

AGENDA ITEM  
12A

Date: November 8, 2019

Council Action Date: November 18, 2019

**TO:** Honorable Mayor and City Council

**FROM:** Alex D. McIntyre, City Manager  
Akbar Alikhan, Assistant City Manager

**SUBJECT:** Development Review Process – Matrix Consulting Group Final Report

**SUMMARY**

The Matrix Consulting Group was retained by the City of Ventura to assess the organizational structure, staffing levels, service delivery, and user fees related to the development review, permitting, and inspection process. The final report outlines the findings and recommendations from the consultant.

**RECOMMENDATION**

- a. Receive and file the final Development Review Process Report prepared by Matrix Consulting Group.
- b. Direct the City Manager's Office to coordinate the formation of an implementation team to execute recommendations contained in the Matrix Report.
- c. Direct the City Manager's Office to provide a progress report on the implementation to City Council for each quarter of 2020, and as needed thereafter.

**DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS**

The City's development review, permitting, and inspection functions span several work groups including Building & Safety, Planning, Traffic, Land Development, Ventura Water, and Fire Prevention. Together, these work groups process all land use applications received by the City.

To improve the development process and inter-departmental collaboration regarding land use applications, City staff released a Request for Proposals (RFP) requesting consultants to conduct a multi-phase organizational and operational review of the

development services process. The RFP included an evaluation of functions across all City departments involved in the development review process and to provide recommendations and an implementation plan for improvement. On May 13, 2019, the City Council approved the selection of Matrix to conduct an evaluation of the Development Review Process.

On May 28, 2019, Matrix began their engagement with the City, conducting operational and staffing studies over the course of six months, including a Preliminary Gap Analysis (Phase I), Policy, Organizational and Process Improvement Plan (Phase II), and an Implementation Plan/Final Report (Phase III). 57 recommendations outlined in the final report (Attachment A) will serve as an implementation blueprint for process improvements related to the City's development review process.

As outlined in the approved scope, Matrix submitted a draft report to staff on October 4, 2019 for review. The draft report and the recommendations were shared with over 80 city staff at an internal Development Review Summit held on October 8. Staff's responsibility was to validate statements of fact found in the draft report and to offer any additional background that may better inform Matrix's recommendations. The final draft was submitted to staff on November 8. A detailed timeline of events can be found in Appendix C of the report.

The recommended action includes directing staff to form an internal implementation team and begin execution of the report's recommendations. While many of the report's recommendations will require subsequent action by City Council for funding or policy adoption, staff also recommends quarterly progress reports on the implementation effort during 2020, and as needed thereafter. If approved, staff will return in the first quarter of 2020 with a progress update.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

No financial impact from current action.

Prepared by: Cary L. Glenn, Management Analyst II

### **ATTACHMENT:**

- A Matrix Consulting Group Evaluation Report of the Development Review Process

# Report on the Evaluation of the Development Review Process

---

VENTURA, CALIFORNIA



**November 8, 2019**

## Table of Contents

#	Title	Pg #
1	Introduction and Executive Summary	1
2	Process and Procedure Analysis	7
3	Technology Improvements	37
4	Staffing, Organizational, and Management Analysis	44
	Appendix A – Descriptive Profile	61
	Appendix B – Stakeholder Survey Analysis	86
	Appendix C – Development Services Review Timeline Summary	105

# 1. Introduction and Executive Summary

The Matrix Consulting Group was retained by the City of Ventura to assess the organizational structure, staffing levels, service delivery, and user fees related to the development review, permitting, and inspection process. This study was designed to provide an understanding of the organizational structure, the efficiency and effectiveness of the overall processes and operations, identify appropriate staffing levels, and analyze current fee structures and rates. This report summarizes our findings, conclusions, and recommendations regarding the organizational, staffing levels, processes, and service delivery portion of the study.

## 1 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Development review, permitting, and inspection activities for the City of Ventura occur in multiple function areas, including: Planning, Building, Fire, Public Works (Land Development), Environmental, Traffic, and Ventura Water. The project team evaluated the functions of these operational areas and their involvement in the development review process.

This report provides specific recommendations to improve the organizational structure and staffing levels to ensure services are being provided effectively, efficiently and with a strong focus on customer service to applicants. By completing this study, the City of Ventura is committed to a process of continuous improvement and providing a high level of service to residents, the development community, and staff. Implementing the recommendations contained in this report will aid the City in its ongoing efforts to conduct operations in accordance with best practices.

## 2 STUDY SCOPE AND METHODOLOGIES

In this study, the Matrix Consulting Group's project team utilized a wide variety of data collection and analytical techniques. The project team conducted the following data collection and analytical activities:

- Developed an in-depth understanding of key issues impacting key areas. To gain understanding of the various operations, processes, organizational structure, and issues, the project team conducted multiple interviews with staff from each department, as identified above. Interviews focused on the roles/responsibilities of staff, levels of services provided by each section, resources available to perform those services, and understand current and potential issues.
- The project team developed a profile document that captured staffing levels, roles and responsibilities, and process mapping for each operational area. This document was utilized as a base point of comparison for future analysis and comparison for all recommendations.

- A series of stakeholder surveys were conducted with prior and current customers involved in the development review process. The survey allowed customers to share their opinions on current strengths and opportunities for improvement in this process.
- A best management practices assessment was completed that included a comparison of current practices to industry standards. The project team focused on best management practices for management and administration, process, staffing levels, organizational structure, policies, and technology utilizations.
- Based on the previously mentioned activities and initial findings, the project team analyzed issues, explored alternative service delivery options, and developed recommendations to create a more efficient and effective process. The analysis resulted in recommendations to staffing, services, processes, and technology usage to streamline the services provided and to help the City meet its goals.

The report is divided into the following chapters:

- Process and procedure improvements
- Technology utilization
- Staffing and organizational structure analysis, and
- Appendices that include copies of the interim deliverables (profile, best practice assessment, and stakeholder survey summary)

Each of these sections will provide relevant recommendations and insight into the City's development review process as it relates to the City overall or to individual departments.

### 3 SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the project team's assessment and analysis, there are a variety of recommendations for each topic covered in this assessment that are discussed in detail throughout this report. The following table consolidates the recommendations and assigns a priority level and suggested timeframe for implementation for each one. Please note that recommendations are presented in the order they are discussed in the body of the report and **not** listed in order of priority.

**Summary of Recommendations and Implementation Plan**

#	Recommendation	Priority	Implementation Time-frame	Projected Cost / Time
<b>PLANNING ENTITLEMENT REVIEW PROCESS ANALYSIS</b>				
1	Upon updating the adopted codes, create a decision-making authority matrix that summarizes the respective roles of staff, boards, and commission in the development review process. This authority table should be posted on the City's website.	High	Spring 2020	40 – 50 Hours
2	The results of the Historic Determination Survey should guide what applications should be reviewed for historic appropriateness. Upon conclusion of the survey and adoption of the report, elements eligible for historic review should be codified with clear identification of approval authority at the staff and HPC level.	High	2021	40 – 60 Hours
3	The City should adopt the Department of the Interior eligibility requirement of 50 years versus the current 40-year threshold. This will require an update to the City code.	High	Winter/ Spring 2020	8 – 10 Hours
4	Develop and adopt new objective guidelines that specifically define the design elements that the City desires to regulate.	Extremely High	Summer 2020	250 – 300 Hours (Internal)
5	Transition the review of confirmation of details from the DRC to an administrative review conducted by Planning staff (or qualified consultant).	High	Winter/ Spring 2020	1 – 2 Hours Per Application
6	Modify the requirements for pre-application and conceptual design reviews. A reduction in the requirements will provide the applicant with appropriate feedback about the potential feasibility of a project. The level of detail provided will correspond with the level of detail provided in the application.	High	Winter/ Spring 2020	3 – 5 Hours
7	The approach to informing City Council of pending development projects (pre-review) should be discontinued and City Council should utilize the City's pending and active project web-based maps to see what development applications are pending.	High	Immediately	Reduction in staff's time
8	The City Council should discontinue the call for review process for applications that are approved by HPC, DRC, or Planning Commission.	High	Winter/ Spring 2020	8 – 10 Hrs to update Ordinance, staff time savings in future
9	Adopt and track a 30-day goal for a complete application to be heard by the Administrative Hearing Officer and a 45-day goal for a complete application to be heard by all other land use boards.	High	Summer 2020	2 – 4 Hours
10	Develop criteria for planning applications (and others) that require an internal Development Advisory Committee (DAC) review.	Medium	Immediately	4 – 6 Hours

#	Recommendation	Priority	Implementation Time-frame	Projected Cost / Time
11	The Development Advisory Committee (DAC) should meet weekly.	High	Immediately	26 - 52 hours annually for each attendee
12	Expand the application types that may be reviewed administratively either by staff or the Administrative Hearing Officer.	High	Winter/ Spring 2020	15 – 20 Hours
13	Start the CEQA process as soon as the appropriate project scope and materials have been provided, even if the application has not been deemed complete.	High	Immediately	N/A
14	Update the General Plan and ensure compliance with Coastal Commission regulations.	High	Restart Immediately	\$1.75M over next 3 fiscal year, plus staff time
15	Develop and implement an onboarding program for the HPC, DRC, and Planning Commission. Provide annual training for each of the land use committees/commissions.	Medium	2020	10 – 15 Hours Initially, 8 Hours Annually
16	Staff reports should be more concise and include only the elements required by law and that is requested by the respective decision-making body.	High	On-going	N/A
<b>GENERAL REVIEW PROCESS ANALYSIS</b>				
17	Develop consolidated list of review timelines for all building application types.	Medium	Fall 2020	8 – 10 Hours
18	Offer expedited Building Division plan check services beyond the Thomas Fire Zone. If necessary due to City staff workload, provide these services via contracted plan checkers and ensure fees are established at appropriate levels to achieve full cost recovery including time for any City reviewers/departments.	Medium	2021	Negligible impact as review will occur.
19	All review entities should collaborate and determine who is included in the review for all development review application and permit types. This will ensure that applications are routed to the appropriate reviewers.	High	Winter 2019/ 2020 Spring	6 – 8 Hours
20	Create a development review webpage that acts as a central hub and provides an overview of permitting requirements and links to departments for more information.	High	2020	100 – 125 hours
21	A staff member from each review department/division should serve as their respective department's content administrator. A Community Development staff member should be the overall administrator of the development review webpage.	High	2020 (after process changes are implemented)	2 hours per month per division



