BID RESPONSE

Responding To:

Bid/Project Number: RFP 10878-25

Bid/Project Title: Business License Process, Policy and Compliance Evaluation and Recommendation

Closing Date: 09/10/2025 at 2:00pm PST

Submitted By:

Name of Company Submitting Response:
strategica, inc.

Printed Name of Person Submitting Response:
David Howe

Email:
dhowe1000@gmail.com

Signature of Person Submitting Response: Signed by: David Howe 5EDF0E07AA9A4CF...

Date:
9/10/2025

Attach Your Bid/Proposal:

Remember to sign your bid/proposal

Attach all pages of your response here

proposal title

Proposal to Provide a Business License Process, Policy and Compliance Evaluation and Recommendation

RFP No. 10878-25

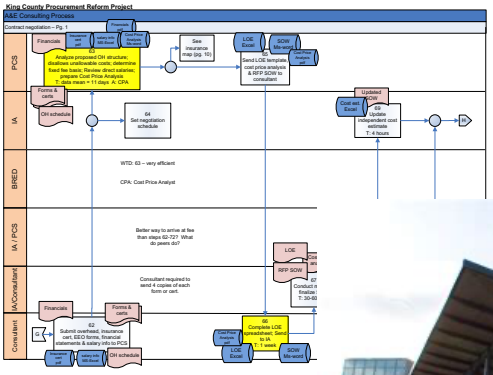
submitted to

City of Redmond

date sent

September 10, 2025

CityofRedmond
WASHINGTON



Lean Process improvement
Financial Modeling
Performance measurement
Performance Audits

STRATEGICA

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Proposal to Provide a Business License Process, Policy and Compliance Evaluation and Recommendation

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STRATEGICA

704 228th Ave NE #415
Sammamish, WA 98074
Tel: (425) 427-5269
www.strategica-usa.com

September 10, 2025

City of Redmond
15670 NE 85th Street
Redmond, WA 98073
ATTN: Heidi Johnson

Dear Ms. Johnson:

Thank you for considering Strategica, Inc. for your **RFP No. 10878-25 for Proposal to Provide Business License Process, Policy and Compliance Evaluation and Recommendation.** We have a long and successful history of providing high quality professional services to public agencies and special districts up and down the west coast. This includes numerous projects improving the efficiency and performance of permitting and licensing systems for municipalities in Washington State including Kirkland, Woodinville and Issaquah.

This proposal demonstrates the value we can bring to the City on this important project. Our team is local to western Washington, and has a proven track record consulting to cities, a full complement of consulting techniques and methods that can benefit the City including our experience with data mining and analysis, lean process redesign, benchmarking and policy analysis. We are also dedicated to working closely, on-site, with the City in a partnership that will yield real results.

We are always looking for an opportunity to assist municipalities and special districts in our home region. We look forward to working with the City on this important project. If you need any additional information I can be reached at:

Strategica, Inc.
704 – 228th Ave NE #415
Sammamish, WA 98074
Dhowe1000@gmail.com
Tel: (425) 427-5269

Yours truly,

David Howe
President

Approach

We have prepared this proposed project method based on the requirements set forth in the City's RFP. We are proposing some adjustments to the task numbering, timing and content that was described in the RFP:

- Splitting up Task 2 (research) into separate tasks for the baseline analysis, comparative analysis, compliance audit and policy research. We are recommending this due to the variety and complexity of sub-tasks within this element of the project and the amount of time required for each one. Splitting it up will allow more project management focus on the individual work elements with more client check-ins.
- Combining Tasks 3 and 4 from the RFP into one task (task 5 in our scheme) addressing processes and staffing. We believe that it would be advantageous to address these at the same time as they involve similar techniques.
- Moving the KPI sub-task from Task 3 to the data reporting task (task 6 in our scheme). We recommend this as the content and purpose of the KPIs will be driven by the results of the policy and process tasks (tasks 4 and 5 in our scheme) and so should be performed afterwards.

We are, of course, open to input from the City in tailoring this approach to match the specific needs of the City.

Task 1:	**Kickoff and Establish Licensing Baseline**
Activities:	1. Conduct a kickoff meeting with the City's Core Team and initiate a working relationship. Reconfirm the project scope and discuss the needs of the City. Determine expectations on deliverable format and timing. 2. Determine calendar and format of bi-weekly check-in meetings, bi-monthly Core Team meetings and presentations to elected leaders. Note that it would be advantageous to time Core Team meetings with presentations of task deliverables. 3. Discuss access to City licensing systems and procedures for extracting data. Identify any data quality issues (e.g., missing years, corrupted or missing data elements). Meet City staff involved with report writing and data integrity. 4. Prepare and submit a detailed project workplan and gantt chart based on kickoff discussions. 5. Initiate procedures for procuring access to State and County systems (e.g., DoR, L&I, Secretary of State), utilities such as PSE and commercial business directories. Identify procedures for obtaining data extracts including confidentiality agreements.

6. Prepare a data dictionary (or metadata) of City licensing system including data elements, tables, history, file format.
7. Define reporting specification and presentation of licensing baseline data (e.g., report parameters, calculations, chart formats, narrative format). This would include data elements such as license and UBI number, EIN, business type, SIC and NAICS code, # of employees, business location, home office location, license type, business formation date, original license date, cancellations and revocations.
8. Submit report (or data extract) request. Inspect data and note anomalies, quality issues. Refine and augment data with additional requests as needed.
9. Process data using a database management tool such as Access or MySQL. Format output and generate reports. Prepare demographic and trend analysis presentation for the Core Team.
10. Prepare charts and narrative documenting the licensing baseline and share with Core Team members. Modify project scope as needed.

Task 2:	**Peer City Comparative Analysis**

Activities:

1. Identify parameters to benchmark (e.g., city ordinances impacting business formation, location, lease restrictions, home-based businesses, remote work and WFH, short term rentals, co-work spaces, non-resident businesses and contractors). Include sampling of KPIs used by peers and online tools for communicating with licensees, enforcement mechanisms.
2. Identify survey sample, create data collection instrument and distribute to peer cities.
3. Collect, clarify and normalize benchmark data. Identify relevant comparisons with Redmond and identify interesting disparities (if any).
4. Prepare and present comparative data deliverable to illustrate findings and share with City's Core Team members.

Task 3:	**Compliance Audit**

Activities:

1. Define parameters of non-compliance based on current City policies (e.g., ordinance section, conditions that would constitute non-compliance) and parameters for expanded definitions of licensees.
2. Obtain data extracts from potential sources containing business entity records. This could include State agency databases (e.g., DoR, L&I, Secretary of State), utilities (e.g., Comcast, PSE) and commercial business directories.

3. Define filter criteria for use in database record selection to create datasets of manageable size (i.e., how data would be selected to match compliance conditions – for example, active UBI in a State database, PSE business account, all with a Redmond address). Filters should also strip out records from unincorporated areas surrounding the City of Redmond.
4. Identify data elements for use in each filter criteria (i.e., element, data source, format) that can be used to eliminate duplicates and identify non-compliant business entities as well as delineating potential new licensee populations. Define filtering logic for processing data. Define output data elements (i.e., elements produced by our analysis)
5. Test logic with data samples from each database source. Identify any inaccurate results or results that do not comport with desired output elements (i.e., unusable results). Make corrections to filtering logic as needed to refine data and outputs and improve accuracy and relevance.
6. Perform data runs and compile results from various data extracts. Clarify and categorize outputs based on accuracy, relevance and quality. Incorporate assumptions on fee levels to estimate lost revenue amounts.
7. Draw conclusions and chart results such as rates of non-compliance by business type, reporting status, fee status, location. Also prepare charts illustrating scope of potential licensee populations. Note areas where data was not available or of sufficient accuracy to draw reliable conclusions.
8. Prepare and present charts and narrative report to Core Team. Discuss results and project scope changes (if any).

Task 4:	**Develop Licensing Policy Recommendations**

Activities:

1. Define potential policies for registering, licensing, collecting data and fees, reporting and enforcement for new business types including but not limited to:
    a. Work from home (WFH) businesses located in Redmond
    b. Redmond WFH employees of non-Redmond businesses
    c. Remote workers of Redmond-based businesses
    d. Short term and vacation rentals
    e. Collaborative and co-working spaces (and the businesses that support this)
    f. Pawn brokers, tow truck operators, door-to-door solicitors, telecom providers and other businesses subject to specific regulations or that are temporary in nature

g. Contract workers residing or working in Redmond

2. Define desired regulatory and financial outcomes of each potential policy (i.e., what would compliance look like?)
3. Work with the City Attorney to determine and ensure legality of potential policies and identify any necessary ordinance changes or legal opinions to support policies. Determine application, registration, renewal and reporting requirements. Determine enforcement mechanisms.
4. Identify any potential unintended consequences and level of public support (or lack thereof). Identify communication strategies for rolling out new policies.
5. Draft policy language and identify supporting systems and processes necessary to implement.
6. Share policy framework with City Core Team.

Task 5:	**Develop Recommendations to Improve Business License Compliance including Review and Approval Processes**

Activities:

1. This Task 5 corresponds to, and consolidates, tasks 3 and 4 from the RFP except for KPIs which are included in Task 6.
2. Obtain and review any existing City process documentation such as process maps, KPI data, workload history, process analysis work such as the Business License Comparative Questionnaire.
3. Map existing application, registration, review, fee collection, certification, reporting, renewal, cancellation, revocation and enforcement processes such as notices and penalties for business licensing. Identify process breakdowns or inefficiencies such as excessive backlogs, chronic errors, timeliness issues, complaints. Identify process redesign ideas for mitigating breakdowns. Include examination of public interfaces (that City controls) for licensing as well as interfaces between DoR systems and City permitting and licensing systems.
4. Prepare a staffing model (using MS-Excel) for the licensing function using City payroll data, licensing workload history, KPI data. Augment with a work distribution survey if necessary (i.e., to determine amount of staff time for licensing processes). Use model to determine FTE requirement for the City, compare to existing licensing FTEs and make recommendations for augmenting staff if necessary.
5. Document redesigned processes and staffing model and share with the City's Core Team. Make adjustments as necessary.

Task 6:	**Develop Reporting and Monitoring Recommendations**

Activities:

1. This task corresponds to task 5 in the RFP and also includes the KPI requirements of task 3.
2. Inventory existing City KPIs for licensing. Determine reliability, accuracy, credibility and usage of existing KPIs. Identify potential KPIs (or redefined existing KPIs) that would support new or redesigned policies and processes. Ensure that accurate data (and the supporting systems) exist to populate recommended KPIs. Discuss potential KPIs with licensing staff, budgeting staff and the Core Team members to ensure that future KPIs are credible, accurate and useful.
3. Working with City IT staff, design a reporting tool for presenting KPI data as well as workload reports, revenue reports, and reports for enforcement data such as non-compliance rates, enforcement actions taken, licenses revoked, penalties levied, waived and collected.
4. Evaluate how licensing data can be used for economic development purposes and reporting and determine indicators for business formations and closures by industry, type (e.g., WFH, collaborative workspace), location, # of employees, etc.
5. Share reporting and KPI templates and specifications with the City's Core Team. Make modifications as needed.

Task 7:	**Prepare Final Report**

Activities:

1. Prepare and deliver a briefing on preliminary recommendations and present to City's Core Team
2. Prepare a draft report that incorporates findings and recommendations for the following:
    a. Licensing baseline statistics
    b. Peer city comparative analysis
    c. Results of compliance audit
    d. Licensing policy recommendations
    e. Licensing process and procedure recommendations
    f. KPI and reporting recommendations
3. Present draft report to Core Team. Incorporate suggestions and edits as needed.
4. Brief City Council and Mayor on project results
5. Finalize report and issue it to City Core Team

Project Management and Client Coordination Approach

The Strategica project management approach has been proven through extensive experience managing large projects for state and local governments and other clients. Our experience has shown that effective management is a critical success factor in a project such as this one. Careful planning, close client involvement, and thoughtful progress reporting are necessary components to delivering quality results on-time and with a high-level of client satisfaction and minimal fuss.

Project Planning

Strategica is capable of effectively managing and scheduling numerous tasks in a complex project to successfully meet project deadlines. Our project work plan and the timing of tasks and deliverables is premised on our extensive knowledge of the chokepoints that normally occur on a project such as this. Benchmarking, for example, can often take longer than anticipated because we cannot control when peer cities will respond to inquiries. Also, obtaining data extracts and clarifying the data can be time consuming. All project tasks are programmed into a gantt chart where task status is tracked every few days to ensure that each phase is on schedule.

Client Communication and Coordination

Communication with our clients is the cornerstone of our client service approach and a key factor in delivering projects on-time and within budget. At project initiation we will determine the frequency and format of status meetings with project sponsors. These discussions could include:

- Tasks completed to date
- Tasks to complete in the next reporting period (before the next status meeting)
- What is going well on the project
- Risk factors
- Proposed scope or workplan changes
- Significant findings since the last status meeting
- Status of project budget and billings

Quality Assurance

The Strategica team of consultants includes only senior level personnel with extensive experience and a track record for high quality work. The expertise of our team in itself is a major factor in ensuring the quality of the overall project. The use of client-approved workplans, pre-screened deliverable formats and acceptance criteria can ensure a smooth, on-time project that yields actionable results.

Consultant Team Coordination

The Strategica consultant team has identified David Howe as our project lead. While we encourage regular contact between client personnel and each member of our consulting team to facilitate knowledge transfer, issues related to project management, status, and administration of the engagement should be directed to Mr. Howe to ensure consistency and continuity.

Analytical Tools

For a project like this one that involves a great deal of data mining, clarification, categorization and analysis we will use proven database management tools such as MS-Access and SQL (a computer language that is useful for managing and analyzing the types of data commonly found in enterprise systems).

For analyzing and determining staffing requirements (part of Task 5) we have developed an MS-Excel based staffing model that looks at historical workloads and payroll data, current workload metrics and productivity metrics and forecasted workload variables and calculates FTE requirements. The model is user-friendly and can be used by clients after the consultants have completed their work and left.

Process analysis and redesign work is accomplished by using lean process redesign methods and tools such as process mapping templates using tools such as Vizio and Powerpoint.

Experience in Research, Data Analysis and Business License Evaluation & Compliance

The Strategica team has worked with several clients on various licensing applications including business licensing at both the State and municipal level. Often these projects were part of a larger effort that looked at all levels of licensing and land use permitting and the systems that supported it. As detailed later in this proposal, these clients included local cities like Woodinville, Issaquah and Kirkland, the State governments of Washington and California and other municipalities as far away as Philadelphia.

Our data analysis experience includes several projects that involved extracting data from enterprise systems and then organizing, categorizing and performing calculations to draw conclusions and findings on organizational performance that wouldn't be possible with the limitations of their enterprise systems. Examples of this include data mining projects for Los Angeles County, King County and several municipal clients. Often, these efforts were undertaken to determine performance metrics like process timeliness or unit cost that weren't otherwise available.

Hours

The following table shows our estimated hours by task and consultant.

Task	Description	Consultant hours: D Howe	A Ruotsala	Total hours
1	Kick off and establish licensing baseline	40	24	64
2	Peer city comparative analysis	56	24	80
3	Compliance audit	88	32	120
4	Develop licensing policy recommendations	40	32	72
5	Develop recommendations to improve licensing processes	56	48	104
6	Develop reporting and monitoring recommendations	40	32	72
7	Prepare final report	40	32	72
	Total Hours	360	224	584

Project Schedule

		Month										
Task	Description	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
1	Kick off and establish licensing baseline											
	Deliverables: Licensing baseline presentation & data											
2	Peer city comparative analysis											
	Deliverable: peer city comparative data presentation											
3	Compliance audit											
	Deliverable: Compliance audit charts, narrative and data											
4	Develop licensing policy recommendations											
	Deliverable: Draft policy framework											
5	Develop recommendations to improve licensing processes											
	Deliverable: Redesigned process specs & staffing model											
6	Develop reporting and monitoring recommendations											
	Deliverable: Reporting & KPI templates and specs											
7	Prepare final report											
	Deliverable: Draft report											
	Deliverable: Final report											

Project Lead and Team Qualifications

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Strategica was established in 1998 to help public sector organizations survive and thrive in the face of change and opportunity. We provide international-caliber consulting and advisory services in a form that is appropriate for our government clients.

The following resumes describe the experience of the proposed consultants. Mr. Howe, President of Strategica, Inc., is a certified Lean Black Belt and holds an MBA and Mr. Ruotsala is a longstanding member of the American Institute of Certified Planners and holds a Masters degree in City Planning. Mr. Howe will be the project principal.

David Howe, President of Strategica, Inc., has over 32 years of professional management consulting experience, performing more than 93 engagements. These engagements include financial modeling, data mining, process design and also include several engagements involving various licensing programs.

Licensing and Permitting Systems

- Facilitated the creation of a new strategic plan, redesigned processes, created a staffing model matching staffing with workload forecasts, and redesigned the organizational structure of the permitting and licensing functions of the City of Lynnwood, WA
- Conducted a performance audit for the California Contractors State License Board focusing on more effective ways to license building contractors and process and investigate complaints and violations.
- Conducted a management audit of the Washington State Department of Health focusing on the medical practitioner licensing and disciplinary function.
- Conducted a program review of the California State Bureau of Automotive Repair focusing on ways to improve licensing and enforcement of licensed auto repair businesses in the State.
- Conducted a performance audit of the Washington State Department of Licensing focusing on an efficient deployment of licensing service offices.
- Developed performance measures and a reporting mechanism for professional licensing programs within the Washington State Department of Licensing.

- Redesigned the permitting and licensing processes for the City of Woodinville, WA

Education

- M.B.A., Wharton Business School, University of Pennsylvania
- B.S., Business Economics, California State University

Certifications

- Black Belt, Lean Process Improvement

Professional Experience

- Strategica, Inc., President, 1998 to present
- Price Waterhouse, Director, 1989 – 1998

Andy Ruotsala brings over 35 years of industry experience improving the effectiveness of permitting, licensing and regulatory systems in jurisdictions large and small across the U.S. and Canada. He founded and grew a software company from a one-man basement startup into an industry leader for permitting, licensing, and land management software, including major customers such as Orlando, Indianapolis, and Baltimore. With personal involvement in over 130 projects, he has a unique ability to analyze department operations, regulatory requirements, system design, technology issues, and industry best practices.

Licensing and Permitting Systems

- Mr. Ruotsala worked with a team to cross match licensing records in the city of Issaquah's third-party system against B&O data from DOR, identifying businesses that were registered with DOR but not licensed by the City - and vice versa. The project identified almost 700 records that did not appear in both systems, allowing City staff to follow up with business owners, helping to recover potentially lost licensing revenue for the City.
- Contract consultant for Tyler Technologies, reviewing business licensing and e-Plan review requirements for several EnerGov clients, recommending product and process improvements to speed up issuance of business licenses and cycles of e-Plan review.
- Reviewed and improved business licensing systems in Kirkland, WA, Torrance, CA and the lower mainland of British Columbia.
- Performed business process analysis and design for a business licensing system for the City of Philadelphia. Processes for 54 different types of legacy business licenses were streamlined.
- Redesigned the land use permitting and code enforcement processes for the City of Lynnwood, WA and developed specifications for an enterprise system replacement for the community development department. Advised the City in

	the procurement of the replacement system. • Redesigned the permitting and business licensing processes for the City of Woodinville, WA.
Education	• Bachelor of Science, Electrical Engineering, Clarkson University • Master of City Planning, University of Pennsylvania • Master of Science, Engineering (Transportation), University of Pennsylvania • Member, American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) since 1982
Professional Experience	• AwindRow LLC, Principal, independent consultant, August, 2000 – present • Tidemark Solutions, Inc., Founder, CEO, Chairman of the Board (1984 – 1998), CTO (1998 – 2000)

In the next few pages we describe the relevant projects the Strategica team has performed. All of these projects addressed licensing and permitting systems at the State and municipal level.

City of Issaquah
Business Licensing Compliance Study

Prior to utilizing the Department of Revenue Business Licensing Service (DOR/BLS), the City of Issaquah, like many Washington cities, tracked business licensing through third-party software systems that were not directly connected to DOR/BLS databases. As a subcontractor to the City, Mr. Ruotsala worked with a team to cross match licensing records in the city's third-party system against B&O data from DOR, identifying businesses that were registered with DOR but not licensed by the City - and vice versa. The project identified almost 700 records that did not appear in both systems, allowing City staff to follow up with business owners, helping to recover potentially lost licensing revenue for the City.

California Department of Consumer Affairs - Bureau of Automotive Repair
Enforcement Monitoring

Mr. Howe was retained to act as enforcement monitor over the Bureau of Auto Repair (BAR), a division of the Dept. of Consumer Affairs. Enforcement Monitors are retained in California to act as an independent, third party monitor over consumer protection boards. This project included observing field operations such as investigations, conferences with licensees, administrative hearings, and complaint mediation. The consultant also reviewed closed cases (both settled and adjudicated) and compared outcomes and procedures to established disciplinary guidelines and due process standards. The consultant also conducted extensive legal research to evaluate proposed statutory and procedural changes to the disciplinary process.

City of Carlsbad, CA and Los Angeles County Department of Public Works (DPW)
Business Licensing Process Review

Mr. Ruotsala worked with City of Carlsbad to review business licensing application, review, issuance, and renewal procedures, to recommend changes to speed up licensing and reduce staff time requirements. While several recommendations resulted in product enhancements to EnerGov, the City also recognized and eliminated process bottlenecks outside of the EnerGov system.

City of Woodinville
Permitting/Licensing Operational Analysis

Messrs. Howe and Ruotsala were retained by the City of Woodinville to evaluate the organization and operations of the City's departments of Development Services and Public Works as it relates to land use permitting and business licensing. The consultants analyzed historical data to determine turnaround times, evaluated the organizational structure of the permitting and licensing function, analyzed work processes and how City staff use IT systems and tools. The consultants also benchmarked the City against a sample of peer cities to compare workloads, staffing, organization and performance levels. The consultants also created a workload and staffing forecasting tool that will allow the City to forecast future staffing needs. Recommendations focused on process improvements, customer service enhancements (especially for non-development professionals), staffing enhancements, and improvements to IT systems and GIS.

California Contractors State License Board
Transition Review

Mr. Howe directed a Transition Review of the Board's licensing, testing, enforcement, and education functions. After conducting an initial risk assessment, detailed fieldwork produced several recommendations for consideration by the new management team of the Board. Recommendations included instituting a complete set of performance measures, establishing new workload standards for investigators, devoting more resources to solving the more complex cases, and implementing effective ways to make key laws, procedures and regulations available to the far-flung Licensing Board staff.

Washington State Department of Licensing
Development of Performance Measures

Strategica, Inc. worked with staff from two program areas of the Business and Professions Division of the Department of Licensing: real estate licensing and security guard licensing, to develop a system of performance measurement. The tasks included selecting and specifying measures, identifying data sources, testing the availability of the necessary data, and developing reporting formats. The end products included measures for these two programs, prototype guidance for measures for other Division programs, and training and facilitation materials.

City of Lynnwood, Development and Business Services
Organizational Design, Process Redesign, Staffing Study

Messrs. Howe and Ruotsala worked with the management of the City of Lynnwood and its Department of Business Services (DBS) on a project to restructure the Department. DBS is the community development and building permitting agency within the City and also handles economic development and business licensing. DBS had been afflicted with significant turnover and a crisis in customer service and confidence.

Strategica worked with the City and DBS to develop a one-page strategic blueprint for DBS, restructure the agency eliminating hard siloes and numerous vacancies, right-sized the staffing to deal with the workload, modernized code enforcement practices and developed specifications for a new enterprise permitting system.

Subconsultants

Awindrow LLC, subcontractor to Strategica, Inc., is a Gig Harbor-based consulting firm that specializes in permitting and licensing systems and processes. Awindrow and Strategica have teamed up on multiple projects in the past. Please refer to the previous section for details on Awindrow's professional experience.

Strategica, Inc. may also subcontract for data mining and analysis work as needed but these costs will be borne as an internal expense and the City will not be charged. We have various resources available for this work and the appropriate resource will be selected once the specific nature of the task is determined.

Business Name

Strategica, Inc. was established as a Washington sub-S corporation in 2001. Our offices are in Sammamish which is from where the project will be managed. Mr. David Howe, President of Strategica, will serve as our point of contact. He can be reached at:

Strategica, Inc.
704 – 228th Ave NE #415
Sammamish, WA 98074
Dhowe1000@gmail.com
Tel: (425) 427-5269

Business License

Strategica, Inc. will be pleased to register a business license with the City of Redmond prior to contracting for this project.

Valid Time Period

This proposal shall be valid for a period of 60 calendar days.

References

The City of Redmond is welcome to contact the following references regarding the quality of our work and ability to communicate results:

Kevin O'Neill
Assistant City Manager
City of Woodinville
17301 133rd Ave NE
Woodinville WA 98072
206-867-4233
KevinO@ci.woodinville.wa.us
Messrs. Howe and Ruotsala worked with the City to determine appropriate staffing levels and redesign key work processes in their permitting and licensing function.

