



Bellevue Development Committee

Kickoff Meeting

September 13, 2023

Agenda & Notes

Welcome and Purpose – Rebecca Horner

Rebecca Horner welcomed meeting participants and provided an overview of the following as outlined in the meeting presentation and on the Bellevue Development Committee webpage:

- Purpose of the committee
- Development Services [organizational structure](#)
- Development Services mission statement and service

Introductions – Roundtable

Each meeting participant provided a short introduction including their name, organization affiliation and their top priority for the committee.

Call for Agenda Committee – Facilitator/Roundtable

Rebecca Horner asked for volunteers to serve on an agenda committee that would be responsible for partnering with city staff to develop future meeting agendas. Volunteers included:

- Rebecca Horner, City of Bellevue
- Joe Fain, Bellevue Chamber of Commerce
- Veronica Shakotko, Master Builders Association of King and Snohomish Counties
- Patience Malaba, Housing Development Consortium Seattle-King County
- Tim McKey, Sellen Construction

Development Activity Update – City/Roundtable

City staff provided an overview of development activity information, data and performance metrics including:

- General development cycle trends, challenges, and current state
- Development activity volumes for pre-application conferences, permit applications, issued permits and inspections performed.
- Percentage of permits meeting first review decision timeline targets
- Average number of days for permit intake process
- Percentage of inspection results posted on the same day.
- The percentage of the business community who rate City of Bellevue permitting better than other cities as measured through the bi-annual business survey.
- Percentage of Development Services customers who report they are extremely or very satisfied as measured through the Development Services customer experience program.
- Development activity webpage information

Following the presentation, meeting participants were asked what measures or metrics are most important to them. Responses and questions raised during the discussion included the following. Information and answers to questions to be presented and discussed at a future meeting date.

- What are the current permit target timelines?
- Does the city have targets established for revision cycles?
- For complex projects does the city have established targets?
- Does the city have decision targets established?
- Does the city have a target for the number of revision cycles?
- Does the city track permit expiration timelines and have data to share on that?
- Does the city track failed inspections?
- Does the city track the time it takes to issue a permit once review has been completed?
- Can the city identify common problems faced in the past in entitlements, permit review and inspections and then publish the solutions?
- Has the city completed after action review processes in the past when a major project has been completed to query both sides on the process?
- What can the development community provide to the city in terms of data or metrics that might be helpful?

Process Improvement Feedback and Priorities – City/Roundtable

City staff presented information regarding the feedback city staff receive through a variety of different communication channels regarding opportunities for process improvements. General themes and high-level priorities were presented to meeting participants who were given the opportunity to voice their perspective during small group discussions and a report out session. The themes and priorities included the following.

- Consistency and predictability.
- Simplify and streamline permitting.
- Improve city codes and guidelines.
- Inspector availability.

- Project management and single point of contact.
- System improvements.
- Permit timelines.
- Performance management and customer service
- Maximizing human potential
- Training and onboarding
- Permit discovery – website and application process
- Delivering continuous improvements

Notes from the roundtable discussions under the general themes and priorities included the following.

Consistency and predictability

- Provide clear well-defined written code so it cannot be randomly interpreted.
- Inspection related issues include different inspectors calling out different things, need consistency and transparency as inconsistency can lead to expensive delays.
- Plan reviewer inconsistencies between the design, plan review, and inspections can lead to expensive delays.
- Consistency of transportation related items is an issue between what is on the plans and what is in the field.
- Utilities issues in the field versus what is believed to be in the ground can be an issue, so quick decisions are needed on minor deviations.
- Clear and grade
 - Being able to clear and grade for the lots instead of just roadway improvements. Currently can only grade for road and improvements.
 - Getting in the ground as soon as land use permit is issued saves time.
 - Consider the sequence of required permits and whether some permits should be combined such as clear and grade and early demo work.
- Inspector availability can be challenging at times for special inspections or re-inspections. Often inspections are only available for an hour a day, which can slow down a project.
- Create a culture to empower and motivate employees to consistently implement codes in a positive way.
- Have a culture to allow employees to make calls at their level.
- Provide a process for streamlined conflict resolution.
- Disseminate decisions of code interpretations to all staff and document.
- Enact new codes quickly.
- Allow concurrent review, such as being able to submit a final plat while the plat is being built.
- Publish director's rules.
- Provide design guidelines that include directions rather than allowing the applicant to guess what the requirements are.
- Set up project-specific email groups to improve communication.
- It is unclear at times who is running the review process and should there be a main point of contact such as the land use planner.