#	Recommendation	Priority	Implementation Time-frame	Projected Cost / Time
22	All departments involved in the development review process should each develop a comprehensive checklist that identifies all of the items required to be submitted by application type. The checklist should be included as part of the application.	High	On-going	20 – 25 hours
23	Provide a fee estimator on the centralized development review webpage.	Medium	2021	20 - 30 hours internally or \$3,000 - \$5,000 for contracted
24	The assigned project planner should serve as the Project Manager and be the single point of contact for their assigned applications.	High	Immediately	N/A
25	All applicable review entities should be included in the final inspection process for building permits.	Medium	Immediately	30 – 60 minutes per permit
26	Ventura Water should develop criteria that details when a water/sewer study is required based on location, proposed use, and other criteria.	High	Spring 2020	20 – 25 hours
27	Update the Water and Sewer master plan that includes a dynamic modeling component for future demand analysis to support General Plan growth projections.	High	2020	\$150k – 250k plus 100 – 150 staff hours
28	Charge appropriate fees for private water line pressure testing, disinfection services, and sewer bypass systems.	Medium	Fall 2020	4 - 6 hours
29	Modify the net zero use calculation so that it is based on individual uses and demand. Incorporate an appeal process for applicants to increase greater flexibility in the net zero ordinance.	High	On-going	30 – 40 hours
30	Collocation of Community Development, Land Development, Fire Prevention, Transportation Environmental Services, and Ventura Water (Development Review) staff, with a consolidated permit counter, staffed by representatives from each entity.	Medium	As space comes available	Cost dependent on existing or new location.
<b>TECHNOLOGY ANALYSIS</b>				
31	Provide permitting software user training to all plan review staff, including a formalized training program for new hires, involved in the development review process.	High	Upon New Software Implementation	16 – 24 hours
32	Utilize the features on the permit software system to calculate the appropriate plan check and permitting fees.	High	Upon New Software Implementation	Included in price of new software system

#	Recommendation	Priority	Implementation Time-frame	Projected Cost / Time
33	Utilize EnerGov for all development related activities (plan review and inspections) across all departments.	High	Upon New Software Implementation	Included in price of new software system
34	Implement electronic application and plan submittals for all development application types.	Medium	Phased over 2 years after implementation	Included in price of new software system
35	Allow applicants to track the status of their application through an online portal.	Medium	Upon New Software Implementation	Included in price of new software system
36	Utilize the permitting software system (or digital submittal program) to allow for the online payment of fees.	Medium	Upon New Software Implementation	2%– 3% of permit fee for swipe fees, if surcharge not applied
37	Implement an automated voice-activated and online inspection request system to receive inspections and automatically link requests to the permit.	High	Immediately/ Upon New Software Implementation	Included in price of new software system
38	Utilize tablets in the field for all development Inspectors to access relevant permit information and input their inspection results upon completion of the inspection.	High	Upon New Software Implementation	Tablets \$1,000 - \$1,200 per inspector
<b>STAFFING, ORGANIZATIONAL, AND MANAGEMENT ANALYSIS</b>				
39	Develop and implement an employee succession plan to identify mentoring and cross training opportunities for staff and identify key staff members who can progress up the career ladder.	Medium	2021	N/A
40	Utilize features in EnerGov to track workload data and performance measures to accurately track information.	Low	2021	Included in price of new software system, 1 hour per month

#	Recommendation	Priority	Implementation Time-frame	Projected Cost / Time
41	Utilize features in EnerGov to track time spent on all stages of the development projects (e.g. inspection, plan check, etc.).	Low	2021	Included in price of new software system, 1 hour per month
42	Utilize features in EnerGov to generate comprehensive reports on time spent on development activity.	Low	2022	Included in price of new software system, 1 hour per month
43	Administer a formal survey to obtain customer feedback periodically and utilize the information to monitor satisfaction with the development process.	Medium	2021	4 – 6 hours annually
44	Community Development should host a regularly scheduled meeting between the City's development reviewers and the local development community.	High	Immediately	4 -6 hours annually per attendee
45	Require all future Construction Technicians to obtain certification and update the job description to reflect the requirement.	Low	2022	\$500 and 16 - 24 hours annually per technician
46	The Fire Preservation Services Technician should be a certified position.	Medium	2021	\$500 and 16 - 24 hours annually per technician
47	Maintain the position of Senior Construction Technician and three Construction Technician II positions. Upon full implementation of digital application submissions, audit the roles and responsibilities of these positions and expand roles based on efficiencies gained from digital application submittals.	High	On-going	N/A
48	A total of three Senior Construction Inspector positions should be authorized which is an increase of one position.	High	Immediately	\$100,000 - \$150,000 Annually
49	A total of three contract Senior Construction Inspector positions should be utilized until the Thomas Fire rebuild is mostly complete, then staffing should be reduced to one contract position. This is an increase in one contract position from the 2019 budget.	High	Immediately	\$100,000 - \$150,000 Annually

#	Recommendation	Priority	Implementation Time-frame	Projected Cost / Time
50	Continue the use of contract plan checkers for select permit and application types, especially for expedited plan check services.	High	On-going	Paid by applicant
51	Maintain the Construction Permits Supervisor and two Senior Plans Examiner positions but expand the types of applications that plan check services provides internally.	High	On-going	N/A
52	Keep the Housing and Grant staff under the Assistant Community Development Director.	Medium	Immediately	N/A
53	Maintain an Associate Planner at the public counter. One Planner should serve as the lead (or primary) public counter staff, but all Associate Planners should staff the public counter a minimum of one day every two weeks.	High	On-going	N/A
54	Re-examine Planning staffing levels in one year to determine if additional resources are necessary to maintain the 30-45 day goal of having a complete application go to a hearing body.	High	Fall 2020	None at this time
55	Weed abatement contract management should be consolidated with another City department that performs similar services.	High	Summer 2020	N/A
56	Staffing needs for Fire Plan Review (construction and fire permits) should include a Fire Marshal, Fire Prevention Supervisor, and 2.5 Fire Inspectors. This is an increase of 1.5 authorized Fire Inspector positions.	High	Immediately	\$150,000 - \$200,000 annually
57	Bring water/sewer modeling in-house by adding an Associate Engineer. Additional duties may be transitioned in-house based on the skill set of the staff member and reduced reliance on the Contract Engineer.	High	Immediately	\$75,000 - \$100,000 Annually, partially offset by reduction in contract services cost

The following report provides the narrative and analysis regarding each of these recommendations.

## 2. Process and Procedures Analysis

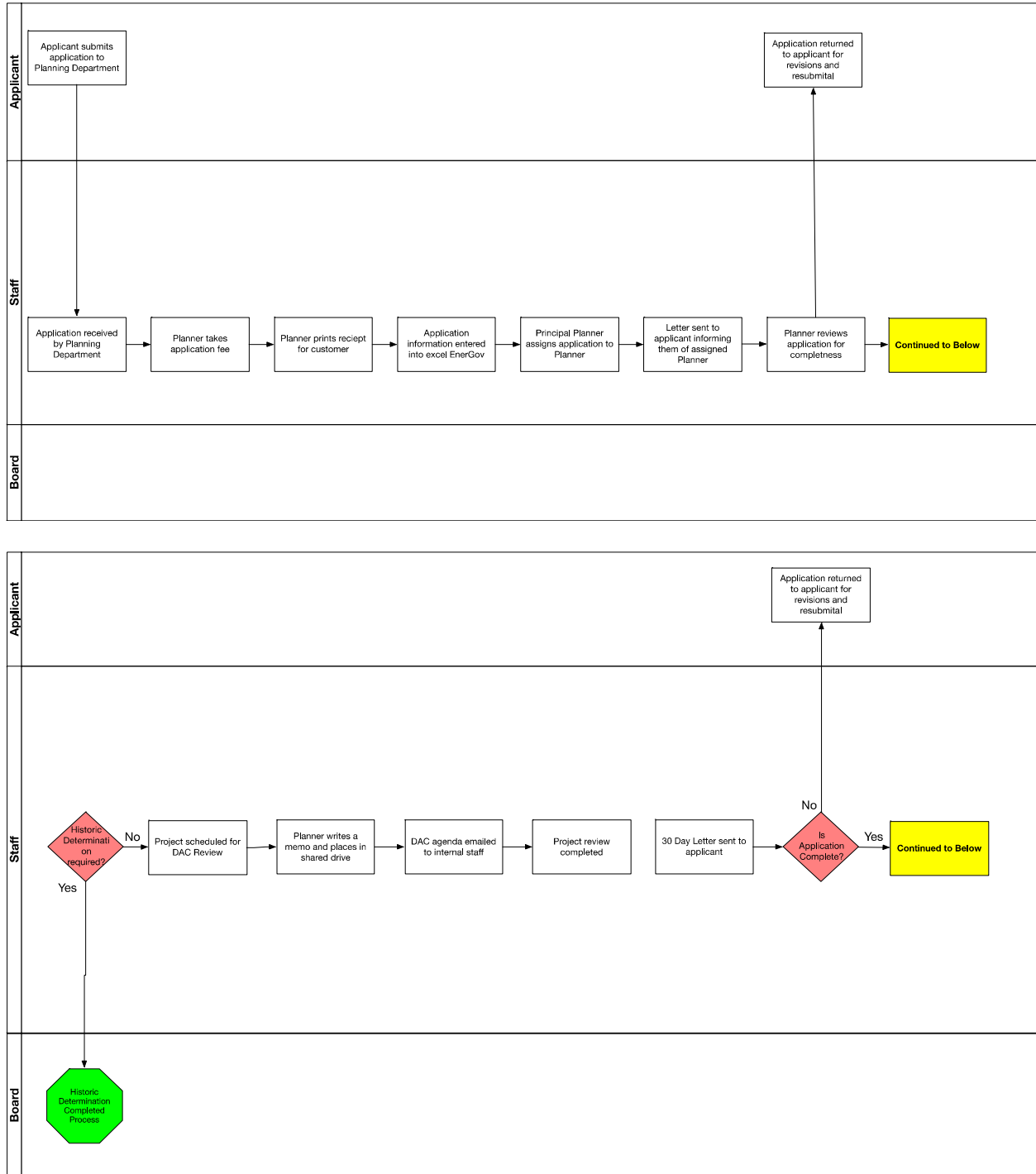
This chapter of the report is focused on improvements to the adopted process and procedures related to the development review and permitting processes. This chapter is generally divided into two areas. The first section will primarily focus on the Planning entitlement phase, while the second section focuses on various other aspects of the development review process.