David Kleitsch
Director, Economic Development
City of Lynnwood
20816 44th Ave W, Suite 230
Lynnwood, WA 98036
office: 425-670-5042
dkleitsch@lynnwoodwa.gov
Messrs. Howe and Ruotsala worked with the City to determine appropriate staffing levels and organizational structure, redesign key business processes and develop an RFP for a new permitting/licensing system for the City's development permitting and licensing function.

Brian Moura
Senior Advisor - Finance & Economic Development at Regional Government Services Authority
Former Assistant City Manager, City of San Carlos
650-995-6249
bmoura8@comcast.net
Mr. Ruotsala worked with the City of San Carlos to identify permit review and service delivery issues in the Community Development Department and implement an automated permitting and licensing system for the city.

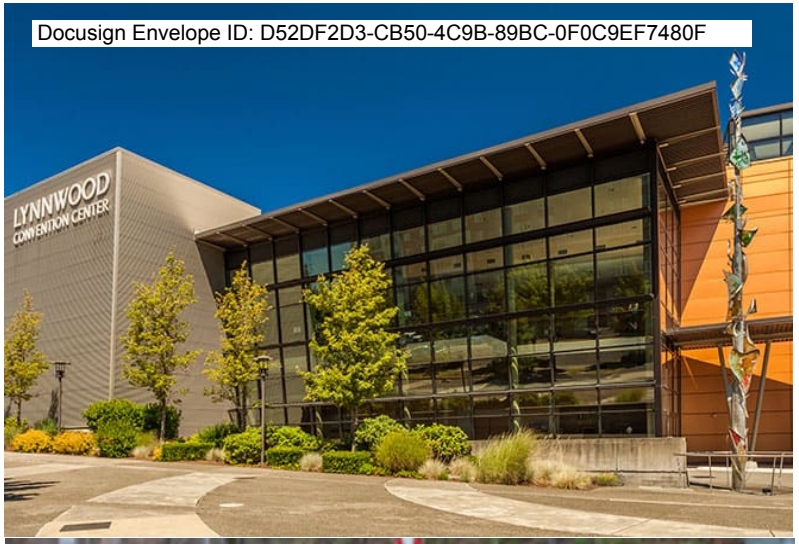
Work Samples

We have submitted two work samples as separate PDF documents that demonstrate our ability to perform technically demanding process and data analysis, policy formation and support and communicate project results.

Cost

The following table shows our proposed budget for the project broken down by consultant and task and our not-to-exceed estimate. This amount includes all expenses. We do not bill separately for expenses.

Task	Description	Consultant hours: D Howe	Consultant hours: A Ruotsala	Total hours
1	Kick off and establish licensing baseline	40	24	64
2	Peer city comparative analysis	56	24	80
3	Compliance audit	88	32	120
4	Develop licensing policy recommendations	40	32	72
5	Develop recommendations to improve licensing processes	56	48	104
6	Develop reporting and monitoring recommendations	40	32	72
7	Prepare final report	40	32	72
	Total Hours	360	224	584
	Rate	$250	$250	
	Extension	$90,000	$56,000	
	Total Project Cost	$146,000		



City of Lynnwood
Development & Business Services

Process Review and Improvement Project

Final Report

June 19, 2020

LYNNWOOD
WASHINGTON

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Process Review and Improvement Project

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I. Executive Summary

The City of Lynnwood has undertaken an efficiency study for process and organization improvements at Development & Business Services (DBS). DBS consists of four independent departments:

- Community Development Department (Administration, Planning, Permitting and Inspecitions)
- Office of Economic Development (Economic Development and Tourism)
- Public Works (Development Engineering), and
- Fire Marshal's Office (South Snohomish County Fire)

This efficiency study has been undertaken in response to negative feedback regarding services provided at DBS.

Background

The City has been reviewing the organizational management structure of DBS, functional processes, and the customer service culture since 2017. This effort is a work in progress. To help expedite the process, the firm of Strategica, Inc. was retained in the summer of 2019 to evaluate the structure of DBS, formulate a new strategic plan, and improve the automated systems and processes of the various functions.

Lynnwood has a Community Vision, adopted by City Council in 2009 and reaffirmed in 2015, to be a regional model for a sustainable, vibrant community with engaged citizens and an accountable government. In 2018, a Strategic Plan covering the period of 2018 to 2022 was prepared to compile priorities, objectives and strategies deemed to be of the highest importance. The top prioriteis for 2018-2022 are:

1. Fullfill the community vision for the City Center and Lynnwood Link light rail
2. Ensure financial stabilty and economic success
3. Nurture operational and organizational excellence
4. Be a safe, welcoming and livable city
5. Pursue and maintain collaborative relationshieps and partnerships

The situation at DBS was seen as an impediment to achieving the Community Visision and implementing the Strategic Plan.

DBS Strategic Plan

While the City has a Community Vision and a Strategic Plan, DBS itself was operating without a strategic plan. Although the management and staff at DBS were operating with apparent strategic goals in mind, they were not articulated or necessarily aligned with the broader City vision. To address this situation, Strategica, Inc. first worked with DBS managers and then sought input from staff on documenting the strategic plan direction for DBS. Five DBS strategic goals evolved from this process:

1. Create a positive culture for applicants
2. Build systems, processes and codes to work smarter and more efficiently
3. Develop staff expertise and a culture to address Lynnwood's future growth
4. Enhance quality of life through implementing the Lynnwood Comprehensive Plan
5. Attract businesses and development partners to succeed in Lynnwood

The entire DBS Strategic Plan was documented on one page so that DBS staff can quickly instill a unified direction and incorporate these goals into their daily activities. These goals will be achieved and supported by specific strategies and tactics. The DBS Strategic Plan can be viewed in **Appendix A** and associated performance measures for tracking progress are found in **Appendix B**.

Organizational Structure

In the summer of 2019, the organizational structure of DBS reflected an organization in transition. Nearly a third of the staff positions were either filled in an interim status, vacant, on leave, or staff were working out of class. This was due to significant turnover during the first half of 2019.

The organizational structure was also characterized by hard siloes, whereby the various functions within DBS involved in the core processes of handling development, building permit applications and business services were placed in separate City departments with no overall management of the processes.

In addition, DBS had not evolved its portfolio of skills and expertise to reflect an increasingly mixed-use urban environment that included more complicated projects. This evolution will become more critical in the future as Lynnwood becomes integrated into the Sound Transit light rail system and transit-oriented development (i.e., more dense, mixed-use development, pedestrian oriented) comes on line. In addition, the structure of DBS lacked sufficient administrative support or management/technical support.

The recommended DBS organizational structure (shown in Appendix C) resolves these problems and achieves unified command over all DBS functions, especially core building permit processing. The new structure reflects the strategic goals of DBS and clearly shows where accountability for these goals is placed within the organization. The new structure strengthens functional areas critical to the future growth of Lynnwood, and addresses the issues of staff vacancies, interim appointments and staff working out-of-class. Finally, the new organization structure adds critically needed managerial and technical support positions. This new structure reflects a net addition of 7 positions to DBS.

Permitting Process System

The existing permitting process system, was originally installed 11 years ago. It has never been fully implemented and has been incorrectly used over the years by staff that was insufficiently trained. The

importance of a permit processing system to track the "life-cycle" of a permit is critical to organizational efficiency. The City should either re-install the system from scratch or evaluate and install a different software product through an open procurement process.

The most important feature in any future permitting process system is a workflow function that expedites and tracks planning cases, the processing of permit applications, business licenses and code enforcement cases. In addition, peripheral software applications such as electronic plan review, an online public portal, mobile inspection tools, geographic information system (GIS), and digital document storage should be part of the selected enterprise permitting system.

The most critical process at DBS is the processing of building permits given the volume of permits and fees involved. New processes should be implemented and facilitated by a new permitting system that features parallel reviews, workflow technology, digital plans and drawings, and automated tools for inspections.

Code Compliance Activities

The Community Vision and Strategic Plan speak to the quality and character of Lynnwood. Achieving these priorities can be supported through code enforcement. While DBS does a good job of achieving compliance for most cases, there needs to be new procedural and legal tools for dealing with serious conditions such as derelict houses and junk cars. In addition, with 43% of the City's housing stock consisting of rental units, Lynnwood needs to design and implement a program for ensuring that these housing units are safe, meet code and do not deviate or detract from community standards.

Achieving Planning and Policy Outcomes

In the effort for efficient processing of building permits, effective planning and economic development functions may be overshadowed. There is a big difference between efficiently processing applications and achieving the goals and policies of the Community Vision and the Strategic Plan. While tracking

desired outcomes to be achieved through policies and development agreements is essential, specific performance measures and efficiencies are not as easily identified as with permit processing. Achieving the successful implementation of plans, policies, and related projects, however, should be tracked in the permit process system to monitor and evaluate progress.

The following pages present the findings and recommendations for the Development and Business Services efficiency study prepared by Strategica, Inc.

II. What Work Was Done

This project was begun in August 2019 as the result of changes at Development & Business Services (DBS). DBS had acquired a negative reputation in the business and development community for heavy-handed regulation, slow turnaround times and unhelpful customer service. In February 2019, staff turnover at DBS provided the opportunity to install new management, and mandate process improvements and organizational change. Several new hires were made at DBS in an effort to improve the level of customer service, make Lynnwood a friendlier place to do business while staying faithful to the Lynnwood Municipal Code, and fulfilling regulatory responsibilities. Lynnwood sought the advice of outside experts in organizational development, process improvement and permitting systems to make impactful changes at DBS. This report is the product of that effort. The recommendations contained herein will result in a more efficient, mission-driven organization that helps to fulfill the policy objectives of City leaders.

III. What should be the DBS Strategy?

A strategic plan is a plan for achieving impactful changes in an organization whether those changes be improved products, services, improved financial performance, policy goals realized, etc. All of these outcomes should result in achieving the mission of an organization. Strategies are different from tactics in that strategies have higher payoffs and bigger benefits that are directed at bigger problems or opportunities. Tactics, in contrast, are designed to achieve specific strategies and are more immediate in time. All organizations have a strategic plan whether it's explicit and written down or is just a general, unspoken understanding of what needs to be done to achieve the mission. It is easier to communicate and track performance of a well thought out and documented strategic plan, which is what Strategica, Inc. was asked to do at DBS.

The future strategy of DBS will be driven by attention to building a positive culture for staff and applicants; building new and enhanced permitting systems, processes and codes; build up skills and staffing to respond to address future growth patterns in Lynnwood; and attracting new development and business partners

What was the existing strategy at DBS?

DBS did not have a documented strategic plan in August 2019 when Strategica, Inc. started this project. In 2018, initial efforts were made by DBS staff to document a strategy. Some goals were documented for each operating unit within DBS but no strategies or tactical-level actions were defined.

A DBS mission statement dating from 2018 was documented by Community Development in the City budget:

"We strive to ensure our City is the safest, most livable and sustainable community in the region"

This mission statement is limited in perspective and does not embrace a future for process improvements and customer service through proactive change.

The City itself does have a strategic plan that has been in place since 2018 which includes several vision statements and strategic priorities that involve DBS. These statements and priorities are incorporated into the DBS strategic plan that was created as part of this project.

Performance measures and targets to achieve the 2018 DBS mission statement are included in the biennial City budget but are not monitored on an ongoing basis. These measures and targets are separated by DBS departments. In addition, very little data is available for effective monitoring and management of DBS processes and outcomes. The current permit processing system is not configured to easily and consistently generate this data and cannot generate reliable management information for monitoring performance and mission achievement. These factors prevent regular assessments of efficiencies and effectiveness.

What problems or opportunities were identified for DBS that a strategic plan would address?

Based on interviews with DBS staff, City officials, and members of the development and business community, Strategica, Inc. identified several key issues that should be addressed by a strategic plan and the other components of this Process Review and Improvement Project. Key issues and opportunities requiring a strategic-level response included:

- An outdated, error-prone, user unfriendly permitting system that had not been properly configured when originally installed in 2012, had never been fully implemented and put into production, and in which the DBS staff had lost confidence.
- A longstanding reputation of DBS for poor customer service, long turnaround times for permits, non-responsiveness and heavy-handed regulation, which had become a hindrance to attracting new investment into the City.

- Although the City had begun a well-received organizational revamp at DBS that included hiring new managers, transitioning from the less helpful managers and staff, and changing attitudes and customer service standards, there remained vacant positions, staff working out of class, and managers in interim appointments that needed to be addressed. In addition, the City has been undergoing significant redevelopment and is poised to be further transformed by the impending arrival of Sound Transit light rail. DBS does not have all the technical or professional expertise to handle this change. Outdated zoning designations, land use codes, development standards, and code enforcement do not match the emerging development that is occurring.

What is going to be the DBS strategic response to these problems and opportunities?

DBS managers met in December 2019 and developed a strategic plan that incorporated these five strategic goals:

1. Create a positive culture for applicants
2. Build systems, processes and codes to work smarter and more efficiently
3. Develop staff expertise and a culture to address Lynnwood's future growth
4. Enhance quality of life through implementing the Lynnwood Comprehensive Plan
5. Attract businesses and development partners to succeed in Lynnwood

From these goals, specific strategies were defined to drive implementation of the goals. DBS staff were given an opportunity to review the draft plan and suggest enhancements prior to adoption of the DBS strategic plan. The full plan can be viewed in **Appendix A**. It is a focused one-page document identifying the most important DBS goals and strategies.

How will DBS know if the mission and strategic plan are realized?

DBS managers have adopted a roster of performance measures to monitor strategic implementation and operational efficiency. These measures include:

Measures of efficiency such as turnaround times:

- Response time to customer calls and email inquiries
- Plan review and inspection turnaround times
- Code enforcement case resolution time

Outcome measures such as:

- Permit applicant satisfaction index (an existing measure)
- Percent of City area covered by improved design guidelines
- Value of construction and public infrastructure in designated development zones

The entire roster of performance measures can be viewed in **Appendix B**

Recommendation III.1 – Continue to implement the new strategic plan (**Appendix A**) by making it part of managerial goal setting and performance review criteria, ongoing DBS managerial meetings, reporting to City Council and the Mayor, and monthly DBS All-Hands meetings.

Recommendation III.2 – Initiate the daily, monthly, semi-annual and annual monitoring of DBS performance using the measures in **Appendix B**. Ensure that configuration of a new permitting system include reporting tools and queries that generate regular, periodic data to populate the measures. Use the measures as part of managerial goal setting and performance review criteria.

IV. How should DBS be organized and how many staff will be needed in the future?

In this section, the structure of DBS is examined, recommendations to streamline and focus the structure are offered and, using data-driven empirical models, we identify how many staff will be needed in the future to accomplish the goals and work of DBS.

The DBS management structure reflects significant recent turnover, a high percentage of unfilled positions and interim appointments, and a lack of unified command. Although the current management is working hard to rectify these problems, the City should adopt a sweeping reorganization and staff right-sizing.

The structure of any organization is a key tool to achieving the organization's mission. In this light, the organizational structure should be thought of in the same way as the permit process systems, policies, work processes, strategies, and the staff; all of these are tools or enablers for mission achievement. A well-designed structure should clearly delineate accountability for the organization's strategic goals, facilitate easy communication between staff, and facilitate efficient work processes and transfers of information.

In this section, we examine the structure of DBS, offer recommendations to streamline and focus the structure and, using data-drive, empirical models, we identify how many staff will be needed in the future to accomplish the goals and work of DBS.

What is the Current Structure of DBS?

The current structure of DBS is consistent with an organization that has been undergoing rapid and significant changes and turnover. Several long-term staff transitioned out of DBS in early 2019 leading to several vacancies, unfilled management positions, interim appointments and managers and staff working out of class. In addition, DBS is not a unified City department with unified command over all the staff, processes, and policies. Rather, it is modeled more like an agency with separate departments responsible for various functions. Specifically, as of November 2019:

- 28% of the organization had been impacted by turnover.
- Of 6 mid-management positions at DBS; 2 were vacant, 1 was filled on an interim basis and 3 were filled permanently. Management vacancies still exist for the Permit Counter (the main point of contact with the public) and the Planning unit (which is filled on an interim basis).
- Of 36 total positions in DBS, 10 were vacant, serving as interim status, or on leave. There have been some new hires since April 2019.
- The DBS structure is characterized by siloes and the apparent chief executive of DBS, who leads Community Development and Economic Development, does not have direct managerial control over certain parts of the organization. The Public Works staff (that review private infrastructure development permits) and the Fire Prevention staff (that review fire building permit applications) report to outside entities: the Public Works Department, and the South Snohomish County Fire and Rescue Regional Fire Authority, respectively. Thus, there is no unity of command within DBS. Proposals for bringing the private development review function of Public Works under the control of DBS are being discussed. However, the Interlocal Agreement between the City and the Fire Authority memorializes this dis-unity of command for fire prevention services.
- All DBS staff except for 1 are engaged in line activities (i.e., involved directly with core DBS functions). There are only two management or admin support positions and one of those was on leave until recently. The other admin support position reports to the Fire Authority.
- Until recently, technical specialties in the planning unit reflected a suburban built environment rather than an urban built environment (e.g., high densities, multi-modal transportation, more complex design and construction techniques that are typically associated with transit oriented development or TOD).
- Staff resources are primarily focused on plan review and inspection; with limited resources provided to planning, policy, economic development, and business support services.

- The structure features narrow spans of control (ratio of subordinates to manager) throughout DBS except at the Permit Center where it is 1:5; elsewhere it is 1:4 or less.
- There is currently no structure or staffing at DBS that analyzes the financial, budgetary or management operations or permit systems of the agency and assists top management. Consequently, these crucial tasks are done inconsistently.

What are the Current Staffing Levels at DBS?

Current staffing levels within DBS were established in the City's 2019-2020 Adopted Biennial Budget at 19 funded positions, no change from 2018. No empirically or data-based staffing model was in use for determining optimal staff levels based on workloads, performance or policy goals. The use of overtime is minimal within DBS although, as mentioned before, several funded positions have been vacant for quite some time. As an example of the amount of turnover experienced within DBS, 20 different people (not positions) worked on permit review and inspection functions (including Public Works and Fire Authority) during the 2019 calendar year, however, as of February 2020, only 13 of those remain with DBS.

The proposed structure for DBS eliminates siloes, focuses accountability for strategic goals, consolidates managerial control over all DBS functions and critical processes, adds technical and managerial support positions and adds skill sets that will be necessary to address future development trends in Lynnwood.

Strategica developed a workload and staffing forecast model that looked at historical workloads, how staff spend their time, and forecasted population growth to determine optimal staffing levels. In the future, as a new permitting system is configured and put into production, there should be sufficient performance data (specifically permit and inspection turnaround times) to refine this model to accurately forecast staffing needs in DBS in the future.

Recommendation IV.1 – Implement a new organizational structure that will have the following features:

- Unity of command for all DBS functions (including those handled by Public Works and the Fire Authority),

- Pinpoint accurate accountability for the strategic goals embedded in the recommended strategic plan,
- Reasonable spans of control
- Elimination of the hard siloes that currently exist in DBS,
- Sufficient staffing of the right type and expertise to guide the community planning (i.e., long term) efforts of the City,
- Sufficient admin support for line staff and management,
- Unified, seamless, consolidated and close-up oversight of the key work processes at DBS (e.g., application intake to Certificate of Occupancy and everything that happens in-between),
- Sufficient staffing to address planning, policy, economic development, and business development services.
- Permanent appointments for the current management positions filled on an interim basis,
- A strengthened and expanded code enforcement function, and
- Two positions dedicated to management, financial and budget analysis and permit system applications support for DBS.

This recommended structure is shown in **Appendix C**. Specific implementing actions include:

1) Create new positions and hire for:
    a) Planning Technician (needs new classification as well)
    b) Management analyst
    c) Applications Analyst

d) Deputy Director, Permitting Services (designate this person as Building Official)

e) Two Combo Plans Reviewer/Inspector

f) Two admin assistant or Sr. Finance Spec positions

g) One Business Development Manager

2) Reclassify/Rename positions:

a) Rename Building Official to Deputy Director, Permitting Services

b) Rename Planning Manager to Community Planning Manager

c) Rename Economic Development Director to Economic Development Manager

d) Reclassify one existing permit tech position as an Administrative Assistant

3) Fill currently budgeted positions for:

a) Permit Counter Supervisor

b) Senior Planner (w/ 50% Transportation Focus)

c) One code enforcement officer

4) Eliminate positions:

a) Existing vacant Assistant Building Official (funding used for new Deputy Director, Permitting Services)

b) Existing contract inspector (use funds for a permanent position)

5) Transfer supervisory responsibility to the Deputy Director, Permitting Services:

a) Private development public works (renamed Development Engineering). This should be facilitated by executing an Inter-Departmental Agreement between Public Works and

DBS. The Public Works Director has prepared a draft agreement that serves as a good model.

b) Fire Marshall permitting staff. This should be facilitated by amending the existing Interlocal Agreement, Exhibit A, Section I.A so that the Director of DBS as delegated by the City will "Direct the management and supervision of personnel performing the Services" provided by the Fire Authority.

c) Explore co-locating DBS with other city departments to achieve organizational adjacencies and efficiencies.

Recommendation IV.2 – Based on the strategic and policy needs of the City and DBS and the results obtained from the Workload and Staffing Forecasting Model, right size the staffing level of DBS by creating and filling a net of 7 new positions within DBS as follows:

1) Create positions and hire for:
   a) Planning Technician (needs new classification as well)
   b) Management analyst
   c) Applications Analyst
   d) Deputy Director, Permitting Services (option to designate this person the Building Official)
   e) Two Combo Plans Reviewer/Inspector
   f) Two admin assistant or Senior Finance Spec positions
   g) Business Development Manager
2) Eliminate two existing positions:

a) Existing vacant Assistant Building Official (funding used for new Deputy Director, Permitting Services)

b) Existing contract inspector (use funds for a permanent position)

Recommendation IV.3 – Analyze the staffing needs of DBS in the future using the Workload and Staffing Forecasting tool developed by Strategica. This model (an Excel-based tool) was provided to DBS staff in March 2020. The model should be updated annually with the population growth projections for the City.

The model calculates workloads and staffing requirements for the permit review and inspection and permit counter areas based on those population projections. In future years, time-based performance data from the new permitting system should be analyzed to calculate permitting turnaround times (based on the recommended performance measures from this report). The Workload and Staffing model can be modified so that the difference between current and targeted turnaround times can be programmed into the model and staffing needs can be calculated to close the gap (if any) between those current and targeted performance levels. The City may need to contract with a consultant to re-program the model for those purposes.

Staffing needs for planning, policy, economic development, and business development are not easily measured by a data-driven workload and staffing forecast tool. These functions serve to attain outcomes and benchmarks that achieve the community vision and strategic goals. The regular assessment of outcomes and benchmarks related to the community vision and strategic goals will track progress and serve to determine the resources required.

V. What should be the future permit software system of DBS?

This chapter covers the permit process systems of DBS. The permit process system is the backbone of the organization that should track all activity and transactions from over-the-counter permits to long range community planning products that are implemented over years. In addition, this chapter discusses key peripheral applications. Topics covered include:

- Status of the current system and what to do about it
- Secure, On-line Public Portal
- Automated Review Routing and Electronic Plan Review
- Mobile Field Inspection Applications
- Digital Document Storage
- Geographic Information Systems (GIS)
- Network Infrastructure

The existing enterprise permitting system, the EnerGov system, was originally installed 11 years ago and has never been fully implemented and has been misused over the years by under-trained staff. The City should either re-install EnerGov from scratch or install a different software product through an open procurement process.

What is the Status of the Current Enterprise Permitting System Used at DBS?

The City has been using the EnerGov permit management system from Tyler Technologies for eleven years. EnerGov was originally installed to replace Accela PERMITS Plus, a legacy system that was no longer supported by the vendor. EnerGov is a server-based product hosted at the City Hall data center and managed by the City's Information Technology Department.

The EnerGov installation does not serve the needs of DBS. The following reasons lead to this conclusion:

- Staff who implemented EnerGov are no longer with the City and much of the background rationale and information about configuration decisions and design have been lost through staff changes over the years.

- Some application types were never implemented (such as Development Agreements); and others have not been fully configured. For example, the workflow feature, a crucial element of a functional permitting system, has never been fully configured or put into production mode. For practical purposes, the EnerGov system is mostly functioning as a card file and word processor to generate and archive permits.
- Some design elements retained from PERMITS Plus impose extra work on DBS staff. For example, Building Permits must be entered as an EnerGov "plan" application type, after which separate "permit" cases (e.g., a building permit) are created for issuance and inspection. This situation is complex, confusing, and inefficient.
- Training on EnerGov for DBS staff has been inconsistent and incomplete, especially for new hires.
- City IT provides one staff person to support EnerGov via a system of support tickets submitted to IT to request changes and address issues with the software. DBS staff report that response times from City IT on many issues is slow and the backlog of tickets is approximately 300 items. A ticket list this extensive is more typical of a system in the first year or two of implementation, not a mature installation.
- DBS staff and IT efforts to reconfigure and improve EnerGov were hobbled a year ago, when a key DBS staffer left temporarily on extended leave.
- There is a deep lack of trust of EnerGov among DBS staff, given the lack of training, periodic software crashes, slow performance, gaps in functionality, and backlog of support issues.
- Historical data is severely corrupted due to null records, forced transactions, and general misuse of the system.

