of processing all applications. The documents further state that 3% fee increases were "needed to maintain 55% cost recovery for land use applications." • Service counter open only 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Thursday, to conserve funds.

* General note about comparison of land use application fees: It is difficult to compare fees because application types vary significantly between jurisdictions. For example, several separate applications in one jurisdiction, each with a separate fee, may make up one overall application at Washington County. Thus, it is not possible to make an across-the-board comparison of fees between jurisdictions.

* All of the planning departments in this table consist of both Long Range and Current Planning, with the exception of Washington County.

APPENDIX C:
Preliminary “Benchmarking”—Preliminary Table Comparing
Washington County’s Processes and Performance with Other Jurisdictions
December 17, 2010

NOTE: The following information was gathered during the verbal interviews with the staff of other jurisdictions. A follow-up written survey is recommended for direct comparison purposes for future benchmarking.

	Hillsboro	Beaverton	Tigard	Tualatin	Portland	Yamhill County	Washington County
Current/Long Range Planning Combined, Integrated (or Moving Toward)?	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO
Case Load (Development Review Planning Sections):							
In Recent Peak Years	“Has remained strong since	900/Yr				700	496 processed (188 Rural w/ 52% Type IIs & IIIs; 305 Urban w/ 48% IIs & IIIs)
Currently	Peak years.”	600/Yr		12 Industrial. Residential last year = 1, this year = 20.		200	365 processed (165 Rural w/ 56+% IIs and IIIs; 200 Urban w/ only 27.5% IIs and IIIs)
Review Planners on Staff:							
In Recent Peak Years		17	8		2/3 Decrease Since 2009	3	32 CP staff overall (9-12 reviewers)
Currently	18 (CP = 8; LR = 6; Transp = 2)	14	5 (4 staff writers, 1 arborist).	11.5	(All BDS?)	2	18 CP staff (3-4 reviewers but most w/ additional duties)

	Hillsboro	Beaverton	Tigard	Tualatin	Portland	Yamhill County	Washington County
Layoffs Since Peak Years?	NO	NO		NO	YES		(4 via transfers)
Building Staff – Reduced Since Recent Peak Years?			Some on .8 work weeks.	Slightly	YES	YES	YES
Through Layoffs?					YES	YES - 3	YES (14 last year, possibly 9 more in 2011)
Use-Specific Applications Used?	YES (With checklist incorporated).	YES (With checklist incorporated).	To limited degree	YES	YES (but more significant use of educational brochures).	YES	To limited degree
Checklists used?	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	Minimally
Can Separate Land Use Actions be Combined into One Application?	NOT YET	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES
If so, is a Discount Allowed for this?	N/A	NO	NO	N/A	NO	NO	YES
When are Fees Collected?	At each step in process.	At each step in process (Once for land use - no “final approval” land use app/fee). NOTE: “Land Use Permitting” and “Site Development” are separate processes w/ separate fees.	At various stages (some deposit system actions).	At each step in process (multiple separate land use decisions per development, each with fee).	At each step in process (multiple separate land use decisions per development, each with fee. No “final approval” land use app/fee).	Various points in the process but only one land use review (no “final approval” land use app/fee).	Various points in the process (NOTE: “final approval” land use app/fee required).
Are Consultants Used? If so, for what?	Rarely – Zoning for large complex plans.	Not for land use. Building may send out plans if backlog.	YES Consulting Eng. Large projects only.	NO	Not generally	NO	Limited degree, generally for special projects (such as LRP’s N. Bethany Plan; Dev. Svcs’ Green Code).
Procedures/Software of Note for:							

	Hillsboro	Beaverton	Tigard	Tualatin	Portland	Yamhill County	Washington County
Interdivisional Sharing of Work Products	Internally developed software.	No shared access to work products.		"Agenda Quick" software for revisions of staff reports between staff and Council.	Significant development of and reliance upon electronic software. Current \$5.2 million GF loan request for further upgrade.	All files shared between Building, Planning, Sanitation.	Permits Plus, Geonet, Core, iSpirits, Webnut shared in LUT but not consistently used from division to division or for sharing work
Interdivisional Tracking of Project Status	Considering purchase of new software for this.	Permit tracking software designed in-house.	Permit Coordinator Position.			IS Dept. currently writing software.	Permits Plus, Geonet, Website but usage not consistent
Customer Tracking of Project Status	Considering purchase of new software for this.	YES – online "Project Tracker"	Permit Coordinator Position.		Good electronic access: "Empower People to gather info themselves online."	Program under development.	Basic permit status by tax lot via Intermap (not detailed).
Development Assistance Counter Hours Reduced?	NO	YES, Bldg. Svcs. only (open 7.5 hrs. per day: 7:30-12 & 1-4).	YES (Unavailable Mondays except by appointment).	YES (Closed for lunch hour).	YES (Available Tues-Fri., 8-3, for permit and app intake/review 8-12 and general inquiries 12-3)	YES (Closed for lunch hour).	NO

	Hillsboro	Beaverton	Tigard	Tualatin	Portland	Yamhill County	Washington County
If General Fund Received, Cost recovery from Fees (Current Planning Function) - (Goal % / Actual %)	Considered 100% GF supported but recovery is approximately 17%. (Fees go back into GF).	60% / less than 30%	60% / 26-30%	Considered 100% GF supported but recovery is “probably not even 20%.” (Fees go back into GF. Additionally, funding for public facilities, economic dev., & urban renewal goes into the combined CP/LRP div).	N/A (but \$5.2 mil GF loan request in process)	N/A (but some Solid Waste funding since in same department – those funds built the building they are housed in. Also seeking fee increases).	N/A (except for Code Compliance activities).
If General Fund, Justification For?	Good Council support. Fund support allows lower fees and good service to attract development.	Planning “Viewed as community benefit, therefore a community funded activity.”	Never in question. Strong Council support, viewed as integral to the community.	City Council largely pro-growth.	N/A, fee based assistance model (but loan request based on improved efficiency via electronic upgrades).	Currently N/A (but Yamhill’s research shows most other OR Counties’ dev. Rev. functions at 50-70% GF).	
Interpretations as Formal land Use Decision?	YES	YES	YES	YES	(Done by Long Range Planning).	YES	NO
If so, fee?	YES	YES (\$708)	YES (\$599 or appeal = \$2,265)	YES (\$30)	?	YES (staff time: \$300 avg.).	N/A
Do Interpretations Get Incorporated into Code?	NO Case specific.	?		NO Site specific.		YES	
Fees for Pre-Application meetings?		YES (\$237, Not applied to application)	YES (\$599)	YES	YES (\$2,680, Not applied to application)		NO
Methods of Note for Ongoing Code Modifications		Code amendments can be processed at any time.			Web portal for customer suggestions/Code updates (under Bureau of Planning).	Book is kept for Interpretations and issues raised by staff and public for ultimate inclusion in Code.	

	Hillsboro	Beaverton	Tigard	Tualatin	Portland	Yamhill County	Washington County
Practices that Ensure Objective Review		Senior planner reviews casefile (extra set of eyes).	“Checklists and professional ethics.”	Use-specific applications, checklists.	Weekly team meeting with case files.		
Extent of In-House Engineering Review vs. Reliance on Private Engineer’s Stamp?			“We feel thorough building/eng plan review is extremely important.”	“We do not rely on an engineer’s stamp.” Before permits, 7 to 10 iterations of redlines common.”	Plans must be 92% ready at land use stage.		
Land Use Review Times (after app is “complete”)							
Discretionary	30-55 days	Most w/in 5 wks but Design Review = 4-6 wks.			Agreemt w/ developers: Land Divs = 48-52 days; other apps w/in 28 days (often waived if concerns via comment pd. – or denial is risk. Also, 92% plan completeness at land use stage = large investment by applicant beforehand).	150 days	Urban w/in 120 days; rural w/in 150 per state law.
Non-Discretionary	10 days if no appeals				W/in 45 days	3 wks – 30 days	W/in 30 days

APPENDIX D: Input Received from Interview Participants—

- 1. Customer Comments**
- 2. Jurisdiction Comments**
- 3. Staff Comments**

APPENDIX D: Input Received from Interview Participants—

1. Customer Comments

December 13, 2010

Customers interviewed included private engineers and surveyors, architects, planning consultants, and builders, as well as landowners who have undertaken the application process without the help of a consultant. The 12 customers interviewed represented interests within a wide range of project types including, but not limited to, single rural dwellings, wineries, churches, schools, and small and large commercial and residential developments.

Interviews revealed the following points of note (among many others):

- That complaints expressed as attitude or culture issues largely relate to those areas of the review process in which the County bears the greatest risk/liability – situations where the real issue may truly be less about “attitude” than about inherent constraints to “flexibility” posed by matters such as fire/life/safety. (Regardless, comments on the degree to which related in-house plan review should occur vary widely even amongst different interviewees in the same profession – several strongly in support of stringent review);
- Diverse views on the ease or complexity of our processes and regulations and the appropriateness of our fees;
- A largely complimentary outlook on staff;
- A desire for better communication and better electronic tracking between internal divisions and workgroups as well as between staff and customers;
- A desire for more specific materials and applications that better convey pertinent requirements.

