

Development Review Stakeholder
Outreach Analysis

REDMOND, WASHINGTON

Revised October 10, 2024

matrix 
consulting group

1. Stakeholder Questionnaire Background and Key Findings

One component of the development review process assessment for the City of Redmond was to conduct a questionnaire and facilitate focus group conversations with prior customers of the City's development review process. This interim deliverable outlines the process utilized and the findings from these efforts.

The questionnaire was conducted utilizing SurveyMonkey and distributed via email to 1,834 prior customers of the City. The questionnaire was initiated on September 5, 2024 and closed on September 22, 2024. 137 respondents completed or partially completed the survey out of the 1,834 email invitations distributed for a response rate of 7.5%. Another 5 responses came through a web link for a total of 142.

As a result of this questionnaire analysis, the following key findings were identified:

- **Processing Timelines:** A common theme across the multiple-choice sections and reinforced in the narrative section was the dissatisfaction with the application processing timelines. This came up in the planning, building, and engineering sections.
- **Technical Applicants:** Those that work in technical fields (engineering, architects, trades) were more likely to respond with higher levels of agreement than respondents who are homeowners and business owners.
- **Strengths:** Customer service was noted as a strength with many commenting that they experienced professional staff. The online portal also had many comments pertaining to its efficiency and ease of use.
- **Generally Mixed Responses:** The final multiple-choice section, regarding the overall process, received a 57.5% combined agreement rate. The narrative also reinforced respondents lack of consensus as some of the strengths identified were also noted as areas of opportunity.

The following sections provide the questionnaire result details and findings.

2. Respondent Demographics

While the questionnaire was anonymous, questions were included to understand the background of the respondents and to understand response pattern differences by key demographics. The following sections summarize the demographics of the respondents.

What is your role in interacting with Redmond's development, permitting, and inspection activities? (check all that apply)	Number of Responses	% of Total
Architect / Designer	41	28.9%
Homeowner	30	21.1%
Contractor for Specific Trades	28	19.7%
Property Developer	20	14.1%
Other	16	11.3%
Engineer	14	9.9%
Business Owner (local / small)	12	8.5%
Builder	9	6.3%
Environmental Consultant	3	2.1%
Planner	3	2.1%

Architect / Designer was the highest responding group representing 28.9%. The next largest group was Homeowners at 21.1%. The 16 respondents that selected "Other" specified their role as either "Permit Tech/Specialist" (6), "Surveyor" (3), "Project Manager" (2), "Owner" (2), "Contractor", "Enviro Steward", "General Manager", and "Drafter".

Respondents were asked to indicate which development review functions they primarily interact with.

Which development functions do you primarily interact with? (Check all that apply)	Number of Responses	% of Total
Building Plan Review and Permits	114	80.3%
Planning and Zoning Applications	64	45.1%
Engineering/Infrastructure Plan Review	54	38.0%
Building Inspections	34	23.9%
Other	16	12.0%

"Building Plan Review and Permits" received the highest response rate at 80.3%. The next highest response rate came from "Planning and Zoning Applications" at 45.1%.

Responses for “Other” included “Tree permits” (4), “Fire Suppression” (3), “Electrical Plan Review” (2), “Stormwater Management” (2), “Special events”, “Civil Site Inspections”, “Capital Projects”, “Pre-Apps”, and “Strategic/Master Planning”.

The next question asked about interaction frequency with the City.

How frequently do you interact with the City's development, permitting, and inspection functions?	Number of Respondents	% of Total
Several times per month	49	34.5%
Several times per year	48	33.8%
Once or twice per year	21	16.9%
Less than once or twice a year	24	16.9%

A majority of respondents are interacting with the City at least several times per year (68.3%).

The last demographic question asked about the respondent's most recent interaction.

When was your most recent interaction with the City?	Number of Respondents	% of Total
Within the last 3 months	101	71.1%
Within the last 6 months	15	10.6%
Within the last 12 months	17	12.0%
Over 12 months ago	9	6.3%

A large majority, 71.1%, of respondents have interacted with the City in the last 3 months, providing feedback on recent and relevant experiences.