Recommendation V.1 - The City should scrap the existing EnerGov permitting process system configuration and either rebuild the EnerGov system (including permit, license, land use application and code enforcement configuration as a new installation to incorporate more complete and efficient processes needed by DBS in today's business

environment), **OR** the City should replace the existing EnerGov system with a new permit system that can provide the required functionality. The choice to rebuild or replace should be based on evaluation of proposals and demos from vendors under Request For Proposal (RFP) 3178, currently in procurement. The design of application types, workflow processes, fees, forms, and other system configuration elements should follow the structured requirements outline in **Appendix E**. The City should retain change management or configuration services familiar with the selected software to install and configure the software to match the structured requirements shown in **Appendix E**, and to train DBS staff on proper use of the software. The DBS application support position will assist in this process and the on-going use of the system.

Peripheral applications that should support the permitting process system are discussed below.

Secure, On-line Public Portal

A permit system that provides a secure, on-line, public portal, available 24/7 will provide customers with access for submitting applications, checking status, paying fees, uploading and downloading documents, printing permit forms, scheduling inspections, and other tasks. An effective, self-service portal also substantially reduces staff time needed to process applications, compared to interacting with customers at the permit counter on many applications.

EnerGov includes a Customer Self-Service (CSS) on-line portal capability and can be configured to accommodate any permit, license or plan application. The City has configured and made available on CSS several simple application types that don't require plan submittal and review. Recently, however, the ability to submit applications via this portal was suspended on CSS because:

- Applicants became confused and chose the wrong application type at the start, requiring DBS staff to manually back out erroneous applications and refund fees.

- Applicants sometimes created duplicate contact records for contractors, electricians, plumbers, and other licensed trades people who were already in the system, again requiring DBS staff to manually clean up contact records.

CSS continues to allow customers to check application status, pay fees, and schedule inspections.

Recommendation V.2 - The future enterprise permitting system should include a secure, on-line public portal that allows customers to perform all required tasks associated with the entire lifetime of an application, from beginning of an application through final approval, as described in RFP 3178 and as shown in scripts for vendor demos (see **Appendix D**). Particularly important for achieving the City's goal of going paperless, is the ability to upload/download digital plans and other documents for projects of any size, via the portal, instead of submitting paper plans and documents. Accommodations should also be made for "mom and pop" applicants, who have no ability to create digital plans. This may be achieved by providing a PC kiosk at DBS and scanning small paper plans for a nominal fee.

Automated Review Routing and Electronic Plan Review

Virtually all applications for permits, business licenses, and land use approvals, plus certain code enforcement cases, require routing plans, drawings or other submitted documents to one or more departments within the city, and occasionally to outside agencies, such as Snohomish PUD, Alderwood Water, and the Snohomish County Health Department. The only exception is certain minor "over-the-counter" permits (e.g., certain plumbing permits) that don't require plan submittal.

EnerGov supports automating the routing of plans and documents to reviewing personnel (a concept known as workflow) but it has been only partially implemented. As a result, most staff continue to use their own tracking spreadsheets, paper logs sheets, and clipboards to track which reviews are required, who has signed off, and when a permit is ready to issue. These paper logs, clipboards and spreadsheets defeat a key purpose of using a permitting process system, which is to expedite the flow of documents, facilitate faster turnaround times, and keeping applications from falling through the cracks.

After tracking reviews with external spreadsheets, Microsoft Word documents, and paper logs, DBS staff update the application status after the fact in EnerGov. These workarounds slow the issuance process, consume large amounts of staff time shuffling paper in a sequential review process, and result in a highly siloed environment separating departments. More efficient parallel (i.e., simultaneous) review of plans by multiple departments is rendered impossible because paper plans are available to only one reviewer at any given time.

The most important feature in any future enterprise permitting system is a workflow function that expedites and tracks the processing of permit applications, planning cases, business licenses and some code enforcement cases.

DBS recently installed Bluebeam, an electronic plan review application that allows reviewers to examine and mark up plans and drawings without resorting to paper documents. EnerGov supports interaction with Bluebeam electronic plan review software, but only a few reviewers perform reviews in Bluebeam. Such digital plans are received as email attachments and manually loaded as documents into EnerGov. Most plan review is still done on paper plan sets. This process is inefficient and does not take full advantage of electronic permitting capabilities. While a few DBS staff are proficient in using Bluebeam from previous jobs, most staff have received little or no training in Bluebeam.

Recommendation V.3 – Ensure that the future permitting process system supports automated notification, review routing, and electronic plan review as required in RFP 3178 and demonstrated per the scripts for vendor demos (see **Appendix D**). The system should be configured to include standard automated routings and plan review steps (Workflow) that allow

multiple departments and reviewers to simultaneously review and mark up plans and other digital documents submitted through the portal. The system should allow:

- adding and deleting routing steps as needed to handle unusual review situations.
- automated consolidation of markups, comments, corrections, and notes into a single correction or comment letter or memo to be sent electronically via the portal to contacts associated with the application.
- each reviewer to apply and "burn in" digital approval stamps and other notations to appropriate pages in the electronic plans and documents.
- applicants to download marked-up and approved versions of digital plans and documents through the portal.
- applicants to upload requested corrected plans and other submittals at the correct stage of the review process.
- insertion and/or replacement of single PDF plan pages into multipage plan sets.

DBS staff need to be thoroughly trained in working with automated review routing and whichever electronic plan review software is selected.

Mobile Field Inspection Applications

Providing connected software for inspectors to do their work in the field is essential to the success of the future permitting process system. The City currently uses EnerGov IG Connect field inspection software on Apple iPads. Inspection requests from applicants and contractors are made on the CSS portal or in the main EnerGov program, after which they are assigned and downloaded each day to each inspector's iPad. Inspectors can pull up a given inspection request, note corrections, approve or fail an inspection, capture digital signatures of the inspector and recipient of the inspection, and send an automated email with inspection results to the contractor and other contacts in minutes from the field.

This reduces the amount of office work an inspector must do at the end of the day and customers appreciate getting inspection results quickly.

Some inspectors have had the following issues with IG Connect:

- At locations with poor or no cell service, inspectors cannot complete inspections. When cell service is available, previously unrecorded results may not be updated correctly in the main database.
- Contractors often request additional inspections while meeting with an inspector at the job site, but inspectors cannot add new inspections in the field, on top of those previously scheduled for the day.

> **Recommendation V.4 –** Ensure that the mobile field inspection component of the future enterprise permitting system replicates capabilities used by DBS inspectors today and include capabilities as required in RFP 3178 and demonstrated per the scripts for vendor demos (see **Appendix D**). In particular, the future system should include two important capabilities to remedy issues with the existing system:
>
> - Ability to work reliably and update accurately in areas with poor or no cell service, by automatically storing results and updating the back-end database when a cell connection is available.
> - Ability to add new inspections while out in the field.

Digital Document Storage

DBS staff create, access, file, and store thousands of pages of plans, specs, reports, memos, and other documents while processing applications and permits. Most large-format plan drawings are still handled in paper form during the review process, with plan storage on shelves and in bins or file cabinets. After finalizing a permit, one set of approved plans is boxed with other plans and sent to

records management at City Hall for scanning, indexing, and archiving on the Application Xtender document management system. Reports, memos, spreadsheets, and other small-format Microsoft Office documents created during application processing are stored by individuals who have to remember to manually upload files to department network share drives and/or local hard drives.

This fragmented storage of both large- and small-format documents requires additional staff time to handle paper, risks loss of key documents stored in department network share drives, and risks losing track of documents stored on local hard drives.

Archiving only a portion of a file's documents on Application Xtender requires the additional cost and time to scan paper and could make potentially important documents unavailable in the future.

> **Recommendation V.5 –** The future permitting process should support cloud-based document storage capabilities associated with all permit and application types as required in RFP 3178 and demonstrated per the scripts for vendor demos (see **Appendix D**). The future system should facilitate easy saving of all large- and small-format documents from within an application workflow, instead of saving to a network shared or local hard drives. This will encourage saving critical documents in this centralized location. Records Management may choose to selectively download certain digital documents to Application Xtender for public records requests **OR** members of the public conducting record searches for permit information could access permit information directly from the future enterprise permitting system via the on-line portal or other portal user interface.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

Considerable GIS technology and data layers are potentially available to DBS staff, through extensive existing ESRI licenses of both ArcGIS Pro desktop and ArcGIS Online. Details are included in **Appendix E**. Planning staff are the primary users of GIS data and use GIS to review locations associated with Planning

applications, produce vicinity maps, and generate lists for mailing labels for public notices. Despite the wealth of available GIS software and data, DBS staff utilization of GIS is extremely low. It has been hampered for months by periodic crashes loading ArcGIS Pro on HP laptops recently acquired for Planning staff. Recent investigations suggest a time-out problem with a legacy ArcSDE server and not the laptops themselves. GIS is supported by only one individual in IT.

Recommendation V.6 – The future permitting process system should support GIS capabilities associated with all permit, license, and application types and code enforcement as required in RFP 3178 and demonstrated per the scripts for vendor demos (see **Appendix D**). These capabilities should include:

- generating mailing labels, hearing notice postcards, and lists of properties within a certain radius of a land use application.
- Creating ad hoc polygon boundaries of multiple parcels (and fragments of parcels) associated with complex projects. This would allow identifying permits, land-use applications and their requirements related to complex project boundaries by clicking and drilling down from a map.
- Providing public access to up-to-date GIS data in a "What's in my Neighborhood?" portal page.

Network Infrastructure

The City's network infrastructure is vital for any future permitting process system to function in a fast, reliable manner. This network infrastructure currently includes:

- One gigabit/sec (GB) fiber connects all buildings across the city.
- Each workstation is equipped with a 1GB network interface card; each network closet has a new Cisco Meraki GB switch.

- Wave Communications currently provides a 1GB internet connection with a secondary internet connection through Frontier Communications at City Hall. IT is transitioning that Frontier service to a second discreet WAVE internet service, allowing a transition to the backup internet without changing external IP addresses. That project is scheduled to be completed by late spring.
- A single Cisco model 4150 core network switch at City Hall has become a bottleneck for network traffic with the addition of additional security and traffic cameras, VOIP traffic, and other hardware requiring substantial bandwidth. This has resulted in complaints from DBS staff about slow network response using EnerGov and dropped calls on the agency phone system.
- Two new Cisco model 9500 core switches with substantially increased capacity are scheduled for installation when the hardware arrives from the manufacturer (in China).
- The change from the internally-hosted EnerGov system to a potential cloud-based system will increase demands for bandwidth, especially for electronic plan documents retrieved from cloud-based storage.

Recommendation V.7 – The City's IT Department should constantly monitor network traffic and bandwidth demand from the new permitting process system, set automatic notifications to IT staff when issues occur, and quickly make repairs and adjustments at the core switches and other hardware to maintain bandwidth for DBS. In the event that a cloud-based permitting system is chosen, network performance recommendations from the software vendor should be provided and maintained for all DBS users

VI. How should work processes be improved?

This chapter discusses the key work processes of DBS and ways to make these processes more efficient, reduce turnaround times, achieve better outcomes and realize the strategic goals of DBS that address work processes. The chapter covers these processes:

- End-to-end permit intake, routing, review, inspection and finalizing
- Paperless Parallel Processing with Electronic Plan Review
- Field Inspection Hardware/Software
- Development Agreements
- Land-Use Application Processing
- Long-Range Planning
- Business Licensing
- Code enforcement for derelict houses
- Code enforcement for junk vehicles
- Rental unit registration and inspection

The most critical process is the processing of building permits given the volume of permits and fees involved. New processes should be implemented, facilitated by a new permitting system that feature parallel reviews, workflow technology, and using digital plans and drawings, and automated tools for inspections.

End-to-end Integration of Permit intake, routing, review, inspection and finalizing

DBS should provide for "life-cycle" review of permit applications from initial intake, through application review, final approvals, and archiving. End-to-end processing integration should encompass everything from customers being able to submit any type of application using a self-service on-line portal, through automated routing to staff who need to review, comment, and approve, to public hearings where required, to issuance of the permit or approval back to the applicant via the portal, to scheduling and managing inspections and final approvals in the field. Integration should also document projects approvals that arise through development agreements and impact fee requirements. Such integration should help to remedy the currently siloed, sequential series of largely manual workflows in DBS, supplemented by manually updated spreadsheets, Word documents, and

paper log sheets, with the permit system serving as little more than an electronic "card file" system to record a few key dates and actions after the fact.

Partial, incomplete efforts have been made to achieve end-to-end integration in EnerGov, using the EnerGov Customer Self-Service (CSS) public portal for application submittal on the front end and IG Connect field inspections at the end of the process. Application submittal using CSS has been postponed due to applicant confusion in choosing the correct application type and creation of duplicate contact records. IG Connect functions moderately well, except when cell service is poor or non-existent.

> **Recommendation VI.1 –** In considering an RFP for a future permitting process system, the City should look for the best end-to-end integration suite of tools offered by a vendor. Where a vendor's solution incorporates some third-party products and services (such as electronic plan review, report writers, GIS, field inspection software, cashiering, etc.) that link with a vendor's main system, seamless integration is particularly important. One example to consider is how well a third-party electronic plan review application integrates with a) the on-line portal to send and receive digital drawing files, b) automated creation and sending of correction notices, and c) storage of digital documents related to the permit or land-use application.

Paperless Parallel Processing with Electronic Plan Review

In order to speed up reviews, all types of permits, licenses, and applications that require reviews by multiple agencies and staff should be reviewed in parallel, allowing multiple reviewers to perform their review tasks simultaneously. However, the current process features each reviewer looking at paper plans and drawings before handing them on to the next reviewer. Using paper makes it impossible to achieve parallel reviews which are much quicker and efficient. Instead of marking up paper, modern electronic plan review software allows all staff to access the same set of digital plans and other documents to add digital markups, corrections, notes, and stamps. A modern system should also expedite issuance of correction letters and incorporating updated plans and drawings.

In addition to building permits, all planning and land-use applications should use this technology to review digital plans, consultant reports, staff reports, hearing decisions, and other documents. Furthermore, it is imperative that all DBS staff in Building, Planning, FMO, Public Works, Business Licensing, Economic Development, and Code Enforcement have thorough training to become as proficient in the use of the electronic plan review software as they are with Microsoft Word and email.

Recommendation VI.2 – Make sure that the following key functionality is integrated with the future permitting process system, to facilitate parallel, paperless processing:

1. Self-service on-line portal to allow applications to be filed along with managing the submittal of digital plans and documents
2. Automated routing for staff review to keep the review process moving
3. Electronic plan review app to allow simultaneous review and mark-up of digital plans
4. Markups and corrections noted on the digital plans should automatically flow into correction letters that are automatically emailed to the applicant
5. The system should send an automated correction letter to the applicant and allow the applicant to retrieve the marked-up plans through the on-line portal. The applicant should resubmit, via the portal, only the pages from the plan set that have been corrected, and the system should facilitate inserting the corrected pages into the full plan set for the next round of plan review. The system should automatically assign a version number to plans used in each round of plan review

Field Inspection Hardware/Software

Virtually all types of permits, licenses, land-use applications, and code enforcement require field inspections to verify compliance with codes and conditions of approval as a project is built out or violations are resolved. Inspections prescribed by approval of a permit or land-use application are

typically requested by contractors and applicants using the on-line public portal. Ad hoc inspections may be performed at any time by staff to check on-going compliance.

Speedy posting of complete, accurate inspection results immediately from the field benefits contractors by alerting them to required corrections and allowing work to move ahead quickly when each stage of inspection is approved. Inspectors also benefit by completing each inspection at the job site, with little or no follow-up or paperwork to be done at the end of the day.

> **Recommendation VI.3 –** Acquire, install and implement a field inspection application and associated hardware that is compatible with the future permitting process system. Field inspection hardware should be compatible with the Cisco Meraki Mobile Device Management (MDM) standard adopted by IT. The field inspection software should accommodate a range of inspection tasks across the six main groups of the DBS organization: Building, Fire Marshal, Public Works, Planning applications, Business Licensing, and Code Enforcement. The system should be able to schedule prescribed inspections for Building, Fire, Planning and Public Works, plus ad hoc inspections not requested by the applicant for all groups.

Development Agreements

DBS Economic Development staff pursue policies and projects that address the vision and strategic goals of the community. Development Agreements are negotiated agreements between the City and a developer to clarify both the scope and timing of new development and to provide a consolidated approval framework for large projects. No fees are collected by the City, under the assumption that increased tax revenue from the development will more than offset the lost permit revenue.

Development Agreements (DAs) are currently done manually, on paper and with Microsoft Word and Excel, with no data entered in EnerGov and no system workflow to assist processing. The final negotiated Development Agreement is recorded on the subject property with the Snohomish County

Auditor's Office. This memorializes the agreed-upon duties and responsibilities of both parties and is intended to transfer the requirements to new owners in the event the property is sold.

DAs may interact with other land-use approvals over wide areas of the project for years or decades to come. It is imperative that they be tracked in the future permitting system so their provisions may be easily accessed during future application review. Staff do not consistently monitor long-term compliance with the provisions of individual Development Agreements but should do so in the future using timed reminders programmed in the permitting system.

Development Agreements often span multiple parcels and encompass multiple street addresses; they should be mapped in GIS so staff can locate and drill down into the provisions from a map, even if addresses and parcel boundaries change in the future.

Recommendation VI.4 – Tracking Development Agreements would enable identification and tracking of outcomes achieved. The following should be included as an application type in the future permit processing system:

1. Include automated workflow with electronic plan review to speed up review and approval,
2. Include links to GIS (linked to polygonal geographical project extents) to map the potentially complex assemblage of parcels and addresses encompassed by the DA,
3. Incorporate on-line document storage to allow present and future staff full access to all documents (including the final recorded agreement) to track requirements and compliance during the lifetime of the DA, and
4. Include the ability to set alerts for site visits, conditions of approval with specific follow-up dates, and periodic inspections scheduled in the future system.

Land-Use Application Processing

Requirements for processing land-use applications, holding hearings, and issuing decisions are governed by the Lynnwood Municipal Code (LMC). The LMC sets forth six decision-making processes (note that the LMC no longer defines a "Process V" so that number is skipped in the following text):

- Process I – Public Hearing and decision by Hearing Examiner
- Process II – Administrative decisions appealed to the Hearing Examiner
- Process III – Administrative permits review process
- Process IV – Decision by City Council after Review by Planning Commission
- Process VI – Appeals of administrative decisions to the Hearing Examiner
- Process VII – Appeals of decisions by the Hearing Examiner to City Council

Noticing, hearing, and decision requirements in the LMC are slightly different from one decision-making process to another, complicating staff work in processing applications. For example, the hearing notice for a Process I (Hearing Examiner) application must be sent at least 20 days prior to the hearing, but the Notice of Impending Decision for a Process III (administrative) application must be sent only 14 days before. Process I notices must be mailed to property owners within 300 feet, but Process III notices must be sent to 300-foot radius property owners and to occupants/tenants of multiple-tenant buildings and mobile home parks within the same radius as well.

Planning staff have identified potential changes to the LMC to create more common procedural requirements, while still preserving the existing tiers of review (Administrative, Hearing Examiner, Planning Commission, and City Council).

LMC 1.35.080 provides for process consolidation of two or more applications, where the applications would follow different processes if done separately. For example, a Short Plat is normally a Process III admin decision, but if a Variance is required (Process I – Hearing Examiner), the combined application would be heard by the Hearing Examiner.

Efficiencies should be identified and implemented to improve the process for applicants and the community.

Recommendation VI.5 - Retain a code consultant to work with Planning staff on potential changes to the LMC. Strategica also recommends that the implementation of the future permitting system not be held up waiting for LMC code changes to be made. In our experience, code changes sometimes take much longer than originally anticipated and most modern permit software systems have configuration tools that allow changing workflow processes that may result from any likely code changes.

Recommendation VI.6 – Configure the future permitting system so that application combinations are entered as separate applications, grouped as a "project" in the system, with the higher-process application designated as the primary application.

Often overshadowed by the rush to churn out building permits, effective long range planning can be the difference between just another anonymous suburb and a place with unique amenities and character. Long range planning products should be processed and tracked the same as building permits in the new enterprise permitting system.

Long-Range Planning

Planning functions in DBS include both "current planning" (review of land-use applications) and "long-range planning" (preparation and maintenance of area and neighborhood plans, critical areas, transportation planning, and other activities that are not site-specific). While most of the focus of the permit processing system is on applications handled in current planning, DBS should track long-range planning polices and projects in the permitting process system. Like permit applications, long-range planning policies and projects involve multiple reviewers, production of documents, scheduling of meetings and hearings, and occur within project boundaries (such as neighborhoods and critical areas) that can be delineated in GIS. Being able to view and drill down into a long-range planning projects on a map would enrich decision making and help avoid possible conflicts where future land-use applications and permits fall within that planning project boundary.

Recommendation VI.7 – Long-Range Planning should be included as an application type in the new system to provide staff with the same automated tools as they use for processing land-use applications and permits. Automated workflow should be used to track and schedule staff reviews, meetings, preparation of documents and reports for neighborhood, Planning Commission, and City Council hearings. The boundaries of the long-range planning project should be mapped in GIS, and all documents should be stored electronically for present and future staff to access. Because this would be an internal application type, no application would be available to the public on the on-line portal. This process would enable identification and tracking of outcomes achieved by adopted plans and policies.

Business Licensing

Starting in November 2019, the State Legislature mandated that all Washington municipalities process business license applications, issuances, and renewals on the Business License System (BLS) developed and operated by the State Department of Revenue (DOR). This mandate has provided some efficiencies for the customer and the licensing process. However, there are aspects of the licensing system that should be improved or that resulted in additional work for DBS staff:

- Instead of routing regulatory business license reviews electronically to affected city departments, routing is done manually using a spreadsheet and email.
- DBS must monitor reports from the State BLS system for licensees that are paid late and send a letter or invoice to collect a late fee, as is presently done on 551 accounts as of 2/7/2020. The State does not collect such late fees for the City.
- DBS must manually send out Occupancy Fee letters and invoices to collect alcohol fees from full-service restaurants because they are not included in BLS.
- DBS manually monitors accounts on the State termination report (115 account terminations at present) to see if the businesses are actually terminated or still doing business in Lynnwood.

- DBS must follow up on 3,726 accounts that the State shows as doing business in Lynnwood that have never filed for a City business license before.
- DBS must follow up on 380 accounts that have not renewed their business license through BLS.
- BLS customer service to businesses at times is not very helpful, referring calls back to the City.

The City has become the de-facto fee collection agency for the DOR because the State does not attempt to collect any overdue business license fees. If a business fails to renew on BLS, the State sends two reminder notices, but if the business fails to respond, the State simply closes the account and refers the account to the City for collection. Also, the City is responsible for collection of all other regulatory non-State-related fees for businesses such as garbage collection, establishments serving alcohol, and body scrub parlors. The City must follow up by verifying if the business is still open and send collection letters for overdue amounts.

After three months on the State program, it is apparent that revenues are down primarily because the State prorates City license renewal due dates to coincide with the business license fee due dates on the State licenses. This process does not coincide with how Lynnwood previously issued business licenses on an annual basis making it more difficult to forecast and budget City fee revenue.

Lynnwood is evaluating other cities to learn from their experience and identify best practices. For example, Kirkland has seen a revenue loss after the first three months due to proration and sending of collection letters. They also have the same equivalent license volume administered. However, Kirkland has 1.5 staff FTEs for business license administration which is 0.5 FTE greater than Lynnwood. Kirkland's collection ordinance also allows them to go back and collect delinquent fees for three prior years plus penalties and one year forward. This process has resulted in over one million dollars of additional collections. Lynnwood could collect close to $500,000 if similar changes were implemented.

There is currently no automated way to update Business Licensing records in EnerGov, based on changes in BLS. Without hand-keyed manual updates, data in EnerGov will become increasingly out of date and less reliable.

Recommendation VI.8 To maintain up-to-date information on licensed businesses in Lynnwood, the City should pursue periodic data updates of license data from BLS and create methods to import BLS data into the future permitting process system.

Recommendation VI.9 The City should implement changes to the LMC and department procedures to allow back billing for unpaid fees and penalties for up to three years back.

Recommendation VI.10 Ensure that the future permitting system includes a business license module to register all businesses in the City of Lynnwood, independently of licensing under the State BLS. This would include downloading BLS data to keep the Lynnwood data up to date, automated routing for departments to review new applications, and billing capabilities for following up on unpaid renewals and additional fees for businesses such as garbage collection, establishments serving alcohol, and body scrub parlors.

Recommendation VI.11 As reliable licensing volume data is available, DBS should budget for sufficient staff to handle manual processing tasks associated with business licensing tasks not handled by the State BLS.

The DBS code enforcement does a good job of achieving compliance for most cases but needs new procedural and legal tools for dealing with derelict houses and junk cars.