Customer comments, below, are organized into categories generally as they pertain to “Areas for Improvement” noted within the Development Review Improvement Process Report prepared by Washington County Department of Land use and Transportation, dated January 28, 2010.

I. LEADERSHIP/MANAGEMENT

A. Culture, Staff Role, and Attitude:

- I don't feel that any staff has ever tried to take advantage of us. Overall it is a great group of people. Only some attitudes are a problem. (Engineer)
- *We did not feel we got the short end of the stick even given the poor economy, reduced staff and such.* (Winery and Building Permit Applicants)
- *I believe strongly that the way a business or department functions is based solely on the projection from the top of the management chain.* (Engineer)
- *Work with a smile, limit frustration, on a reasonable schedule, within reasonable costs.* (Engineer)
- *People are not the problem. The system is – and the miscommunication about the best way to work through problems within it.* (Architects)
- *Staff is generally good to work with, positive, polite, and nice.* (Engineer & Surveyor)
- *Cultural/tone/attitude problem: In the fire & life safety review I feel as though I am never an equal but always there to be guided. Even when I am told my work is good, something always has to be pointed out for improvement next time.* (Construction Specialist, Architecture Firm)
- *There has not necessarily been improvement overall – this varies by staff. [Building Services staff person] has changed and is more helpful.* (Construction Specialist, Architecture Firm)
- *When plans examiners have strong up-to-date knowledge, they are less defensive. Those who don't seem to be up to date seem more defensive.* (Construction Specialist, Architecture Firm)
- *I work all over the place. Staff in smaller towns is generally nicer, not intimidating. Friendly staff members that seem to enjoy their work are much more pleasant to work with. I don't like to call and have someone answer the phone who seems like I'm bothering them and they don't like what they're doing.* (Cell Tower Consultant)
- *Washington County staff is good to talk with.* (Cell Tower Consultant)
- *[Current Planning staff person] at the front counter is first contact – pleasant and nice.* (Cell Tower Consultant)
- *If someone messes up, the conversation should not be derogatory.* (Engineer)
- *Don't be punitive about anyone's ideas.* (Engineer)
- *Do anything to motivate people.* (Engineer)
- *Staff should be able to enjoy their jobs.* (Engineer)
- *Enable communication without fear. This has to be clear to everyone from the top down.* (Engineer)

- Bring everyone together to figure out how to solve things. (Engineer)
- A smile and a genuine hello at the counter are important. People who look at life in a certain way, remember names and details about a person provide good customer service. (Engineer)
- People don't have to bend the rules but smile. (Engineer)
- County inspectors: Don't presume others are lying, always presume others are working in best interest. (Engineer)
- Working with staff, each other, should be fun. [Building Services staff person] (Building) was fun to work with. Karen Wittenburg (Building) was nice. Things went downhill with fire and life safety supervisor. (Engineer)
- [Current Planning staff person] (Current Planning - Rural) has been great to work with on my personal projects. (Engineer)
- Staff should treat the private engineer/consultant as part of the team. (Engineer)
- Find ways to say yes. (Engineer)
- Project the concept of high ethics and professionalism in a positive way. (Engineer)
- Because we rarely got responses to our repeated inquiries, we felt like we were annoying someone and then our plans being put back at the bottom of the pile. (Architects)
- Building Division: How do people get promoted who are known to create difficulty – even to be audited/observed by the state? (Construction Specialist, Architecture Firm)
- [Building Services staff persons] and [Building Services staff person] are great to work with (Building Division Grading Review). I have no problem with their engineering review or what they ask for. (Planning Consultant)
- My client has complimented [Current Planning staff person] and [Current Planning staff person] for their work and good customer service on her rural Template Dwelling and Plan Amendment. (Planning Consultant)
- Most interaction was with [Current Planning staff person] (Current Planning) – he was super. He showed professionalism in his accuracy and demeanor. He was not a pushover but clear and empathetic. (Winery and Building Permit Applicants)
- Building Services staff person] and Building Services staff person] were helpful. (Winery and Building Permit Applicants)
- [Current Planning staff person] shepherded us through the Building Services Division (onerous standards but Heidi was pleasant). (Winery and Building Permit Applicants)
- We talked with [Building Services staff person] when we had trouble with the fire and life safety reviewer. It felt more like brainstorming with him, like we were part of a team. It seemed to light a fire under everyone in a good way. (Engineer)

B. Department Efficiency: Workload, Capacity, and Review Timing

1. Timing and General Efficiency:

- Our General Contractor has built homes, commercial projects, and wineries in many cities and counties. He says he could have been done 4 months earlier and at \$50,000 less if our winery was in Yamhill County. The process may be simpler/faster in other jurisdictions such as Yamhill County but other counties may not be looking at all of the fire/life/safety issues. There is comfort in knowing the review has been thorough. (Winery and Building Permit Applicants)
- Can take two months for the fire & life safety review – too long. (Construction Specialist, Architecture Firm)
- Building Division plan review for house takes four weeks minimum, nearly three months for redlines. Tigard takes only two weeks for a house. (Builder) [Staff note: Washington County's completion time for house plan review is now generally two weeks, per Building Official].
- Halfway through Building permitting process when things should have been ironed out, we were told that the County structural engineer "had another thought," and we had to make changes in the midst of things. (Architects)
- Building – Plan review should be faster. In Portland if we have a plan in on Friday, we hear back from the reviewer by the next Wednesday. (Architects)
- There are reasons to check on all aspects of safety and regulations but timeline is too long [Staff Note: This applicant notes that land use review was completed in 40 days rather than the State permitted 150 days]. Overall everything went quickly and well for us – great - although some other winery owners have not been as satisfied [with the process] as we are. (Winery and Building Permit Applicants)
- Current Planning was somewhat clear and efficient. (Architects)
- Current Planning: For final approval we should not have to submit evidence of permits we've obtained, etc., when the County already has evidence of those they've issued. (Architects)
- Building Services was very efficient (over the counter permit for manufactured dwelling placement). (Rural Replacement Dwelling and Health Hardship Dwelling Applicant)
- Grading requirements went smoothly. (Rural Replacement Dwelling and Health Hardship Dwelling Applicant)
- Current Planning review was the slowest of these. (Rural Replacement Dwelling and Health Hardship Dwelling Applicant)
- Planning and Building inspections were fast and we knew when they were coming (as opposed to the Health Dept's unannounced inspection for septic). (Rural Replacement Dwelling and Health Hardship Dwelling Applicant)
- The structural plan review can be an ugly, long drawn-out process. (Planning Consultant)

2. Combined Reviews and Assembly Line Practices:

- Right-of-Way permits and onsite grading permits should be combined/issued simultaneously as at other jurisdictions so that the approach within the right-of-way and the onsite road can be constructed at the same time. This would save time and money for the applicant by reducing the necessary number of contractor visits for install. (Engineer & Surveyor)
- Halfway through construction the contractor ran into something unanticipated and we had to make a field change. We called the plans reviewer and she did not have a copy of the final plan set. There should be a central control of plans where all can access them. All divisions should be reviewing the same set of plans. (Architects)
- CWS is turning around plans in weeks. County's public improvement/transportation engineering plan review takes longer (about 30 days): Staff [Engineering staff persons—two] is very responsive but plans must go to traffic engineering for lighting and striping review. Is there a way to streamline or allow early review, remove obstacles? (Planning Consultant)
- The facility permit process is too disjointed. Assurances receives and transfers public improvement plans to Engineering, then they come back to Assurances, then a contract is issued to assure the improvements. The Assurances and Engineering processes should be more concurrent. [Staff notes that the public improvement contract is currently dependent upon \$ estimates calculated by Engineering during their review of the plans]. (Engineer & Surveyor)
- Each division and subgroup has permits and forms to be completed. Permits should be combined where possible. (Winery and Building Permit Applicants)
- Process is serialized, one division's work hinging on completion of work for or by another division. Processes should run parallel where possible. (Winery and Building Permit Applicants)

II. FINANCIAL

A. Fee Issues:

- You should consider a two tiered system with different fees. One process would be for simple projects where the applicant knows how to use the code and comes in with a clear plot plan that meets requirements. The other process would be for those who need help with their project. The County could provide that help, at least to a point where they can provide a list of private planners (if conflict of interest is in question). [Staff notes that Portland provides "early assistance" at \$408 for an hour with a planner; and "design advice" at \$1,501 for 1.5 hours with a land use planner and design commission. NOTE: This comment also reflected under Sec. III, "Accurate Applications & Consistent Reviews," below]. (Engineer)
- Clients think the County always has its hand out for money. Reduce the times a customer writes a check. (Engineer & Surveyor)
- I had a window revision. My inspection was held up because \$85 was needed before final inspection. I was told I could not put it on a credit card over the phone without an authorized signature. Charging credit cards over the phone is a commonplace practice these days and given the small amount, should not have been a problem. (Builder)
- Fees are outlandish in many places, having increased 50 to 75%. Clark County is the worst – a Type I application is \$6,000. Washington County's fees are ok. (Cell Tower Consultant)
- Fees are a problem. Measure 49 review fees are especially expensive for applicants, most of whom are elderly. These fees should be cut in half in the immediate future. (Planning Consultant)
- We were shocked at the \$12,000 check for the Transportation Development Tax (TDT). It seems high. What is it for? Why is it a benefit to me or my community? Answers to these questions should be printed on TDT request info. (Winery and Building Permit Applicants) [STAFF NOTE: Not really a fee but a tax].