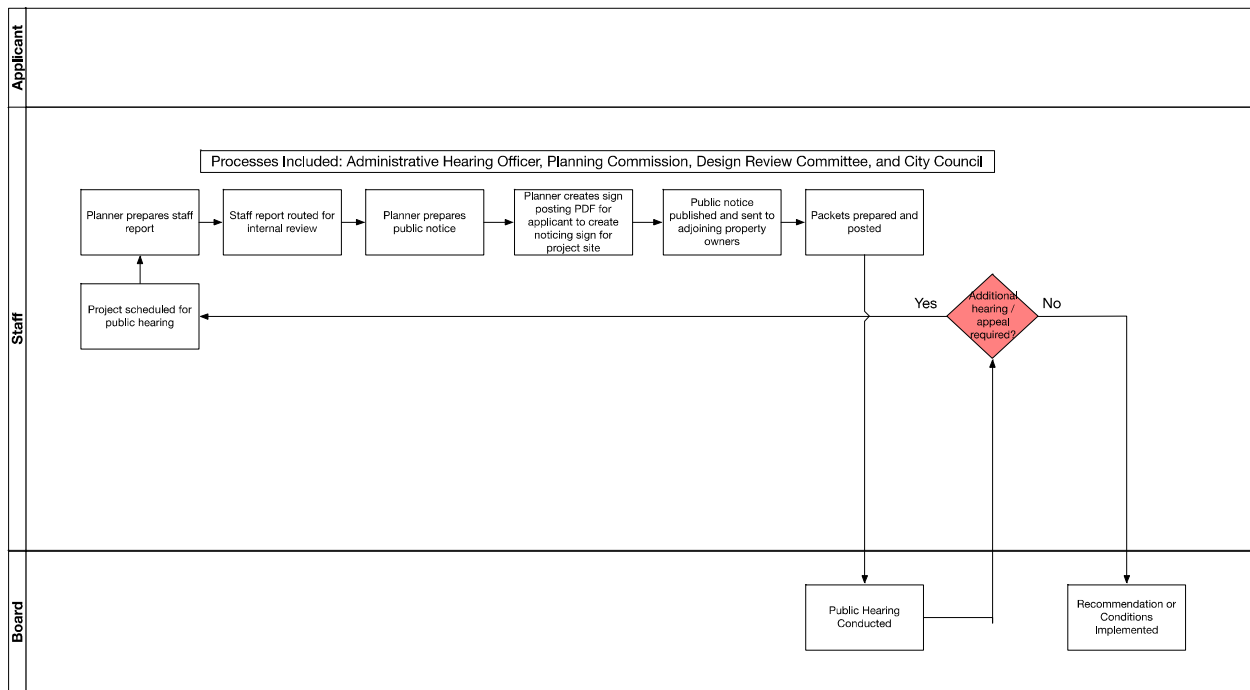
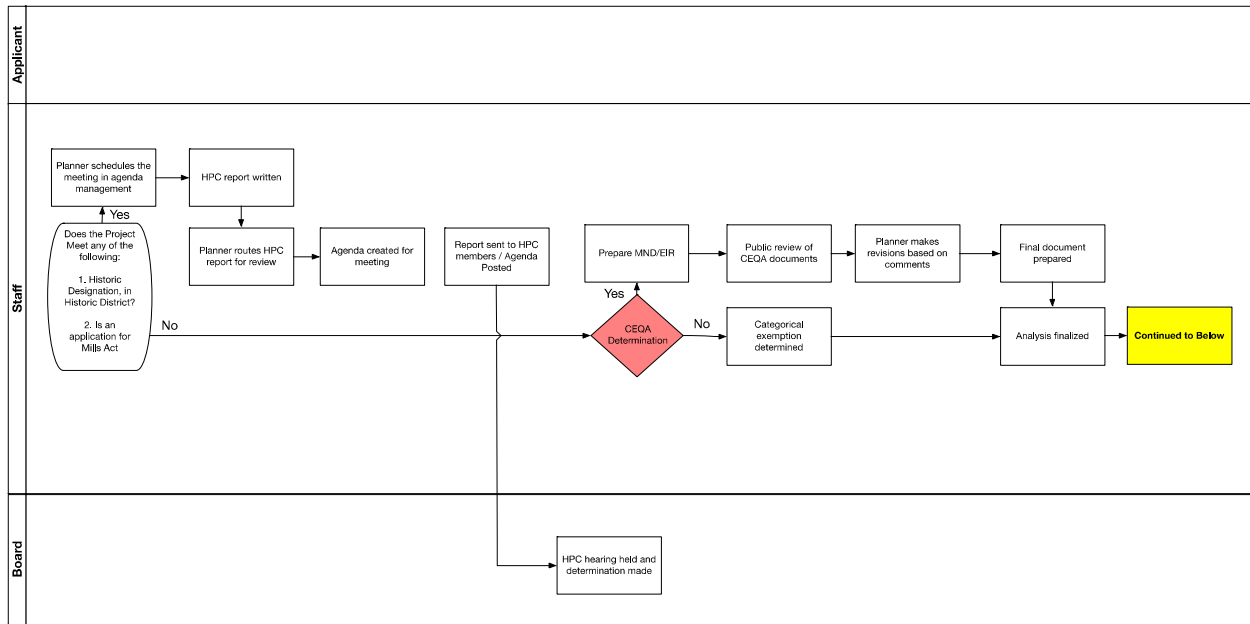
### Analysis of the Planning Entitlement Process

The planning entitlement process involves multiple departments to review an application and is ultimately approved by staff, one of the three land use boards (Historic Preservation Committee (HPC), Design Review Committee (DRC), or Planning Commission (PC)), or by the City Council. Often times, an application may go to multiple land use committees/commissions for review and approval. The entitlement review process is cumbersome and, in many instances, a lengthy process. This section of the report will analyze the planning entitlement process and identify alternative approaches that will create greater efficiencies and effectiveness.

The following diagrams presents the current process for planning applications that may be reviewed by one of the various land use boards.

## Planning Entitlement Review Process





1

## A MATRIX SHOULD BE DEVELOPED THAT OUTLINES RECOMMENDATION AND APPROVAL AUTHORITY BY APPLICATION TYPE.

Currently, the Planning Division does not provide an overview of the entitlement process on their website. Planning provides a high level general overview of what reviews may be required for a select number of applications. Furthermore, there is not information on who is ultimately tasked with making recommendations or the final decision on a planning application. Complicating this matter even more is that staff are generally unaware as to the ultimate decision-making body. Staff indicated that the decision-making body is often

determined by management, due to complexity in the review bodies and application types. Challenges with the current approach was noted in the feedback received from the stakeholder survey and focus group meetings.

Planners should be able to provide applicants of standard projects (e.g. commercial and multifamily development) with the approval authority quickly and accurately. Atypical or more complicated projects may require consultation with management. Potential applicants of straightforward applications should be able to easily determine who is the decision-making authority for their project.

In order to simplify the process and to provide direction to both staff and the public, the Planning Division should simplify the process by proposing ordinance amendments that simplify the review process, including but not limited to reconsidering whether to retain the DRC and HPC or reduce their scope. This will allow planners to provide applicants with process information. In addition, the Planning Division should develop a summary table that outlines by application type who has the recommendation and final decision-making authority. This table should also include which committees/commission have review authority and provide a recommendation. The following table is a generic example of how this table may look.

**Decision-making Matrix Example**

Application Type	Staff	Historic	Design Review	Planning Commission	Elected Body
Single Family (New Construction)	✓□		✓□ (Design Approval)		
Tenant Improvement	✓□	✓□ (Rec)			
Commercial Renovation (Exterior)			✓□ (Design Approval)		Appeal
Multi-Family (New Construction)			✓□ (Design Approval)	✓□ (Rec)	Appeal
Sign (New)	✓□				

The decision-making authority should be outlined for each application type for the various bodies that have input into the review and decision-making process. It is understood that planning staff will remain involved in shepherding each application to the various committees and commissions. The decision-making matrix should be posted on the City's website on the appropriate development review and planning webpages.



**Recommendation #1: Upon updating the adopted codes, create a decision-making authority matrix that summarizes the respective roles of staff, boards, and commission in the development review process. This authority table should be posted on the City's website.**

**Key Stakeholders: Planning, City Attorney, City Manager, City Council**

## **2 THE HISTORIC DETERMINATION PROCESS SHOULD BE MODIFIED AND INCORPORATE THE RESULTS OF THE HISTORIC ASSESSMENT STUDY THAT IS BEING COMPLETED.**

The City of Ventura has a unique process for historic determination. Currently, the City utilizes a 40-year threshold for deciding if an application needs to be vetted for historic determination. The 40-year threshold exceeds the Federal Department of the Interior eligibility requirement that a structure must be a minimum of 50 years old. Regardless of whether the age threshold is appropriate, the process is as follows. For an application for a structure greater than 40-years old, Planning staff will send an email to the HPC members for their review, referred to as a 5-business day notice. HPC members have 5-days to review the application and if fewer than two members indicate they desire more information, the item can move forward without any further historic analysis. If two or more members indicate the desire for more information, the applicant must get an historic analysis completed and the item can be resent for a new 5-day notice, or scheduled for HPC review. The call up process is subjective and a minority of board members can result in a project requiring additional work.

During the course of the development review study, the City issued a request for proposal for a historic survey of the City. The intent of the historic survey is to conduct a survey of the City and identify areas that have historic significance. Upon the conclusion of the study, the City should be provided with a document that outlines the areas within Ventura that have historic significance. This document should provide historic determination guidance for the City. Upon the acceptance of the document by City Council, the Planning Division should update the applicable City codes related to historic structures and their designation, and what elements of historic structures that should be regulated. Elements that may be regulated include: windows, exterior cladding, exterior color, roof materials, etc. The updated code should provide specific guidance on the items that should be reviewed for historic significance and compatibility. Furthermore, it should be determined what elements may be reviewed by staff and what requires review by HPC. Applicable City codes and ordinances should be updated as needed.

Upon the results of the historic determination survey, the City should understand what percentage of the City is considered historically important. These findings should guide the City Council's decision on whether or not to maintain the Historic Preservation Committee's role in reviewing historic applications or whether this may be achieved more effectively at the staff level. In the interim, the City should adopt the federal guideline of 50 years and adjust application types that may be approved at the staff level.

**Recommendation #2: The results of the Historic Determination Survey should guide what applications should be reviewed for historic appropriateness. Upon conclusion of the survey and adoption of the report, elements eligible for historic review should be codified with clear identification of approval authority at the staff and HPC level.**

**Recommendation #3: The City should adopt the Department of the Interior eligibility requirement of 50 years versus the current 40-year threshold for historic determination. This will require an update to the City code.**

**Key Stakeholders: Planning, City Attorney, City Manager, City Council**

### **3 THE CITY SHOULD ADOPT SPECIFIC DESIGN REGULATIONS THAT PROVIDE GUIDANCE TO THE DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE AND STAFF.**

The City of Ventura has a Design Review Committee that is responsible for the review and possible approval of the design elements of planning applications. One of the chief complaints from stakeholders was related to the subjectivity that DRC interjects into their review of applications and projects. This was especially relevant for windows and exterior wall finishes, primarily the type of stucco finish. The project team was able to easily find reference to the most recent design guidelines adopted in 2008. Upon discussion with staff, the project team was directed to design guidelines from 1997 and specific plans that include design elements, some of which are dated. The project team reviewed the design element guidelines on the City's website that was adopted in 2008. The elements included in the design guidelines are:

- Porches
- Alleys
- Sidewalks
- Utility Structures and Mechanical Equipment
- Parkways
- Street Lighting
- Street Trees
- Front Fences
- Street Intersections
- Street Widths
- Balconies
- Trash Enclosures.