3. Multiple Choice Section

The following sections asked participants to rate their experience with different parts of the development review process. The results are displayed in percentages showing the agreement or disagreement levels of the participants. Respondents could select “Strongly Disagree”, “Disagree”, “Agree”, or “Strongly Agree” for a number of statements under each section of the development process.

3.1 Planning and Zoning

This section focused on respondents who interacted with the Planning and Zoning process in some capacity. A total of 89 respondents had engaged with planning and zoning in the past. This section asked participants to either agree or disagree with 13 statements regarding their experience working with planning and zoning.

#	Statement	SD	D	A	SA
1	I clearly understood what planning approvals / permits would be required for my project.	11%	24%	54%	11%
2	I clearly understood what information and documentation I needed to include in my application.	16%	23%	47%	14%
3	I clearly understood the timeline associated with the review process for my project.	25%	35%	35%	6%
4	I clearly understood who had the decision-making authority (Staff, Technical Committee, City Council) for my application.	14%	29%	43%	14%
5	I clearly understood what fees would be required for my project.	14%	23%	47%	16%
6	Staff was accessible and responsive when I had questions regarding my application.	15%	18%	51%	16%
7	Staff was helpful in explaining what I needed to do and how to accomplish it.	11%	29%	45%	15%
8	The City's website had the information I needed to prepare a complete application.	12%	32%	51%	4%
9	The initial review of my application was complete and comprehensive.	14%	34%	43%	9%

#	Statement	SD	D	A	SA
10	After receiving comments on my application, I clearly understood what I needed to revise on my application to achieve compliance with adopted codes and ordinances.	14%	25%	53%	8%
11	The comments received outlining deficiencies were appropriately aligned with the City's Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Code, and engineering standards and details.	20%	21%	51%	7%
12	Staff provided good customer service throughout the process.	14%	17%	53%	17%
13	The time it took to process my application was appropriate.	31%	34%	31%	4%

Across the board, responses were mixed but leaned positive. The combined average of “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” was 57.3%. A further analysis of the responses is below.

Statement 12 - “Staff provided good customer service throughout the process” received the highest agreement level at 70%. While six other statements received a 60% or higher agreement level.

Higher Disagreement:

Only two statements received a combined disagreement above 60%.

#3: I clearly understood the timeline associated with the review process for my project.
Disagreement Level: 60%

#13: The time it took to process my application was appropriate. Disagreement Level: 65%

Respondents were unsure what the application time would look like but were also not satisfied with the length of time it did end up taking to be processed.

Demographic Differences:

Engineers consistently had higher levels of agreement in this section with an average agreement rate of 70.1%.

3.2 Building Permit / Building Inspection Process

Respondents were asked if they had applied for a building permit or received a building inspection. 80 of the 142 respondents (56.3%) had applied for a building permit or received a building inspection in the past. For those that had, they were provided a set of 13 statements regarding the building application review and permitting process and then another set of 8 statements regarding the building inspection process.

#	Statement	SD	D	A	SA
1	I clearly understood what building approvals / permits would be required for my project.	6%	13%	57%	25%
2	I clearly understood what information and documentation I needed to include in my submittal package.	10%	22%	39%	29%
3	I clearly understood the timeline associated with the review and approval process for my project.	13%	29%	51%	7%
4	I clearly understood the steps of the review process for my project.	6%	22%	57%	15%
5	I clearly understood what fees would be required for my project.	6%	28%	45%	22%
6	The City's website had the information I needed to prepare a complete building application package.	9%	22%	48%	22%
7	The initial review of my building application was complete and comprehensive.	12%	18%	54%	16%
8	After receiving comments on my application, I clearly understood what I needed to revise on my plans to achieve compliance with adopted codes and ordinances.	12%	17%	54%	17%
9	The plan review corrections received outlining deficiencies were appropriately aligned with ensuring compliance with adopted standards/codes.	10%	13%	59%	17%
10	Staff was accessible and responsive when I had questions regarding my application.	14%	16%	39%	30%

#	Statement	SD	D	A	SA
11	Staff was helpful in explaining what I needed to do and how to accomplish it.	9%	16%	44%	31%
12	Staff provided good customer service throughout the process.	10%	10%	49%	31%
13	The time it took to process my building permit application was appropriate.	17%	26%	39%	17%

Responses for the building permit process section were overall positive. The combined average of “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” was 70.3%.