III. ACCURATE APPLICATIONS & CONSISTENT REVIEWS

A. Assistance:

1. Materials and Applicant Education:

- Initially, the timeline clarity was lacking. We thought the 30-day completeness review was the formal land use review. We did not realize that once our application was found complete, we would still have to go through the formal review. There should be better information on this given out early on. (Rural Replacement Dwelling and Health Hardship Dwelling Applicant)
- Planner should try to give all info up front [although Staff notes that this interviewee noted that Beaverton's pre-apps are complicated and cautioned against that]. (Engineer & Surveyor)
- There should be specific application forms for Type I/Co-located antennas. (Cell Tower Consultant)
- There should be informational materials for Type I, Type II, and Type III tower/antenna applications. (Cell Tower Consultant)
- Our first contact was the counter where we received a packet about replacement dwelling applications. The packet was a good start but could be more complete. It did not include information about road/easement and access permit requirements. (Rural Replacement Dwelling and Health Hardship Dwelling Applicant)
- Building/plan review: List of corrections is easy to follow. (Engineer)

2. Meetings:

- *There should be intake meetings for both Current Planning and Building. (Cell Tower Consultant)*
- *You should consider a two tiered system with different fees. One process would be for simple projects where the applicant knows how to use the code and comes in with a clear plot plan that meets requirements. The other process would be for those who need help with their project. The County could provide that help, at least to a point where they can provide a list of private planners (if conflict of interest is in question). [Staff notes that Portland provides “early assistance” at \$408 for an hour with a planner; and “design advice” at \$1,501 for 1.5 hours with a land use planner and design commission]. (Engineer)*
- *There is no centralized intake – such as an intake meeting. (Architects)*
- *There should be a pre-development conference when you are bringing drawings in for permits. (Architects)*
- *Washington County should have a counter intake person who goes through all land use applications like Portland does. (Planning Consultant)*
- *In Portland, counter intake is a ½ hour process. Internal people are assigned to project from various divisions via computer at that time. Something like this would be helpful up front. (Planning Consultant)*
- *Portland requires an internal meeting with all bureaus/divisions. Might be helpful but fee is high [\$2,680]. (Planning Consultant)*

B. General Access to Staff:

- *I have worked on Intel projects in Washington County, greenhouse projects... I have worked on a restaurant and mall in Hillsboro. The contractor interface is better there. (Engineer)*
- *I called to try to get an inspection on something. It had been rejected but I did not know. I can't regularly check online because I'm usually out at construction sites. I think I should be able to get somebody that answers the phone that I can talk to. (Builder)*
- *In the County's outgoing messages, ask for details from caller. (Cell Tower Consultant)*
- *As in Jackson County, consider having specific hours when people return phone calls and make people aware of this. (Cell Tower Consultant)*
- *We had issues communicating with the plans reviewer in Building. When there are disagreements we should be able to meet face-to-face. (Architects)*
- *Building – We submitted our plan and then we didn't hear back. If we were asked for a detail, we would submit it and again we would not hear back. We would inquire “is this correct” but we would get no response so we assumed it was ok. Then finally we would find out it was not. We should be able to have conversations with staff to move through the process more efficiently. (Architects)*
- *We were able to find out where in the process we were / permit readiness, etc. fairly easily. Our General Contractor has good relationships with people at Washington County. We're not sure if his ability to get info was due to that (whether it's “who you know”) or whether anyone can easily find out. (Winery and Building Permit Applicants)*
- *With fire repairs, we called [Building Services staff person] when issues could not be resolved with the plan reviewer and he helped to work things out. (Construction Specialist, Architecture Firm)*

C. Regulations, Policy and Training:

- *The purpose of a government agency in issuing a permit is to ensure compliance with applicable codes and to protect the public. To do otherwise would leave the agency open to liability. There is a role. (Engineer & Surveyor)*
- *Yes, land use regulation is important. We don't want abuse of resources and there have to be minimum standards to keep things safe. (Rural Replacement Dwelling and Health Hardship Dwelling Applicant)*
- *Yes, regulation is important although as part of “Wineries of the Willamette” we are self regulating as to how we use the land. Wineries of the Willamette works with the Oregon Wine Board, the State Department of Agriculture, and the Oregon Association of Counties and has issued its own position paper. We do not want Willamette Valley to turn into Napa. We do not want it to be an adult Disneyland. To us, if most income is coming from weddings, that is not a winery. If most income is from wine that's produced, that's a winery. (Winery and Building Permit Applicants)*
- *There are community standards that Washington County wants to see and respected Fire and Safety requirements that the county is legally responsible for. (Winery and Building Permit Applicants)*
- *The process is not particularly difficult in terms of road engineering review. If roads are to remain under County ownership and maintenance, the County has every right to review plans thoroughly. Also, as taxpayer, I want the roads built well with sufficient County review. (Engineer & Surveyor)*
- *If a private road, less review should be necessary, with private engineer's stamp carrying more weight/liability and owner retaining ownership and maintenance responsibility. (Engineer & Surveyor)*
- *All divisions have different policies as to different plan sizes and numbers of plans. This should be more consistent and clearly identified up front. (Cell Tower Consultant)*
- *Building Division: Structural review issues are easier to overcome than fire and life safety hurdles. (Engineer)*
- *When there is difficulty bring in another reviewer /second opinions from other staff. (Engineer)*
- *Have a senior official roam the office and offer the clients an alternate eye to look over and discuss project features/challenges. (Engineer)*

- Too complicated. (Architects)
- Washington County has a long process (in Current Planning) but you know what you're getting. It's a big benefit that Washington County does not have a planning commission review because elsewhere you can have one or two commissioners who are "out there" and not following the code. It is nice to have staff/hearings officers at Washington County who know the code. This helps to cut down on unexpected requirements or decisions. (Planning Consultant)
- The Washington County land use process in general is very deliberate but done very well. It is discretionary but clear enough that not a question of yes or no [as to what is likely to be approved]. (Planning Consultant)
- Where clients get irritated is with Conditions of the land use approval.
- Washington County's Measure 49 reviews are involved. (Planning Consultant)
- We are just honest about everything that we are doing. Others will commonly withhold information (such as the fact that a stove is to be installed for commercial use) and put it in after inspection approval to avoid complicated requirements. [Staff notes that Yamhill County staff confirmed the same problem in Yamhill]. (Winery and Building Permit Applicants)
- Communication as to outstanding requirements is effective but content is overly prescriptive. (Construction Specialist, Architecture Firm)
- Fire & Life Safety engineering/plan review – comes down to "How much is the government supposed to protect the public?" (Engineer & Surveyor)
- As for extent of County engineering review: As an engineer, if plans are supposed to include A, B, and C, and I don't have C, I need to add it. I have no problem with that. (Engineer & Surveyor)
- Grading permits: Codified requirements are too onerous. One to two years ago, Staff required a lot of analysis that provided no value. Geotech engineers were being required to do more than what's needed. A geotech engineer ultimately signs off and has insurance so if a slope has been around for 25 years or more and the project will not touch the slope, why is there a need to analyze? This seems to have improved in the last six months. (Engineer & Surveyor)
- Clients think the whole thing is "crazy complicated." (Engineer & Surveyor)
- Washington County's minimum densities are much higher than other cities' within the county (Engineering and Planning Firm)
- Washington County's open space requirements are also much higher. [Staff note: for Planned Developments? Open space requirements not otherwise applied except for unbuildable lands.] (Engineering and Planning Firm)
- Building Fire and Life Safety Review:
 - Too prescriptive – cut sheets are required for everything now, including a lag eye to ensure it will support 200 pounds. This is difficult because we may not know what brand we will use for such things so cannot necessarily provide the spec sheet for the right brand. If we have to do so, we will always end up using the same brand and this will limit the market. This could be a problem in our work on schools, etc., where things have to be impartial.
 - We should just have to submit the plan/design to the local authority without being name-specific as to manufacturer of parts and without associated cut sheets. The field inspector can then see if the specs are sufficient.
 - One reviewer may accept what another won't and there are different interpretations of things. For example, the "exit access travel distance in the Code means different things to different people.
 - A private engineer is a licensed professional with his stamp on the line. Liability most often falls with the private engineer vs. the public agency therefore the County's review does not need to be so inflexible. (Construction Specialist, Architecture Firm)
- Concern is not with structural review. (Construction Specialist, Architecture Firm)
- Simplify Code language. Use lay terms. (Cell Tower Consultant)
- Cell tower/antennae requirements of CDC Section 430-109.3 are particularly difficult and leave staff and consultant to do a lot of interpretation. There are gray areas and things end up getting interpreted differently by different staff members. Different requirements therefore are applied for two antenna applications that are essentially the same. (Cell Tower Consultant)
- When an antenna is added to an existing pole, requirements for fence, landscaping, etc., that should have been applied with the original tower should not be revisited/required. (Cell Tower Consultant)
- Clark County, WA web site now has all Code sections better organized (through its "Re-tooling of the Code"). Look at it as an example. (Cell Tower Consultant)
- More and more jurisdictions are creating codes specific to wireless communications facilities. Many jurisdictions review times are not consistent with FCC requirements. FCC "shock clock" should be integrated into Code (150 days for completion of requirements for new tower, 90 days for collocated antenna). (Cell Tower Consultant)
- Fire break language under CDC Section 428 was confusing. (Rural Replacement Dwelling and Health Hardship Dwelling Applicant)
- Code language should be in lay people's terms. (Rural Replacement Dwelling and Health Hardship Dwelling Applicant)
- Building Division plan review policy (fire and life safety):
 - There are so many things going on that it's easy to make a mistake that's hazardous so the County's thorough review of the private engineer's work is important. In the past I worked on the KOIN center. When the steel frame was hit by the sun in the morning and shaded in the evening, the structure would