Code Enforcement

The code enforcement unit within DBS is currently comprised of one staffed Code Enforcement Officer (CEO) position and one additional vacant CEO position. The unit closes approximately 500 cases per year although that number varies from year to year. The majority of cases are investigated, mitigated and closed within 180 days. As of February 2020, 8 cases (comprising 13 separate violations) had been open beyond 180 days. Of these 13 outstanding violations, 6 were for

houses that were unsafe to occupy or junked vehicles on private property but visible from the street. The oldest case (a derelict house) has been on the books for more than three years. Despite the best efforts of the Code Enforcement unit, these cases linger due to uncooperative property owners or difficulties in finding responsible parties.

In some of the outstanding derelict house cases, the responsible property owners were recently deceased, and the heirs are difficult to track down or are not cooperative or competent. In some junk vehicle cases, it can also be difficult to track down registered vehicle owners to obtain cooperation in removing the vehicles or the property owners may not agree to remove the vehicle. Usually, these junk vehicles have some scrap value and once title is made available, it is relatively easy to have them towed away and sold. But if the vehicle is on private property and title is not available, it requires the cooperation of the property owner in the absence of a warrant.

Legal remedies are available to the City to mitigate these conditions; however, these remedies are difficult to undertake since they often require a warrant from Snohomish County Superior Court. Thus far, the Code Enforcement unit has not been able to obtain adequate legal support from the resources currently available. The current code enforcement process relies on informal persuasion and fines to motivate compliance, which is eventually effective in most cases. However, for the most egregious cases, more intensive methods, including legal discovery tools and litigation, are required.

If the City opts to improve the code enforcement process, further study will be needed to identify specific recommendations, which may include additional staffing to handle the informal persuasion code enforcement tactics while other staff are following up with more egregious violations and litigated cases.

In the same way that “life-cycle” permit processing integration can help expedite permits and land-use applications, Code Enforcement can benefit from such integration. This would involve the public using the on-line portal to enter complaints (anonymously or not); automated workflow among code

enforcement officers, planners, inspectors, and other staff; creation of routine forms such as the Notice of Violation; tracking inspections and site visits; maintaining lists of property owners, tenants, complainants, property managers, etc.; and keeping an extemporaneous log of everything that's transpired with the violation, in the event that stronger civil and/or criminal actions must be taken.

Rental Unit Regulation

The City should also address the fact that 43% of the housing stock in Lynnwood are rental properties (this includes apartments). Cities with such high proportions of rental units are adopting rental unit registry and inspection programs to maintain their housing stock and property values and ensure that rental units are maintained to code and incorporate life safety measures such as smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. Tenants are often hesitant to report code violations for fear of landlord retribution. A proactive registry and inspection program addresses this problem by making inspection mandatory rather than just based on complaints.

Recommendation VI.12 – The City should hire and fill the existing vacant Code Enforcement Officer position and assign each officer geographically-based territories (e.g., South Lynnwood, North Lynnwood).

Recommendation VI.13 The City should choose a software solution that supports Code Enforcement with the ability to receive complaints via the on-line portal, conduct automated workflow and creation of routine notices, enter inspection results and site visits in the field, and track all the parcels, addresses, and people involved with code enforcement cases.

Recommendation VI.14 – Strengthen the process for mitigating derelict houses to include a stronger litigation component and a new cost recovery procedure under the authority of RCW 35.80. This would include:

1. Retain contract legal services focused on code enforcement to initiate litigation on difficult derelict house cases to obtain abatement warrants through Snohomish County Superior Court to mitigate the blight (i.e., demolition).

2. Recover the abatement cost (typically demolition which can amount to $50,000 or more) through a Special Assessment on the property to recover the costs through property tax collections, or a tax foreclosure and sale if necessary. RCW 35.80.030 (1)(h) provides that:

   "…amount of the cost of such repairs, alterations or improvements; or vacating and closing; or removal or demolition by the board or officer, shall be assessed against the real property upon which such cost was incurred…"

   And that

   "…county treasurer shall enter the amount of such assessment upon the tax rolls against the property for the current year…"

This unoccupied house on 200th St SW is literally collapsing, constitutes a blight and a safety hazard and needs to be demolished

RCW 35.80.030 also specifies the due process protections that may be afforded the property owner. If adopted into ordinance by the City, these protections will require the City to serve notice to all interested parties (RCW 35.80.030 (1)(c)) of the violation and an order to mitigate (up to and including demolition).

3. Provide additional due process protection to property owners by utilizing the City's contracted hearing examiner to hear appeals to abatement orders.

Recommendation VI.15 – Expedite the process to remove junk vehicles that incorporates issuance of the initial infraction within 30 days of initial contact with the property owner. Second infractions should be issued after 60 days of initial contact if the vehicles have not been removed.

Recommendation VI.16 – Implement a Rental Unit Registry (RUR) program in the City for purposes of encouraging preventive maintenance of rental units, protecting the interest of vulnerable tenants (e.g., low income, disabled) that may be resistant to lodging complaints with their landlords, and maintaining the housing stock and property values in the City. The RUR should be administered by the Code Enforcement Unit of Development and Business Services and should incorporate the following features:

With 43% of the City's housing stock rented out, the City needs to design and implement a program for ensuring that these housing units are safe, meet code and do not deviate or detract from community standards.

1) **Scope of Program.** The program should apply to any housing unit available for long term rental. Exemptions may include short-term rental (Air BNBs), hotels & motels, government-owned or subsidized rental housing (Section 8), owner-occupied rental housing (e.g. owner lives in one-half of a duplex or the property owner rents out a room), and properties built within the past five years.
2) **Rental Unit Registration.** Registration should be renewed annually. A detailed process and fee study is warranted to ensure the fees are accurate and defensible.
3) **Registration requirements.** The registration should include contact info to identity the property owner and insurer. For property owners located out-of-state, the registration should require a Snohomish County contact that will accept legal notices and Notices of Violations. Registration should require a property owner to agree to expedited authority of the City to abate nuisances and blight with less due process (e.g., hearing officer appeal is final) and at owner's expense, and that all outstanding code violations be cured before annual certificate is issued. The registration certificate should include an inspection guide listing

criteria used in quadrennial inspections. Finally, the Certificate cannot be transferable if the property is sold.

4) **Inspections.** Inspections should be required within a specific term, such as every four years, and accelerated to annually for rental units with violation history of 5 or more violations in any one calendar year. Inspections should be noticed beforehand to both the property owner and the tenant so a property owner has a chance to clean up potential problems.

5) **Inspections Fees.** The initial inspection should be free to encourage compliance. If violations are found that need to be corrected and re-inspected, fees could be charged.

6) **Initial Inspections.** At the RUR program inception, DBS should assign all registered units to four zones. Each zone should be inspected during one of the first four years. DBS could also phase it in by age of building – oldest units first, or properties with a history of code violations. An inspection and new registration should also be triggered by a change in ownership.

7) **Mitigation.** A property owner should be given specific timelines to correct both non-life threatening and life-threatening violations. A follow-up inspection should be scheduled based on the highest-scoring (most serious) violation (30 days if no life-threatening violations).

8) **Program staffing.** Rough estimates show that the program would require approximately 2,000 inspections per year. Assuming an inspector could handle 4 to 6 inspections per day, this would require 1.5 to 2 inspector FTEs. An additional FTE may be required to handle the administrative tasks of registrations, accounting, processing violations, etc. for a total FTE count of 2.5 to 3. The exact number of positions should be determined once program specifications are finalized.

Appendix A – Adopted 2020-22 DBS Strategic Plan

Goal 1 – Create a positive service culture for applicants

Tactics

a. Hire and retain people with a customer service mentality
b. Simplify (or communicate simply) our processes so applicants can understand them
c. Provide customer service training for DBS staff
d. Provide recognition and rewards for good customer service
e. Shorten turnaround times (while still meeting our regulatory responsibilities)
f. Define and track customer service metrics

Goal 2 – Build systems, processes and codes to work smarter and more efficient

Tactics

a. Implement a new user-friendly, DBS-wide permitting system that facilitates accurate data, 24/7 access and workflow data sharing
    1. Align work processes with the capabilities and functions of the new system
    2. Streamline permit types and supporting processes
    3. Obtain continuous training in the software functionality for DBS staff
b. Streamline and untangle our codes and regulations
    1. Eliminate duplicative sections and resolve conflicts
    2. Modernize regulations to address projected development patterns
    3. Make it easy for applicants and businesses to access and understand
    4. Streamline the zoning code

Goal 3 – Develop staff expertise and a culture to address Lynnwood's future growth

Tactics

a. Identify the expertise, qualifications and skills we need
b. Determine how many staff we need and hire up to that level

c. Create an organizational structure that promotes accountability for results and fosters a cohesive, positive culture
d. Train our people in customer service and technical expertise for their success
e. Update and/or create new job descriptions that match DBS needs
f. Provide staff the flexibility to work with applicants to identify solutions and solve problems
g. Track performance to ensure accountability to our mission and strategy

Goal 4 – Enhance quality of life through implementing the Lynnwood Comprehensive Plan

Tactics

a. Track implementation of the current Comprehensive Plan
b. Gear up for the 2023 update of the Comprehensive Plan and make it simpler and more accessible
c. Develop plans through meaningful public engagement
d. Implement fair and equitable code enforcement
    1. Build a system allowing us to expeditiously process the tougher cases

Goal 5 – Attract businesses and development partners to succeed in Lynnwood

Tactics

a. Explore and adopt programs to promote new business formation and expansion
b. Partner with the Lynnwood Chamber and other business organizations for economic vitality
c. Change public perception on how friendly it is to do business in Lynnwood
d. Promote tourism, visitor spending and hotel stays
e. Prioritize and facilitate development of projects for community benefit
    1. Quantify and communicate the benefit to the community

Appendix B – Recommended Performance Measures

Performance Measures

	Org Unit/Measure	data source	calculation method	Trigger event	Terminal event	reporting frequency	responsible party	Purpose or strategy link
Permit Counter								
1	Average calendar days between final inspection and closeout	energov or replacement	subtract julian date of final inspection from closeout date for all permits closed out during month. Calc mean of all elapsed times	final inspection logged	permit closed out	monthly	permit counter supervisor	shorten turnaround times
2	Average calendar days between plan submittal and completeness check	energov or replacement	subtract julian date of submittal from completeness check for all plans deemed complete during month. Calc mean of all elapsed times	plans submitted	completeness check	monthly	permit counter supervisor	shorten turnaround times
3	Average call hold time	ACD	Calc mean of all hold times on incoming calls during the day	incoming call	call answered	daily	permit counter supervisor	positive service culture
4	Average time to respond to emails	?	subtract julian date of email received from date of response for all email responses during month. Calc mean of all elapsed times	email received	email answered	daily	permit counter supervisor	positive service culture
Code Enforcement								
5	Average calendar days, complaint to initial inspection	energov or replacement	subtract julian date of complaint received from initial inspection date for all complaints received during month. Calc mean of all elapsed times	complaint logged	initial inspection logged	monthly	Building Official	expeditious processing of code enforce cases
6	Average calendar days, Initial inspection to forced compliance	energov or replacement	subtract julian date of initial inspection from closure date for all forced cases closed during month. Calc mean of all elapsed times	initial inspection logged	forced compliance case closed	monthly	Building Official	expeditious processing of code enforce cases
7	Average calendar days, Initial inspection to voluntary compliance	energov or replacement	subtract julian date of initial inspection from closure date for all voluntarily resolved cases closed during month. Calc mean of all elapsed times	initial inspection logged	voluntary compliance case closed	monthly	Building Official	expeditious processing of code enforce cases
8	Percentage of cases resolved through forced compliance	energov or replacement	# of forced compliance cases closed during month divided by all informal+voluntary+forced cases closed during the month	N/A	forced compliance case closed	monthly	Building Official	fair & equitable code enforcement
9	Percentage of cases resolved through voluntary compliance	energov or replacement	# of voluntary compliance cases closed during month divided by all informal+voluntary+forced cases closed during the month	N/A	voluntary compliance case closed	monthly	Building Official	fair & equitable code enforcement
10	Percentage of cases resolved through informal measures (door hangars, etc.)	energov or replacement	# of informally resolved compliance cases closed during month divided by all informal+voluntary+forced cases closed during the month	N/A	informally resolved case closed	monthly	Building Official	fair & equitable code enforcement
11	# of cases unresolved longer than 365 days	energov or replacement	subtract julian date of initial complaint or observation from current date. Sum # of cases where elapsed time is greater than 365	initial inspection logged	N/A	monthly	Building Official	expeditious processing of code enforce cases

	Org Unit/Measure	data source	calculation method	Trigger event	Terminal event	reporting frequency	responsible party	Purpose or strategy link
Plan Review & Inspection (building/public works/fire)								
12	Average # of calendar days from plan submittal to completion of all reviews by Department (building, public works, FMO)	energov or replacement	subtract julian date of plan submittal from date of last finished review for the cycle for all applications where all reviews are complete during month. Calc mean of all elapsed times	plans submitted & logged into system	last review completed per cycle	monthly	Building Official/ PW supervisor/ Fire Marshal	shorten turnaround times (while meeting regulatory reqts)
13	Average # of calendar days per review (review assigned to correction letter/pass) by Department (building, public works, FMO)	energov or replacement	subtract julian date of plan submittal from date of each finished review for all applications where at least one review was completed during month. Calc mean of all elapsed times	review assigned	each review completed	monthly	Building Official/ PW supervisor/ Fire Marshal	shorten turnaround times (while meeting regulatory reqts)
14	Development: Average calendar days from request to inspection: Commercial (by Department (building, public works, FMO))	energov or replacement	subtract julian date of inspection request from date of inspection for all completed commercial inspections during month. Calc mean of all elapsed times	inspection request received	inspection results logged in	monthly	Building Official/ PW supervisor/ Fire Marshal	shorten turnaround times (while meeting regulatory reqts)
15	Development: Average calendar days from request to inspection: Residential (by Department (building, public works, FMO))	energov or replacement	subtract julian date of inspection request from date of inspection for all completed residential inspections during month. Calc mean of all elapsed times	inspection request received	inspection results logged in	monthly	Building Official/ PW supervisor/ Fire Marshal	shorten turnaround times (while meeting regulatory reqts)
16	# of plan review cycles by Department (building, public works, FMO)	energov or replacement	sum the number of review cycles for each application sorted by reviewing department	review assigned	review completed	monthly	Building Official/ PW supervisor/ Fire Marshal	shorten turnaround times (while meeting regulatory reqts)

	Org Unit/Measure	data source	calculation method	Trigger event	Terminal event	reporting frequency	responsible party	Purpose or strategy link
Planning								
17	Average # of calendar days to issue notice of complete application or request for additional information	energov or replacement	subtract julian date of application received from date of notice of complete application/request for additional info issued for all applications where a notice was issued during month. Calc mean of all elapsed times	Application received	Notice of complete application request for add'l info issued	quarterly	Planning Manager	RCW 36.70B.070
18	Average # of calendar days to post public notices	energov or replacement	subtract julian date of notice of complete application from date of public notice posting for all applications where a public notice was posted during month. Calc mean of all elapsed times	Notice of Complete Application issued	Public notice posted	quarterly	Planning Manager	shorten turnaround times (while meeting regulatory reqts)
19	Average # of calendar days to send first round of comments to applicant	energov or replacement	subtract julian date of public notice posted from date comment letter was sent to applicant for all applications where comments were received. Calc mean of all elapsed times.	Public notice posted	Comments sent	quarterly	Planning Manager	shorten turnaround times (while meeting regulatory reqts)
20	Average # of calendar days to issue notice of decision	energov or replacement	subtract julian date of conclusion of testimony or notice of impending decision from date of notice of decision issued for all applications where a notice was issued during month. Calc mean of all elapsed times	conclusion of testimony (hearing examiner) or notice of impending decision (admin cases)	Notice issued	quarterly	Planning Manager	RCW 36.70B.080
21	Average # of round of comments sent to applicant	energov or replacement	Divide total number of rounds of comments by the number of applications receiving comments	decision made		quarterly	Planning Manager	statistical

	Org Unit/Measure	data source	calculation method	Trigger event	Terminal event	reporting frequency	responsible party	Purpose or strategy link
Business licensing								
22	Average # of calendar days between application and submittal of approval to WA DOR	State system	subtract julian date of license application from date approved application submitted to DOR for all licenses submitted to DOR during month. Calc mean of all elapsed times	Application received	Approved application logged into DOR system	monthly	Building Official	shorten turnaround times (while meeting regulatory reqts)
23	Average # of calendar days between regulatory license application and approval	energov or replacement	subtract julian date of regulatory license application from date approved for all licenses approved during a selected time period. Calc mean of all elapsed times	Application received	Approved license	As needed	Building Official	shorten turnaround times (while meeting regulatory reqts)
Economic Development								
24	applicant satisfaction index	survey monkey tool	% of applicants expressing target level of overall satisfaction	N/A	N/A	semi-annual	Econ Dev Director	positive service culture

Input/Output Measures

DBS Input/Output Measures - Proposed				
Org Unit/Measure		data source	reporting frequency	responsible party
Permit Counter				
1	# of plan submittals by permit type	energov or replacemnt	monthly	permit counter supervisor
2	# of counter visits	TBD	daily	permit counter supervisor
3	# of phone call	ACD	daily	permit counter supervisor
Code Enforcement				
4	# of complaints	energov or replacemnt	monthly	Building Official
5	# of inspections	energov or replacemnt	monthly	Building Official
6	# of cases closed	energov or replacemnt	monthly	Building Official
Plan Review & Inspection (building/public works/fire)				
7	# of plans reviewed by permit type	energov or replacemnt	monthly	Building Official
8	# of reviews by permit type	energov or replacemnt	monthly	Building Official
9	# of inspections by permit type	energov or replacemnt	monthly	building Official
10	# of permits issued by type	energov or replacemnt	monthly	building Official
11	# of review hours by permit type	energov or replacemnt	monthly	building Official

DBS Input/Output Measures - Proposed				
Org Unit/Measure		data source	reporting frequency	responsible party
Planning				
12	# of projects that use planned action ordinance	TBD	Annual	Planning Manager
13	# of formal partnership contacts (e.g., ST, AHA, HART, Edmonds School District)	TBD	Annual	Planning Manager
14	Amount/types of public outreach for projects	TBD	Annual	Planning Manager
15	# of public notices issued	energov or replacemnt	quarterly	Planning Manager
16	# of notices of decision issued	energov or replacemnt	quarterly	Planning Manager
17	# of complete applications received (RCW 36.70B.080)	energov or replacemnt	quarterly	Planning Manager
18	# of of complete applications received during the year for which a notice of final decision was issued before the deadline established	energov or replacemnt	quarterly	Planning Manager
19	# of applications received during the year for which a notice of final decision was issued after the deadline	energov or replacemnt	quarterly	Planning Manager
20	# of applications received during the year for which an extension of time was mutually agreed upon by the applicant and the city	energov or replacemnt	quarterly	Planning Manager
21	# of notices of decision issued	energov or replacemnt	quarterly	Planning Manager
Business licensing				
22	# of license applications received	State system	monthly	Building Official

Planning Outcome Measures

	Org Unit/Measure	reporting frequency	responsible party	Purpose or strategy link
Planning Outcome Measures				
1	# of subsections of code changes proposed to Council that promote development and allow for greater flexibility	Annual	Planning Manager	remove unnecessary development obstacles and allow greater innovation in design and construction
2	% of City area overlaid by new or improved design guidelines	Annual	Planning Manager	Encourage design for all development within the City that promotes a sense of place
3	# of City road miles overlaid by streetscape standards	Annual	Planning Manager	Encourage design for all development within the City that promotes a sense of place
4	% of City area overlaid by new or improved sub-Area plans	Annual	Planning Manager	Encourage design for all development within the City that promotes a sense of place
5	# of subsidized and # of market-rate units approved	Annual	Planning Manager	Encourage the development of affordable housing for all income levels
6	% of eligible development utilizing MFTE	Annual	Planning Manager	?
7	% of population and employment growth specified by the Countywide Planning Policies occurring within designated Lynnwood Regional Growth Center and Highway 99	Annual	Planning Manager	?

Economic Development Outcome Measures and Benchmarks

	Org Unit/Measure	reporting frequency	responsible party	Purpose or strategy link
Economic Development/Tourism Outcome Measures				
1	Marketing impressions per dollar	Annual	ED Manager	Promote tourism, visitor spending and hotel stays
2	valuation of construction and public infrastructure in City Center	Annual	City Center Manager	Track City Center development goals
3	Tourism	Annual	ED Manager	Track tourism metrics
4	Development agreements	Annual	ED Manager	Track DA requirements
5	Policy Implementation	Annual	ED Manager	Track policy/plan achievements

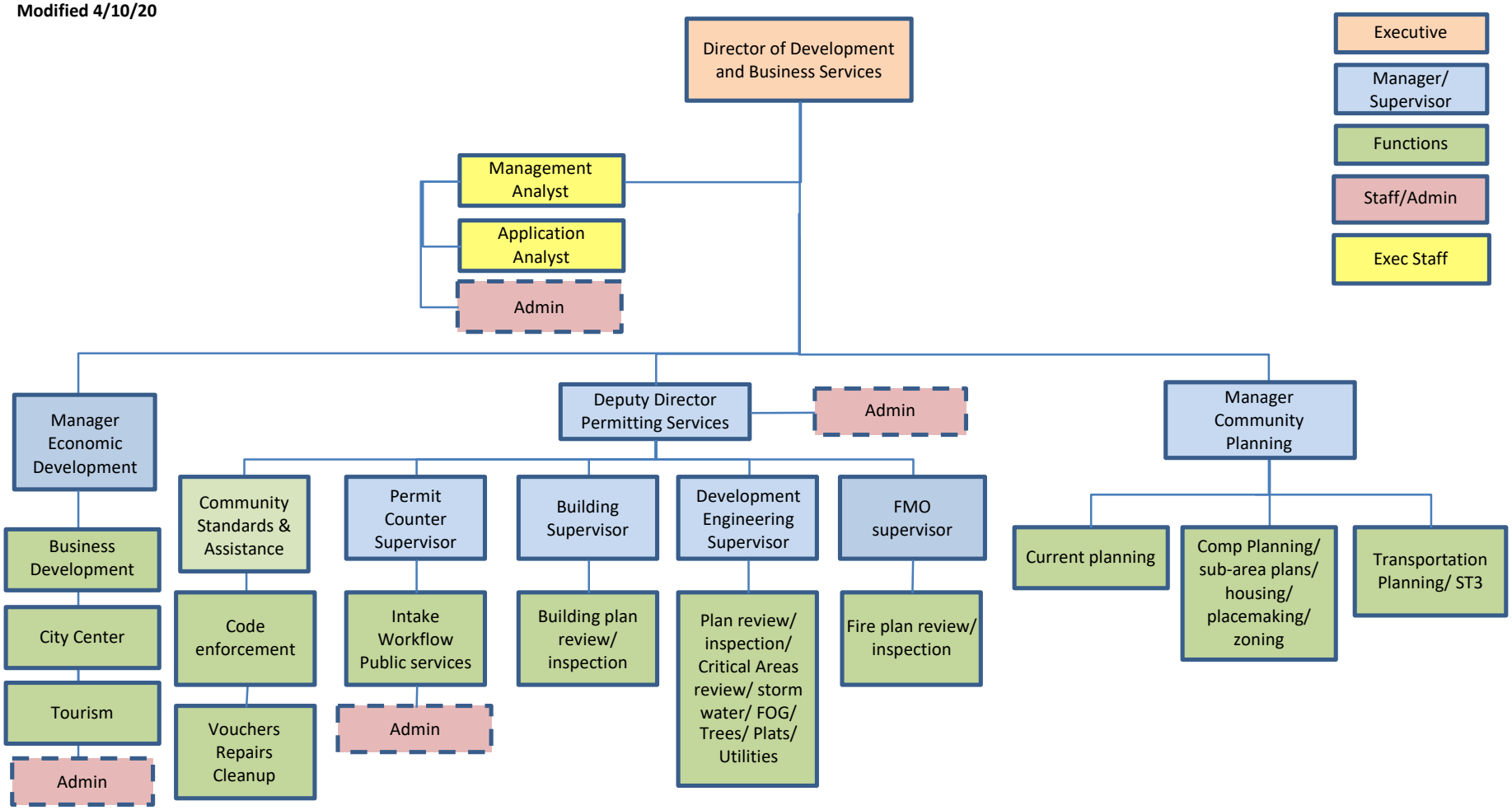
Appendix C – Recommended DBS Organizational Structure

Recommended DBS Organizational Structure – Functional Chart

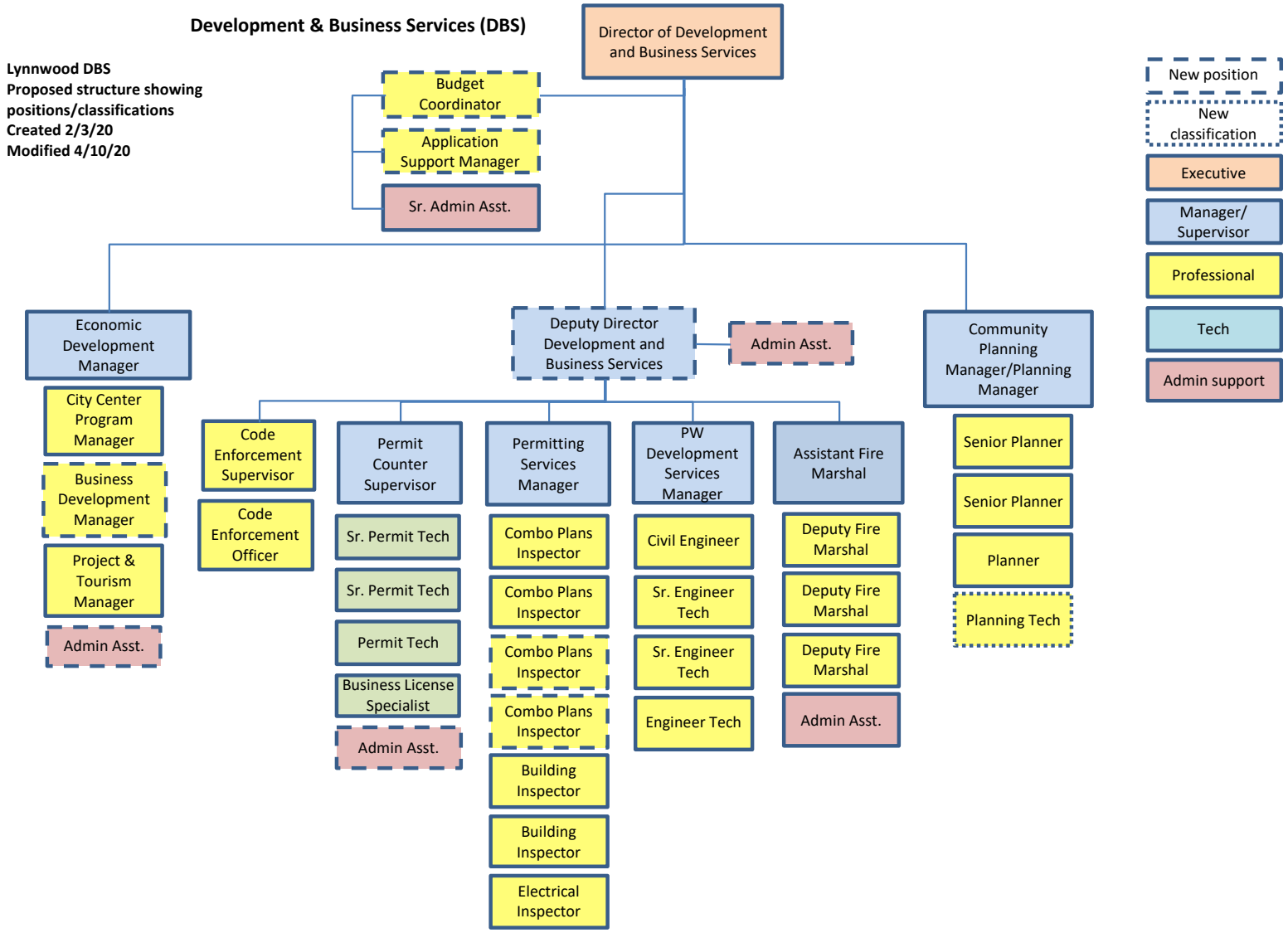
Lynnwood DBS
Proposed functional structure
Created 2/3/20
Modified 4/10/20

Development and Business Services

Position boxes are shown as representations only and not as the actual number of positions.