Higher Agreement:

#1: I clearly understood what building approvals/permits would be required for my project. Agreement Level: 82%

#4: I clearly understood the steps of the review process for my project. Agreement Level: 72%

#8: After receiving comments on my application, I clearly understood what I needed to revise on my plans to achieve compliance with adopted codes and ordinances. Agreement Level: 71%

#9: The plan review corrections received outlining deficiencies were appropriately aligned with ensuring compliance with adopted standards/codes. Agreement Level: 76%

#11: Staff was helpful in explaining what I needed to do and how to accomplish it. Agreement Level: 75%

#12: Staff provided good customer service throughout the process. Agreement Level: 80%

Several positives from this section included customer knowledge of project processes, a positive reaction to plan comments, and good customer service.

Higher Disagreement:

The highest disagreement came from statement #11 at 43%.

#11: The time it took to process my building permit application was appropriate.

Disagreement Level: 43%

Nearly half of respondents believe the time it takes to process a building application permit is too long.

Demographic Differences:

Again, Architect/Designers were providing higher levels of agreement averaging 72.3%. While Homeowners were consistently providing below average levels of agreement at 64.1%.

The following table outlines the responses received for the building inspection process.

#	Statement	SD	D	A	SA
1	The City did a good job at communicating what building inspections were required.	14%	11%	53%	22%
2	It was easy to request and schedule a building inspection.	6%	12%	48%	33%
3	Inspectors handled my appointment using a positive approach of "here's how to get your work approved."	10%	13%	45%	32%
4	If deficiencies were identified during an inspection, inspectors indicated the applicable code section.	13%	16%	47%	25%
5	The inspector arrived during the assigned inspection window.	10%	10%	48%	32%
6	Inspectors were fair and consistent in applying the codes and regulations to my project.	9%	15%	42%	33%
7	The process to obtain the final inspection/certificate of occupancy for my permit was efficient.	10%	16%	48%	26%
8	Staff was competent in explaining what I needed to do and how to accomplish it.	6%	3%	61%	29%

Responses for this section leaned more positive. The combined average of "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" was 70.3%.

Although all the statements received over a 70% agreement level, statement #8 received the highest agreement level at 90%. This statement was related to staff competency and explaining how to move forward.

Statement #4 received the highest disagreement level of the section at 29%. Statement #4 reads: "If deficiencies were identified during an inspection, inspectors indicated the applicable code section." Although, 29% is still a relatively low disagreement level.

Demographic Differences:

No significant demographic trends were identified here.

3.3 Fire Plan Review

Respondents were asked if they had interacted with fire plan review or received a fire safety inspection in the past. 52 of the survey respondents had interacted with fire plan review or received a fire safety inspection in the past. For those that had, they were provided a set of 13 statements regarding the fire plan review and inspection process.

#	Statement	SD	D	A	SA
1	I clearly understood what fire permits would be required for my project.	6%	20%	58%	16%
2	I clearly understood what information and documentation I needed to include in my application.	10%	22%	54%	14%
3	I clearly understood the timeline associated with the review and approval process for my project.	14%	34%	38%	14%
4	I clearly understood the steps of the review process for my project.	10%	24%	52%	14%
5	I clearly understood what fees would be required for my project.	8%	27%	41%	24%
6	The City's website had the information I needed to prepare a complete fire application.	12%	24%	53%	10%
7	The initial review of my fire application was complete and comprehensive.	8%	10%	58%	23%

#	Statement	SD	D	A	SA
8	After receiving comments on my application, I clearly understood what I needed to revise on my application to achieve compliance with adopted codes and ordinances.	8%	14%	53%	24%
9	The comments received outlining deficiencies were appropriately aligned with ensuring code compliance.	9%	13%	59%	20%
10	Staff was accessible and responsive when I had questions regarding my application.	16%	10%	52%	22%
11	Staff was helpful in explaining what I needed to do and how to accomplish it.	12%	8%	52%	28%
12	Staff provided good customer service throughout the process.	12%	14%	44%	30%
13	The time it took to process my fire permit application was appropriate.	17%	25%	44%	15%

Responses for this section leaned more positive. The combined average of “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” was 70.2%.