In the introduction to the design guidelines, it states: "*The guidelines presented in this Design Primer reflect the vision, intentions and standards of the City of Ventura and its Design Review Committee by emphasizing pedestrian orientation and treatment of streetscape as community living space.*" It is clear at the time of the adoption of the design guidelines, the focus was geared toward public spaces and the specific elements defined above. Unfortunately, based on the review of past DRC meetings, the committee

has expanded the scope of their review beyond these 12 elements and other elements not included in the 1997 or specific plans.

It is common practice for a jurisdiction to regulate the design features of buildings in their jurisdictions. In order for a City to have an effective approach to design review, it is important for the jurisdiction to define the elements that may be regulated. Based on the assumption that Ventura decision makers desire to regulate the exterior features of buildings, then it is recommended to specifically define the elements included for review. Defining the architectural and design elements that are to be regulated provides specific guidance to the applicant and the reviewer, regardless if it is staff or the DRC. Upon determining which elements will be regulated for design, then appropriate design guidelines should be developed and adopted by the City and codified in the City's ordinances. Codifying the design elements that are regulated provides the reviewer with a specific set of guidelines that must be followed. This removes the reviewer's subjectivity from the review and provides legal protection for both the applicant and City.

Common elements that may be included in design guidelines include:

- Exterior material and finish
- Roof style and material
- Front facades for commercial and multi-family structures
- Color of structure as visible from the street or public right-of-way
- Massing elements
- Placement and screening of mechanical equipment
- Public access and approach
- Awning, canopies, and other shade structures
- Screening materials and finishes (e.g. screening for mechanical equipment viewable from the public right-of-way)
- Windows (scale) – size, proportion, and materials
- Landscape materials
- Fences and wall materials and colors
- Solar and alternative energy equipment placement screening type
- Screening material/type between non-compatible uses (e.g. between adjacent residential and commercial zoned properties).
- Elements or accessories placed in the public right-of-way (e.g. sidewalk café, bench, streetlighting, utility box, etc.)
- Non-traditional materials for parking lots, sidewalks, and pathways
- Stormwater infrastructure elements
- Signage (digital and traditional signs)

When developing design guidelines, they should be structured in a way that describes the element being regulated and what is appropriate. Design guidelines should provide flexibility for advancements in technology and new techniques. This will help limit applicants requesting variances for emerging trends and best practices.

Developing a prescriptive design guideline will guide the applicant and reviewer on what elements are eligible for design review and focus the review on relevant elements. The City should develop a checklist to guide the applicant and staff on items that will be reviewed for design elements. This revised approach will provide concise guidance to all parties and make the process more efficient and effective. The project team recommends that the elements presented above should be incorporated into the design guidelines.

**Recommendation #4: Develop and adopt new objective guidelines that specifically define the design elements that the City desires to regulate.**

**Key Stakeholders: Planning, Building, Fire, City Attorney, City Manager, City Council**

#### **4 THE RECENT DISCONTINUANCE OF THE DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE LIAISON WAS WARRANTED.**

During the course of this project, the Planning Division halted a longstanding practice that was referred to as DRC Liaison. The DRC Liaison essentially was a method of allowing one DRC member to represent the entire board and work with the developer on final design details. This was implemented as a way of reducing the number of additional hearings before the DRC. This approach, while being more time efficient, injected subjectivity of one individual into the final review and approval process. Furthermore, it bypasses the formal approval by the DRC as a whole and relied on one DRC member's opinion if the final application met the desired intent of the confirmation of details.

As previously mentioned, the Community Development Director halted this practice in July 2019 based on City Council direction. The project team agrees with the discontinuance of this practice due to the fact that it bypassed a formal vote by the DRC, who has final decisions on the design of many applications. An alternative to the utilization of the DRC liaison would be to use staff, or a consultant architect working for the City, to review and sign off on details. This approach is similar to "conditions of approval" for site development/zoning issues that are often provided by planning commissions in the State of California. This approach will better align with best and common practice in California and not provide one member of the DRC with greater authority than others. Alternatively, the item may be placed on consent agenda at the next DRC meeting for approval by the entire committee.

**Recommendation #5: Transition the review of confirmation of details from the DRC to an administrative review conducted by Planning staff (or qualified consultant).**

**Key Stakeholders: Planning, City Attorney, City Council**

#### **5 THE CONCEPTUAL DESIGN AND PRE-APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS SHOULD BE LESS FORMAL.**

In an attempt to help applicants determine the feasibility of a potential project, the City has created the pre-application and conceptual design process. The pre-application process is an internal meeting/review intended to provide high level feedback to the applicant about the feasibility of a project. The conceptual design review process is where the applicant takes their conceptual design before the Design Review Committee for their feedback and to gauge if the DRC will approve upon submittal. Both of these efforts have a very structured and defined process that require significant design element incorporation into the submittal.

Based on feedback received from staff, the original intent of both review practices was for the applicant to receive preliminary feedback before they significantly invest in the development of plans and submit a formal application for a project that may not be feasible. Based on feedback from staff and stakeholders, the process is cumbersome and requires a significant design effort to submit for either review.

The project team reviewed the respective application forms and found the requirements for the pre-application or conceptual design review to be detailed and exhaustive. For example, the submittal requirements for a pre-application meeting is three full pages and include a full site plan, detailed architectural drawings, a solar shading study (if applicable), signed and stamp plans from an engineer, architect, or land surveyor, and 22 copies of the plan set. The level of design details required for a pre-application review is significant.

The conceptual design review application process has less requirements than the pre-application meeting, but still has a significant number of elements that are beyond a typical conceptual design. These elements include a solar shade study, planning application form signed by the property owner, and six printed plan sets. Furthermore, the process to present to DRC is very formal, and as such requires a public comment period since it is held in a public meeting. The conceptual design review should be handled at the staff level and staff should provide general feedback to the applicant. This revised approach would require the City to adopt stronger design guidelines that provide explicit guidance. The level of detail and application submittals, except for the six plan sets and solar shade study are ideal for conceptual design review. Ideally, the conceptual design review would be submitted electronically upon the implementation of an electronically submitted application process, as discussed in the Technology chapter. In the interim, the applicant should be allowed to provide smaller sized plan sets to reduce the burden of producing full-size sets.

The pre-application review process should be less cumbersome and require less elements. The level of detail for a pre-application meeting should align more with the requirements for the conceptual design review. Both applications would go to the DAC or be reviewed by various staff that would ultimately review the application for approval. It is important to note that staff will provide feedback that is consistent with the level of detail provided by the applicant.

Modifying the approach and requirements for the pre-application and conceptual design review processes will provide a mechanism for feedback about the feasibility of a proposed project in a more economically friendly approach. These modifications will provide the level of feedback that the applicant desires, while reducing the initial investment into the design of the project. The level of work detail and work required by the applicant will align better with the intent of both processes.

**Recommendation #6: Modify the requirements for pre-application and conceptual design reviews. A reduction in the requirements will provide the applicant with appropriate feedback about the potential feasibility of a project. The level of detail provided will correspond with the level of detail provided in the application.**

**Key Stakeholders: Planning, City Attorney**

## **6 THE CITY COUNCIL “CALL FOR REVIEW” PRACTICE SHOULD BE DISCONTINUED.**

The City Council is generally not involved in the review and approval of development applications. They have delegated most decision-making authority to staff, the Administrative Hearing Officer, Historic Preservation Committee, Design Review Committee or the Planning Commission. As a result, City Council's involvement in the review process is when an applicant or the public appeal a committee/commission's decision.

Over the past few years, the City has implemented what they have titled a “call for review”. A call for review can take one of two forms. First, when a major development application is submitted, Planning staff place a summary of the application on a City Council agenda to make City Council aware that a specific application has been submitted. City Council may ask staff about the application, provide their opinion on the project, or simply note that an application exists. This will be referred to as the “pre-review” by City Council.

The second approach occurs after an application has been approved by one of the three land use committees/commission. The application and the approved decision are placed on the City Council agenda and the Council may “call for review” of the application. During this review, City Council may interject their thoughts and opinions on the project and may ask for an appeal on the application by returning to the decision-making body for amendments. This practice is not common, based on the experience of the project team. Generally, the appeal period is a set number of days after the appropriate body makes a determination on the application, and it does not go to City Council for review and appeal by Council.

These two approaches are a discretionary review that interposes increased subjectivity into the review process. The first component of notifying the City Council of a pending project (pre-review) should only be an informational session. Staff is not required to notify City Council of pending applications, nor should City Council be discussing potential

applications, as this may persuade the decision of the decision-making entity. Additionally, by a City Council member commenting on an application at this point in the process, they run the risk of having to recuse themselves later on in the process. The project team recommends that the discretionary call for pre-review by City Council be discontinued, along with the call for review after an appointed committee/commission has made their determination. City Council members have access to the City's GIS active application/projects map online and should consult that to see what applications are being reviewed and permitted.

The call for review process after a project has been approved is uncommon. City Council has previously delegated the decision-making authority to the respective body and the call for review and possible 10-day appeal process undermines the authority of these committees/commission. This approach increases the review process timeline.

The call for review after an application has been approved by a land use committees/commission should be discontinued. If City Council wants to have input on an application, then they should be the final decision-making body and the HPC, DRC, and Planning Commission need to be advisory boards and not decision-making entities. However, this change in the review process would lengthen the review timeline and increase the workload for staff related to an additional staff report for City Council. The project team does not recommend transitioning to the City Council for final approval for applications that are currently approved by staff, AHO, HPC, DRC, or Planning Commission. However, it is recommended that the current call for review process by City Council be eliminated. This will require an ordinance change to modify the process.

**Recommendation #7: The approach to informing City Council of pending development projects (pre-review) should be discontinued and City Council should utilize the City's pending and active project web-based maps to see what development applications are pending.**

**Key Stakeholders: Building, Planning, GIS / IT, City Council**

**Recommendation #8: The City Council should discontinue the call for review process for applications that are approved by HPC, DRC, or Planning Commission.**

**Key Stakeholders: Planning, City Attorney, City Manager, City Council**

## **7 THE CITY SHOULD ESTABLISH GOALS FOR WHEN A COMPLETE APPLICATION WILL BE HEARD BY A LAND USE COMMITTEE/COMMISSION.**

One of the primary concerns that was received in stakeholder survey and focus groups, was the total length of time for the entitlement review process. Chiefly, the biggest complaint was associated with the timeline between when an application was submitted (or resubmitted) and when the public hearing was conducted. Anecdotally, customers indicated that the time ranged between four and eight months for resubmittals. Considering that many applications may go to public hearing three times, this means that



the applicant is waiting between 12 and 24 months for their application to receive a final action.

The best practice associated with public hearings is to have the application (when complete and do not require or have already completed CEQA review) to go to the next public hearing that meets the minimum noticing requirements. At most, the project should be heard within 45 days of (re)submittal.