Recommended DBS Organizational Structure – Position Chart



City of Woodinville

Permitting Operational Analysis

Final Report

March 15, 2022

WOODINVILLE

STRATEGICA

Permitting Operational Analysis

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I. Executive Summary

Background

This project began in late September 2021 as the result of concerns about permitting turnaround times, customer service, and whether the departments of Development Services (DS) and Public Works (PW) were positioned to deal with expected growth in Woodinville. Woodinville (population 13,000) has been transitioning from a small city characterized by suburban development, small-scale retail, and some light industry to more dense mixed-use projects and tourism-oriented development centered on the wine and spirits industry. Larger, more complicated projects coming on line have stressed the ability of the City DS and PW staff to process permits in a timely manner. Woodinville sought the advice of outside experts in organizational development, process improvement, and permitting systems to recommend impactful changes at DS and PW. In response to this, Strategica, Inc. was retained to conduct this Permitting Operational Analysis with the following objectives:

Determine if and where deficiencies exist within the organization's structure, policies, procedures, forms, technology, etc.

Identify improvements as it relates to processes, staffing, communications (internal and external), customer service, and teamwork amongst staff.

Determine and recommend solutions to the identified issues, including likely resources and funding needed to implement the solutions.

Propose implementation timelines, and methods of tracking improvements.

This report is the result of that effort. The recommendations contained herein will result in a more efficient, mission-driven organization that helps to fulfill the policy objectives of City leaders.

How should the permitting function be organized and staffed?

The City's permitting function is split between Development Services and Public Works. A significant portion of permit applications are reviewed by both departments but there is no managerial position that oversees both departments below the level of City Manager. Despite this, the two departments coordinate reasonably well. All positions are currently filled although turnover in Public Works has resulted in short-staffing among the engineers that review permit applications. Public Works lacks any administrative or analytical capacity other than what their managers (all engineers) can provide.

Recommendation: The City can mitigate these structural and staffing issues by adding an Engineer I position in Public Works, a GIS Analyst, and a Management Analyst position to enhance the administrative and performance management capabilities of both departments. The City should also have more direct supervision over Fire personnel on permit review matters.

Setting and tracking performance targets

The City's permitting staff sets target times to complete specific permitting tasks (tasks are intermediate steps taken to process a permit application). The City completes 78% of these permitting tasks within established time standards. However, there are certain areas where performance lags such as Public Works plan reviews, Fire plan reviews, as well as permits that involve critical areas, design reviews and large, complicated projects. Measuring the overall start-to-finish timing is not relevant as some tasks are performed by applicants themselves and, therefore, the City has no control over how those tasks are performed.

Recommendation: The City should develop additional performance management tools so that Department managers can better monitor the progress of applications. This would include a "red line" report that draws attention to permitting tasks that have exceeded time targets. The City should also update selected time standards for permitting review tasks and begin publishing performance standards and actual results on the City's website.

Getting work done faster

The City's permitting system, Accela, has instilled good management practices such as workflow (an automated process for assigning and routing tasks and work materials) and a paperless work environment but potentially useful Accela functions were never implemented. Also, review practices and procedures performed outside the Accela system can add additional days to review and approval times.

Recommendation: The City should implement additional practices that, combined with Accela, can speed up the permitting process (at least the part that the City can control). These practices include better application checklists, backfilling for Permit Tech absences, automating fee calculation and payment options, expediting the initial application reviews (i.e., completeness reviews), simplifying the consolidation of departmental application reviews, reducing the scope of the Design Review Committee, improving the consistency of approval stamping of plans, adopting a triage procedure for incoming applications in order to expedite the easy ones, and simplifying approval memos for certain permit types.

Getting more value from Accela

Accela is the City's enterprise permitting system, installed in 2018. While Accela has improved City permitting processes, there are many features that either were not activated or are not being used. For example, while building permit applications are completely handled through Accela, many planning

applications (e.g. site development permit) are not initiated using Accela and instead rely on email and PDF forms.

Recommendation: Accela, the City's permitting system, can be improved by implementing several easy enhancements such as using Accela (instead of email) for uploading and downloading of application materials, simplifying and consolidating document storage practices, including consultants (e.g., Geotech, traffic) in the workflow process, including project owners when communicating application review comments, assigning planners as the main point of contact rather than Permit Techs, identifying and tracking code deviation requests in Accela, and inputting conditions of approval in Accela so they can be easily referenced in the future.

Serving the public better

The City should strive for a better balance between code compliance and public service. To the extent that compliance isn't compromised, there should be some room to better help all applicants but especially those who are not in the building trade or are not using design professionals.

Recommendation: The City should require pre-app conferences for those permit situations that frequently get bogged down due to communication problems or insufficient documentation and should reach out to non-professional applicants (e.g., homeowners) that are not using design professionals and establishing a consistent point of contact. In addition, the City should implement enhanced informational PDFs on common building permits, and an automated email generator that alerts applicants when a permit review action is taken.

Geographic Information System (GIS)

The City has GIS but does not use it to its potential. There is no public access to GIS on the City's website and even planning staff have difficulty accessing GIS. GIS enhancements could provide more

information to the public, better information on site characteristics (e.g., critical areas, utility infrastructure, active permits) that could impact development, and information that could help permitting staff perform their jobs better (e.g., existing conditions of approval).

Recommendation: The City should provide a public point of access to GIS on the City's website and install the additional informational layers mentioned above. In addition, a new GIS Analyst position would be able to oversee this new functionality and keep GIS up to date.

Administrative improvements

The City's Accela system has a large number of dormant applications and issued, but uninspected, permits. Permitting staff also handle a large number of public information requests (PIRs) and business license applications that are not tracked in their IT systems.

Recommendation: The City should purge some dormant application records and follow up on the uninspected permits. In addition, the City should improve recordkeeping practices for public information requests and business licenses.

II. What Work Was Performed

The following are the major work tasks undertaken during this project:

- Reviewed 14 background documents including codes, workload statistics, budget, City Council priorities, fee studies, organization charts
- Conducted 28 interviews of City Council members, City staff, applicants, and developers
- Obtained and analyzed Accela workflow data and calculated process delays by permit type and workflow task
- Observed the City's public portal for applicants
- Mapped processes for tree removal, building, development permits and inspections
- Conducted ridealongs with PW and DS staff documenting inspections and review processes
- Observed and documented how DS and PW staff use Accela
- Collected and reviewed workload and performance tracking reports prepared by DS and PW managers
- Documented strategic goals for the permitting function
- Documented the current organizational structure of permitting function
- Conducted a benchmark survey of six peer cities to obtain data on workload, staffing, structure, performance, and workload measures
- Documented current state of GIS and public access to GIS
- Developed a workload and staffing model that forecast staffing requirements for PW and DS
- Analyzed permitting workflow to identify and quantify processing delays and causes of delays

Developed recommendations on improving customer service, expediting permitting, streamlining the organizational structure, improving the use of IT systems, and expanding the scope of data available to City staff and the public and improving service levels for less sophisticated applicants

III. How Should the Permitting Function be Organized and Staffed?

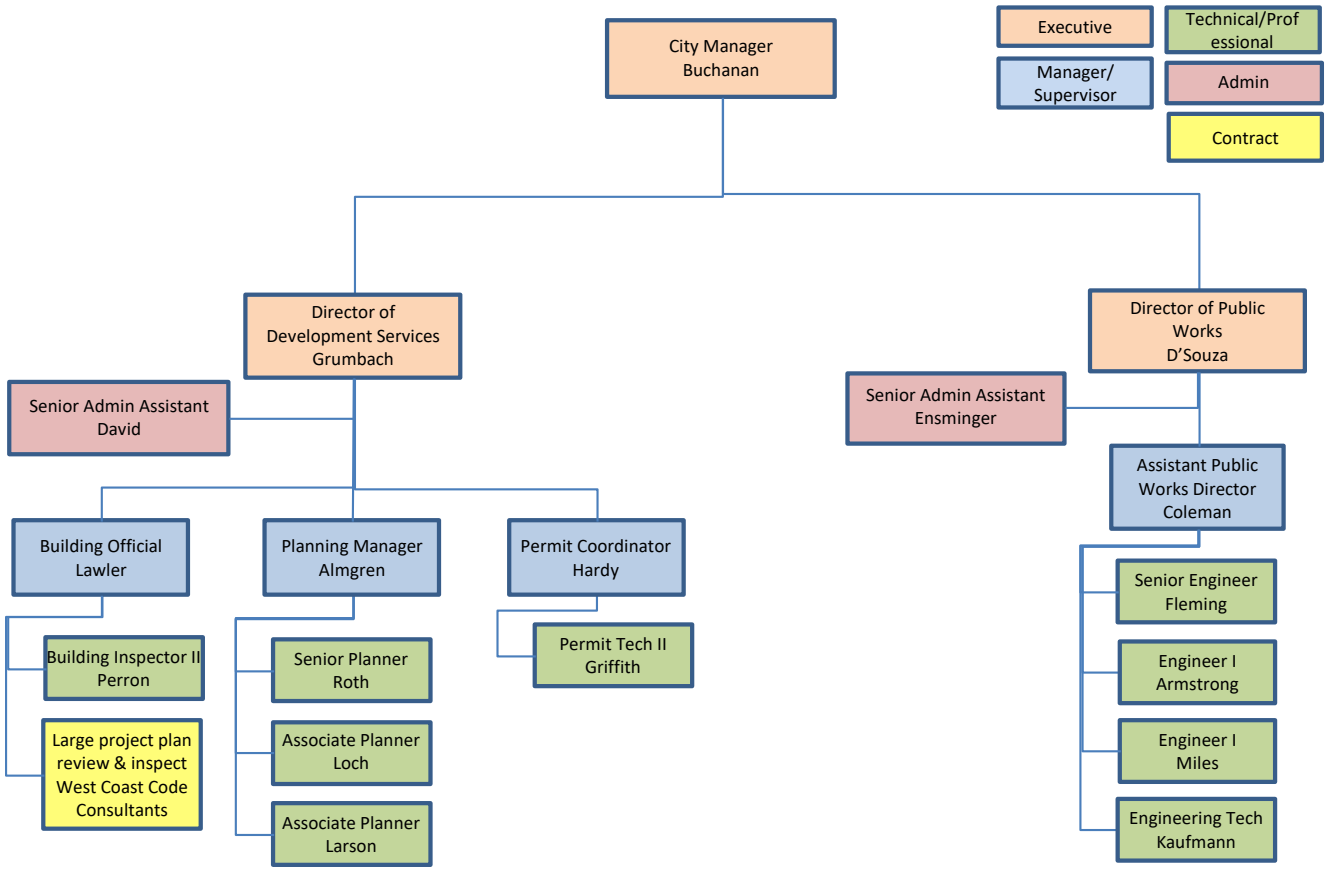
In this section, the structure of the City's permitting function is examined, recommendations to streamline and focus the structure are offered and, using data-driven empirical models, we identify how many staff will be needed in the future to accomplish the goals and work of the City.

The structure of any organization is a key tool to achieving the organization's mission and achieving strategic goals. In this light, the organizational structure should be thought of in the same way as the permit process systems, policies, work processes, strategies, and the staff; all of these are tools or enablers for mission achievement. A well-designed structure should clearly delineate accountability for the organization's strategic goals, facilitate easy communication between staff, and facilitate efficient work processes and transfers of information.

The City's permitting function is split between Development Services and Public Works. While the two departments coordinate reasonably well, additional personnel including management support and engineering staffing would help in managing the workload and improving processing outcomes.

How is the permitting function currently structured?

DS and PW are separate City departments co-located on the first floor of City Hall. Both departments are overseen by Director level positions that report to the City Manager. The current structure for the permitting function of the City is shown below.



Some specific observations include:

- Spans of control are narrow ranging from 1:2 to 1:4 but that's to be expected in a smaller City where the workload is complicated and demands technical specialization.
- Both DS and PW share responsibility for processing land use and building permit applications. Each department has a role in the combined process. Coordination necessary to manage this combined process is not reflected well in the formal organizational structure of the City where the common link between both departments occurs at the level of the City Manager. However, informal working relationships between PW and DS management and staff and workplace proximity help to sustain coordination. This arrangement would be more effective if there was a common system of workload and performance tracking (covered in section IV of this report).
- The mix of specialties and experience of the staff match well with the nature of the workload and the types of development occurring in the City. Outside expertise is retained for specialties such as traffic and structural plan check where the size of the workload does not merit hiring a full time person. Some ancillary expertise is missing such as GIS.
- There is currently no management analyst or similar position in either DS or PW that analyzes and manages the financial or budget data of DS and PW, tracks and reports on performance metrics, manages contracts and IT systems, and assists the directors of the two departments in running their operations.

What are the Current Staffing Levels at the City?

- DS currently has 10 budgeted positions, all filled. PW performs additional work besides permit review (e.g., capital improvements for the City, maintenance) but the portion that is involved in permitting is composed of five budgeted positions (actually 5.3), all currently filled. Similarly,

DS performs important functions above and beyond permit review such as code enforcement and long range planning.

- Overtime utilization (including comp time earned) is minimal accounting for about one-tenth of one percent of total staff hours.
- Turnover is moderate to high in both departments. Of the 15 budgeted positions in DS and PW (permitting portion), four positions experienced turnover in 2021. Turnover is more of a problem in PW. One of the three engineer positions that deals with permit review was vacant for about half of 2021 compromising their ability to keep up with the workload.
- As with most areas of the economy, staffing retention and recruitment is getting increasingly difficult. It is becoming common to have only one qualified candidate (or none at all) apply for open positions especially those that require specialized knowledge.

What Strategic Goals should the Permitting Function Strive For?

As mentioned above, the structure of any organization should be, foremost, a tool for accomplishing the organization's mission, in a similar way that machinery, policies, people, processes, etc. are also the tools for mission attainment. Given this, the first step would be to identify what the mission is or what the key strategic goals are.

Neither the City nor the DS or PW departments have a formal mission statement or strategic plan but the City does have a set of Council Priorities that were adopted for the 2021-2022 biennium. Of the nine Priorities, three are relevant for the permitting function and the scope of this project:

- Provide excellent customer service so that residents feel listened to and can easily do business with the City

- Utilize technology, metrics and process improvements to guide decisions and enhance service delivery, and
- Enhance economic vitality and maintain a unique sense of place by facilitating investment in commercial areas.

The key takeaways from these priorities for purposes of this project and in looking at the permitting function org structure would be 1) good customer service, 2) make it easy to apply for permits and work through the review process, 3) use technology, metrics and process improvement to make the permitting process easier and more efficient, and 4) facilitate the development of commercial areas in the City.

Based on the input we received from interviews and our investigations, we drafted a targeted set of strategic goals for addressing the various opportunities for improvement uncovered during our work. Some of these goals complement and support the highlighted Council Priorities (especially those in red).

- **Address organizational gaps in permitting and improve performance tracking and management**
- Simplify the code in select areas
- **Reduce permitting cycle time for targeted permit types and actions**
- **Make it easier for average citizens to navigate the permitting process**
- Push permitting conflict resolution down from the City Manager level into the organization
- Improve credibility of permitting function at City Council

Staffing needed to achieve these goals?

Recommendation III.1 – Based on the strategic and policy needs of the City and the results obtained from the Workload and Staffing Forecasting Model, right size the staffing level of DS and PW and augment the organization as follows:

1) Create, budget, and recruit for an additional Engineer I position for Public Works-Engineering. This new position would handle permit review and selected CIP tasks.
2) Management Analyst capabilities need to be added for tracking workloads and performance, management reporting, budget and financial analysis, contract management for engineer and consultant contracts and task orders, ADA transition planning, transportation master planning, and overseeing the capital improvement plan.
3) Create or reclassify an existing position to implement a GIS Analyst position. The City does not have a GIS Analyst job description but Appendix B contains the essential duties of this position. In addition, this position can also perform current and long range planning tasks such as transportation planning, CIP, etc.

Woodinville F&R Contract

Woodinville Fire and Rescue (WFR) is a special district that provides fire prevention and suppression and emergency response services to the City of Woodinville and unincorporated areas east of the City either directly or through subcontracting with Eastside Fire & Rescue. A Deputy Fire Marshal is assigned to review permit applications to ensure compliance with relevant fire and building codes. These reviews are conducted alongside reviews performed by DS and PW staff and are held to a similar standard on timeliness. In addition, these applications are usually overseen by a DS planner. Only about 5% of

review tasks involve WFR but approximately 40% of these assigned tasks exceed time standards (usually 14 days but sometimes more or less) although this may be due to recordkeeping errors. The City should ensure that there is some degree of common oversight over all permit review functions, including WFR reviews, so that time standards are better monitored and any record keeping issues are addressed.

> **Recommendation III.2 –** The City should amend the Interlocal Agreement with WFR so that the Director of DS, as delegated by the City, will have direct supervision of the Deputy Fire Marshal for all permit review tasks performed by WFR. All other responsibilities of the Deputy Fire Marshal and any discipline, promotion, annual review functions should continue to be within the authority of WFR. These contract terms should flow through to any subcontracting organizations (i.e., Eastside Fire & Rescue).

IV. Setting and Tracking Performance Targets

In the previous section, we discussed important strategic goals for the permitting function. Among these goals was 1) reduce permitting cycle times for targeted permit types and actions, and 2) improve credibility of permitting function at City Council – which is partly a function of reducing cycle times. In addition to goals, the City should establish targeted performance levels tied to the goals and a performance reporting system to monitor how these goals are attained. These targets and reporting tools can also be used to identify applications and permits that need immediate attention and communicating with City management and elected representatives regarding permitting timeliness and workload levels. This will build confidence and rapport with the City Council. **It should be added that success in land use and development permitting is not just about speed. The quality of analysis, fair and consistent interpretation of codes, providing good public service and, ultimately, the extent that the built environment of Woodinville reflects the values instilled in the comprehensive plan is equally, if not more important, than processing speed.** This section delves into processing speed because this is an area of concern and is tied to providing good public service.

The City's permitting function completes 78% of permitting tasks within established time standards. However, there are certain areas where performance lags such as Public Works plan reviews, Fire plan reviews and permits that involve critical areas, design reviews and large, complicated projects. A more robust performance tracking tool would help in identifying potential problem applications and intervening in a more timely manner.

Strategica, Inc. performed several analyses to determine the extent that City staff are performing review tasks within established standards and found:

- City staff perform 290 different tasks (e.g., plan routing, planning review, review consolidation) for 58 different permit types (e.g., tenant improvement, single family house construction, site development permit). Of these 290 tasks, 226 tasks (or 78%) were, on average, performed within established time standards.
- Specific tasks that most frequently exceeded time standards were fire reviews (exceeding standards 65% of the time) and public works reviews (exceeding standards 59% of the time).

- Permit types that most frequently exceeded time standards (or included processing tasks that exceeded standards) included:

  Anything in a critical area (e.g., wetland)

  Anything that involved a design review especially those where the applicant requested deviations from code standards

  Site development permits

  Site plan reviews (especially those where applicants request deviations from road standards)

  Mechanical permits with planning issues (usually setbacks or height issues)

  Large projects that involved a complex hierarchy of permits

- Tree removal permits are a high-volume application type and usually involve Woodinville homeowners rather than development professionals but these permits are usually processed expeditiously.

This section covers these elements:

- Setting standards and targets
- Tracking and Reporting Performance

Setting Standards and Targets

Standard time durations, or targeted durations, expressed in calendar days are defined for every task configured in Accela. For example, the standard or targeted time is 14 days for each work group

(Building, Fire, Planning, and Public Works) to perform its plan review task for most permit types. State law sets some maximum task durations, such as Completeness Review which may not exceed 28 days (RCW36.70B.070) and maximum time to issue a decision which is 120 days (RCW 36.70B.080). These standard times are meant to be not-to-exceed times, not ideal times. The ideal processing time target for these tasks would be less.

The Accela system uses these time standards to generate due dates for permitting tasks and are part of the workflow system that assigns tasks to staff and provides due date reminders (or widgets) on workstation desktop screens. Most of the current standard time durations are reasonable but some task time standards should be adjusted for critical path tasks that should be monitored closely for purposes of expediting applications and maximizing service to the public.

Overall start-to-finish elapsed times are not actively monitored but a canned report is available in Accela that shows these "days to issuance" statistics. However, a start-to-finish metric is not a useful tool for managing performance since some review tasks are not within the control of City staff. For example, once the City has completed an initial review and requested changes or clarifications, an applicant may, and often does, take weeks or months to respond. In some cases, applicants put a project on hold, rethink it or sell it. What the City should be tracking and reporting is elapsed times for tasks for which they do have control.

Recommendation IV.1 – The City should change time standards for certain critical tasks in the permit review process (All days in calendar days):

Plan Routing. Plan routing is the process of routing newly submitted building and site plans to the reviewing departments (e.g., Development Services, Public Works). Since nearly all plans are submitted online, the routing is also done in digital form. The current standard for plan routing is currently set at 7 days but should be compressed to 3 days.

Completeness Review. A completeness review is performed for all newly submitted applications and plans. Each reviewing department reviews the submittal and determines if all the documentation necessary to perform the actual review is present (i.e., the submittal is "complete"). While State Law sets a maximum of 28 days to determine if an application is complete, the City should strive to determine if an application is complete enough to proceed with the actual review within 7 days of application. This goal is attainable if Permit Technicians are tasked with conducting the completeness review (See recommendation V.5).

Review Consolidation. Review consolidation is the step in the process at which all department reviews are complete, and comments are bundled together by the Project Manager (usually a Planner) for forwarding to the applicant. Review consolidation may result in approval of the plans or a request for revised plans or clarifications to deal with comments and corrections noted by the reviewing departments. Because department reviews are done in parallel, the number of days to get to Review Consolidation will be determined by the slowest reviewing department. The standard for review consolidation is currently set at 7 days in most cases but should be compressed to 5 days.