Higher Agreement:

#7: The initial review of my fire application was complete and comprehensive.
Agreement Level: 81%

#11: Staff was helpful in explaining what I needed to do and how to accomplish it.
Agreement Level: 80%

Fire plan review received very positive responses overall and highlighted above are staff’s commitment to supporting the customer. This aligns with similar levels of agreement in the previous sections for Planning and Zoning and Building plan review.

Higher Disagreement:

#3: I clearly understood the timeline associated with the review and approval process for my project. Disagreement Level: 48%

#6: The City's website had the information I needed to prepare a complete fire application. Disagreement Level: 36%

#13: The time it took to process my fire permit application was appropriate. Disagreement Level: 42%

Respondents' dissatisfaction with associated processing timelines is again identified as a challenge.

Demographic Differences:

Homeowners seemed to be consistently more negative than other demographics in this section with an average agreement rate of 52.1%

3.4 Engineering Development Review

Respondents were asked if they had interacted with engineering development review, permitting, or inspection processes in the past. 52 of the survey respondents had interacted with engineering development review, permitting, or inspection processes in the past. For those that had, they were provided a set of 13 statements regarding the engineering development review process and a separate set of 9 statements for regarding the engineering construction inspection process.

#	Statement	SD	D	A	SA
1	I clearly understood what engineering approvals / permits would be required for my project.	16%	24%	51%	9%
2	I clearly understood what information and documentation I needed to include in my application.	18%	31%	47%	4%
3	I clearly understood the timeline associated with the review and approval process for my project.	33%	47%	19%	2%
4	I clearly understood the steps of the review process for my project.	23%	40%	35%	2%
5	I clearly understood what fees would be required for my project.	21%	28%	42%	9%
6	The City's website had the information I needed to prepare a complete application.	21%	35%	42%	2%

#	Statement	SD	D	A	SA
7	The initial review of my engineering application was complete and comprehensive.	42%	23%	35%	0%
8	After receiving comments on my application, I clearly understood what I needed to revise on my plans for approval.	26%	33%	38%	2%
9	Comments received outlining deficiencies were appropriately aligned with ensuring compliance with adopted design standards.	29%	27%	37%	7%
10	Staff was accessible and responsive when I had questions regarding my application.	16%	33%	47%	5%
11	Staff was competent in explaining what I needed to do and how to accomplish it.	19%	30%	44%	7%
12	I clearly understood how to apply for an engineering permit.	22%	15%	49%	15%
13	The time it took to process my engineering application was appropriate for the scope of my project.	50%	21%	29%	0%
14	I clearly understood how to apply for a right-of-way permit.	22%	19%	57%	3%
15	The time it took to process my right-of-way application was appropriate for the scope of my project.	24%	22%	51%	3%

Responses for this section leaned more negative. The combined average of “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” was 46.1%, the lowest of any section in the analysis.

Higher Agreement:

#1: I clearly understood what engineering approvals / permits would be required for my project. Agreement Level: 60%

#12: I clearly understood how to apply for an engineering permit. Agreement Level: 64%

#14: I clearly understood how to apply for a right-of-way permit. Agreement Level: 60%

Statements receiving the highest agreement regarded respondent's understanding of how to apply for various applications. The statement receiving the highest agreement only received 64%.

Higher Disagreement:

#3: I clearly understood the timeline associated with the review and approval process for my project. Disagreement Level: 80%

#13: The time it took to process my engineering application was appropriate for the scope of my project. Disagreement Level: 71%

Although this section leaned negative overall, these two statements received the highest disagreement for the section and also compared to other functional review disciplines. Respondents are expressing their dissatisfaction with the engineering application processing timeline.

Demographic Differences:

Engineers were consistently providing higher levels of agreement with statements in this section, possibly due to their knowledge of engineering requirements, with an average agreement rate of 64.3%.