Simplify and Streamline Permitting

- Provide a process for streamlined conflict resolution.
- Consider consolidation of the inspection process and whether all current inspections are really needed.
- Provide transparent plan review deadlines.
- Predictability - if you know how long something will take, you can plan accordingly.
- There are too many permits required. Consider compiling one required plan set that includes water, sewer, transportation, fire, and planning.
- Provide more concurrent review of consolidated plan sets.
- Publish director's rules and alternate materials and modification requests so customers can see what has been accepted and the criteria the city has deemed relevant. This could then be replicated on other projects.
- Provide more clarity in chain of command and feedback loop with plan reviewers. A lessons learned log made available to the public along with clarity on the ultimate decision maker would be helpful.
- Intermediate decisions in permits are sometimes needed and having clear guidance on those decision parameters through director's rules would be helpful.
- Provide more concurrent permitting such as Administrative Design Review along with early demo and clear and grade combined.
- Consider SEPA exemptions more broadly.
- Tie private easements to relevant permits.
- Provide easier tracking of permits and transparency in permit review timelines.
- Consider costs of decisions, such as utility easements, etc.
- Street use fees should be considered mitigation measures.
- Consider a permit coordinator for major projects to facilitate the process and organize the permit review.
- Provide off ramps for expedited permitting such as paying overtime and contract reviewers.
- Provide real property easement templates and an online tracking portal to monitor the progress.
- Combine the utility developer extension process with the single-family building permit process.
- Allow virtual inspections.
- Provide the same assigned reviewer for repeat customers.
- Simplify the fire flow process like Kirkland.
- Different timelines for different departments on the same permit causes delays.
- Keep all houses in a plat with the same review team.
- Are minor versus major permits being appropriately tracked?
- A lot of intermediate decisions are sometimes necessary, can exceptions be made? Also making the process on how to get there available and transparent is helpful.

Improve City Codes and Guidelines

- Make codes less ambiguous.
- Interpretation is subjective which necessitates timely guidelines.
- Enable flexibility in housing choices.
- When enacting new code do it quickly.
- How to tackle items like active use?
- For manmade steep slopes consider exemption process like Seattle.

Inspector Availability

- Look at the special inspection and re-inspection process.
- Look at the total time available for projects as some projects need more inspection time.
- Limited inspection time, suggest relying more on a 3rd party special inspector.

System Improvements

- Improve self-service options.
 - Provide more property information via GIS,
 - Enable the public to figure out what a project site would need, similar to the information provided during a pre-application conference.
 - Have the ability to research information on your own ahead of the pre-application conference so they can be better prepared.
- Clear and grade requirements for plat development are piecemeal by not allowing clear and grade of all lots due to multiple building permits. It would be better to clear and grade the whole plat at once.
- Make consulting decisions that have been previously made more readily available to the public.

Permit Timelines

- Allowing concurrent review.
- Track net new comments after the initial review. If new comments are generated identify the reason why.
- Allow applicants to pay for quicker review.
- Break out reporting for major and minor projects.
- Allow more 3rd party reviews.
- Allow more parallel permits.

Closing and Next Meeting – Rebecca Horner

Rebecca Horner closed out the meeting by outlining next steps for future meetings and reminding participants about the opportunity to take part in a follow-up survey. Meeting participants were also asked about how they felt the meeting went. Multiple comments were made thanking the city for the opportunity to meet and discuss challenges and opportunities for future process improvements. A request was also made to have city staff share more information about challenges they have been facing during the current development cycle.