In order to set expectations for the applicant and staff, the City should establish a goal that the maximum number of 30 calendar days for complete applications to be heard by the Administrative Hearing Officer and a maximum of 45 calendar days for complete applications to be heard by other land use committees/commissions.

Establishing and monitoring these goals will provide guidance to staff to plan their work, ensure that applications are heard in a reasonable timeframe, and provide performance metrics for staff and respective land use committees/commission. Timeframes should be fluid and adjust with changes in technology and the process. Updates to timeframes should be discussed openly and shared with the development community.

**Recommendation #9: Adopt and track a 30-day goal for a complete application to be heard by the Administrative Hearing Officer and a 45-day goal for a complete application to be heard by all other land use boards.**

**Key Stakeholders: Planning, City Attorney, City Council**

## **8 APPLICATION TYPES THAT GO TO THE INTERNAL DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE SHOULD BE FORMALIZED.**

The Planning Division utilizes an internal Development Advisory Committee (DAC) that reviews all major land entitlement projects. The DAC is comprised of representatives from various departments and staff involved in the entitlement review. Representatives include Planning, Building, Public Works, Land Development, Environmental, Police, Fire, Water, Economic Development, Parks and Recreation, Gold Coast Transit, and others. The intent of the DAC meeting is for all reviewers to discuss projects and identify major issues on which reviewers will likely have comments. The approach to DAC is an industry best practice, as it brings all reviewers together to discuss the application and identify red flags.

There have been recent changes to the DAC process that have resulted in a more streamlined approach. However, it is the understanding of the project team that generally applications that only go to the Planning Commission or DRC are brought before the DAC. During interviews, staff outside of Community Development indicated that there are some projects that should be reviewed by the various DAC participants and are not. In order to provide opportunity for input on a greater number of projects, DAC should develop criteria for the projects that should go to the DAC. For example, Tenant Improvement (TI) applications for breweries generally do not go before DAC and has resulted in challenges



for Ventura Water and Public Works. By developing the framework for projects that trigger a DAC review, it will reduce the probability of late submittal or missing specific application requirements.

Developing criteria for what triggers a DAC review will provide greater consistency in the review process for all reviewers. This approach will ensure that all applicable projects are reviewed by all reviewers and removes the objectivity from Planning staff on whether a project should go to DAC. This approach will also allow all reviewers to provide input on the types of applications that require DAC discussion.

**Recommendation #10: Develop criteria for planning applications (and others) that require an internal Development Advisory Committee (DAC) review.**

**Key Stakeholders: Planning, Building, Fire, Land Development, Public Works, Water, Economic Development**

## **9 THE INTERNAL DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE SHOULD MEET WEEKLY**

The DAC meets every other week to discuss projects that are currently under review. Based on the recommendation in the previous section, the number and types of projects that should go to the DAC will likely increase when the application types are expanded. Due to the increase in the number of projects, and in order to keep meetings efficient and effective, it is recommended to have DAC meetings every week. This will allow for the 30-day completeness review to remain on task and provide ample time for all reviewers to provide their feedback after the DAC meeting. Items should be scheduled for DAC, the second meeting after they are submitted, which will allow for approximately two weeks for reviewers to provide comments before the 30-day completeness review is required.

Staff participating in DAC meetings should come prepared to the meeting with questions and comments that are relevant to the entire group and require discussion and feedback. Furthermore, upon implementation of digital submittals and electronic reviews, reviewers will be able to see all review comments. This approach will provide greater information sharing and knowledge of each reviewer's role in the process and will lead to more efficient reviews in the future.

**Recommendation #11: The Development Advisory Committee (DAC) should meet weekly.**

**Key Stakeholders: Planning, Building, Fire, Land Development, Public Works, Water, Economic Development**

## **10 APPLICATION TYPES THAT ARE APPROVED AT THE ADMINISTRATIVE LEVEL SHOULD BE EXPANDED.**

The Planning Department utilizes an Administrative Hearing Officer (AHO) to review and approve certain planning application types. Additionally, staff are granted decision-making authority for a variety of application types as well. Upon the adoption of the recommendations presented in this report that pertain to defining design and historic preservation jurisdiction, the Director should expand the types of applications that are reviewed administratively. Administrative review and approval (staff and AHO) is a more efficient process for the applicant and the City. Along with generally a more cost effective approach.

Application types that are commonly reviewed administratively include: Minor Conditional Use Permits, Special Use Permits, and Minor Site Development Permits. Additionally, the City may consider reviewing sign permits/plans, administrative warrants, temporary event permits, sign variances, etc. This approach will provide greater efficiency for the applicant, but also reduce the workload associated with staff having to write robust staff reports, issue public notices, and attend additional after business hour public meetings. Upon determination of the application types that may be approved administratively, the appropriate codes and ordinances should be updated and adopted.

**Recommendation #12: Expand the application types that may be reviewed administratively either by staff or the Administrative Hearing Officer.**

**Key Stakeholders: Planning, City Attorney, City Manager, City Council**

## **11 CEQA REVIEW SHOULD BEGIN EARLIER IN THE REVIEW PROCESS.**

It was indicated that often times the CEQA review (when required) begins after the application has been deemed complete. Often times it takes several rounds of completeness review for an application to be considered complete. By starting the CEQA review after the application has been deemed complete, this adds time to the overall review process. An alternative approach would be to start the CEQA process once the general scope of the application is deemed complete enough that the CEQA review can be started. Starting the CEQA review while the applicant is providing the final application items will reduce the overall timeline. It is recommended to start the CEQA review before the application is deemed complete, if sufficient materials and project scope have been provided for the CEQA review to be initiated.

**Recommendation #13: Start the CEQA process as soon the appropriate project scope and materials have been provided, even if the application has not been deemed complete.**

**Key Stakeholders: Planning, Public Works**

## **11 THE GENERAL PLAN SHOULD BE UPDATED.**

The City of Ventura's most recent General Plan was drafted in 2005. While the City has completed the required annual reviews of the General Plan, there has not been a complete update since the 2005 General Plan. In 2018, the City started the process for updating the General Plan, but stopped. It is recommended that the City continue these efforts in order to have an updated General Plan that is more applicable to the economic conditions in 2019. Also, the current General Plan was not formally adopted by the Coastal Commission and therefore the General Plan policies from the 2005 update do not apply in the Coastal Zone. The Coastal Zone is under the dated policies from the 1989 Plan.

Developing and adopting a more relevant General Plan will provide guidance to the City and the development community on the City's short and long term desires. The General Plan provides the framework for staff to gauge new development applications and projects. Furthermore, an updated General Plan will incorporate the strategic vision of the City's residents, staff, and elected officials. As part of a General Plan update, it is important to obtain feedback and buy-in from the Coastal Commission to ensure that the City's future plans agree with Coastal Commission regulations.

**Recommendation #14: Update the General Plan and ensure compliance with the Coastal Commission regulations.**

**Key Stakeholders: Planning, City Attorney, City Council**

## **12 LAND USE BOARDS MEMBERS SHOULD RECEIVE ONBOARD TRAINING FROM STAFF AND ATTEND CONTINUING EDUCATION TRAINING.**

The three land use committees/commissions provide a valuable contribution to the review and subsequent approval/denial of development applications for the City. Each of the three bodies are comprised of appointed representatives and include individuals who have relevant professional experience to make informed decisions. Each appointed body has a specific role in the review process and are restricted by adopted code, ordinances, and regulations on the elements which they are entitled to review. The separation of powers of each body is important to maintain the integrity of each the representative body within the development review process. Upon feedback received from staff, stakeholders, and the project team's review of minutes/videos of each of the three bodies, it is clear that representatives have varying degrees of understanding of their specific role. Often times, members overstep their respective regulatory boundary in the questions they ask or the elements they regulate. This has caused frustration from fellow members, staff, and applicants.

It is important that each committee/commission understand their specific role in the review process and what areas they should focus their review and comments on. Also, it is important for the committee/commission to understand the various roles that staff play in the process and what elements the various departments review. There are two ways that Ventura may augment their current approach to provide better guidance to appointed members. First, Planning and City Attorney staff should develop an onboarding program

for new members for each committee/commission. The onboarding program should include the development of guides for the respective body, that outline the specific role and function of the committee or commission and provides context of each department in the review process. The onboarding program should include training related to roles and responsibility of the member. Training should include general best practice related to the facilitation of the actual meetings, what type of questions may be asked of the applicant and staff, appropriate level of contact regarding specific applications between the member and the applicant/staff, and ethics training. Appropriate Planning and Attorney staff should provide the formalized training to new board members. Furthermore, City Attorney staff should be present at all HPC, DRC, and Planning Commission meetings to provide guidance to members and staff.

Finally, members should receive annual training related to their respective roles. This training may include appropriate local, regional, or state training workshops for their respective committee/commission. Additionally, the respective City legal counsel representative should provide internal training annually for updates related to new regulations (state and local) and a lessons learned for challenges that arose during the previous year. Also, consideration should be given to provide a forum where committee/commission members are provided access to the various staff involved in the process as a learning opportunity to their specific role. This approach will provide relevant information to the committee/commission members.

Implementing the two approaches described above will help maintain the integrity of the respective committees/commission. Furthermore, it will provide the basis of understanding for new members and ongoing training and reminders for long standing members. Finally, it will reinforce roles and responsibilities for each committee/commission and prevent the likelihood of members straying from their intended purpose.

**Recommendation #15: Develop and implement an onboarding program for the HPC, DRC, and Planning Commission. Provide annual training for each of the land use committees/commissions.**

**Key Stakeholders: Planning, City Attorney**

### **13 STAFF REPORTS SHOULD BE CONCISE AND PROVIDE THE RELEVANT INFORMATION.**

The project team reviewed the staff reports that are provided to HPC, DRC, Planning Commission, and City Council. The reports are very robust and provide vast amounts of information. Often times the information was repeated in multiple sections of the report and in many instances seemed to be unnecessarily long. Example staff reports ranged between 10 and 30 pages in length. During discussions with various members of the land use committees and commissions, they indicated that they generally did not read the entirety of the staff report.

Staff reports are a time consuming endeavor by staff and represent a large portion of their time. Considering that staff reports are repetitive and that many of the appointed members are not reading the staff report, then they should be shortened. A more concise staff report would be beneficial to both staff, the public, and committee/commission members. Staff reports should include the relevant information for the body to make a well informed decision regarding the application.

Planning staff should discuss with each committee, commission, and council to understand what elements they see as fundamental in the staff report. Staff should tailor their staff reports to the respective body and include the information they deem important, and balance this approach with what is required by state and local ordinances. This approach should dramatically reduce the time dedicated to writing staff reports.

Finally, upon approval of applications, staff should compose a more streamlined notice of decision, resolution, confirmation of details, etc. These items should provide the necessary information for the documentation and should not be repetitive.