3.5 Engineering Construction Inspection

Respondents were asked to respond to 9 statements about the engineering construction inspection process.

#	Statement	SD	D	A	SA
1	The City did a good job communicating what engineering inspections were required.	20%	8%	60%	12%
2	The City did a good job communicating what right-of-way inspections were required.	20%	4%	64%	12%
3	It was easy to request and schedule an engineering inspection.	15%	8%	65%	12%
4	Inspectors handled my appointment using a positive approach of "here's how to get your work approved".	20%	12%	60%	8%
5	If deficiencies were identified during an inspection, inspectors indicated the applicable code section.	17%	22%	52%	9%

#	Statement	SD	D	A	SA
6	The inspector arrived during the assigned inspection window.	14%	0%	77%	9%
7	Inspectors were fair and consistent in applying the design standards to my project.	13%	21%	58%	8%
8	The process to obtain the final engineering signoff for my permit was efficient.	24%	24%	44%	8%
9	Staff was competent in explaining what I needed to do and how to accomplish it.	16%	20%	56%	8%

Responses for this section leaned more positive. The combined average of “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” was 69.2%.

Unlike the engineering development review section above, the engineering construction inspection section was much more positive. The highest disagreement was on statement #8, receiving 48% disagreement. Mixed agreement with statement #8 indicates that customers don’t think the process of obtaining the final engineering signoff is efficient.

Statement #6 received the highest agreement at 86%. The statement indicates customers consistently had inspectors showing up on time.

Demographic Differences:

No significant demographic trends were identified here.

3.6 Overall Development Review Process

Respondents were asked to respond to 9 statements about the City’s overall development review process.

#	Statement	SD	D	A	SA
1	The development review process is predictable.	16%	37%	40%	7%
2	The City made clear the amount of time it would take to process my application.	20%	37%	38%	4%
3	The amount of time taken to review and approve my application was acceptable.	31%	28%	33%	8%

#	Statement	SD	D	A	SA
4	The City met its time commitments for processing my application.	25%	29%	38%	8%
5	City staff were accessible and responsive when I had questions regarding my application.	11%	12%	54%	23%
6	City staff provided good customer service throughout the process.	11%	12%	54%	23%
7	The City did a good job coordinating input from different teams/departments.	20%	18%	48%	14%
8	The City's technical requirements were consistent with the codes and ordinances that the City enforces.	17%	14%	56%	13%
9	The City provided an efficient submittal process.	24%	19%	46%	11%

Responses for this section were very mixed. The combined average of “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” was 57.5%.

Higher Agreement:

#5: City staff were accessible and responsive when I had questions regarding my application. Agreement Level: 77%

#6: City staff provided good customer service throughout the process. Agreement Level: 77%

Statements receiving the highest agreement indicate that customers are satisfied with the customer service and responsiveness of the city staff. This aligns with the responses in the functional discipline responses.

Higher Disagreement:

#2: The City made clear the amount of time it would take to process my application. Disagreement Level: 57%

#3: The amount of time taken to review and approve my application was acceptable. Disagreement Level: 59%

Again, processing timelines are highlighted as the area respondents are most dissatisfied with.

Demographic Differences:

Contractor for Specific Trades was consistently providing higher levels of agreement (72.6% average) in this section of the overall development review process.

4. Narrative Responses

Participants had the ability to provide narrative responses to three questions. The first asked the respondent to identify strengths, the second to identify improvement areas, and the third to provide any additional feedback about the development review process. Below is an analysis of the responses.

(1) Strengths of the Development Review Process:

There was a total of 113 comments received. Themes and example comments are below.