- twist. Once the outer skin was on, the frame returned to its proper alignment but this sort of thing is very eye-opening. Liability is heavily on the private engineer so the second set of eyes is appreciated.
- You can't take the load away from a private engineer or architect – they still have to do their jobs, but the county should have a more creative approach to solutions.
 - We did Al's Garden Center with a roof that pulls back in a certain way. It was easy to figure out solutions and easy to fix problems working with Cliff Cramer and the inspector.
 - We wanted to do everything the same way as we did with Al's Garden Center in a more recent greenhouse project but we were not allowed to. We had so much trouble getting the County reviewer to accept the plans that we finally told the client they may want to terminate work with us. They did not and we are continuing but it has not been easy.
 - The engineer applies physics to what he's working on. The reviewer or Building Official should be able to look at the intent of the Code and consider it a "guideline," but allow for creative interpretations that would also work. The Code should be "used" instead of strictly applied. Some things are not critical – there can be some give and take. (Engineer)
- As we write more laws and regulations, the notion/easy way out is to use these regulations to say no. This pessimistic viewpoint is difficult to fend off. It takes a good team to say, 'I cannot see how to get there that way, but if you try this, maybe it will work.' (Engineer)
 - Section 104.10 of the 2010 Oregon Structural Specialty Code covers Modifications – It allows the code official to accept alternative materials, design and methods of construction after the building official first finds that "special individual reason" that makes following "the strict letter of this code impractical and the modification is in compliance with the intent and purpose of this code" then goes on to say: "that such modification does not lessen health, accessibility life and fire safety, or structural requirements." The next section, 104.11, states: "The provisions of this code are not intended to prevent the installation of any material or to prohibit any design or method of construction not specifically prescribed by this code." This Section finishes with "... at least the equivalent of that prescribed in this code in quality, strength, effectiveness, fire resistance, durability and safety." These two sections give the code official the latitude to allow variations as arrived at by the individual. The County plan reviewer therefore needs to be flexible about alternatives and creative solutions. (Engineer)
 - Fire and Life Safety review:
 - Private engineers submit stamped engineering plans – they do this work all the time. Then there is so much more in-house review.
 - We proposed a wood building with no hour rating but sprinklers should make it allowable. The reviewer required a one-hour rating. We have been doing this 30 years and this has never come up. In order to get it fire-rated, we ended up being required to use intumescent paint as a fire shield. (Architects)
 - Washington County's Community Development Code (CDC) is updated as compared to other jurisdictions'. (Planning Consultant)
 - I like the Washington County Community Development Code. It's easy to get through. Beaverton's development code is more difficult and Hillsboro's is easier but old - some jurisdictions are still working with 1960s and 70s codes. (Planning Consultant)
 - Consider allowing three years to meet conditions of approval where decisions currently allow two. (Planning Consultant)
 - Most onerous was the "**Building Code**" requirement for a 40,000 gallon underground fire fighting water supply tank. This added \$100,000 we would rather not spend. We could not see the reasoning for this give a concrete and steel building. [Staff notes that this is a **Fire and Life Safety** requirement wherein the 2010 **Oregon Structural Specialty Code** references the **Oregon Fire Code (OFC)**. Tank size is developed from the calculated demand of water to support the fire system. (Winery and Building Permit Applicants)]
 - As for **grading** review, there are two sides to every story. We feel there were more hours spent engineering [than necessary] and that the engineering, architectural, and geotech bills were higher with all of the exchanges involved, but again there is comfort in knowing we're not going to send water and erosion to other properties since Code keeps all water on the site whether that is good or bad. (Winery and Building Permit Applicants)
 - Code language is not very clear. I had been through it before in 1995 so I was more familiar, but someone new to it would be scratching their heads. (Winery and Building Permit Applicants)
 - Land Use – To add a stove in our winery we had to go through a Special Use Review [Commercial Use in Conjunction with Farm Use]. This necessitated an impact analysis which involved considerable time and research on my part. [Staff notes that the Impact Analysis requirement of Community Development Code (CDC) Section 344-4.2.A and 344-4.3 requires the applicant to examine farm and forest uses on surrounding lands and explain how the proposed new use will not significantly impact them]. We explained that we did not want to be a "restaurant" and that the principal use of the stove would be for our own use and to feed those who came to help with processing. Also, our principal customers are restaurants and we wanted to use the stove to teach restaurateurs to pair wine with food. [Staff notes that State and local winery provisions alone do not allow for more than a "limited service restaurant" serving only pre-packaged food and non-perishable beverages. Where a stove is to be used for food service in connection with wine tasting, etc., this is treated as a "Commercial Kitchen" by Building Code (Health Dept. reqs. apply) and a "Commercial Use in Conjunction with Farm Use" by the CDC to ensure that full-scale commercial restaurants are avoided where they are not permitted in protected rural lands]. Building required mechanical design details, cut sheets, etc. (Winery and Building Permit Applicants)

- We were shocked that \$400K of road improvements were required. (Architects) [Staff Note: This value probably represents the bond coverage amount required by the county for public improvements that the applicant builds, required with development consistent with CDC Sections 501 and 502, the Transportation Plan and Road Standards, and State Transportation Planning Rule (TPR)].
- Current Planning: We do not understand all of the conditions of the land use decision. We could not describe to our client what follow-up was going to take. We lost \$100K on land use. [Staff notes that conditions applied via the land use decision reflect requirements of various divisions/workgroups/agencies including Building/Grading, Survey, Transportation/Engineering, Operations, Clean Water Services and more]. (Architects)
- I am part of a citizen group at City of Portland, made up of engineers and architects that, together with the Building Official, hears Building appeals. The appellant walks in and discusses what they are proposing, what they are offering in lieu of the Code standard. The appeal review group discusses the issue amongst ourselves and sends the appellant out with a solution. Washington County should provide a citizens review board – made up of:
 - AIA Architect that works in architect office;
 - AIA Architect that knows code well and either works in office or for contractor/developer;
 - Structural Engineer that is well rounded;
 - Mechanical Engineer that knows mechanical code and energy code;
 - Electrical Engineer with knowledge in code including fire alarms;
 - Someone from general public – contractor or some other person living in the County that will be a positive force – good communicator and keep others on task.

All members should have 20 plus years of experience in their chosen profession and be part of Washington County – have a stake in the community. You want this group to last for YEARS! (Engineer)
- We wanted to appeal Building Code issues but were told that our appeal would end up with the same reviewer. There should be a process (as in Portland) whereby a separate entity or committee hears the appeal. Interpretations made by that committee's interpretations should become precedent. No, we did not complain to the Building Official. (Architects)

D. Coordination (Intra- and Interdivisional and Interagency):

- In the late 90s, San Diego wanted to be more “business friendly.” They wanted to provide an advocate who could walk a customer through the whole process from start to finish, and they put significant planning, effort, and money into this. Ultimately, they were unable to find someone knowledgeable enough about the whole process. They got through about two pilot projects, then went back to their old system. (Engineer & Surveyor)
- There should be a better process for tracking/hand-offs between divisions. (Cell Tower Consultant)
- When the guy from the fire office was not cooperating, the County brought in [TVF&R staff person] of TVF&R. He and [Building Services staff person] worked well with us. (Engineer)
- There is a disconnect between divisions, not much communication. (Cell Tower Consultant)
- There is poor communication and lack of agreement between divisions. (Architects)
- There is no one point person who can be a source of information. (Architects)
- [Current Planning staff person] in Current Planning was helpful and she helped with intake for Building permitting. (Architects)
- Communication and sharing of products between divisions/agencies should be simplified. (Architects)
- There is a disconnect between divisions. (Cell Tower Consultant)
- The divisions, specifically building and fire must work together as a team – not as adversaries. The knowledge that both bring together is impressive. At the same time, a protection of “turf” feeling exists and was clearly projected in my conversations with staff from both workgroups. This feeling inhibited the parties at the table from interacting to provide our client with the best possible structure to meet his needs. (Engineer)
- In-house divisions don't agree on what's needed, and resolution is pushed off on the consultant. (Architects)
- Current Planning: The pre-application stage was straightforward. We met with [Current Planning staff persons—two] and did lots of “negotiating” with various divisions before submitting our application for completeness. The land use process and hearing were clear once there was agreement from the divisions. (Architects)