Permit Issuance. Currently, the standard for this task is 7 days in most cases but should be set at 4 days.

Recommendation IV.2 – The City should publish the above time standards on the City website and also post a report on actual times. Start by developing internal monthly reports showing percentage of applications meeting the targets. Adjust targets as needed, then begin publishing reports on the City website when the City is confident about meeting the standards.

Tracking and Reporting Performance

Workflow data in Accela is a valuable resource for tracking performance. Every task assigned to and completed by each staff member includes the date assigned and date completed, creating a history of who did what and how long it took to complete each task. However, systems and tools for tracking and reporting performance (measured by elapsed time) are a mixed bag. Accela does not currently provide any useful reporting tools except for a "days to issuance" report but, for reasons already provided, this is not a useful performance management tool. Accela does have a built-in Ad Hoc Report Writer and supports third-party report writing tools such as Crystal Reports. These tools make it possible to track performance, run reports on a timed schedule, and have PDF copies of reports automatically emailed to key staff.

Development Services generates a monthly report showing permit volumes, construction valuation and a status report on some large, high-profile projects. A 'late tasks' report can be generated but it mostly shows permit tasks for dormant and completed projects or tasks that are not in the control of City staff so the utility of this report is mostly limited to housekeeping work such as purging long-dormant applications or tasks for completed projects that were never closed out (i.e., many inspections). Public Works maintains a spreadsheet that tracks due dates for reviews assigned to them. Development Services staff maintain a variety of Excel spreadsheets or MS-Word documents for tracking their workload but these are personal tools and, while useful for that purpose, they do not provide an overall view of the permitting workload nor are they visible to department management. What is missing is a real-time tracking tool for identifying processing tasks that are exceeding standard times and directing management attention to these out-of-standard tasks and the most critical applications and tasks.

Recommendation IV.3 – The City should activate the start/stop processing clock in Accela to track the number of days reviews are active with City staff and the number of days it takes for the applicant to respond to requests for information and to resubmit plans in response to corrections required by City staff.

Recommendation IV.4 – The City should implement a "Red Line" report to track applications where tasks are exceeding standard time allocations by more than 7 days. For example, if a building plan review is more than 7 days past its due date, this should be reported to both the reviewing department's management (e.g., Development Services, Public Works) and the Office of the City Manager. This will provide an early warning system to identify overdue tasks in real-time and direct management's attention to these tasks so they can be worked by staff or whatever logjam is occurring can be cleared. This type of report may have to be configured using Crystal Reports and may require a consultant to configure and test the report and train users. Specifications for this report are included in Appendix C.

V. Getting Work Done Faster

This section discusses Woodinville's key work processes and ways to make these processes more efficient, reduce turnaround times, achieve better outcomes, and realize the City's strategic goals that address work processes.

Woodinville has been fortunate in having the Accela system implemented prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic since Accela supports applications being entered on-line, without the need to come to City Hall. Digital submittal of plans also means no need to handle paper. On-line review in Accela and the Bluebeam document collaboration and editing tool allowed staff to work from home while City Hall was shut down.

The original installation and configuration of Accela, however, introduced process steps that automatically introduce delay. Potentially useful modules in the software were never implemented, and review practices and procedures outside the system can add additional days to review and approval times.

The section covers these processes:

- Improving application forms and checklists
- Keeping applications flowing
- Expediting payment of fees
- Expediting determinations of completeness
- Expediting and simplifying review consolidation
- Refine the scope of the DRC

The City's permitting system, Accela, has instilled good management practices such as workflow and a paperless process but potentially useful functions were never implemented, and review practices and procedures outside the system can add additional days to review and approval times. Improvements in application materials, initial completeness reviews, documenting review findings and decisions and triaging applications can yield additional benefits.

- Streamline simple building permit decisions
- Marking digital plan sets
- Permit triage

Improving Application Forms and Checklists

The point of entry into the permitting system is an Application along with supporting plans and documents. Once an application is taken, the first process involves examining the application and supporting documents in a step called the 'completeness review.' This completeness review can take anywhere from a couple of hours to several days. Cities and counties will try and expedite the process and help applicants by publishing checklists showing everything that needs to be submitted to facilitate the review process. The content and quality of these application forms and checklists can greatly affect an applicant's ability to submit an application that will pass Completeness Review the first time and not trigger requests to submit additional documentation. Reviewing correction memos from failed Completeness Reviews since 2018 show that site plans are often defective and require revisions to be acceptable.

Recommendation V.1 – The City should revise application checklists to call out requirements that have in the past been missed and cause failed Completeness Reviews. These checklists should match with checklists used by City staff to determine if an application is complete. Commonly missed requirements include:

Site plan requirements. A number of cities in the Seattle area publish site plan requirements on their websites, which could be used as a guide for requiring better information and illustrative diagrams on issues such as contour lines (existing and proposed), setbacks, easements, building envelopes and height calculations, boundaries

of Critical Areas, and other natural and manmade features of the site. Appendix D includes links to examples of site plan requirements from the City of Bothell which provide a good model.

External mechanical equipment. Community concerns about noisy air conditioners and bulky, unisightly rooftop equipment have sparked code changes requiring additional review for setbacks and visual and noise screening – something that homeowners may not be ready to deal with. The city should amend mechanical permit application checklists to require illustrative diagrams showing required setbacks and screening to expedite Planning review of setbacks and rooftop screening for external equipment.

Keeping Applications Flowing

Processing applications is a team effort among planners, engineers, plan checkers, inspectors and permit techs. Many tasks that are vital to the smooth flow of permits are performed by Permit Technicians. These tasks include creating fee invoices, routing new applications for Completeness Review and Plan Review, routing plans and resubmittals, and marking applications as Ready to Issue. If these routine tasks are delayed, planners, plan checkers and engineers will not be able to see upcoming tasks on their to-do lists, and applications may suffer unnecessary delay.

During our investigations, we observed times when new applications stacked up in processing queues when Permit Techs were on vacation or ill. Delayed projects all incurred an equal amount of delay and downstream reviewers received a flood of new tasks when staff returned to the office.

Recommendation V.2 – The City should implement procedures to keep applications flowing if Permit Technicians are out of the office, especially with unpredictable COVID-19 illnesses. If a

Permit Technician is absent for more than three days, the remaining Tech, or one of the planners, should be assigned to check the absent Tech's task queue and move the stalled tasks along. In the event of a lengthy planned absence, such as two weeks' vacation, Development Services management should assign the Tech's duties to other Techs and planners on a rotating basis.

Expediting Payment of Fees

Payment of fees is an essential part of the permit process. Most application types require an up-front application or plan check fee that must be paid before any further review work can begin. While Accela can calculate such fees for some permit types from the information entered in the application, some application types require a Permit Technician to prepare a manual fee invoice in Accela, once an applicant has finished entering the application.

This introduces two kinds of delay. Because the Permit Technician may not be able to create an invoice immediately after completion of the online application (e.g., applications filed during evenings and weekends), it may take hours or days for the Permit Tech to see that an application is ready to have the fee invoice prepared, depending on when the Techs are back in the office and checking their to-do lists.

Next, once the invoice is created in the system, the applicant must be notified to pay it. Again, it may take hours or days for the applicant to see the notification and pay the invoice before the review can actually begin. A similar laborious process occurs after all reviews are completed and all final fees are calculated.

Recommendation V.3 – The City should configure Accela to automatically compute up-front fees for all application types, so an applicant can pay them immediately, at the time of online

application, without waiting for a Tech to create an invoice. If the applicant chooses to pay online, the application can move automatically to the Completeness Review task in the workflow thereby kicking off the review process. If paying by check, workflow is held until receipt of the check.

Recommendation V.4 – During department reviews, staff should add and update all fee categories from their own departments, that are required for issuance or approval. Such fees should be immediately available for online payment by the applicant, without having to wait for a Permit Tech to prepare an invoice before payment is allowed on Accela.

Expediting Determination of Completeness

State law (RCW36.70B.070) requires a Determination of Completeness (DoC) (i.e., the application is either complete or it's not) to be issued within 28 days of application. While this is the upper time limit, in practice, DoCs should be issued well before the 28 day clock is up. Certain types of common applications took an average of more than 10 days, independent of whether it was determined to be complete or incomplete, as shown in the table below:

Permit Type	Avg Days	# of Permits
Amendment	14	7
Commercial Addition	9	7
Commercial New	4	2
Commercial TI	15	58
Commercial TI - Combo	8	9
Commercial Wall	5	3
Design Review	13	18
Final Plat	17	2
Mixed Use TI	4	9
Multi-Family Addition	16	2
Multi-Family TI	14	2
Preliminary Plat	24	2
Residential Addition	12	22
Residential Addition - Combo	14	5
Residential New	33	12
Residential New - Combo	18	7
Residential TI	4	16
Residential TI - Combo	4	6
Residential Wall	12	8
SEPA Application	37	13
Site Development	24	23
Site Plan Review	11	7

Accela routes the DoC task to the assigned project manager (usually a planner), who then works this task into their current workload. Accela's to-do list dashboard reminds them of how many days are left within the standard time duration of 28 days.

After reviewing an application, the project manager prepares a signed, boilerplate Application Submittal Notification memo in MS-Word, saying the application is complete or incomplete, listing any additional information needed (if any), and emails it to the applicant. The applicant must submit revised plans with the required information, after which the DoC process begins all over again and continues until the application is deemed to be "complete."

In the past, when applicants brought paper applications and plan sets to the counter at City Hall, the DoC would be done on the spot by a Permit Technician, with possible assistance from other staff. Applications that were deemed "incomplete" would be rejected right at the counter, and the applicant provided with instructions on what to provide, without the application being entered into the system.

With the advent of online applications (accelerated by COVID 19 office closures) an average of two to three weeks of delays are added to some types of applications, which were previously processed in minutes. When faced with tight upcoming deadlines on other projects in one's Accela task queue, having 28 days to perform a Determination of Completeness may seem like a luxury and encourage deferring these mundane tasks.

A DoC is intended to designate an application as complete enough to begin plan review, but we observed some DoC memos containing comments that would normally be generated during the plan review phase (e.g., a missing ADA-compliant door hardware schedule).

> **Recommendation V.5 –** The City should have Permit Technicians perform completeness reviews, calling on specialized staff only as necessary. In many jurisdictions, it has been customary for decades for Techs to perform this task. Notification back to the applicant can be

sent through Accela's Communication Manager, without the additional work of preparing a formal signed memo in MS-Word.

For this to be successful, applicants should have informative application checklists that highlight what is required to make a complete application (See recommendation V.1 for more on this). Permit Technicians should have training and instructions on how to quickly check an application, without making judgments that should be reserved for higher level plan reviewers.

Feedback from department reviews should be used to fine-tune completeness criteria and application documents over time. The combination of having Permit Technicians perform DoCs and doing notifications through Accela instead of generating memos in MS-Word has the potential to trim weeks off processing times for many applications.

Expediting and Simplifying Review Consolidations

During review of an application, planners, engineers, and other staff review a wide range of submitted plans, drawings, and supporting documents to ensure the proposed project complies with adopted codes, ordinances, and engineering standards. To keep track of requirements that have been reviewed and to list comments and corrections that must be made, each reviewer in each department crafts their own review spreadsheet, allowing them to start and stop plan reviews over a period of time, returning and picking up where they left off.

Reviewers also prepare their own comment memos containing requested plan changes and corrections as well as other notes. Since these spreadsheets, memos and notes are prepared using different formats and applications, it is difficult for the project manager, who is responsible for consolidating all this review material, to combine it into one document to be forwarded to the applicant.

In addition, review consolidation memos frequently read as a friendly list of comments and suggestions and can be read as a list of "suggestions" for discussion, rather than a mandatory list of actionable corrections designed to encourage applicants to comply with the requirements to move their applications along.

> **Recommendation V.6 –** The City should adopt a common spreadsheet format for use by all reviewers. Each department should forward their correction spreadsheet to the project manager, who would consolidate the rows from reviewer spreadsheets into a Correction Action List spreadsheet to be printed as a PDF and emailed to the applicant. This will save time in reformatting and wordsmithing combined memos and presenting the items in a consistent format from one review cycle to the next.

The following illustrates a recommended format, including a column for Plan Review Cycle. If corrections aren't made on a resubmittal, the cycle is incremented to show that the item remains to be resolved.

City of Woodinville
Development Services Department
17301 NE 133rd St
Woodinville, WA 98072

CORRECTION ACTION LIST

	Application Number(s):			**XYZ21099**				
	Location:			**17301 131st Ave NE**				
	Date of Correction Action List:			**#########**	**Review Cycle: 2**			
#	**Comment Date**	**Dept**	**User**	**Category**	**Source Documents, Dates, Pages**	**Issue/Correction**	**Cycle**	**Met**
1	9/1/2021	PLN	AMANDAA	Height Calcs	Design Addendum for Building A, 4/4/2019, P. 3 	The height calculations provided in the Design Addendum 2 for Building A do not appear to have the correct average. The average of 48.33, 47, 51, and 47.15 is 48.37, not 48.33 as shown on page 3 of the Design Addendum 2.	1	YES
2	9/1/2021	PLN	AMANDAA	Height Calcs	Design Review Packet, 9/18/2018, P. 30	Please provide updated building sections showing the height of the buildings from the average finished grade, like the diagrams provided on page 30 of the original Design Review Packet submitted September 18, 2018	1	YES
3	9/1/2021	PLN	AMANDAA	Parking	Parking Reduction Request, 1/10/2019, P. ?	The Parking Reduction Request dated January 10, 2019 states that 400 parking stalls will be provided, however the Design Addendum 2 states that there will be 399 stalls. Provide consistent numbers.	1	NO
4	9/1/2021	PLN	AMANDAA	Parking	Design Addendum 2, 7/1/2019, P. ?	Pursuant to WMC 21.44.060 bicycle parking is required to be provided at a rate of 1 stall per 20 units of residential and 1 stall per 2,000 square feet of restaurant and retail. Additionally, enclosed bicycle storage is required at a rate of 1 stall per 2 units of residential and 1 stall per 4,000 square feet of retail and restaurant space. Please XXX	1	NO

In addition, text in the Issue/Correction column should read as declarative requirements, including specific code wording to guide the applicant about meeting requirements. For example, the items about height calculation above should state the maximum allowed by code and the method used by code to calculate height.

Refine the Scope of the Design Review Committee (DRC)

The DRC is an advisory committee with no direct decision-making authority. The DRC hears Design Review applications requesting deviations from codes and standards. Preparation for a DRC meeting often means preparing voluminous meeting exhibits and packets that consume considerable staff and applicant time yet do not result in any material decision point or progress towards ultimate application approval (or denial). While the DRC may have some utility as a deliberative body for refining City design standards, the current scope is too broad.

> **Recommendation V.7 –** The City should reduce the scope of the DRC to a standards setting body (which would then feed into code amendments) and should not be used in the permit review process.

Streamline Simple Building Permit Decisions

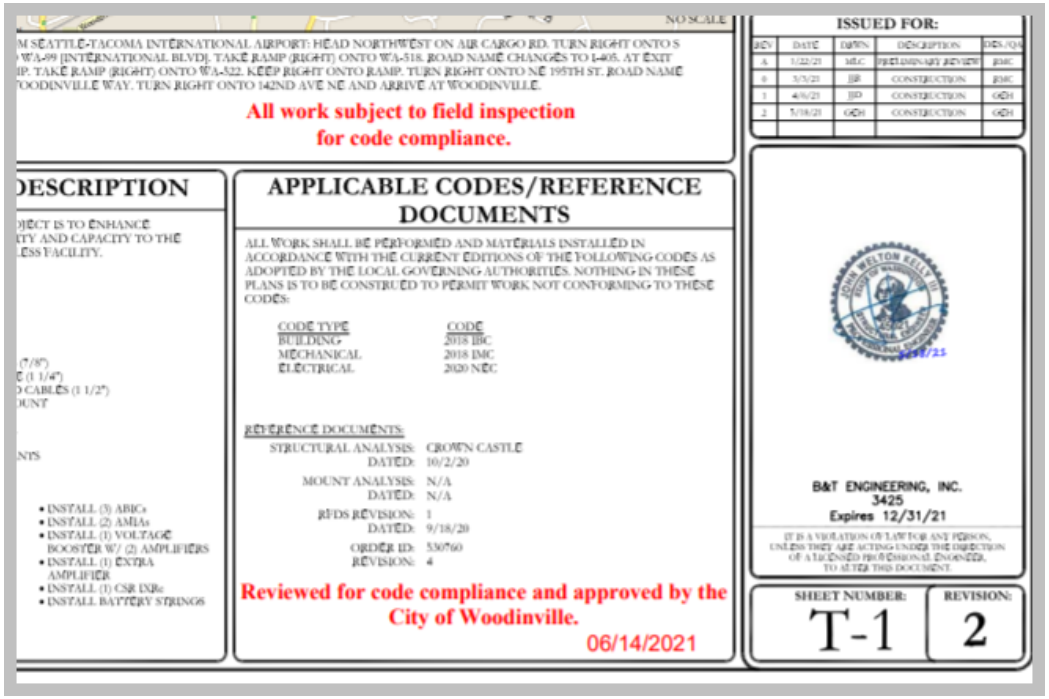
It is common practice for planners to generate an individualized, signed decision memo in MS-Word for some minor building permits (such as a single-family residence) that have no Zoning, Public Works, or Fire complications. Unlike more complicated planning applications, for which the Woodinville Municipal Code requires a written decision, these are simple ministerial actions.

This extra level of documentation to approve simple permits is not a common practice. Staff in other jurisdictions simply review the plans, digitally stamp them approved by the Planning Department, and record approval in the permit system.

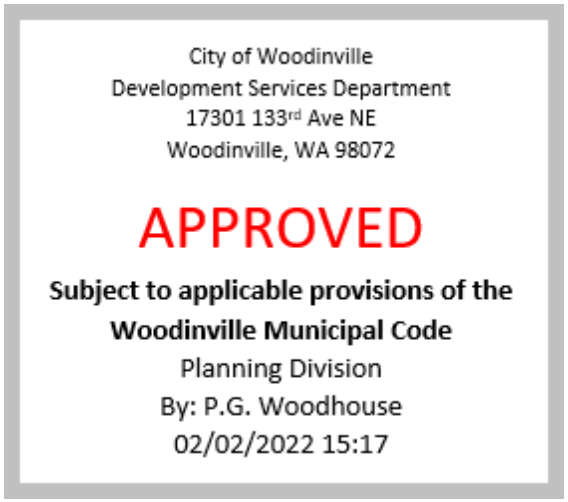
Recommendation V.8 – The City should refrain from preparing approval memos for simple permits to free up time for more complicated projects. Staff can simply stamp plans as 'approved' and issue the permit.

Marking Digital Plan Sets

In the past when paper plans were the typical medium, reviewers would use rubber stamps on plan drawings and other documents to signify approval. Since going paperless, City staff review and mark up drawings electronically using Bluebeam software. Some reviewers signify approval in simple text boxes on drawings, such as the approval shown below (this was approved by a plan checker), while reviewers in other departments don't stamp approved drawings at all.

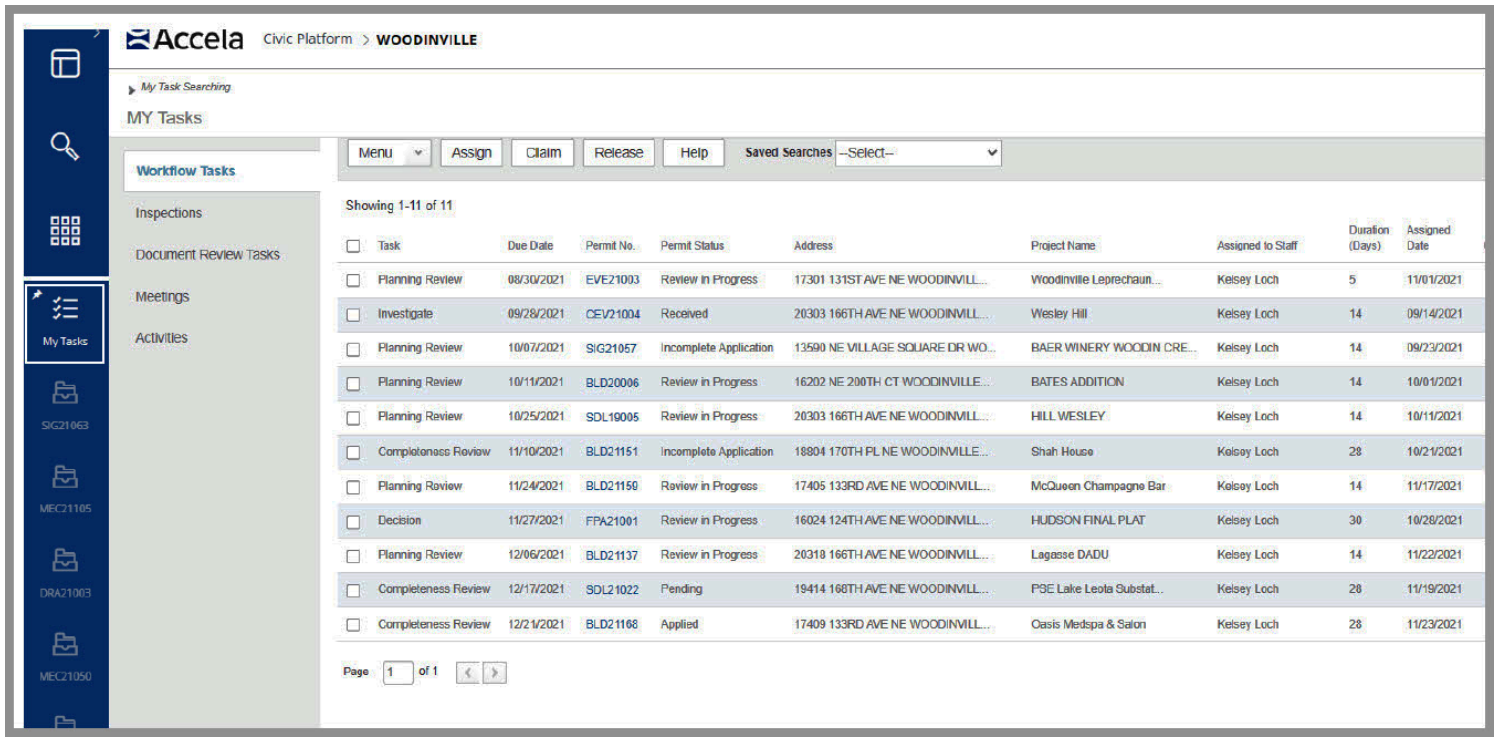


Recommendation V.9 – Reviewers in all departments should be equipped with digital approval stamps, of a consistent design across all departments, including the name of the approver, date/time stamp, and applicable wording and disclaimers, which can be applied in Bluebeam to applicable sheets in the approved plans. Such stamps can then be "burned into" the PDF file to help prevent future alteration. Below is an example of such a stamp. Stamping individual sheets also verifies that a reviewer has seen and approved each applicable sheet, instead of simply commenting on plans in a memo.



Permit Triage

Reviewers, whether from Development Services or Public Works, plan their work weeks using the Accela to-do list, shown below. The Due Date column shows the calculated due date, based on the date the task was assigned to the staff member and the standard Duration (Days) configured in Accela for that task.



Tasks that are getting close to, or over, the Due Date, tend to be given higher priority. Tasks such as Completeness Reviews, which Accela allocates a standard time of 28 days to complete, may drop in perceived importance.

For new tasks showing up on the to-do list, it may be difficult to tell how long they may take to complete. For example, a Completeness Review may take minutes, but a Public Works review on a complicated site development (SDL) application may take days of concentrated work.

Without a sense of how long a task will actually take, and by working on tasks strictly in order of Due Date, reviewers may be tempted to put off such tasks until closer to the Accela-assigned Due Date. Simple tasks that could be dispatched quickly linger in the system in favor of those approaching due dates. In many cases, simple tasks or permits can be triaged out and quickly dispatched thereby reducing overall turnaround times. Some jurisdictions will allocate a day or an afternoon to the easy permits and tasks just to get them finished and simplify the workload.

> **Recommendation V.10 –** City staff should frequently perform permit triage when new tasks come on their to-do list by asking "How simple will this task be?" and "Can I dispatch this one right now?" to sign off simple tasks quickly for the benefit of downstream tasks and to reduce overall time to permit issuance. In addition, should consider setting aside an afternoon or morning a week to dispatch simple permit applications.

VI. Getting More Value from Accela

Accela is currently used as a simple portal for receiving applications via Accela Citizen Access (ACA) (i.e., the public portal) and as a basic workflow engine to help staff perform essential tasks such as reviews, approval/issuance, and inspections. Out of 87 total application types configured in Accela, 48 (mostly Building) may currently be applied for through ACA, while 39 (mostly Planning) may not. During the Accela implementation in 2018, staff decided not to include these application types on ACA because of the small number of applications and the complexity of determining which application types are required for a project. Instead, applicants contact Planning staff by phone and email and schedule a pre-application conference to receive guidance on application requirements. To apply, applicants fill out a PDF application form and email it with PDFs of plans and other required documents to a Permit Tech who then creates the new application in Accela and uploads plans and documents.