Staff Responsiveness and Accessibility (31 comments)

Example Comment: "Staff is accessible to ask questions via email & phone - generally a very helpful staff"

Knowledgeable and Professional Staff (18 comments)

Example Comment: "Knowledgeable plan review staff"

Effective Online Tools and Portal (10 comments)

Example Comment: "REPS makes the submittal process simple and efficient"

Clear Communication (8 comments)

Example Comment: "Comments provided via Excel matrix make it easy to identify which department to coordinate with on the applicable comment"

Efficient and Fast Review Process (8 comments)

Example Comment: "Fast turnaround"

Clear Application Forms and Processes (6 comments)

Example Comment: "Application form is clear what is needed"

Helpful in Explaining the Process (5 comments)

Example Comment: "Responsiveness of staff explaining the process"

Consistent and Fair Application of Codes and Laws (3 comments)

Example Comment: "Application of code is fair and reasonable"

Coordinated Review Among Departments (3 comments)

Example Comment: "Coordination between departments"

Ease of Scheduling Inspections (3 comments)

Example Comment: "Inspection team did a good job"

The first two main themes in this narrative section of strengths are similar to what was expressed in the multiple-choice sections. The final multiple-choice section, on the overall development review process, saw customer service and staff responsiveness as the most agreed to statements, just as we see here.

(2) Areas of opportunity for the Development Review Process:

There was a total of 157 comments received about potential areas of improvement. Themes and example comments are below.

Speed of Review Process (29 comments)

Example Comment: "Speed the process - too slow and time is money."

Staff Communication and Responsiveness (26 comments)

Example Comment: "RESPOND TO EMAIL AND/OR CALLS"

Consistency in Reviews and Comments (22 comments)

Example Comment: "Keep permitting requirements consistent throughout the process."

Clarity of Requirements and Processes (10 comments)

Example Comment: "It's not 100% clear what documents are needed on a project—especially if there is a critical area involved."

Website and Online Portal Issues (10 comments)

Example Comment: "The website and forms online are outdated."

Process Efficiency and Simplification (10 comments)

Example Comment: "The linear process of SPE/CCR/BP is inefficient and unnecessary."

Staff Knowledge and Professionalism (9 comments)

Example Comment: "Planning staff lacks understanding of code, its implementation, and practicality."

Coordination Between Departments (8 comments)

Example Comment: "Lack of coordination within departments on the engineering side."

Application and Submission Requirements (8 comments)

Example Comment: "Requiring 40+ pages of checklists is overboard for design review."

Inspection Scheduling and Process (5 comments)

Example Comment: "Would like better indication of timing of when inspectors would arrive."

Almost every multiple-choice section highlighted the dissatisfaction with the review and processing timelines. We see that reinforced here as a slow review process is the most repeated sentiment in the section.

(3) Additional Stakeholder Comments:

There was a total of 42 additional comments received and they are summarized below.

Out of a total of **42 comments**:

9 comments were **praising strengths**.

33 comments provided **areas of opportunity or negative feedback**.

Strengths Themes

Excellent Customer Service and Staff Support (5 comments)

Example Comment: "Very impressed with the customer service. It's above and beyond most jurisdictions I work with. The availability to talk to a real person is fantastic."

Efficient and Professional Permit Process (2 comments)

Example Comment: "We suffered a fire 2 years ago. The permit process was very easy. The city was fast, efficient, and professional."

City's Efforts to Improve (1 comment)

Example Comment: "Appreciate City trying to improve."

City as a Regional Standard (1 comment)

Example Comment: "Redmond is the standard, locally."

Areas for Improvement Themes**Slow and Lengthy Review Process** (7 comments)

Example Comment: "City review process takes too long."

Inconsistent Requirements and Staff Turnover (5 comments)

Example Comment: "No one knows exactly how things are changing, and what you are expected to do changes from reviewer to reviewer."

Poor Communication and Responsiveness from Staff (4 comments)

Example Comment: "Staff's missed deadlines, late requirements, and last-minute fees create delays and costly setbacks, with no accountability."

Complicated Processes (4 comments)

Example Comment: "I work with a lot of permitting processes, and this was one of the most convoluted, cumbersome, and least justified processes I have been a part of."

Unprofessional or Unhelpful Staff Behavior (3 comments)

Example Comment: "The permit team was difficult to work with. They seemed disinterested in helping to get the project through."

Unnecessary or Duplicative Requirements (3 comments)

Example Comment: "Duplicative reviews by different departments are wasteful and often cause delays."