IV. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY & E-BUSINESS

- There are disconnects between divisions – Grading vs. Building vs. Current Planning requirements. I worked at Intel for years. There are programs that make interoffice communication easier. The county should have such a program – as in a doctor's office. Each caregiver enters notes/updates that the next can see. (Rural Replacement Dwelling and Health Hardship Dwelling Applicant)
- Automated and online tracking system (like Portland) recommended as a way to speed up the total process. (Planning Consultant)
- I was part of an efficiency study on Operations' computer system. The county needs a system that EVERYONE is on for consistency and that enables tracking between divisions and by customers. (Planning Consultant)
- Consider taking electronic plans as as-builts like Tualatin Valley Water District does. (Planning Consultant)

V. COMPARISONS & PERCEPTIONS OF DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PROCESSES LOCALLY:

A. Washington County:

- Washington County is one of the easiest to work with. (Planning Consultant)

- Washington County's planning process and its set of rules are not better or worse than other jurisdictions. We get through it within the 120 days [for urban projects] that the law requires. (Engineer & Surveyor)
- Fire, Life Safety reviews at Washington County are difficult. (Construction Specialist, Architecture Firm)
- B. Multnomah County:**
 - Multnomah County is very structured. (Planning Consultant)
 - Multnomah County's requirements are antiquated. (Planning Consultant)
 - Multnomah requires five different applications within its process with a fee for each. (Planning Consultant)
- C. Yamhill County:**
 - Yamhill is fun to work with. (Engineer)
 - From the land use side, Yamhill is very simple, straightforward. You can almost go through their process as a homeowner [as opposed to needing a consultant]. Yamhill doesn't expect as much. It's less expensive, less complicated. Bigger counties are more set in their procedures [than Yamhill]. (Planning Consultant)
- D. Clark County, WA:**
 - In Clark County, WA, applications can be submitted for cursory completeness review as PDF on disk. This works well. (Cell Tower Consultant)
 - Clark County not bad to work with. (Cell Tower Consultant)
 - Clark County, WA takes "forever" to get things done. Even road design must be on mylar before they approve it. (Planning Consultant)
- E. Portland:**
 - Fire, Life Safety reviews at Portland are difficult. (Construction Specialist, Architecture Firm)
 - Portland's process is onerous and expensive. When a client reports that a project will be in Portland, our firm doubles its fees as compared to its fees for work within Washington County. (Engineering and Planning Firm)
 - City of Portland is awful to work with. There are limited hours to submit info. You must take a number and when they call it, your time at the counter to talk with someone is also limited. (Cell Tower Consultant)
 - Portland's pre-apps are over \$2,400 – they are thorough but expensive and the money does not go toward the application fee. (Cell Tower Consultant)
 - I don't admire the intake system at Portland. Invariably a counter person will go through and find fault. What I appreciate is that it's done in an open area instead of in a closed off room. This way, I can look around for someone who's been around longer than I know and call him over. That person then usually finds a way to make it work. (Engineer)
 - Portland's counter visit process is very deliberate. Counter hours are limited. You get a colored tag which goes into a specific box. If you don't get called before counter hours end, you have to come back another day. Regardless, you can access everything on computer! Their online info and tracking system are great. (Planning Consultant)
 - Portland processes certain development reviews as Type I applications that Washington County reviews as Type IIs. [Staff notes that Portland reviews small land divisions where no flood plain or slide hazard exists through a Type I process]. (Planning Consultant)
 - Portland expects more for the Building Permit. (Planning Consultant)
 - Portland is more difficult than Washington County. (Engineer & Surveyor)
 - City of Portland is very structured. Portland has a good online tracking system where an applicant can check into status of their project within each division/bureau. (Planning Consultant)
- F. Beaverton:**
 - Beaverton is more difficult than Washington County. (Engineer & Surveyor)
 - Beaverton's pre-app conferences are a little complicated as compared to the county's. (Engineer & Surveyor)
 - Beaverton's community development code is more difficult than the county's. (Planning Consultant)
- G. Hillsboro:**
 - Hillsboro is great. They don't waive requirements but they are better at helping us to meet them. They will sit across from us at a table and review our plans. (Construction Specialist, Architecture Firm)
 - Hillsboro is quick with Fire, Life Safety review – they go by "Fast, Flexible, Friendly." (Construction Specialist, Architecture Firm)
 - Hillsboro's development code is easier but old (1970s). (Planning Consultant)
- H. Forest Grove:**
 - Forest Grove allows only one year (as opposed to Washington County's two) to meet conditions of approval. Project is denied at 3rd extension request. (Planning Consultant)
- I. Lincoln City:**
 - In Lincoln City we did this same type of church building, but smaller, about 10 years ago. Lincoln City uses a consultant for structural, fire and life safety, egress reviews. We did not have the same difficulty. (Architects)

APPENDIX D: Input Received from Interview Participants—

2. Jurisdiction Comments

December 13, 2010

Jurisdictions interviewed were Yamhill County and the cities of Hillsboro, Tigard, Tualatin, Beaverton, and Portland. A total of 17 people were interviewed.

While jurisdictional interviews provided solid groundwork for benchmarking of the County's performance against that of other regional jurisdictions, the nature of conversational approaches (time constraints of interviewees, digression inherent to discussion, and potential for feedback that may vary in complex ways in response to the same question) limited the ability to provide a clear set of questions and to accommodate a clear set of answers that could be directly compared and quantified for accurate benchmarking.

Regardless, the less rigid interview format elicited a broad range of ideas that highlight worthwhile topics to explore via a future survey for benchmarking purposes.

Issues of note that came to light via interviews included:

- A regional trend toward combined Current and Long Range Planning Divisions (or at minimum, integrated work between the two).
- Various models for maintaining desired customer service levels in current planning and building services divisions regionally.

Examples: Development Services at City of Portland, entirely fee-supported, copes with financial challenges by assigning fees to preliminary interaction with staff in excess of ten minute counter visits (\$115 to \$2,680 for preliminary and pre-application assistance).

Conversely, these divisions at Beaverton, Hillsboro, Tigard, and Tualatin operate almost entirely on general fund – current cost recovery reportedly ranging from only 17% to 30%. According to a representative of Hillsboro, General Fund support equates to economic development in that it allows provision of both excellent customer service and reduced fees – two things that attract developers.

- Measures for improving both customer and staff accountability for application content and consistency.
- Viewpoints on necessary degree of internal plan review.

The attached comments are organized into categories generally as they pertain to “Areas for Improvement” noted within the Development Review Improvement Process Report prepared by Washington County Department of Land use and Transportation, dated December 17, 2010.

JURISDICTIONAL COMMENTS AS RELATED TO IDENTIFIED AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

VI. LEADERSHIP/MANAGEMENT

A. Culture, Staff Role, and Attitude:

- *Our role is as a tour guide through the process. (Yamhill County)*
- *We are known for “The Hillsboro Way – Fast, Flexible, and Friendly.” (Hillsboro)*
- *Management has a staff member’s back if he/she takes risk at the counter. (Hillsboro)*
- *We have a culture of willingness to take risk. (Hillsboro)*
- *We avoid “normal.” (Hillsboro)*
- *Management is about integration, effort, respect and care for each member of the team. (Tigard)*
- *Values are important. We have an obligation to get it done but also to do the right thing. (Tigard)*
- *Core value is our customers, but in local government you have to be careful not to be on the “wrong side” of customer service. (Tualatin)*
- *Mission is quality of Portland life. (Portland)*
- *Customer wants transparent process. (Portland)*

B. Department Structure:

- *Long Range and Current Planning are done by the same people. (Yamhill County)*
- *Current and Long Range Planning, Building and Solid Waste/Sewer are one unit. (Yamhill County)*
- *We no longer have divisions distinguished by long range/current planning. However, by assignment, we have 7 who work primarily on current planning projects and 7 working primarily on long range projects. (Beaverton)*
- *The Current Planning Manager works with the Long Range Planning Manager and Current Planning is doing long range work. (Hillsboro)*
- *In this year’s budget, the goal is to integrate Long Range and Current Planning into one section: “Community Planning.” We have already begun to integrate to a great degree. (Tigard)*
- *Current Planning does Plan Amendments (as opposed to Washington County where Long Range Planning does). (Tigard)*
- *Current and Long Range Planning are combined. (Tualatin)*
- *Long Range Planning is not in BDS with Current Planning but in “Bureau of Planning and Sustainability.” (Portland)*
- *BDS (Land use, Building), PDOT (Transportation), and BES (Environmental Services) are all in one building to enable “one-stop” visits. (Portland)*