Accela has the potential to automate and improve the permitting process more than is the case currently. Improvements should be made in communications with applicants, document uploading and downloading and document management.

Apart from the initial creation of the application and upload of plans, much of the process details, reviews, and documents appear to be performed outside Accela in email and Word and Excel files stored in Microsoft OneDrive (a cloud-based document hosting service).

This section discusses the following:

- Using Accela for Uploading/downloading all documents
- Consolidated document storage
- Including consultants in system workflow
- Including owner/project sponsors in review comments
- Designating the project manager as “assigned to” for applications in Accela
- Entering conditions of approval in Accela
- Identifying code deviations in Accela
- Staff training

Using Accela for Uploading/Downloading of Documents

Accela's document upload/download and cloud storage capabilities are not being effectively utilized. Accela has the capability to handle uploading of plans, application documents, revised plans and also downloading of marked-up plans for correction and approved plans. However, many documents continue to be exchanged between applicants and staff by email, with no central record of these document transactions. This also limits the ability to share documents among planning staff including sharing of emails from applicants.

> **Recommendation VI.1 –** All documents uploaded from and downloaded to the applicant should come through the ACA portal, not email. In addition to initial application documents, this should include corrective action lists and drawings marked up with corrections, resubmittals of revised plans from the applicant, and downloads of approved plans upon issuance.
>
> Using the ACA for document transfer preserves a record of transactions from authorized system users and allows automatic versioning of documents that may otherwise become difficult to identify and retrieve. Notifications from Accela can alert applicants that corrections and approved plans are available on ACA and the system can track when and by whom documents are retrieved.

Consolidating Document Storage

Documents associated with the life of a permit, from application to review, approval, issuance, inspection, and close-out are scattered, partly in Accela's cloud-based document repository and partly on multiple OneDrive folders that are not accessible across department boundaries. This makes it

difficult to search for documents and for specific document versions that may need to be retrieved for Public Information Requests and researching document history. Currently, all documents for an application are jumbled together with dozens of other files with unintelligible filenames in the same location.

> **Recommendation VI.2 –** The City should consolidate all document storage for an application in Accela, instead of partly in Accela and partly on multiple OneDrive systems. In addition, the City should implement a standard set of virtual folders for each application type in Accela cloud document storage to facilitate filing and retrieval of documents.

Including Consultants in System Workflow

Many applications require external review by outside consultants (Structural, Geotech, Drainage, Arborist, Traffic, etc.). Such tasks have not been configured in Accela or are not being used, so information about which consultants worked on plans, dates of involvement, turn-around time, and working documents generated by the consultants are not being entered into Accela. Instead, this information is stored in email and on OneDrive. This makes it difficult to assess how consultant reviews affect overall turnaround times and how a consultant's work was woven into City staff decision-making. Currently, it is difficult to determine if a consultant was involved in a project at all due to the lack of documentation in Accela.

> **Recommendation VI.3 –** The City should add all external consultants as related parties with specifically defined professional "roles" (such as GeoTech, Arborist, Traffic, etc.) in Accela Contacts. This would allow staff to view external consultants for an application in the Accela Contacts list. Tasks should be created in the workflow for each type of consultant showing dates

assigned, due dates, and completion dates. In addition, standard virtual folders should be created in Accela cloud document storage for consultant working documents.

Including Owner/Project Sponsors in Review Comments

Correction Action Lists generated by City staff during the review consolidation phase specify changes, corrections or additional information that must be provided for a project to be in compliance with applicable codes, standards, and ordinances. Correction Action lists are typically sent to a project's design team (i.e., architect and/or engineer) but not necessarily to project owners or sponsors. This is a problem because architects and engineers do not always communicate back to the project owners in a timely manner or they withhold information.

Recommendation VI.4 – The City should send Correction Action lists to all the contacts on record in Accela for the application to make sure all members of an applicant's project team, including owners and sponsors of record, are aware of requirements in the list.

Designating the Project Manager as "Assigned To" for applications in Accela

Accela allows one user to be "Assigned To" the overall application, but individual tasks in the workflow are assigned to individuals in different departments who will perform those tasks. Typically, the Permit Technician who initially processed the application becomes the "Assigned To" individual even though a planner assumes the project manager role for the life of the permit.

Because the planner is not listed as the "Assigned To" individual, it is difficult to generate reports that accurately list all open applications for which the planner is designated as project manager. For

example, one planner in Development Services had 11 active tasks on their Accela to-do list but had 32 applications for which they were designated as project manager. Only the active tasks show up on the to-do list and the planner has to resort to manually looking up and keeping ad hoc notes to know the status of the other 21 projects.

> **Recommendation VI.5 –** The City should enact a policy whereby a project manager should update the application record with their UserID when an application is first received or the assignment is transferred to another planner. This will facilitate generating reports showing all the assigned workload for a planner.

Entering Conditions of Approval in Accela

Nearly every permit approved by the City includes conditions of approval. Some may be simple "canned" conditions from the Building Code, where others control allowed uses, the building envelope, materials, required road and drainage infrastructure, and restrictions imposed in Critical Areas. Conditions of approval can be negotiated with the applicant, required by staff, or imposed in a decision by the Hearing Examiner. Conditions of approval may affect project construction or they can influence future development or use of the property well into the future.

Accela has the capability to store conditions of approval to allow them to be applied to related projects, and to automatically pass down certain conditions from parent to child applications (e.g., building permits issued for an approved final plat). Conditions can also require a sign-off by a planner, engineer, or building inspector indicating they've been satisfied allowing future approvals to proceed.

Currently, many conditions of approval are stored in MS-Word documents (such as written decisions) in OneDrive folders, where they may be overlooked in the future as staff may not know or remember

where to look. This can result in conditions not being implemented and the potential for serious conflict and litigation.

> **Recommendation VI.6 –** City staff should enter conditions of approval in Accela, especially for complex projects for which conditions need to be checked and enforced over time and where conditions imposed now may affect future development or changes in existing projects over time.

Identifying Code Deviations in Accela

Many applicants request deviations from published zoning, development, Fire, Public Works, and other codes, ordinances, and standards. Examples include requests to increase the number of housing units above code allowances, reducing building setbacks and parking requirements, and reducing street width.

While City codes and ordinances allow deviations to be considered on a case-by-case basis, deviations typically require negotiations between applicants and the City and/or consultant involvement. This invariably adds to the turnaround time for processing permit applications. Accela currently has no way to track which applicants are asking for deviations.

> **Recommendation VI.7 –** The City should add data fields in the Accela Summary screen to clearly identify that the application includes a requested deviation from standards. Added fields should include the type(s) of deviations requested and a note field with a brief description. These additional data fields will facilitate generating an Accela report listing deviation requests and keeping tabs on potentially excessive turnaround times.

Staff Training

When the current version of Accela was implemented in 2018, the City worked with an Arizona-based third party consulting firm called IK Consulting to configure permit types, fee calculations, workflows, printed forms, and other components of the system to the City's needs. IK Consulting also provided training at that time. Since that time there has been no formal user training for City staff (e.g., using the ad-hoc report writer, system administration). Newly hired City staff have either learned the system on their own or received some informal training by their peers. The lack of a more formal, systematic training approach will result in misuse of the system, unusable data and missing out on new system capabilities.

> **Recommendation VI.8 –** New City permitting staff should receive formal Accela training from Accela, IK Consulting, or other Accela-approved training vendor and not just rely on an informal and unstructured mentoring by more senior staff. Periodic refresher training every 18-24 months, from an approved vendor, should also be provided.

VII. Serving the Public Better

While recognizing that the ultimate goal of land use regulation and permit review is adherence to code, City development standards and a built environment that is consistent with the vision of City policy makers, the City is also in the business of serving the public. To the extent that Development Services and Public Works can maximize service to the public without compromising their regulatory mission, they should make that effort. This section discusses some options for the City to improve their public service.

- Pre-app conferences
- Help for the average citizen

The City should strive for a better balance between code compliance and public service. To the extent that compliance isn't compromised, there should be some room to better help all applicants but especially those who are not in the building trade or are not using design professionals.

Pre-Application Conferences

The City offers every applicant an opportunity to participate in a pre-application conference. This is a conference designed to alert the applicant to potential issues and concerns regarding the site and the proposed project. Common issues raised at these conferences include critical areas (e.g., wetlands, stream buffers), traffic impacts, design review issues (e.g., building facades, landscaping), site issues (e.g., street dimensions), infrastructure availability, and other Code requirements.

While many applicants choose to participate in a conference, some do not, only to realize later in the application review process that certain issues and requirements could have been surfaced early on and now require additional time and cost to resolve.

Recommendation VII.1 – The City should pro-actively reach out and require pre-application conferences for applicants in the following situations:

- Developers, builders, and contractors who have not previously worked in Woodinville and who may not be familiar with City code requirements.
- Sites shown as being in Critical Areas, according to Critical Area maps maintained by the City.
- Any combination of application types including
    - Critical Area Determination (CAD)
    - Critical Area Alteration (CAE)
    - Land Use Approval (LUA)
    - Site Development (SDL)
    - Design Review (DRA)
    - Deviation of Decision (DEC)
- Homeowners applying for permits without the help of design professionals.

Help for the Average Citizen

Applying for and working through the permit process can be daunting for homeowners and citizens who have never been through the process before and are unfamiliar with City codes and ordinances and with the various steps in the review process. Commonly asked questions include:

1. What kinds of permits do I need for my project?
2. What kind of information do I need to supply with an application?
3. How much will it cost?
4. How long will it take to get the permit?
5. How can I see that my application is on-track through the system?

Recommendation VII.2 – The City should develop informational PDFs that can be downloaded from the City website, listing requirements for typical single-family residential projects: additions, remodels, garages, sheds, decks, and retaining walls. Sketches and sample illustrations for site plans, deck details, height calculation, and rockeries would be helpful for unsophisticated applicants. While the City website already includes application forms and checklists, material specific to frequently built projects would provide enhanced assistance for members of the general public and those not involved in the building or design trades.

Recommendation VII.3 – The City should implement a permit fee calculator in Accela Community Access (ACA), (i.e., the public portal to Accela) to allow citizens to enter information about a proposed project and print out an estimate based on information entered.

Recommendation VII.4 – The City should configure the Communication Manager function within Accela to send automatic emails to applicants and others associated with an application whenever a user signs off a task signifying a status changes (e.g., completeness review, plans routed) instead of creating memos in Word or writing up emails regarding the status change. ACA also includes a basic progress indicator showing the applicant which tasks are underway, completed, and yet to be done

Recommendation VII.5 – Assigned project managers should reach out to the homeowner or citizen on applications that appear to be from unsophisticated applicants especially if they are not using professional engineers or architects. A brief phone call early in the process, introducing oneself as the project manager and asking if there are any questions can be a big help in allaying fears about the process. In the days before electronic submittal, this was accomplished when the applicant brought paperwork to apply at the counter. This recommendation should include a caveat that the City cannot replace the role of engineers or

architects in designing a project, but the City can improve communication about expediting or explaining the process.

VIII. Geographic Information System (GIS)

Woodinville licenses a suite of GIS software from the Environmental Sciences Research Institute (ESRI), including desktop ArcGIS Pro and web-based ArcGIS Online. GIS offers enormous potential to display maps of physical and environmental layers for all staff to use in reviewing applications. In addition, GIS data can be available 24/7 on a public website allowing citizens and applicants to see:

- Property information and environmental constraints such as Critical Areas, floodplains, and steep slopes
- Available city services such as water, sewer, and storm drainage
- Current permit applications and projects in the neighborhood

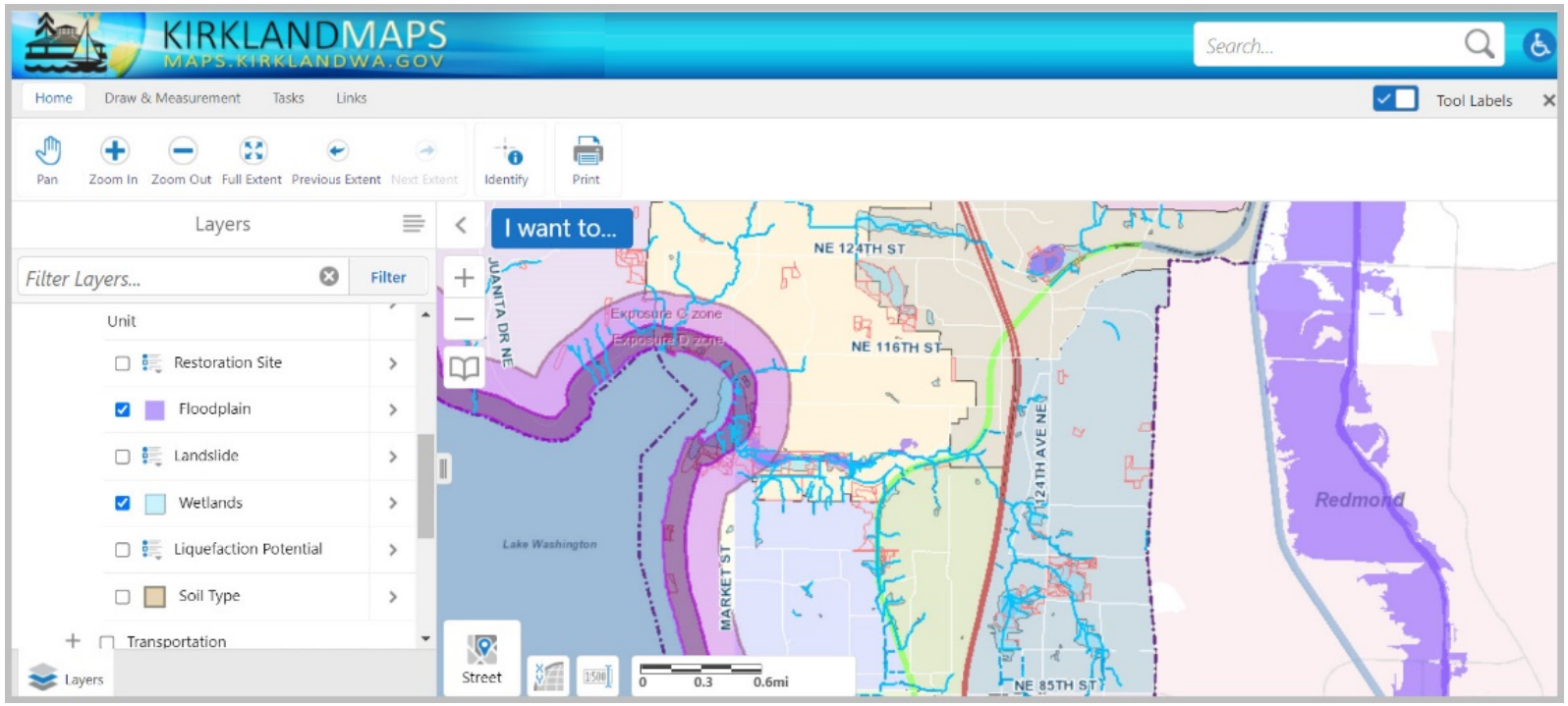
This section discusses the following:

- Public Access to GIS
- Critical Areas
- Addressing point layer
- Utility availability maps
- Active Projects Map Page on City Website
- Accessing documents via GIS map

The City has GIS but does not use it to its potential. GIS enhancements could provide more information to the public, better information on site characteristics that could impact development and information that could help permitting staff perform their jobs better.

Public Access to GIS

Many of Woodinville's neighboring cities offer extensive online GIS data to citizens via city websites. Below is an example from Kirkland (KirklandMaps).



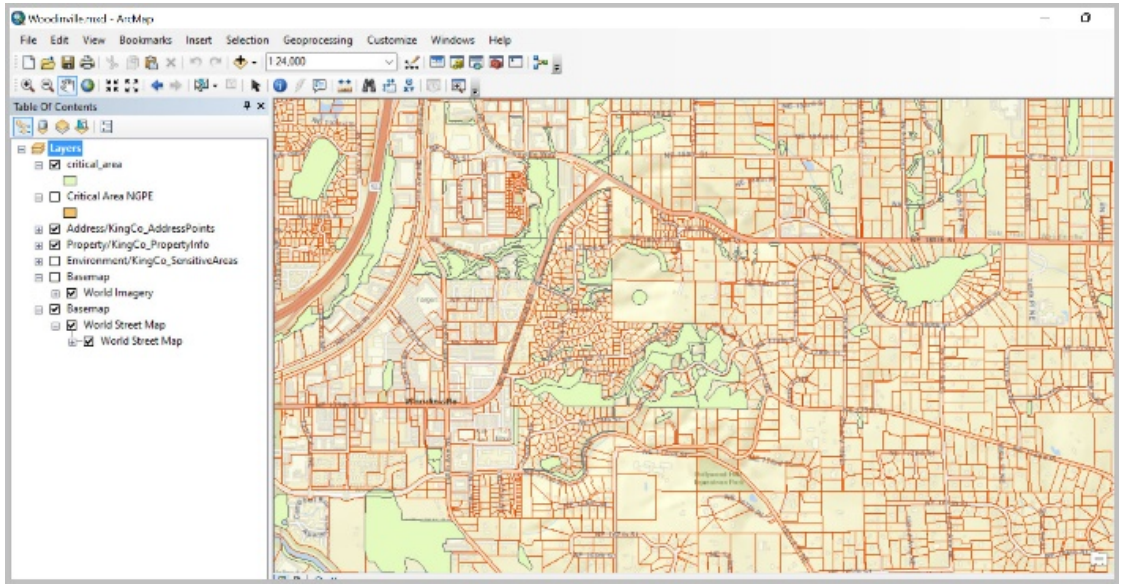
No city-maintained GIS website is currently available to the public or to Development Services staff in Woodinville. To research physical and environmental conditions on a site during permit review, Development Services uses King County's browser-based iMAP application and limited city layers viewed through desktop GIS (which stopped working recently and no one has followed up to fix).

Recommendation VIII.1 – The City should implement web-based GIS for both public users on the City website and for internal staff use in all departments. Use surrounding communities as a guide for the data layers and types of services provided. A number of GIS vendors offer packaged, ESRI-compatible website designs that can be easily integrated into the City's website. Initial contacts should include:

Heather Glock, Account Rep for City of Woodinville
Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI)
Phone: 360-754-4727
111 Market St NE, Suite 250
Olympia, WA 98501
Email: hglock@esri.com

Critical Areas

City staff use King County iMAP to research locations in the city limits. Many of the data layers, including Critical Areas in iMAP, cover unincorporated King County but are inaccurate and incomplete within the city limits. King County's Critical Areas map was last updated in 1990 but the current City Critical Areas layer (light green-shaded areas below) is updated by Public Works regularly as new plats and project as-builts are received. It's an excellent data source about one of Woodinville's most difficult natural constraints, yet virtually no one can access it.



Recommendation VIII.2 – The City should install a Critical Areas map layer in a new web-based ArcGIS application for use by both public and internal staff. The public GIS interface should include banners, pop-ups, or other visual devices to alert new users to the site about new availability of Critical Areas layers.

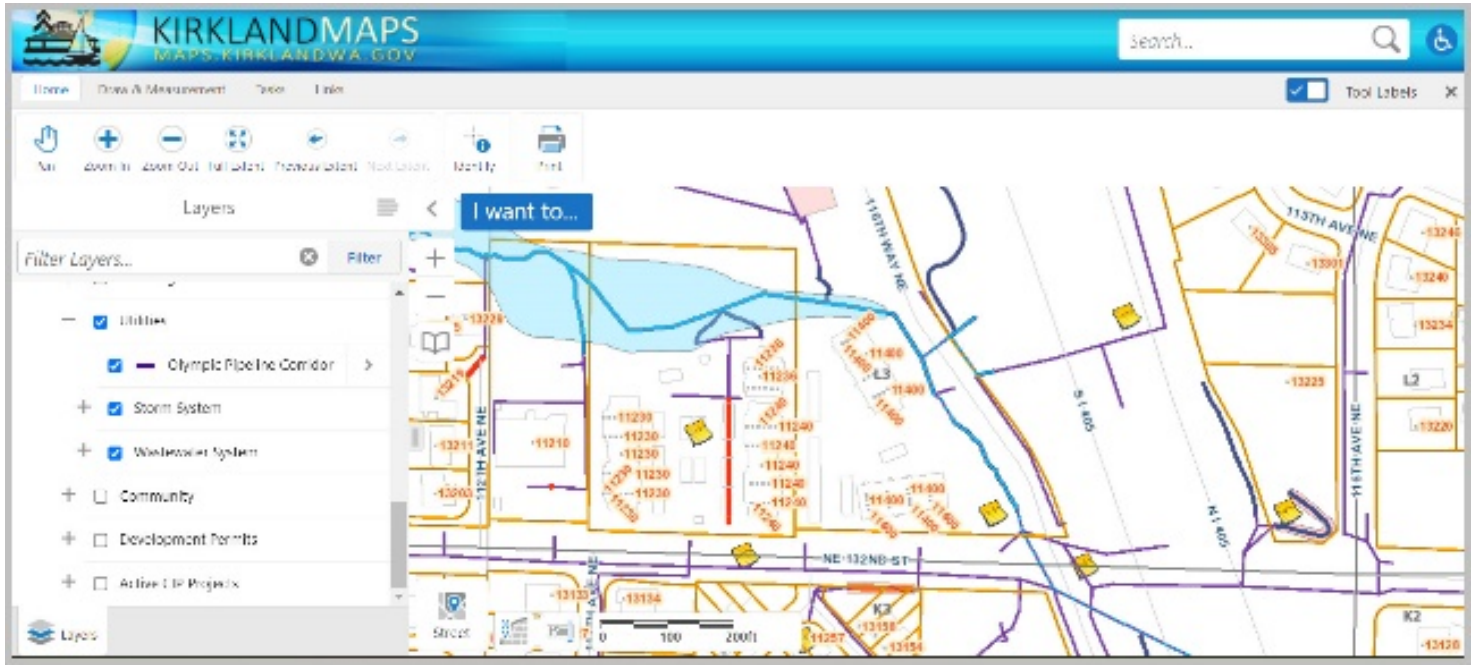
Addressing Point Layer

Looking up properties on a map by address is an everyday task for most City staff yet staff must rely on King County iMAP's parcel map layer to do so. While the King County Assessor maintains an up-to-date parcel base layer, it may be missing address points because the Assessor needs only one address for the parcel, but the City is responsible for addressing and may assign many addresses to a multi-tenant building on that single parcel, addressed off different streets.

> **Recommendation VIII.3 –** The City should implement and maintain an address point layer in GIS and display of that layer in both public and internal web-based GIS applications.

Utility Availability Maps

Many nearby cities include map layers showing the availability of water, sewer, and drainage systems on both public and internal web-based GIS. Below is a screenshot from KirklandMaps (which is found on the City's webpage). Property owners, real estate agents, potential buyers, as well as city staff, can easily determine which services are available on a site.

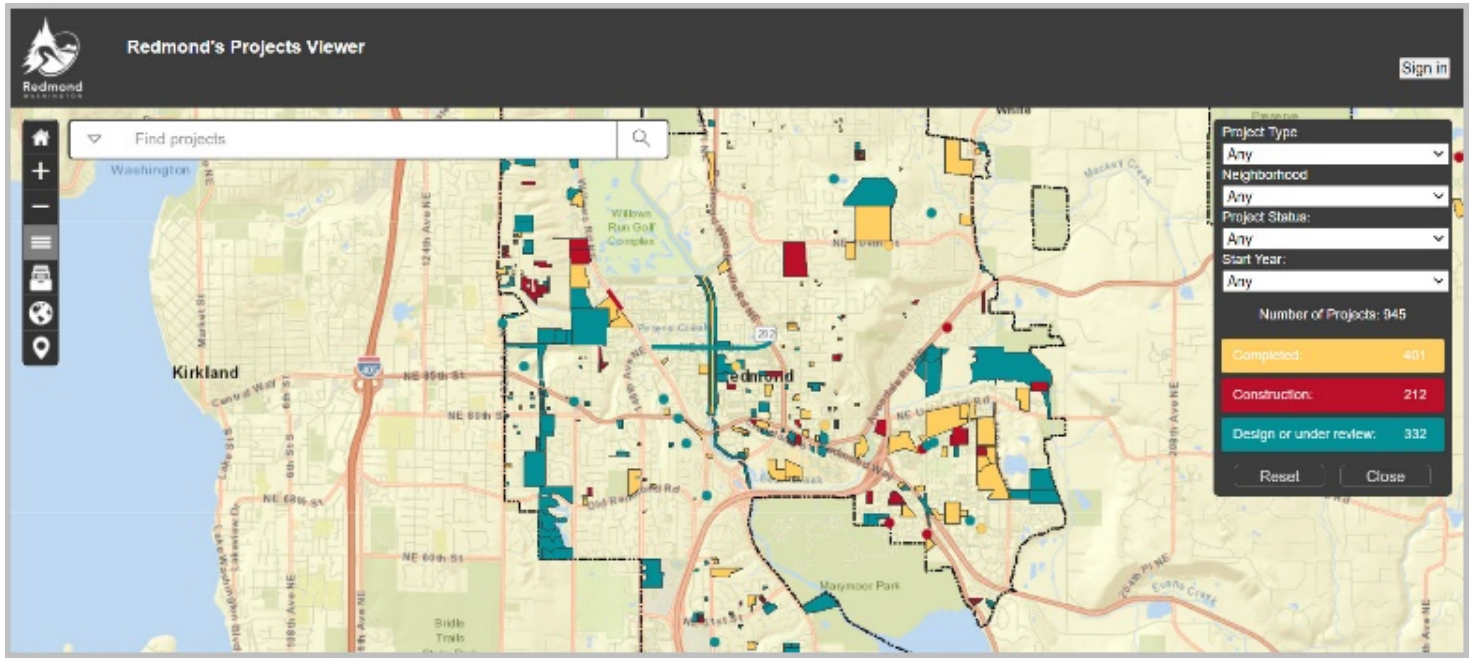


Recommendation VIII.4 – The City should work with the Woodinville Water District, which provides water and sewer service to parts of Woodinville, to provide simple availability maps for its service area in the City. We are aware of Homeland Security concerns about providing such

infrastructure information on a public site. Yet many cities provide basic availability maps without exposing critical infrastructure detail.

