



**County of Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors
Agenda Item Submittal**

From: Planning: Administration
(831) 454-2580

Meeting Date: February 27, 2018

Recommended Action(s):

Accept and file this report on continuous improvements to the development application and review process including counter operations and coordination with other departments and agencies.

Executive Summary

A mid-year report by the Planning Department is being provided to update the Board of the status of continuous process improvement efforts related to the development application review processes. Key improvements include continued regular management level coordination, expansion of electronic plan submittals, expanded Planning Department permit center hours, processing of customer credit card payments and acceptance of some on-line building permit applications.

Background

On February 7, 2017, the Board of Supervisors considered a report prepared by the Planning Director that presented information regarding coordination amongst development service departments and agencies that included metrics related to permit processes. On June 20, 2017, as part of considering the Planning Department's proposed FY17/18 budget, the Board directed the Planning Director to provide an update early in 2018 regarding the status of continuous improvements to improve communication between interdepartmental managers and project staff, and to improve the development review and permitting processes.

Analysis

To improve interdepartmental coordination, a development services management review group was formed in July 2016, with representatives from every development services department or agency meeting regularly to address communication and performance needs of the organization. The Management Review Group (MRG) participating agencies/departments include: Planning Department, Public Works Department, Environmental Health Agency and Fire Districts. The group meets bi-weekly to discuss pending projects, review building permit activity, identify past-due reviews identified by the permit tracking "aging list", discuss code or regulatory compliance issues, and hear member presentations about development and management related topics. The group implemented a paperless distribution system that involves distribution of upcoming meeting agendas, project plans, technical reports and other materials via email. Some of the presentation topics presented to date by group members include "Water Services and Challenges", "A CIP (Capital Improvement Program) Primer", "Fire District Services", "Septic and Sewer Services",

and “Roadway Challenges after the 2016 Storm Event”. In February 2018, the group conducted a roundtable discussion with Soquel Creek Water District focused on future water availability, and the group plans to schedule similar roundtable discussions with other governmental organizations. The group routinely provides feedback to planners, engineers, and developers about pending or proposed development projects. The team is in the process of coordinating mandatory electronic plan (ePlan) review for all building permit submittals, planned to occur later this year. Another initiative that the Group has undertaken is the development of common development principles and goals that will assist the group’s effort to streamline the development process and to engage staff in a development services re-branding strategy.

Other improvement measures undertaken during 2017-2018 include accepting customer credit card payments, extended Planning Department Counter hours (Monday through Thursday 7:30 AM to 4:00 PM) and acceptance of some on-line building permit applications. The Building Division hopes to expand the range of on-line application options later in the year. Updated counter brochures and handout materials have also recently been introduced. The Planning Department is in the process of developing customer self-service kiosks in the fourth floor lobby. Initially, the self-service kiosks will allow customers to log in basic details and connect with counter staff, however the Department plans to expand this to allow customers to access Planning, GIS, Public Works, Environmental Health and other file and code information. The goal is to create an interactive one-stop customer center with reduced wait times, and to equip customers with online information and tools to help facilitate development application processing.

Shortly after establishment of the MRG, the County embarked on a county-wide strategic planning process for the purpose of adopting comprehensive priorities and to implement a budget and programs that will assist individual departments to establish performance metrics and goals that capture operational measures and outcomes. The alignment of services in the county-wide plan will include a framework for establishment of performance metrics that will be phased in over the next 1-2 years. Many of the MRG team members are actively contributing to the county-wide effort, and to avoid conflicts in collection or presentation of performance metrics, the Group (that includes Planning) plans to build upon the performance metrics developed through the strategic planning effort. Additional metrics will therefore be identified as part of the larger county-wide strategic planning effort.

Financial Impact

None.

Submitted by:

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Recommended by:

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