**Recommendation #16: Staff reports should be more concise and include only the elements required by law and that is requested by the respective decision-making body.**

**Key Stakeholders: Planning, City Attorney**

## GENERAL REVIEW PROCESS ANALYSIS

The following section will analyze various aspects of the development review process that are outside the planning entitlement process.

### 14 DEVELOP A LIST OF REVIEW TIMELINES FOR ALL BUILDING APPLICATION TYPES.

In addition to the creation of a central webpage for the development review process that provides general permit information and links to division webpages, the Community Development department should develop review timelines for all building permit application/permit types. The following table outlines the review timelines for a sample data set that was provided to the project team for several of the most recent major projects.

**Building Application Review Time**

Building Turnaround	Average Number of Days
1st Submittal	65
2nd Submittal	27
3rd Submittal	21
4th Submittal	10

As indicated by the table above, it takes an average of 65 days to turnaround an initial building permit submittal. This timeline is based on when the application was submitted to the Building Department and the comment letter (or permit issued) was provided to the applicant. Also, based on the fact that the subset above included a fourth resubmittal, this may indicate that the example projects were poorly designed and that the applicant may not have addressed all comments for each resubmittal, or additional comments were provided later in the review. Based on interviews with staff, the timeline for turning an initial submittal around back to the applicant is 4-6 weeks; however, the data shows that it takes slightly longer on average for this subset of projects. Based on information collected in interviews, staff expect subsequent resubmittals to be turned around in 10-15 days. The data shows that, on average, subsequent submittals take on average between 10 to 27 days to turnaround. As subsequent resubmittals were received, the review timeline continued to decrease, indicating that reviews focused on previous comments.

The following table provides example review timelines for some of the most common application types.

**Building Permit Review Timeline Examples**

Permit Type	# of Business Days for Review Comments
Single Family - New Construction	15
Single Family - Interior Renovation	5
Single Family - Addition	10
Demolition	5
Re-Roof	1
Accessory Structure - Residential	5
Commercial - Tenant Improvement	10
Commercial - New Construction	30
1 & 2 Family Electric Vehicle Charger Alteration	1
Residential Mechanical Equipment Alteration or Repair	1
Sign - New	10
Sign - Changeout	5
Privacy Fence	1

The department may utilize this information to create a comprehensive list for applicants on the expected project turnaround times for building applications and permits. The list will provide applicants with an expectation as to how long a permit should take to review. The list will also serve as a guideline for staff to keep both parties accountable for project timelines. The list should be divided by the different types of submittals and include a range of days or weeks for each phase of the submittal and include each division involved and the tasks they must carry out to complete the submittal. It is important to note that in order to meet review turnaround times, staffing levels must be appropriate to

accommodate the review timeframe. This is an important consideration, especially for review departments where development review is not their primary responsibility or only a limited number of staff conduct reviews.

**Recommendation #17: Develop consolidated list of review timelines for all building application types.**

**Key Stakeholders: Building, Planning, Fire**

## **15 THE BUILDING DIVISION SHOULD OFFER AN EXPEDITED PLAN CHECK SERVICE.**

Currently, the Community Development Department offers an expedited plan check process to all development that occurs within the designated Thomas Fire Zone. The expedited process places a 14-day review timeline on all plan checks for projects that are in the Thomas Fire Zone. The basic premise behind the adoption of this expedited plan check is to speed up the process of areas/structures that were affected by the fire. Currently the Thomas Fire expedited plan check is completed by a combination of in-house and contracted plan check staff. The requirements for the Thomas Fire expedited plan check are as follows:

- Must be designed by a license architect or qualified designer and be complete at the time of plan review.
- Maximum square feet cannot exceed 3,000 sq. ft.
- Must have less than 50 total occupants
- Must be single story, with no structural changes
- Performed by City staff Wednesday and Thursdays from 2-4 PM only

The expedited plan check service is a service that is offered by many jurisdictions as an option for developers who wish to pay an additional fee to expedite the process. Although this is a function that may be conducted in-house, the strict turnaround time may cause staff to stay after hours to complete the plan check. It is therefore good practice for organizations to contract the expedited plan checks to outside agencies, where applicable. The City is currently contracted with several different agencies to provide plan check services for the Thomas Fire rebuilds, and for additional plan check services for the remainder of the City.

The City will need to determine the timeframe associated with expedited plan check service and this may be impacted by the availability of contract plan checkers and internal staff availability. The City may need to revise the terms with contracted plan checkers to ensure that the turnaround times and appropriate fees are outlined in the scope of services. Expedited plan check services should be charged a higher fee than traditional



plan check services, and ensure full cost recovery for the City. The approach to expedited plan check should also incorporate the staffing needs of reviewers outside of Building and Safety and should include applicable fees for other city reviewers.

**Recommendation #18: Offer expedited Building Division plan check services beyond the Thomas Fire Zone. If necessary due to City staff workload, provide these services via contracted plan checkers and ensure fees are established at appropriate levels to achieve full cost recovery including time for any City reviewers/departments.**

**Key Stakeholders: Building, Planning, Fire, Land Development, Public Works, Water**

**PROJECT PLAN SETS SHOULD BE ROUTED TO ALL RELEVANT DEPARTMENTS INVOLVED IN THE REVIEW OF THE SPECIFIC APPLICATION TYPE.**

The development review process in the City of Ventura involves various departments; the majority of development applications are received and processed by the Community Development Department. Departments such as Water and Fire are often involved in the review process in Ventura and review plans related to their specific purpose. Upon interviews with staff, the project team discovered inconsistencies in the distribution of project material to the departments/divisions involved, especially for building permit applications.

The Land Entitlement process has applications that vary in size and complexity. Projects that are smaller (e.g. tenant improvement) may not be sent to the Fire Department, Public Works and/or Ventura Water when they should. By not providing the application/plan sets to all departments involved in the review of the application, the overall process is slowed down as reviews are not being completed simultaneously.

As such, the Community Development Department, in conjunction with all reviewers, should develop a standardized list of application types and all relevant reviewers. Therefore, when an application is submitted, then staff know which departments (or reviewers) should be part of the distribution for review (paper or electronically). This approach will ensure that all applicable reviewers have the ability to review and submit comments appropriately. Implementing this approach will ensure that an adequate number of plan sets are provided based on the application type for the review to be completed simultaneously by all reviewers. It should be noted that defining and expanding the list of items going to DAC will help reduce the number of applications that may not be reviewed by the appropriate staff.

It is important that the plans and application documents are routed to departments that are relevant to the application type. This approach will reduce delays and turnaround times. The option is also available for the department to list the departments/divisions involved on each application type to ensure that the correct number of copies and plans



are submitted and are routed to all departments. This step has a two-fold purpose. The first is to ensure that an appropriate number of paper plan sets are provided and distributed accordingly. Second, this will help define the appropriate project review workload for the upcoming permitting software development and will help define where projects types should be routed automatically upon electronic submittal implementation.

**Recommendation #19: All review entities should collaborate and determine who is included in the review for all development review application and permit types. This will ensure that applications are routed to the appropriate reviewers.**

**Key Stakeholders: Building, Planning, Fire, Land Development, Public Works, Water**

## **17 A DEVELOPMENT REVIEW WEBPAGE SHOULD BE CREATED TO ACT AS A HUB FOR PERMITTING REQUIREMENTS AND LINKS TO DEPARTMENT.**

The City does not currently have a single webpage for the development review process that acts as a central hub where applicants can find links to all permitting requirements and departments involved in the process. The City website is laid out to where each department has their own webpage, where divisions are given subpages to display information. This means that if an applicant wishes to see and understand the steps needed for a particular permit, they would need to visit each of the divisions involved separately and piece the requirements together. Furthermore, the “How to Apply” tab on the City’s homepage has no information related to the development processes completed by the Community Development Department. Currently, only Public Works – Land Development has a link under the “How to Apply” tab.

A centralized development webpage should be provided on the City’s website. This centralized page should be the starting point for the public’s research into the development requirements of Ventura. A centralized development webpage should include the following elements:

- Information related to the overall development review and permitting process. Both in narrative and graphic (process flow charts) forms.
- A link for each department/division that is included in the development process.
- Appropriate contact information for respective staff in each department/division (e.g. Contact Information for Plan Checker, Inspections, Counter staff, etc.).
- Links to development codes (e.g. Building standards, zoning ordinance, design standards, etc.).

- Link to each department's applications and requirements. Including checklist, guidelines, standards, ordinances, etc.
- A frequently asked questions page.
- Summary table that identifies the review agency and decision maker for each application type. (e.g. Single Family Residential is reviewed by Planning, Building, Land Development, and Water, etc.)
- A page (or link) that is utilized for the electronic submittal of applications and corresponding "How To" guide for the electronic submittal process.

The Community Development Department has a summary page for development applications and review. Informational documents, guides, and applications are provided on Building's and Planning's respective webpages. Providing an overarching webpage that provides an introduction to the process, outlines the permitting requirements, and provides links to the forms and documents for each department directly would make the processes simpler for all parties involved.

In order for a successful development, implementation, and maintenance of a centralized development webpage, a staff member from each department/division should be responsible for updating their respective content. Second, someone involved in the development review process should be the curator of the development webpage and ensure updates are completed in a timely manner. Ideally, this person would be from the Community Development Department.

**Recommendation #20: Create a development review webpage that acts as a central hub and provides an overview of permitting requirements and links to departments for more information.**

**Recommendation #21: A staff member from each review department/division should serve as their respective department's content administrator. A Community Development staff member should be the overall administrator of the development review webpage.**

**Key Stakeholders: Building, Planning, Fire, Land Development, Public Works, Water, Economic Development**

## **18 A COMPREHENSIVE CHECKLIST OF SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS FOR EACH APPLICATION TYPE SHOULD BE DEVELOPED.**

The Community Development Department practice of making information readily available on their website for applicants to access is consistent when it comes to providing links to requirements for specific permit types. For example, in the forms and documents page of the Building & Safety division, links are provided to documents of all types that

include the application and requirements for submittal. Despite the availability of the information, accessibility to these requirements in a simple checklist form would help improve the efficiency of the process.

The department has already implemented a similar process for all residential building permits in the Thomas Fire Zone. This practice should be expanded to all building permit types, but should be modified, as the requirements may not be uniform. Almost half of the respondents in the stakeholder survey indicated feeling that they do not understand what information and documentation is required in a building permit application. This may be mitigated by including a checklist as part of the application. The checklist can be subdivided by division to make it easier for applicants to identify what documents are submitted to what division. The checklist should also be made available in the development review webpage where applicants can download the document and check off the boxes to determine if anything is missing from their application.

This would help avoid incomplete applications and would make it easier on permit technicians to identify whether an application is complete and ready for review. This process should be applied to all permit/application types, both, over the counter and more complicated permits, to further streamline the development review process.