C. Department Efficiency: Workload, Capacity, and Review Timing

1. Timing:

- *We have Type A, B, and C planning reviews. Type A applications are processed in 3 weeks to 30 days, Bs and Cs may take the full 150 days allowed by state law. (Yamhill County)*
- *Assuming no appeals and that the clock starts with completeness, Type 1 land use decisions are issued in approximately 10 days, Type 2 application decisions are issued in approximately 30 days, and Type 3 application decisions are issued in approximately 55 days. (Beaverton)*
- *Our land use review timeframes vary. We set hearing date and work backward but generally:*
 - *Completeness is 7 days (application seen by planning/zoning, hearings board, building, planning commission).*
 - *Notice is 14 days.*
 - *Hearing is within 5 weeks (20 days after notice).*
 - *Design Review is a 4 to 6 week administrative review. (Hillsboro)*
- *Land divisions do not have to be processed in 28 days (including a 21 day comment period) but other Type II land use applications do. The reduced timeframes were via a customer service agreement made with developers. A major drawback is that unforeseen things often come up within the 21-day public comment period that require an applicant’s attention. The applicant often can’t properly address these issues within the one remaining week. Staff can feel like they are “bullies,” having to tell applicants they must submit a request to waive the review time restriction or have their application denied. Staff ends up getting many time waiver requests and submittals of additional materials. (Portland)*
- *Land divisions are supposed to be processed in 48-52 days, including the notice period. Again, waivers of this timeframe are frequently submitted because the applicant is left with insufficient time*

to rebut comments or provide evidence of compliance when unforeseen questions are raised via the public comment period. (Portland)

- Customer wants answers as quickly as possible. (Portland)
- Our land use review is a one-step process (not a preliminary and a final review as in Washington County). (Yamhill County)
- All conditions of the land use review must be met before issuance of a Building permit. (Yamhill County)

2. Combined Reviews and Assembly Line Practices:

- We do not allow combining of land use applications. We are always hearing that we have to due to state law but how can we? There are separate applications that must be submitted and approved in sequence. For example, first there is a Conditional Use (CU) review with a quasi-judicial hearing before the City Council. People are always eager to submit their Architectural Review (AR) application but they cannot until they meet conditions of the CU. Then they are eager to get the public facilities review but they can't until they meet conditions of the AR. City Council makes a decision on each. (Tualatin)
- We are currently preparing to allow combining more than one land use application into one application to meet state statute. (Hillsboro)
- There can be concurrent reviews by the land use planner and Building. (Portland)
- Assembly line practices: Teams of planners that do only land divisions; others that do only Design Reviews; others that do only Conditional Uses and Nonconforming Uses; others that do only Environmental reviews. Where applications are combined, they will work together. (Portland)
- We don't have assembly line practices except that our assistant planners doing most of the Type 1 applications. (Beaverton)

3. Staffing:

Tigard:

- We have decreased by three staff members since peak years. Our goal is to keep current positions and have any decreases be only by attrition.
- We currently have four staff writers (Planning).
- Some Building Staff has been reduced to .8 work weeks.
- We have our own arborist on staff in Community Development.
- Sufficient admin support is essential. Helps counter staff keep up.

Yamhill County:

- We currently have two planners – only one less than in peak years.
- We have laid off three Building Inspectors over the last couple of years.
- In 1978 due to UGB acknowledgements, we had seven times our current planning staff. With comp plan work then, in the late 70s we had 14 planners, we kept about 6 until the late 80s and early 90s, and went down to 3 in about 2000. We currently have the fewest planners ever (2).

Beaverton:

- The most recent peak years were 2002-2007. During that time, we had 17 professional planners.
- Since peak years we have cut 3 positions through attrition.
- In the planning division, we now have 14 professional planners.

Hillsboro:

- We have had no layoffs since the peak years.
- Current planning is a team of 8; Long Range is 6; and there are 2 Transportation staff members (including a traffic analyst). We are hiring a Transportation Planner. Your Traffic Analyst, Jinde Zhu, is on the interview panel.

Portland:

- There was about a 2/3 decrease in planners in 2009.

Tualatin:

- Planning has about 11.5 staff reviewers -no layoffs or furloughs. Building Division has reduced slightly since peak years but not other divisions.
- Engineering actually writes the Subdivision and Partition application reviews.
- Engineer also writes the site and Public Facilities review for the Architectural review.

4. Case Load:

Yamhill County:

- We have less than 1/3 of the applications we had in 2006 (200 now as compared to 700 then).

Beaverton:

- The case load per planner varies considerably depending on complexity of the case.
- As compared to peak years, case load has dropped from approximately 900 land use actions to 600 per year.

Hillsboro:

- Our caseload has stayed strong since peak years. We've had big institutional projects: Airport expansion, Pacific University Hillsboro Campus, Kaiser. (Hillsboro)

Tualatin:

- Caseload: In 2009 we had only one new residential land use project. Now we have 20 or so (improving). We had a big retirement community, a big industrial project (food distribution), and we now have 12 industrial projects ready to build but awaiting loans. (Tualatin)

5. Counter Hours:

- Our counter hours are every day from 8 to 5 but we are closed during the lunch hour from 12 to 1 each day. The exception is that Wednesday afternoons planners are not available at the counter so that they can get work done. (Yamhill County)
- Planning counter opens at 7:30 and closes at 5PM. Building counter hours are 7:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. (Beaverton)
- Our counter availability has been reduced. We are no longer available on Mondays except by appointment. (Tigard)
- Our counter is closed at lunch. (Tualatin)

6. Consultant Usage:

- We do not use consultants for any land use permit review or processing. The building division may send out plans for review if the backlog makes it necessary. (Beaverton)
- We have no in-house structural engineer. We have funds to have engineering review done for large projects by consulting engineer. (Tigard)
- Current Planning does not use consultants. (Portland)
- Hearings officers are not contracted, they are City employees and they do not hear land use cases only. (Portland)
- We use no consultants except for certain Long Range projects mandated by the Federal or State government. The last thing we use a consultant for was the Transportation Plan. (Yamhill County)
- Once in awhile we will contract out zoning/large complex plans review. (Hillsboro)

VII. FINANCIAL

A. Fee Issues:

1. General Circumstances:

- Preapps are required for every land use project. We do charge for them - \$195. This does not apply toward application fees. (Tualatin)
- Portland Assistance Fees:
 - If someone exceeds ten minutes at the counter they are now asked to return another day or schedule an "early assistance appointment" for a paid (\$408) 1-hour meeting with a planner.
 - There is a charge for a written summary from a planner of development standards that apply to a site (even without a specific development proposal) or for early review of a site plan and elevations to generally assess compliance with standards: \$115 for 1-2 dwelling units; \$345 for all else. There is no meeting provided as part of this.
 - For those who are unfamiliar with the land use process, need longer than 10 minutes at the counter or don't want to keep returning each day for another 10-minute session, "Early Assistance" one-hour appointments can be made with a planner. They are \$150 for environmental greenway or design issues only. They are \$408 for info on land divisions, conditional uses, zone changes, master plans, nonconforming uses and all other situations.
 - For larger (usually Type III) projects "Design Advice Requests" can be made for \$1,501. This gives someone 1.5 hours with a planner and the Design Commission. (Portland)
 - Pre-Application conferences where submittal requirements are discussed are required for Type III and IV applications and optional for all others. These are \$2,680 for 1.5 hours with a planner and usually someone from Transportation and Environmental Services.
- The Building Division's dedicated enterprise fund can be used only for Building Division activities, however the building fund is self supporting so far this year. (Tigard)
- (Tigard)
- Building receives little or no general fund. (Hillsboro)

- Building does not receive General Fund money. Building is self-sufficient and its fees don't cycle into the General Fund (by state law). (Tualatin)
- 2. Director's Interpretations as a Fee Based Land Use Action?**
 - Code interpretation is a land use decision (with \$708 fee) which follows the Type 2 process established by the Development Code. (Beaverton)
 - Director's Interpretations are not considered precedent. The interpretation becomes an advisory memo to interpret the Code that is generally for the purposes of permitting. It is a land use application and is applicable with the land use decision. (Hillsboro)
 - We charge staff time for Director's Interpretations – they run about \$300 if complicated. We started doing this about five years ago when we wondered why we would end up so busy but still have no money. (Yamhill County)
 - We have a Type I process (with \$599 fee, or \$2,265 if appealed to City Council) for Director's Interpretations. (Tigard)
 - Interpretations cost \$30. They do not go into the Code but are confined to the application/location. (Tualatin)
- 3. Challenges to Fee Based Operation:**
 - When Long Range projects must be done, they take a very long time because as a fee-supported department, we don't have enough money to work on them - politics. (Yamhill County)
 - We cannot continue to operate on current fees or we will hit bottom. We had to hold off on requesting the increase until after elections but we are now bringing fees to the board for increases so that our fees can be at least comparable to other counties.' (Yamhill County)
 - Lack of money to operate was not an issue in the boom years but we are now down to our last ½ million dollars. (Yamhill County)
 - These fees [for most preliminary service beyond 10-minute counter visits] are necessary to pay for customer service that cannot otherwise be provided absent general fund money.
- 4. Discounts/Refunds?**
 - Each land use application is a standalone decision, but the applications can be combined. The fees are still collected as if they were separate (i.e. no discount). (Beaverton)
 - Land use actions may be combined into one application but no fee reduction for this. (Portland)
 - For wineries we do a Site Development Review and a Special Use/Conditional Use Review. There are no reduced fees for combining them into one application. (Yamhill County)
 - We no longer allow a fee reduction for combining land use actions into one application. (Tigard)
 - Once a land use application is accepted as complete, applicant who withdraws is eligible for a refund of no more than 50% (less depending on how much work has been done by staff). (Portland)
- 5. Fee Timing**
 - Land use fees are required at submittal. The fees cover all steps of the land use process and there are no additional fees at a later time unless a new application is required. (Beaverton)
 - All fees for Current Planning review are charged up front (but building fees, etc. are not charged at that time). (Yamhill County)
 - The applicant pays only one land use application fee. There is no final (land use review) fee. (Portland)