Active Projects Map Page on City Website

Online public GIS can be a valuable tool for citizen access by providing a searchable map of on-going permit applications and development projects. Instead of calling or emailing staff about activity in their neighborhood, citizens can look at a real-time map of applications and projects and click to drill down for more information. Below is an example from Redmond.



Recommendation VIII.5 – The City should implement an active projects GIS map in the City's website. An active projects GIS layer can be created by connecting Accela permit data to a parcel base layer. Symbolizing with colored points, lines, and shadings denotes the types of applications. Such a map can be created in the City's ArcGIS Online environment by a reasonably competent GIS analyst familiar with Accela and ArcGIS Online.

Accessing Documents via GIS Map

Accela GIS, an add-on module for the City's existing permit system, allows internal staff to locate permit applications and projects from a web-based map. Currently, there is no way to locate applications and projects from a map. Because document files, such as approved plans, project reviews, consultant reports, and other information stored in Accela's cloud document storage are linked in the database to both address and parcel data, linking further to the map may make it possible to click on a map location and, for example, pull up all the geotechnical reports for projects in the surrounding area without manually searching for documents on each application in the system.

Recommendation VIII.6 – The City should implement Accela GIS and its document lookup capabilities to provide better information for staff about nearby conditions when reviewing applications. Accela and IK Consulting should be able to provide guidance from other customers who have implemented this functionality.

IX. Administrative Improvements

This section addresses miscellaneous administrative improvements in the following areas:

- Clearing inactive applications
- Investigating uninspected permits
- Public Information Requests
- Business/liquor licenses

The City's Accela system has a large number of dormant applications and issued, but uninspected, permits. Efforts should be made to purge some records and follow up on the uninspected permits. In addition, the City should improve recordkeeping practices for public information requests and business licenses. .

Clearing Inactive Applications

The Accela system contains many dormant applications or pending tasks, some dating back years. In some cases, the project was completed but certain tasks, such as inspections, were not closed out. In other cases, a reviewer issued a memo requesting corrections or a notice of incomplete application but the applicant never responded (which can happen for many reasons). While these dormant applications are not harming anything and may, in fact, be resurrected at some point, they do clutter up the workflow and, for expired applications, they should be purged.

Recommendation IX.1 – The City should periodically review inactive or dormant applications or pending tasks and close or purge them from Accela, per WMC requirements.

Investigating uninspected permits

Similarly, Accela contains many building-related permits that had been issued, but for which no inspections had ever been performed (or was performed but not recorded in Accela). This sometimes occurs with minor plumbing and mechanical inspections, where the contractor obtains the permit and does the work, but never calls for inspection. This oversight may expose the contractor, property owner, and the City to potential legal liability if faulty work is performed.

> **Recommendation IX.2 –** The City should determine whether uninspected permits are the result of recordkeeping lapses (and correct those) or the result of missed inspections. For the latter, the City should contact owners whose permits have not received inspection within 180 days of issuance and request that the inspections be scheduled and completed. If there is no response the permit should be voided in the system.

Public Information Requests (PIRs)

The Washington State Public Records Act (RCW 42.56) allows any member of the public to request public information about a property, permit, or action taken by a municipality in the State. Types of requests received often include documents and emails pertaining to a permit, a parcel of land in the city, action of City Council, etc. Requests are filed with the City Clerk through a web-based cloud app called JustFOIA. The City Clerk then assigns requests related to Development Services to a planner. State law requires a response back to the requestor within 5 days, stating how long it will likely take to assemble the requested documents.

At this point, the assigned planner must review and accumulate PDF files, Accela records, GIS documents, electronic documents from one or more OneDrive folders related to the application, plus

any historic paper plans and documents used before the advent of electronic review. Paper documents are scanned as PDFs. The City Clerk's office searches the City's email servers for emails related to the request and saves them as PDFs, which are combined with document PDFs and sent to the requestor as an email link to OneDrive.

During 2021, Development Services responded to 106 of the 131 PIRs filed with the City (81%), an average of two requests per week. Gathering the requested information may take as little as 30 minutes or many hours over several days for complicated cases.

> **Recommendation IX.3 –** The City should create a simple case type in Accela to track PIRs in Accela listing the addresses, parcels, and applications related to a PIR, along with the dates the request was received and fulfilled and the UserID of the Development Services staffer handling the request. This can help provide historic data about staff workload responding to such requests and help when researching future requests in the same areas.

Business License and Liquor License Reviews

Before 2019, Business Licenses were issued by the City but since then this function has been absorbed by the Washington State Department of Revenue (DOR). Applications are filed through DOR, which then notifies the City to do any required department reviews and respond with a recommendation to approve or not approve the license. The City's Finance Department assigns Development Services to conduct a review based on the zoning code and other applicable sections of WMC and respond back to Finance. Finance then submits the City's recommendation to DOR. Business License renewals follow a similar path. No Business Licensing applications or tracking information is currently stored in Accela.

In 2021, Development Services reviewed 337 license applications, approving 309 and denying 28, as shown in the table below. On average, Development Services staff must evaluate and prepare a response to one new DOR licensing request every business day, in addition to regularly assigned permit review tasks in Accela.

Review by Development Services is vital, in that some businesses requesting DOR licenses may not be permitted uses according to the zoning code or may be subject to bulk, density, or performance standards. For example, a proposed fast-food outlet may be a permitted use according to zoning, but the proposed site may be too small to accommodate required parking.

Issuance of a Business License does not grant carte-blanche approval for a business to operate in a city, so it's important to review applications to recommend denial of incompatible applications or to notify Business License applicants of additional City requirements. Business Licenses that are issued without careful screening may create liability for the City if the business opens, thinking everything is okay, then gets shut down with violations.

> **Recommendation IX.4 –** The City should enter DOR Business Licensing reviews in Accela, by piggybacking on the existing Home Occupation Permit (HOP) processed by the City, independently from the State DOR Business License. The data structure and review processes are already in place in Accela. This will allow automatic routing to applicable staff, tracking review times, and providing a process record related to all businesses licensed in Woodinville. In addition, having business license records in Accela will allow mapping and analysis of trends about the types and locations of businesses coming to the City.

Appendix A – GIS Analyst Job Duties (See recommendation III.1)

- Develop and maintain data documentation for the City's core GIS data sets.
- Augment GIS with additional layers
- Maintain the public GIS interface
- Work with City staff to develop complex analysis and reports.
- Production of high quality maps for City Departments.
- Works with City Departments on developing spatial analyses in support of their program areas.
- Ensures accuracy and completeness of data entry.
- Analyze the GIS application needs of client departments and perform application development projects.
- Provides information and technical assistance to users regarding the GIS system and other related issues.
- Aids in project planning and management.
- Provides technical support for GIS and database software.

Appendix B – Red Line Report Specifications (See Recommendation IV.4)

- Application records sorted by permit type and project name
- Task and Task Status limited to those tasks where City staff have an active role (e.g., routed for review, revisions received)
- Projects on hold, completed, not approved or deemed incomplete are not included in record selection
- Only those tasks that have not been completed and where the report date exceeds the due date by 7 days or more are included
- Days overdue is reported along with assigned staff name

Appendix C – Sample Application Checklists (See Recommendation V.1)

- City of Bothell Commercial/Multi-family Permit Checklist: https://www.bothellwa.gov/DocumentCenter/View/862/2---Commercial--Multi-Family-Building-Permit-PDF?bidId=
- City of Bothell Critical Areas Identification and Alteration Checklist: http://www.ci.bothell.wa.us/DocumentCenter/View/917/25---Critical-Areas-Alterations-Checklist-PDF?bidId=
- City of Bothell Final Short Plat: http://www.ci.bothell.wa.us/DocumentCenter/View/920/27a---Final-Short-Plat-Intake-Checklist-PDF?bidId=
- City of Bothell SF Building Permit: http://www.ci.bothell.wa.us/DocumentCenter/View/851/3---Single-Family-Building-Permit-PDF?bidId=
- City of Bothell Site Plan Review: http://www.ci.bothell.wa.us/DocumentCenter/View/8286/15---Site-Plan-Review-PDF?bidId=

Appendix E – List of Recommendations

Recommendation III.1 – Based on the strategic and policy needs of the City and the results obtained from the Workload and Staffing Forecasting Model, the City should right size the staffing level of DS and PW and augment the organization as follows:

1) Create, budget, and recruit for an additional Engineer I position for Public Works-Engineering. This new position would handle permit review and selected CIP tasks.
2) Management Analyst capabilities need to be added for tracking workloads and performance, management reporting, budget and financial analysis, contract management for engineer and consultant contracts and task orders, ADA transition planning, transportation master planning, and overseeing the capital improvement plan.
3) Reclassify the existing Engineer Tech position in PW to a GIS Analyst. The City does not have a GIS Analyst job description but Appendix B contains the essential duties of this position. In addition, this position can also process right-of-way permits.

Recommendation III.2 – The City should amend the Interlocal Agreement with WFR so that the Director of DS, as delegated by the City, will have direct supervision of the Deputy Fire Marshal for all permit review tasks performed by WFR. All other responsibilities of the Deputy Fire Marshal and any discipline, promotion, annual review functions should continue to be within the authority of WFR. These contract terms should flow through to any subcontracting organizations (i.e., Eastside Fire & Rescue).

Recommendation IV.1 – The City should change time standards for certain critical tasks in the permit review process (All days in calendar days):

Plan Routing. Plan routing is the process of routing newly submitted building and site plans to the reviewing departments (e.g., Development Services, Public Works). Since nearly all plans are submitted online, the routing is also done in digital form. The current standard for plan routing is currently set at 7 days but should be compressed to 3 days.

Completeness Review. A completeness review is performed for all newly submitted applications and plans. Each reviewing department reviews the submittal and determines if all the documentation necessary to perform the actual review is present (i.e., the submittal is "complete"). While State Law sets a maximum of 28 days to determine if an application is complete, the City should strive to determine if an application is complete enough to proceed with the actual review within 7 days of application. This goal is attainable if Permit Technicians are tasked with conducting the completeness review (See recommendation V.5).

Review Consolidation. Review consolidation is the step in the process at which all department reviews are complete, and comments are bundled together by the Project Manager (usually a Planner) for forwarding to the applicant. Review consolidation may result in approval of the plans or a request for revised plans or clarifications to deal with comments and corrections noted by the reviewing departments. Because department reviews are done in parallel, the number of days to get to Review Consolidation will be determined by the slowest reviewing department. The standard for review consolidation is currently set at 7 days in most cases but should be compressed to 5 days.

Permit Issuance. Currently, the standard for this task is 7 days in most cases but should be set at 4 days.

Recommendation IV.2 – The City should publish the above time standards on the City website and also post a report on actual times. Start by developing internal monthly reports showing percentage of applications meeting the targets. Adjust targets as needed, then begin publishing reports on the City website when the City is confident about meeting the standards.

Recommendation IV.3 – The City should activate the start/stop processing clock in Accela to track the number of days reviews are active with City staff and the number of days it takes for the applicant to respond to requests for information and to resubmit plans in response to corrections required by City staff.

Recommendation IV.4 – The City should implement a "Red Line" report to track applications where tasks are exceeding standard time allocations by more than 7 days. For example, if a building plan review is more than 7 days past its due date, this should be reported to both the reviewing department's management (e.g., Development Services, Public Works) and the Office of the City Manager. This will provide an early warning system to identify overdue tasks in real-time and direct management's attention to these tasks so they can be worked by staff or whatever logjam is occurring can be cleared. This type of report may have to be configured using Crystal Reports and may require a consultant to configure and test the report and train users. Specifications for this report are included in Appendix C.

Recommendation V.1 – The City should revise application checklists to call out requirements that have in the past been missed and cause failed Completeness Reviews. These checklists should match with checklists used by City staff to determine if an application is complete. Commonly missed requirements include:

> **Site plan requirements.** A number of cities in the Seattle area publish site plan requirements on their websites, which could be used as a guide for requiring better information and illustrative diagrams on issues such as contour lines (existing and proposed), setbacks, easements, building

envelopes and height calculations, boundaries of Critical Areas, and other natural and manmade features of the site. Appendix D includes links to examples of site plan requirements from the City of Bothell which provide a good model.

External mechanical equipment. Community concerns about noisy air conditioners and bulky, unisightly rooftop equipment have sparked code changes requiring additional review for setbacks and visual and noise screening – something that homeowners may not be ready to deal with. The city should amend mechanical permit application checklists to require illustrative diagrams showing required setbacks and screening to expedite Planning review of setbacks and rooftop screening for external equipment.

Recommendation V.2 – The City should implement procedures to keep applications flowing if Permit Technicians are out of the office, especially with unpredictable COVID-19 illnesses. If a Permit Technician is absent for more than three days, the remaining Tech, or one of the planners, should be assigned to check the absent Tech's task queue and move the stalled tasks along. In the event of a lengthy planned absence, such as two weeks' vacation, Development Services management should assign the Tech's duties to other Techs and planners on a rotating basis.

Recommendation V.3 – The City should configure Accela to automatically compute up-front fees for all application types, so an applicant can pay them immediately, at the time of online application, without waiting for a Tech to create an invoice. If the applicant chooses to pay online, the application can move automatically to the Completeness Review task in the workflow thereby kicking off the review process. If paying by check, workflow is held until receipt of the check.

Recommendation V.4 – During department reviews, staff should add and update all fee categories from their own departments, that are required for issuance or approval. Such fees should be immediately

available for online payment by the applicant, without having to wait for a Permit Tech to prepare an invoice before payment is allowed on Accela.

Recommendation V.5 – The City should have Permit Technicians perform completeness reviews, calling on specialized staff only as necessary. In many jurisdictions, it has been customary for decades for Techs to perform this task. Notification back to the applicant can be sent through Accela's Communication Manager, without the additional work of preparing a formal signed memo in MS-Word.

For this to be successful, applicants should have informative application checklists that highlight what is required to make a complete application (See recommendation V.1 for more on this). Permit Technicians should have training and instructions on how to quickly check an application, without making judgments that should be reserved for higher level plan reviewers.

Feedback from department reviews should be used to fine-tune completeness criteria and application documents over time. The combination of having Permit Technicians perform DoCs and doing notifications through Accela instead of generating memos in MS-Word has the potential to trim weeks off processing times for many applications.

Recommendation V.6 – The City should adopt a common spreadsheet format for use by all reviewers. Each department should forward their correction spreadsheet to the project manager, who would consolidate the rows from reviewer spreadsheets into a Correction Action List spreadsheet to be printed as a PDF and emailed to the applicant. This will save time in reformatting and wordsmithing combined memos and presenting the items in a consistent format from one review cycle to the next. In addition, text in the Issue/Correction column should read as declarative requirements, including specific code wording to guide the applicant about meeting requirements. For example, the items about height calculation above should state the maximum allowed by code and the method used by code to calculate height.

Recommendation V.7 – The City should reduce the scope of the DRC to a standards setting body (which would then feed into code amendments) and should not be used in the permit review process.

Recommendation V.8 – The City should refrain from preparing approval memos for simple permits to free up time for more complicated projects. Staff can simply stamp plans as 'approved' and issue the permit.

Recommendation V.9 – Reviewers in all departments should be equipped with digital approval stamps, of a consistent design across all departments, including the name of the approver, date/time stamp, and applicable wording and disclaimers, which can be applied in Bluebeam to applicable sheets in the approved plans. Such stamps can then be "burned into" the PDF file to help prevent future alteration. Stamping individual sheets also verifies that a reviewer has seen and approved each applicable sheet, instead of simply commenting on plans in a memo.

Recommendation V.10 – City staff should frequently perform permit triage when new tasks come on their to-do list by asking "How simple will this task be?" and "Can I dispatch this one right now?" to sign off simple tasks quickly for the benefit of downstream tasks and to reduce overall time to permit issuance. In addition, should consider setting aside an afternoon or morning a week to dispatch simple permit applications.

Recommendation VI.1 – All documents uploaded from and downloaded to the applicant should come through the ACA portal, not email. In addition to initial application documents, this should include corrective action lists and drawings marked up with corrections, resubmittals of revised plans from the applicant, and downloads of approved plans upon issuance.

Using the ACA for document transfer preserves a record of transactions from authorized system users and allows automatic versioning of documents that may otherwise become difficult to identify and

retrieve. Notifications from Accela can alert applicants that corrections and approved plans are available on ACA and the system can track when and by whom documents are retrieved.

Recommendation VI.2 – The City should consolidate all document storage for an application in Accela, instead of partly in Accela and partly on multiple OneDrive systems. In addition, the City should implement a standard set of virtual folders for each application type in Accela cloud document storage to facilitate filing and retrieval of documents.

Recommendation VI.3 – The City should add all external consultants as related parties with specifically defined professional "roles" (such as GeoTech, Arborist, Traffic, etc.) in Accela Contacts. This would allow staff to view external consultants for an application in the Accela Contacts list. Tasks should be created in the workflow for each type of consultant showing dates assigned, due dates, and completion dates. In addition, standard virtual folders should be created in Accela cloud document storage for consultant working documents.

Recommendation VI.4 – The City should send Correction Action lists to all the contacts on record in Accela for the application to make sure all members of an applicant's project team, including owners and sponsors of record, are aware of requirements in the list.

Recommendation VI.5 – The City should enact a policy whereby a project manager should update the application record with their UserID when an application is first received or the assignment is transferred to another planner. This will facilitate generating reports showing all the assigned workload for a planner.

Recommendation VI.6 – City staff should enter conditions of approval in Accela, especially for complex projects for which conditions need to be checked and enforced over time and where conditions imposed now may affect future development or changes in existing projects over time.

Recommendation VI.7 – The City should add data fields in the Accela Summary screen to clearly identify that the application includes a requested deviation from standards. Added fields should include the type(s) of deviations requested and a note field with a brief description. These additional data fields will facilitate generating an Accela report listing deviation requests and keeping tabs on potentially excessive turnaround times.

Recommendation VI.8 – New City permitting staff should receive formal Accela training from Accela, IK Consulting, or other Accela-approved training vendor and not just rely on an informal and unstructured mentoring by more senior staff. Periodic refresher training every 18-24 months, from an approved vendor, should also be provided.

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Recommendation VII.3 – The City should implement a permit fee calculator in Accela Community Access (ACA), (i.e., the public portal to Accela) to allow citizens to enter information about a proposed project and print out an estimate based on information entered.

Recommendation VII.4 – The City should configure the Communication Manager function within Accela to send automatic emails to applicants and others associated with an application whenever a user signs off a task signifying a status changes (e.g., completeness review, plans routed) instead of creating memos in Word or writing up emails regarding the status change. ACA also includes a basic progress indicator showing the applicant which tasks are underway, completed, and yet to be done

Recommendation VII.5 – Assigned project managers should reach out to the homeowner or citizen on applications that appear to be from unsophisticated applicants especially if they are not using professional engineers or architects. A brief phone call early in the process, introducing oneself as the project manager and asking if there are any questions can be a big help in allaying fears about the process. In the days before electronic submittal, this was accomplished when the applicant brought paperwork to apply at the counter. This recommendation should include a caveat that the City cannot replace the role of engineers or architects in designing a project, but the City can improve communication about expediting or explaining the process.

Recommendation VIII.1 – The City should implement web-based GIS for both public users on the City website and for internal staff use in all departments. Use surrounding communities as a guide for the data layers and types of services provided. A number of GIS vendors offer packaged, ESRI-compatible website designs that can be easily integrated into the City's website.

Recommendation VIII.2 – The City should install a Critical Areas map layer in a new web-based ArcGIS application for use by both public and internal staff. The public GIS interface should include banners, pop-ups, or other visual devices to alert new users to the site about new availability of Critical Areas layers.

Recommendation VIII.3 – The city should implement and maintain an address point layer in GIS and display of that layer in both public and internal web-based GIS applications.

Recommendation VIII.4 – The City should work with the Woodinville Water District, which provides water and sewer service to parts of Woodinville, to provide simple availability maps for its service area in the City. We are aware of Homeland Security concerns about providing such infrastructure information on a public site. Yet many cities provide basic availability maps without exposing critical infrastructure detail.

Recommendation VIII.5 – The City should implement an active projects GIS map in the City's website. An active projects GIS layer can be created by connecting Accela permit data to a parcel base layer. Symbolizing with colored points, lines, and shadings denotes the types of applications. Such a map can be created in the City's ArcGIS Online environment by a reasonably competent GIS analyst familiar with Accela and ArcGIS Online.

Recommendation VIII.6 – The City should implement Accela GIS and its document lookup capabilities to provide better information for staff about nearby conditions when reviewing applications. Accela

and IK Consulting should be able to provide guidance from other customers who have implemented this functionality.

Recommendation IX.1 – The City should periodically review inactive or dormant applications or pending tasks and close or purge them from Accela, per WMC requirements.

Recommendation IX.2 – The City should determine whether uninspected permits are the result of recordkeeping lapses (and correct those) or the result of missed inspections. For the latter, the City should contact owners whose permits have not received inspection within 180 days of issuance and request that the inspections be scheduled and completed. If there is no response the permit should be voided in the system.

Recommendation IX.3 – The City should create a simple case type in Accela to track PIRs in Accela listing the addresses, parcels, and applications related to a PIR, along with the dates the request was received and fulfilled and the UserID of the Development Services staffer handling the request. This can help provide historic data about staff workload responding to such requests and help when researching future requests in the same areas.

Recommendation IX.4 – The City should enter DOR Business Licensing reviews in Accela, by piggybacking on the existing Home Occupation Permit (HOP) processed by the City, independently from the State DOR Business License. The data structure and review processes are already in place in Accela. This will allow automatic routing to applicable staff, tracking review times, and providing a process record related to all businesses licensed in Woodinville. In addition, having business license records in Accela will allow mapping and analysis of trends about the types and locations of businesses coming to the City.

Certificate Of Completion

Envelope Id: D52DF2D3-CB50-4C9B-89BC-0F0C9EF7480F
Status: Completed
Subject: RFP 10878-25 Business License Process, Policy, Compliance, Eval and Recs Closes 9/10/2025 @ 2pm PST
Source Envelope:
Document Pages: 155
Signatures: 1
Certificate Pages: 2
Initials: 0
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David Howe dhowe1000@gmail.com strategica, inc. Security Level: Email, Account Authentication (None)	Signed by: David Howe 5EDF0E07AA9A4CF... Signature Adoption: Pre-selected Style Using IP Address: 2601:600:a401:6a60:7d47:139b:1291:abeb	Sent: 9/10/2025 10:29:04 AM Viewed: 9/10/2025 10:29:44 AM Signed: 9/10/2025 10:31:47 AM

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Secure Bids SecureBids@Redmond.gov Security Level: Email, Account Authentication (None)	**Completed** Using IP Address: 204.152.61.20	Sent: 9/10/2025 10:31:50 AM Viewed: 9/10/2025 2:02:03 PM Signed: 9/10/2025 2:02:12 PM

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In Person Signer Events	Signature	Timestamp

Editor Delivery Events	Status	Timestamp

Agent Delivery Events	Status	Timestamp

Intermediary Delivery Events	Status	Timestamp

Certified Delivery Events	Status	Timestamp

Carbon Copy Events	Status	Timestamp

Witness Events	Signature	Timestamp

Notary Events	Signature	Timestamp

Envelope Summary Events	Status	Timestamps
Envelope Sent	Hashed/Encrypted	9/10/2025 10:29:04 AM
Certified Delivered	Security Checked	9/10/2025 2:02:03 PM

Envelope Summary Events	Status	Timestamps
Signing Complete	Security Checked	9/10/2025 2:02:12 PM
Completed	Security Checked	9/10/2025 2:02:12 PM

Payment Events	Status	Timestamps