**Recommendation #22: All departments involved in the development review process should each develop a comprehensive checklist that identifies all of the items required to be submitted by application type. The checklist should be included as part of the application.**

**Key Stakeholders: Building, Planning, Fire, Land Development, Public Works, Water**

## **19 A PERMIT FEE ESTIMATOR SHOULD BE INCLUDED ON THE DEVELOPMENT WEBPAGE.**

The various departments involved in the development review process have a listing of their appropriate permit, plan check, and impact fees on their respective webpage or provide a link to the City's adopted fee schedule. However, there is no fee estimator application for an applicant to determine what fees may be charged for their project.

The presence of fee calculator(s) or fee calculations by sample project type on the City's website mitigates questions from the developers or an applicant regarding the scope of fees they should expect for their type of development activity within the City. Additionally, having these permit fee calculators reduces the burden on staff for calculating fee estimates for the developer or applicant, as they can refer them to the website, and/or ensure that the system's total fees are in line with the permit fee estimator or calculator. Providing a fee estimator on the City's website will provide better customer service, while reducing the potential workload on staff.

**Recommendation #23: Provide a fee estimator on the centralized development review webpage.**

**Key Stakeholders: Building, Planning, Fire, Land Development, Public Works, Water**

## **20 THE ASSIGNED PLANNER SHOULD SERVE AS THE PROJECT MANAGER FOR THEIR RESPECTIVE APPLICATIONS.**

In the past, the assigned Planner would collect review comments from all review entities, but the applicant generally has to contact the individual department/reviewer to resolve issues with their applications. This approach results in miscommunication between reviewers, frustration among customers who have to go to individual departments, and a greater chance of misunderstanding internally and externally. In order to provide greater customer service, the City is implementing a true “project manager” responsibility to the assigned project planner. This would provide one point of contact for the applicant, increase communication between Planning and other reviewers, increase awareness for the Planner about the roles other departments have in the review and what their requirements are, and provide increased customer service to the applicant.

Implementing a project management approach to planning applications should increase ownership of the process for the Planner. In order for this approach to be successful, Community Development and City management must provide staff with appropriate training to develop necessary project management skill sets, empower staff to make decisions, and management not undermine them after a decision has been made. Furthermore, if an issue arises from the applicant, all staff should follow the appropriate chain of command to resolve this issue (e.g. City Councilmembers go through the City Manager’s Office, who goes through Community Development management, etc.). The project management approach will provide staff with the confidence to make decisions. Based on the feedback received from stakeholders, they felt that staff did not feel comfortable with making decisions on their applications and this led to longer review times. The assigned Planner should serve as the project manager and be the single point of contact for the applicant, noting that the applicant may contact reviewers directly for resolutions of questions on particular comments, etc.

**Recommendation #24: The assigned project planner should serve as the Project Manager and be the single point of contact for their assigned applications.**

**Key Stakeholder - Planning**

## **21 ALL APPLICABLE REVIEW ENTITIES SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE FINAL INSPECTION PROCESS.**

As discussed previously, there are a variety of departments and divisions involved in the development review process. However, upon close out of the building permit, not all

applicable departments/divisions are involved in the final inspection process. For example, Environmental Sustainability is not involved in the final inspection, but must approve their waste management plan before the building permit is issued. This dichotomy between the reviews that are required before a permit is issued and who is required to sign off on the final inspection process, limits enforcement abilities of respective entities. This will provide greater enforcement of the various development regulations for departments and divisions outside of Building and Safety.

In order to ensure compliance with various development standards, a more robust final inspection process should be developed. The final inspection process should include all applicable departments/divisions that were required to review and approve of specific elements of the building permit. This revised approach will help ensure that all elements and conditions of approval are completed before the applicant may occupy their structure.

**Recommendation #25: All applicable review entities should be included in the final inspection process for building permits.**

**Key Stakeholders: Building, Planning, Fire, Land Development, Public Works, Water**

## **22 VENTURA WATER SHOULD DEVELOP CRITERIA DETAILING WHEN A WATER AND/ OR SEWER STUDY IS REQUIRED FOR A PROJECT.**

A consistent theme from various Community Development, Public Works, and Water staff related to when a water and sewer study is required. Based on comments received from the survey and stakeholder meetings, it was clear they desired to have clear direction on this issue as well. Ventura Water should develop criteria for projects that require a water/sewer study. The criteria for requiring a study could be based on location and/or proposed use. Developing criteria would formalize the process and be applied uniformly across similar project types. Often times the application is deemed complete by staff, then upon later review, the requirement for a water/sewer study is determined. This approach would help eliminate the possibility of the applicant being required to submit this study well after their application was deemed complete or well into the review process, helping to reduce the timeline associated with review. After criteria is approved for when a study is required, the appropriate applications should be updated to include this requirement as part of the initial application. The requirement would be included as part of the application checklist that is part of building and planning application forms.

**Recommendation #26: Ventura Water should develop criteria that details when a water/sewer study is required based on location, proposed use, and other criteria.**

**Key Stakeholders - Water**

## **23 THE WATER AND SEWER MASTER PLAN SHOULD BE UPDATED AND INCLUDE A DEMAND ANALYSIS MODEL.**

Water and sewer infrastructure are a key component to many development projects. As discussed in the previous section, there is often confusion on when a water/sewer study is required for individual development applications. One of the key challenges associated with new development is understanding the existing capacity for the current infrastructure. It is the understanding of the project team that the current water and sewer master plan was updated in 2011 and that significant development has occurred since the previous study was completed, providing capacity constraints on existing infrastructure. Additionally, the type of development that is occurring in Ventura and the region, is much different than what was being proposed and built 10 years ago. As such, Ventura Water needs to update their water and sewer master plan. As part of the master plan, the City should develop updated models for the water and sewer systems. This model should continue to consider a holistic approach to modeling and allow for the integration of new projects into the model so that it is dynamic and is updated regularly as development is permitted and comes online.

The water and sewer master plan update should be integrated into the general plan update and provide contexts to the areas within the City that can sustain increased development activities and areas where significant improvements will need to be made. This will help guide the city on future water/sewer capital projects and provide context to developers on what infrastructure may be required by them in order to develop. Updating the water and sewer master plan may reduce water/sewer studies based on individual applications.

**Recommendation #27: Update the Water and Sewer master plan that includes a dynamic modeling component for future demand analysis to support General Plan growth projections.**

**Key Stakeholders - Water**

## **24 THE CITY SHOULD CHARGE FOR PRESSURE TESTING PRIVATE WATER LINE DISINFECTION SERVICES, AND SEWER BYPASS SYSTEMS**

Water Department staff are responsible for conducting pressure testing and disinfection services for private water lines. However, there is no fee for conducting these services for the community. In order to maintain equality between testing and inspection services for all departments involved in the development review process, the City should charge appropriate fees to conduct these services. Fees should be developed in accordance with adopted policies and procedures related to cost recovery determination methods.

**Recommendation #28: Charge appropriate fees for private water line pressure testing, disinfection services, and sewer bypass systems.**

**Key Stakeholders – Water, Finance**



## **25 NET ZERO FEE CALCULATION SHOULD BE BASED ON INDIVIDUAL USES AND ACTUAL CHANGE IN WATER DEMAND.**

When the net zero program was established, the City adopted a fee calculation policy based on land use for new projects. The land use categories that were outlined were very broad, especially for non-residential land uses. When the net zero ordinance was put into practice, there were several instances where the applicable net zero fee was not appropriate for the actual use (e.g. changing from a restaurant to a retail store required a significant net zero fee because of square footage increase, but an actual decline in water use). In multiple instances, the net zero fee did not make sense. As such, the City should develop a revised net zero fee schedule based on actual water usage versus by use category versus the land use designation. The use category is at the granular level, while the current of land use designation is broader.

A revised net zero policy should be based on a broader range of usages versus the land use type. The City should develop a gallon per day usage by type for categories such as retail, restaurants, bars, breweries, industrial, personal care (e.g. salon, assisted living facility, etc.), medical offices, hospitals, single family and multi-family residential, warehouse, auto dealer, and landscape/irrigation usages, etc. Each use should be assigned a gallon per day usage per unit and then calculate the usage per year or acre foot per year. Then the City should apply their fee per gallon/acre foot and determine the appropriate net zero fee.

There are two elements in the current net zero policy that should be maintained. These include the conservation credits and the demand offsets calculation for existing meters. This allows for flexibility in the fees charged, but more importantly encourages conservation efforts to help reduce water demands. Furthermore, utilizing the demand offset approach does not penalize individuals by charging a fee when they are using less water than their predecessors.

Finally, the City should allow for a developer/property owner to submit their own water use analysis to the City, if they disagree with the City's predetermined use criteria. This provides the applicant with an appeal process if they feel that the adopted standards are not appropriate for their actual demand. The City should adopt deviation thresholds to help eliminate frivolous appeals. For example, the applicant's water usage study must denote that the applicant is projected to use 33% (or greater) less water. For the appeal, the water analysis must be appropriately stamped by a Professional Engineer. The City may consider adopting a policy in conjunction with the appeal, that they will audit the actual water usage the first six months (or one year) and if the average use is greater than what was submitted, then a fine will be imposed to recoup the net zero fee that was reduced.

Ventura should transition to a more detailed use table for determining net zero fees. The use categories should be expanded and include common use types. This new approach will more accurately assess the future demand on water resources and recoup appropriate funds. Furthermore, an appeal process should be included in the new

ordinance to provide flexibility to the applicant for uses that may not be covered in the new use table and to encourage greater conservation.

This recommendation addresses several of the requested action items from the October 14, 2019 City Council meeting and subsequent memo.

**Recommendation #29: Modify the net zero use calculation so that it is based on individual uses and demand. Incorporate an appeal process for applicants to increase greater flexibility in the net zero ordinance.**

**Key Stakeholders: Water, Planning, City Attorney, City Council**

## **26 CONSIDERATION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO CO-LOCATING ALL DEVELOPMENT REVIEW DEPARTMENTS IN THE SAME LOCATION.**

There is a total of seven departments/divisions that play a significant role in the development review process (Building and Safety, Planning, Land Development, Fire Prevention, Ventura Water, Transportation, and Environmental Services). Currently three of these functions are located together in Room 117 in City Hall. The Transportation function is located in Room 120 in City Hall. However, Fire Prevention, Ventura Water, and Environmental Services are not located in City Hall, but in two separate locations. This creates logistical challenges when an applicant submits an application and has a question/comment or would like to meet with staff for agencies not located in City Hall. The applicant has to go to multiple locations to meet with staff of the various departments. A best practice is to co-locate development review staff at one location, ideally with representative's availability at a consolidated counter.

The benefits of a consolidated or centralized permitting counter are multi-fold. These advantages include:

- One location for the public to address development related concerns.
- Greater collaboration between development review entities.
- Increased awareness and understanding of other department/division processes.
- Increased staffing resources available to assist the public.
- Expanded awareness of staff's workload levels.
- Opportunities for cross-training between departments/divisions.