B. General Fund Support:

1. Goal vs. Actual Cost Recovery:

- General fund to fee support ratio / goal vs. actual cost recovery: The City Council goal for cost recovery is 60%. Due to the decrease in land use application activity, the actual cost recovery is currently less than 30%. (Beaverton)
- Last year, Planning's projected fee support was 60% but only about 26 to 30% of planning work was actually fee supported. Regardless, Planning Application fees go into the overall general fund pool. (Tigard)
- Our Current Planning cost recovery is realistically about 17%, but we are considered 100% fund supported because our fees go straight into the General Fund. (Hillsboro)
- Planning (current and long range) is general fund supported. Land use application fees go back into general fund. Cost recovery is extremely low right now – probably not even 20%. We have/are recently increasing fees to try to offset costs a little. (Tualatin)

2. Justification for:

- The City has always viewed planning as a community benefit, therefore a community funded activity. (Beaverton)

- *Planning (Current and Long Range) receives general fund support because we have strong Council support. General funding has never been in question because we are considered integral to the community. (Tigard)*
- *Washington County is a challenging place to do business. In order to bring good economic development, we (Hillsboro Planning) need general fund support. We have great Council support because we are needed for economic development. (Attract development with lower fees and good service). (Hillsboro)*
- *City Council at least in part has been pro-growth. (Tualatin)*
- 3. Misc. Fund-Related Comments:**
- *None of the other counties' planning reviews that we have looked at (besides Yamhill and Washington) are 100% fee supported. Most are at least 50% fund supported, some are 70%. (Yamhill County)*
- *In 2009 the Bureau of Development Services (BDS) began to argue for General Fund money to maintain high degree of customer service but layoffs were already imminent. They may still be considering it. (Portland)*
- *The City Council did subsidize the Building Division with General Fund Monies (\$328,000) last year. This was a conscious decision to maintain a reasonable level of service and help establish a reserve. (Tigard)*

C. Other Revenue Sources:

- *Solid Waste being part of our department, we do receive Solid Waste Funding. That funding actually built the building we are housed in. (Yamhill County)*
- *An SDC that had been imposed was gotten rid of and those who had paid it have been refunded. This has been a dividing factor. (Yamhill County)*
- *We apply for a lot of TGM (Transportation and Growth Management) grants. We have received about 1.2 million and are using it to work well with other departments on things such as affordable housing. (Tigard)*
- *As "Tree City, USA" we have collected one million dollars in nonrefundable fees to mitigate for tree impacts. Application fees cover trees to be removed. They are charged at \$125 per caliper inch per tree if trees are not replaced. (Replacement trees need not total the original number but caliper inches must add up to the same removed or fees apply – sometimes greater quantities of smaller trees are installed to reach original total of caliper inches). (Tigard)*
- *Funding for public facilities, economic development funding, and a sizable urban renewal fund all go into planning. (Tualatin)*

VIII. ACCURATE APPLICATIONS & CONSISTENT REVIEWS

A. Preliminary Assistance:

1. Materials:

- *There is a "Forms Team" that works on forms and informational materials. They pour over the content and agree to it. (Portland)*
- *Our use-specific land use applications are very useful both internally and externally – as are our brochures and checklists. (Tualatin)*
- *We have a big drawer full of specialized application forms. By trial and error we have tried to make our forms very clear. Partly this is because we have a very active "friends group" that is very conservative. When things were not as clear we would hear about it. (Yamhill County)*
- *Objectivity = Checklists, professional ethics! (Tigard)*

2. Applicant Education:

- *There may be a perception that we are lax and approve anything but we actually try to make it very clear at the counter if an application is unlikely to get approved. It is rare that someone who then knows they're likely to get denied applies, although we occasionally do deny a nonfarm dwelling, variance, etc. (Yamhill County)*

3. Meetings:

- *There may be a perception that we are lax and approve anything but we actually try to make it very clear at the counter if an application is unlikely to get approved. It is rare that someone who then knows they're likely to get denied applies, although we occasionally do deny a nonfarm dwelling, variance, etc. (Yamhill County)*
- *More informal "scoping meetings" are occasionally provided at no charge (not in place of paid preapp conference). (Tualatin)*

- Preapps are required for all land use projects (\$195 that doesn't apply toward land use application). An engineering, Building, and Planning staff member attends preapps. (Tualatin)
- Most customers still visit the counter but there is no longer enough staff for the 20 minute discussions that used to occur. If someone exceeds ten minutes at the counter they are now asked to return another day or schedule an "early assistance appointment" for a paid (\$408) 1-hour meeting with a planner. (Portland)
- Assistance Fees:
 - If someone exceeds ten minutes at the counter they are now asked to return another day or schedule an "early assistance appointment" for a paid (\$408) 1-hour meeting with a planner. (Portland)
 - There is a charge for a written summary from a planner of development standards that apply to a site (even without a specific development proposal) or for early review of a site plan and elevations to generally assess compliance with standards: \$115 for 1-2 dwelling units; \$345 for all else. There is no meeting provided as part of this. (Portland)
 - For those who are unfamiliar with the land use process, need longer than 10 minutes at the counter or don't want to keep returning each day for another 10-minute session, "Early Assistance" one-hour appointments can be made with a planner. They are \$150 for environmental greenway or design issues only. They are \$408 for info on land divisions, conditional uses, zone changes, master plans, nonconforming uses and all other situations. (Portland)
 - For larger (usually Type III) projects "Design Advice Requests" can be made for \$1,501. This gives someone 1.5 hours with a planner and the Design Commission. (Portland)
 - Pre-Application conferences where submittal requirements are discussed are required for Type III and IV applications and optional for all others. These are \$2,680 for 1.5 hours with a planner and usually someone from Transportation and Environmental Services. (Portland)
 - These fees allow for customer service that cannot otherwise be provided absent general fund money. (Portland)
- Preapps are required for every land use project. We do charge for them - \$195. This does not apply toward application fees. (Tualatin)

B. Ongoing Access to Staff:

- Staff and management are very accessible if someone has an issue and wants to talk, and we are all housed together so it's easy to visit with those involved. (Tualatin)

C. Regulations, Policy and Training:

- We require preliminary level of engineering review at the land use review stage for projects to ensure the "doability" of the proposed project. This is almost exclusively focused on site engineering such as water detention and quality facilities. We do not require a wet stamp. We do not ask for structural engineering materials at land use. Those are submitted for the separate subsequent Site Development review and Building Division reviews. (Beaverton)
- At the land use application stage, plans are expected to be 92% complete. For this reason there are fewer loose ends/conditions at the end but much more up-front preparation and expense for applicants. (Portland)
- Prior to land use approval, the applicant must have "site development" confirmation that grading and erosion control plan is feasible. (Portland)
- Albert Shields, our Permit Coordinator, tracks project status between Building, Planning and Engineering. He keeps up a spreadsheet that helps keep clients and staff updated. (Tigard)
- Albert also creates a spreadsheet of Conditions of Approval per land use casefile and tracks status on each of the Conditions. (Tigard)
- Main part of budget is personnel but training budget is decent. Legal workshops are still a priority. (Yamhill County)
- Training is kind of ad hoc. Our HR department does schedule occasional training on the various software programs we use. Besides outside budgeted training, it is learn by doing with mentoring/coaching/supervision from the senior planners. (Beaverton)
- We have budgeted each year approximately \$100 per planner to attend different professional training opportunities. (Beaverton)
- We keep a book – a tablet of things the public has brought up, interpretations, staff ideas, etc. Ultimately, these go into the Code. (Yamhill County)
- Code amendments can be processed at any time. (Beaverton)