High Fees and Unjustified Costs (3 comments)

Example Comment: "Water meter installation process was terrible—from the price to scheduling to the installation."

Portal and Website Issues (3 comments)

Example Comment: "The City's permit portal—some comments visible there but not on the spreadsheet. Uploading documents can be confusing."

Need for More Inspectors (1 comment)

Example Comment: "Inspections—there needs to be more inspectors."

This section again reinforces the strengths and weaknesses already identified. The strength repeated the most regarded strong customer service, and the theme repeated most for areas of opportunity was a slow processing time.

5. Stakeholder Focus Group Summary

Three stakeholder focus group meetings were scheduled for this effort. The stakeholder focus group invitation was sent to a random selection of the original customer emails and 15 individuals attended and provided thorough feedback. A meeting with a small group of representatives from the Master Builders of King and Snohomish Counties was also held.

As a result of the conversations during the focus group meetings, the following strengths were identified of Redmond's development services functions:

- **Staff Customer Service:** Overall, several comments were made about staff willing to provide good customer service to assist with applicant questions about the development review process. They are willing to "go the extra mile" to discuss project specific concerns about staff requirements or comments. A mention about an improvement in "culture" within the City's development services disciplines, compared to the past, was also made. However, this is also shared with comments about staff needing to be empowered and supported by leadership to make decisions and recommendations (further discussed below).
- **Documentation of Staff Comments:** Several focus group participants mentioned how they like to see the collection of staff comments throughout the different review cycles. This is typically gathered on what is called the "issues matrix document," an excel sheet that is shared between staff and applicants to document staff requested changes and applicants' responses. These comments emphasize other comments made about the strong desire to be able to know and see what is occurring during the development review process.
- **Customer Permitting Portal:** The feedback on the customer portal of the permitting software system were both positive and negative. Several mentioned that the portal is easy to navigate and use for building permit submittals.

Additionally, the focus group participants shared some challenges of the City's development services that can be future opportunities:

- **Predictability of Processing Timelines:** A common theme across the focus groups was recommending the City provide greater predictability in processing timelines. The only processes that were mentioned to have standardized review timelines are residential building permits and Coordinated Civil Reviews (CCRs). A variety of timelines were shared for land use entitlements, with many comments stating that

subdivision reviews, including short plats, can take up to years to finalize for construction to begin. Linked with this recommendation are comments about staff expecting to have multiple attempts at reviews and the tendency of new requirements being added by staff during subsequent reviews.

- **Combination of Civil Review with Building Permit:** Another recommendation from participants, that received overwhelming consensus, was to combine engineering civil review with building permit review. Comments were shared about how an applicant can submit a clearing and grading permit or CCR concurrently with a building permit, but the two have entirely separate review timelines (therefore, not creating the time savings that concurrent review would typically provide). Associated with this recommendation are comments about the confusion related to knowing whether a CCR application is required for their proposed development. Several examples were shared about the need for applicants to submit technical information to staff to allow them to make a determination of what engineering permits are required prior to submitting a formal application.
- **Expand Capabilities of Permitting Software:** While some recommended the City change to MyBuildingPermit.com permitting software like other jurisdictions in King County are utilizing, several recommended Redmond's customer portal should be improved and expanded to provide more options, more automated in functionality (e.g., allowing instantaneous approval of "over the counter" building permits that do not require plan review), and less dependent on staff performing manual steps during the review process (e.g. staff "opening" the portal to allow for uploads of plans). The inefficiencies of the permitting software were mentioned as a constant frustration for applicants.
- **Siloed and Divisive Staff:** Applicants are seeing a lack of cohesion between some review disciplines with the City's development services. This results in staff comments or change requests that are inconsistent with one another and require the need for further discussions between applicants and staff. Some examples were shared where this siloed approach results in requirements being made by staff last minute in the review process, resulting in delays in final approvals and costly design changes to address.
- **Minimize the Use of Technology Review Committee:** Several mentioned a lack of clarity for when the City's Technical Committee is required to be a part of their development review process. Additionally, it was shared that applicants do not know what is being shared by staff during these meetings and wish they could

have more participation during this review step that results in a recommendation or “approval.”