- Our development code is old. Parts of it go back to the 60s and 70s. (Hillsboro)
- Director's Interpretations are not considered precedent. The interpretation becomes an advisory memo to interpret the Code that is generally for the purposes of permitting. It is a land use application and is applicable with the land use decision. (Hillsboro)
- Interpretations and Development Code Updates are done by Long Range Planning in a different bureau (Bureau of Planning and Sustainability). (Portland)
- There is a portal on the Long Range website for suggestions from customers for Code changes. (Portland)
- We feel thorough building/eng plan review is extremely important. This is the home of Dolan so we are sensitive to liability for inadequate engineering reviews. If eng plans not in compliance, I will go to the mat to get compliance (Ron Bunch, Comm. Dev. Director). (Tigard)
- Fire and life safety and structural reviews are done by our plans examiner. (Tigard)
- Only seismic details are permitted as-is with stamp. (Tigard)
- Our Development Code was based on the 1998 Portland Draft Code but we have a spreadsheet where staff keeps track of Code Sections that don't work, why not, and suggestions. The Code is updated yearly based on these. (Tigard)
- We are working on a "Regulatory Improvement Initiative." This includes a two-year plan for revisions to our Urban Forest Code by our in-house arborist. (Tigard)
- We do not rely on an engineer's stamp. We end up "designing by redline." Before permits are issued, significant engineering review occurs in-house. There are generally 7 to 10 iterations of redlines on a project. There were 9 to 15 on recent projects. (Tualatin)
- Interpretations cost \$30. They do not go into the Code but are confined to the application/location. (Tualatin)
- A senior planner or principal planner acts as the extra set of eyes for each land use review to ensure objectivity. (Beaverton)
- To ensure objective review, there is a weekly team meeting with casefiles to maintain consistency. (Portland)
- I met this morning with the winery group. We are told that verbiage out of Washington County is, "Seems like Yamhill County is getting away with murder." At the meeting though, a lobbyist complained that Yamhill County "puts people through the wringer" on winery applications. Six months before a task force formed, we had restaurant people concerned about wineries competing with them. (Yamhill County)
- Probably about 75% of people within the county are doing things without permission (like events) but just because they are doing it doesn't mean we've allowed it. It is probably similar in Washington County. Another difficult issue is that often times wineries here will hold charitable events and it's difficult to enforce regulations on those without incurring negative press. (Yamhill County)
- Code interpretation is a land use decision (with \$708 fee) which follows the Type 2 process established by the Development Code. (Beaverton)
- Director's Interpretations are not considered precedent. The interpretation becomes an advisory memo to interpret the Code that is generally for the purposes of permitting. It is a land use application and is applicable with the land use decision. (Hillsboro)
- Plans/applications that are sub-par are addressed through the completeness review to ensure that they are "technically complete." Plans must be 92% at the land use application stage. (Portland)
- We have a Type I process (with \$599 fee, or \$2,265 if appealed to City Council) for Director's Interpretations. (Tigard)

D. Coordination (Interdivisional and Interagency):

- Current Planners route application to PDOT, Site Development, BES during completeness review. All look at it for completeness. Current Planner talks to all three. (Portland)
- The fact that Washington County does not know what all conditions of CWS will be up front is a hole in its process. We avoid this by doing the reviews as above, in separate steps. (Tualatin)
- Albert Shields, our Permit Coordinator, tracks project status between Building, Planning and Engineering. He keeps up a spreadsheet that helps keep clients and staff updated. (Tigard)
- Albert also creates a spreadsheet of Conditions of Approval per land use casefile and tracks status on each of the Conditions. (Tigard)
- It would be nice to figure out Clean Water Services' process so that improvement requirements could be known earlier. (Hillsboro)
- Planning Staff is helping to work on a city animal ordinance review but those standards are actually in the Municipal Code, not the Development Code. (Hillsboro)

- *Sign standards are also in the Municipal Code rather than the Development Code. (Hillsboro)*
- *Code enforcement is done through the Police Department, not us. (Hillsboro)*
- *Code Enforcement is all done by our Police Department. (Tualatin)*
- *Although we are a rural County we have agreements with cities to assist with such things as urban reserves. (Yamhill County)*
- *Objective reviews: years ago when writing staff reports, I was challenged by the Planning Commission. After that, for every application we would go through and write up all findings for approval AND for denial. We have evolved away from this practice but still try to follow it for controversial items. (Yamhill County)*
- *BDS (Land use, Building), PDOT (Transportation), and BES (Environmental Services) are all in one building to enable “one-stop” visits. (Portland)*
- *We participate in the AOC (Association of Oregon Counties), but land use folks from Washington and Yamhill and other immediate Counties should meet now and then to compare notes and ideas and how best to handle things. (Yamhill County)*

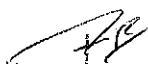
IX. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY & E-BUSINESS

- *Our IS department is writing custom software for Building, Sanitation, everything. We are barely into the Planning part. All share files. (Yamhill County)*
- *We do not use any shared access to work products. We do have an in-house designed and built permit tracking system. (Beaverton)*
- *We have homegrown software products shared by Building, Planning, and Engineering. (Hillsboro)*
- *We are on the cusp of a big decision about investment in Accella CRW to make info more available. (Hillsboro)*
- *Portland’s software is used by all of BDS[(Land use, Building, PDOT (Transportation), and BES (Environmental Services)] to track progress. If permit numbers or address, etc., anyone can look up. (Portland)*
- *“Agenda Quick” software. This was requested by Admin. It is mostly used to send revisions of staff reports back and forth between planning staff and City Council. It allows back and forth revisions. It eases communications on staff report issues. (Tualatin)*
- *GIS mapping software. (Tualatin)*
- *Applicants can access a great deal of info online, including application forms. (Yamhill County)*
- *Applicant’s can’t currently track application progress online but working on it. (Yamhill County)*
- *The city wants to “empower people to gather info themselves online. For this reason, when people call in, staff will guide them through steps for finding (on the website) the info they are asking about. (Portland)*
- *Our web site includes our Development Code, land use applications, brochures, and checklists. (Tualatin)*
- *All reviews are on paper (not electronic). (Tualatin)*

WASHINGTON COUNTY

Intra-Departmental Correspondence

Date: January 7, 2011
To: Andrew Singelakis, Director
From: Paul Seitz, Management Analyst II
Re: Summary of Staff Comments



During the recent review of LUT's development and permitting system, 25 staff were interviewed for their thoughts, ideas, and suggestions to tune up the process. I committed to the people interviewed that I would prepare a Summary of Staff Comments and give them a chance to edit and correct the prepared summary.

Collectively, staff comments centered around three broad issues and the individual comments contained in each have many good ideas and details. It was the intent of this effort that the collected comments would be passed on to teams working on solutions.

Get Act I: Scene 1 Right – Staff suggestions across all Divisions emphasized a heightened need to focus on the initial phases and interactions with our customers. I grouped these recommendations by category teams. Comments centered on a need for:

- A Communications Team to work on web tools, printed materials, informational media, workshops, and training staff to appropriately prepare the customer for the entire LUT development and permitting process and to ultimately submit an accurate and complete application.
- An Administrative Team to work on each of the steps (the forms, processes, the counter visits, phone interaction, etc.) a customer must go through during the initial phases of a project to ensure it is easy to use, efficient for the customer, and properly prepares the customer to successfully proceed through the entire process.
- A Financial Team to work on providing the customer a clear picture of the cost centers, contingencies, fees, and deposits associated with their project or of projects similar to theirs; and providing easy-to-use tracking of the project costs right from the start.
- A Leadership/Management Team to work on staffing levels, workloads, skill sets, and training necessary to ensure submittal of an accurate and complete application that successfully carries each of the customers through the entire development and permitting process; and ensuring that the policies, codes, and procedures are clearly understood by customers and by staff.

Get Fees and Funding Right – Staff suggestions universally emphasized concerns over both the funding of programs and the collection of fees. I grouped these recommendations by category teams. Comments centered on a need for:

- A Leadership/Management Team to work on:
 - Accurately matching up the programmatic philosophy, goals, and funding with the actual customer base utilizing these services and the real dollars available.
 - Policies and guidelines that encourage accountable tracking of staff time.
- A Leadership & Financial Management Team to work on the multiple and incongruent series of fees, contracts, deposits, methods of payment, and financial policies – With a focus on how a customer experiences making payments as they move through the development and permitting process in each of the Divisions.
- A Financial/Administrative Management Team to work on the multiple and incongruent programs and software utilized by staff for the intake of fees and deposits as well as tracking costs.

Make Roles, Responsibilities, and Directives Clear – Staff had a variety of suggestions focused on the operational leadership of the organization I grouped these recommendations by category teams. Comments centered on a need for:

- A Leadership/Management Team to work on:
 - Operating the development and permitting process as a single LUT system rather than a loosely connected series of independent workgroups; and clearly establishing roles within each Division to ensure the process is maximized for the entire system and not just one of the program entities.
 - Ensuring that all aspects of the customer's experiences (from start to finish) are handled through consistent use of policies, goals, outcomes throughout the development and permitting process.
 - Developing an established and consistent complaints-and issues-management process.
 - A variety of minor process details and tweaks to the system that collectively add toward streamlining the system.
- An Administrative Management Team to work on cross-functional and compatible systems for the consistent transfer, sharing, tracking, and archiving information.

Staff are clearly looking forward to seeing the next steps of the process take shape. In proofing the draft of this report a majority of the staff expressed a very similar sentiment ~ they want to know that the teams working to implement these findings consist of the appropriate people, and that the teams are empowered to bring about needed changes in LUT.