A consolidated permitting center would increase the coordination between departments/divisions and their respective staff. This expanded understanding of respective roles in the process will result in greater efficiency in the development review process both internally and for the customer.



**Recommendation #30: Co-location of Community Development, Land Development, Fire Prevention, Transportation, Environmental Services, and Ventura Water (Development Review) staff, with a consolidated permit counter, staffed by representatives from each entity.**

**Key Stakeholders: Community Development, Land Development, Fire Prevention, Transportation, Environmental Services, Water**

### 3. Technology Improvements

Technology is an important tool for innovation and streamlining the development-review process. Therefore, it is extremely important to evaluate the current and potential use of technology to further the efficiency and effectiveness of development review.

The City currently utilizes the EnerGov permitting software system as a database for issuing and tracking applications and permits. However, the software has not been updated since approximately 2009. Furthermore, the software system is not utilized by all development review departments and each department uses it at a different level. Many of the capabilities of the current software system have not been implemented. Building and Safety utilizes EnerGov to the greatest extent as they issue all building permits through the system and record all inspection activities in the system. While the Planning staff have limited use of the EnerGov system. This chapter will provide guidance on the permitting software system functionality and other technology changes that will create greater efficiencies for the public and staff.

#### **1 STAFF SHOULD BE PROVIDED FORMAL AND STANDARDIZED TRAINING FOR THE PERMITTING SOFTWARE SYSTEM.**

The City of Ventura currently utilizes an older version of the EnerGov permitting software system that receives no support from the software vendor. The developer has an individual assigned for troubleshooting assistance for older versions of the permitting software, but support is very limited. Currently, those involved in the development review process receive limited training with the permitting software from other users in the City. However, the depth of the training and features focused on should be expanded through a formal training program during the onboarding process.

The City is currently in the early stages of implementing an upgrade to the EnerGov system. Regardless of a transition to a newer version of the software, staff that are involved in the development review process should be familiar with all of the aspects of EnerGov and its features. The City should provide a monthly training session available for all staff that trains them on the different available features of the system in use. Training all staff members would ensure that there is always someone available with the knowledge and capability to access features in the software. This would likely lead to an increase in the amount of information entered and tracked into the system and can only benefit the accuracy of performance measures. Furthermore, it will provide a standardized approach and methodology between users and divisions. As part of the software training program, it is important that a reference guide/manual is developed for staff to consult when they have questions related to operating the software.

As upgrades and updates to the permitting software become available and implemented, quarterly training sessions can focus on the additions and changes of each update to ensure staff is knowledgeable about the system and that new features/upgrades are utilized.

To fully utilize the permitting software and to consistently provide training to all users, a staff member in Information Technology should serve as the administrator of the system. Additionally, the Community Development Department needs to identify an internal permitting software system lead who is responsible supporting internal staff and serves as the initial troubleshooter. This approach will help ensure greater consistency in use of the permitting system, the system is maintained up-to-date, and provide two levels of support for the system. The internal staff lead should be someone who heavily utilizes the software such as a Construction Technician.

**Recommendation #31: Provide permitting software user training to all plan review staff, including a formalized training program for new hires, involved in the development review process.**

**Key Stakeholders: Planning, Building, Fire, Land Development, Public Works, Water, Economic Development**

## **2 UTILIZE PERMITTING SOFTWARE FEATURES TO CALCULATE THE APPROPRIATE PLAN CHECK AND PERMITTING FEES.**

The current permitting software system allows for staff to calculate the plan check and permit fees. In interviews with staff, the project team discovered that the most recent fee schedule has not been integrated into the permitting software and there are challenges associated with the calculation of these fees in the software system. Instead of utilizing the permitting software, staff are manually calculating the plan check and permit fees through an excel based model. The model calculates the permit based on the parameters that are set on the permitting software and is calculated by plan checkers or counter staff.

EnerGov allows for the calculation of permit and plan check fees; however, it is reliant on having the most updated fees to ensure the accuracy of the fee. The Community Development department should update the fee schedule on the permitting software to reflect the current fees and begin to utilize the calculation feature on the permitting software. This would ensure that the permit fees that are being calculated are utilizing the most current rates in the fee schedule and are being done so accurately. The utilization of this system would also remove some of the human error involved in manually typing out information into a model that could be altered on accident to artificially inflate or deflate a fee. Furthermore, the City should integrate development impact fee calculations into the permitting system where appropriate.

**Recommendation #32: Utilize the features on the permit software system to calculate the appropriate plan check and permitting fees.**

**Key Stakeholders: Planning, Building, Fire, Land Development, Public Works, Water, Economic Development**

### **3 THE PERMITTING SOFTWARE SHOULD BE UTILIZED BY ALL DEVELOPMENT REVIEWERS, EITHER DIRECTLY OR THROUGH DATA INTEGRATION.**

As aforementioned, the permitting software system EnerGov is primarily used for the processing of building permit applications and data. All information related to the application, permit, and inspection process for building applications is stored in the system. Not all staff are provided access to EnerGov to track the application process. However, outside of building permits, the use of EnerGov for non-building related activities varies by functional area.

The Planning Division utilizes EnerGov to log applications and provide the final determination of each application, but applications are not tracked in the software. Nor is relevant project information such as comment letters, that are stored in the permit file. Each major application is currently tracked through the use of a master Excel file that is maintained by a Principal Planner. Secondly, for applications that receive comments from non-Planning staff, often the comment letter is stored on the Planner's hard drive (or email) and other reviewers do not have access to the comments. The utilization of EnerGov as an application/project management tool varies greatly by Planning staff. The software should be utilized to a greater extent and serve as the database for all information related to each application.

Furthermore, the permitting software system should have the ability for all reviewers to see what applications are active and be able to upload their comments to the specific permit file, track the status of the application through the system, receive notifications that they have pending items for review, and be a one stop resource for all information for both Building and Planning applications and permits. Finally, it is important to ensure that Code Enforcement staff have access to the permitting system to research historical information for code violations. In order to provide all review entities, access to the EnerGov suite, it will require a financial investment from the City to ensure the successful implementation of permitting software recommendations made in this report.

**Recommendation #33: Utilize EnerGov for all development related activities (plan review and inspections) across all departments.**

**Key Stakeholders: Planning, Building, Fire, Land Development, Public Works, Water, Economic Development**

### **4 ALL DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS SHOULD TRANSITION TO DIGITAL SUBMISSIONS.**

The majority of development applications must be submitted and paid for in person. Based on advancements in technology and the City's ongoing efforts to implement a new permitting software system, the City should transition to digital submissions of development applications.

Digital application submittals have numerous benefits including: reduction in the use of paper related to printing plan sets, applications may be submitted at any time, reducing the number of customers at the public counter, faster transmittal to contract and internal reviewers, ability for all reviewers to see other review comments, ensure that all reviewers are reviewing the same plan set, reduction in work associated with creating the application file in the permitting system, digital access to plan sets for inspectors in the field, etc. Additionally, the reduction of paper plan sets in Community Development will provide additional workspace for staff. There are numerous benefits for both the applicant and staff by transitioning to digital application submittal and plan sets.

In order for the implementation of digital submittals to be more successful, the following elements should be included:

- Designation of a system administrator/support for the digital submittal process.
- Development of staff user guide for the digital submittal process.
- A how to guide for the customers, that walks them through the entire submittal process. Guide should include screen shots of the process.
- Conduct a series of workshops for frequent customers of development services to guide them through the new process.
- Digital submittals should be phased in over the next three years.

This approach to transitioning to a digital application submittal will increase the level of customer service and provide a more efficient and environmentally friendly approach to the development review process.

In addition to the software needs for digital application submittals, staff will require additional software and hardware needs to perform digital reviews. This may include appropriate software to markup plan sets, cloud based storage/file transfer for larger file sizes, upgraded network capacity (wired or wi-fi), upgraded computer systems, and larger or multiple computer screens for staff.

It should be noted that newer versions of EnerGov have the capability to accept digital submittals and plan reviews.

**Recommendation #34: Implement electronic application and plan submittals for all development application types.**

**Key Stakeholders: Planning, Building, Fire, Land Development, Public Works, Water, Economic Development**

## **5 APPLICANTS SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO TRACK THE STATUS OF THEIR APPLICATION ONLINE.**

The City does not currently utilize a permit tracking application on their website that would allow for applicants to check the status of their permits.

The Community Development Department should allow the applicant to track the status of their application online. Ideally, this would be through the applicant's individual account in the online permitting center. Alternatively, the applicant may be able to search for their application by permit number, and view their application status. This would lower the workload for city staff who would normally relay the status of the application over the phone and increase transparency between the city and the applicant pertaining to where their application is in the review process.

It should be noted; the City has made the status of some current development activity available for review through a "current project" layer on the City's GIS interface. The web application allows the public to view an interactive map of the City where each development is highlighted in a particular color that relates to the development type. Anyone can select a project on the map and see summary information about that specific project that has been permitted. This is a separate function primarily for permitted projects, but should be continued.

**Recommendation #35: Allow applicants to track the status of their application through an online portal.**

**Key Stakeholders: Building, Planning, IT**

## **6 ALLOW ONLINE PAYMENTS OF FEES.**

The current process requires all applicants to pay for all applications in person at the Community Development counter and does not allow for payments to be made online. The Community Development Department and other development review departments should develop an online platform where applicants can pay their applicable fees online. Ideally, this system would be the same software solution that allows for the digital submittals of applications.

This recommendation is only feasible if the permitting software system is capable of calculating fees in the system. If the software system is capable of calculating fees, then the fees can be required to be paid at the time of application submittal and when a permit is issued. Upon payment by the applicant, they should receive an email that includes a receipt for the fees paid and the permit if applicable.

**Recommendation #36: Utilize the permitting software system (or digital submittal program) to allow for the online payment of fees.**

**Key Stakeholders: Planning, Building, Fire, Land Development, Public Works, Water, Economic Development**

## **7 BUILDING, FIRE, AND PUBLIC WORK INSPECTIONS SHOULD IMPLEMENT AN AUTOMATED VOICE ACTIVATED AND ONLINE INSPECTION REQUEST SYSTEM THAT LINKS TO THE PERMITTING SOFTWARE.**

To request a Building inspection, the applicant is required to call a phone number that is designated for scheduling inspections. The applicant is then instructed to leave a voice message indicating who they are, the project they are working on, and the inspection needed. The staff within the Inspection division then listen to the voice message and manually record the information into the computer and then schedule the inspection. This process is time consuming and can be done in a more expedited manner using current technologies available. For Fire and Public Work inspections, requests are made via a phone call to a staff member.

The project team recommends the implementation of an automated voice-activated and/or online inspection request system that is linked with the permitting software and automatically populates the information. The voice activated system would be similar to the current system, however, it would not require the manual entry of inspection request information. The applicant would call in and answer a series of pre-set questions to gather the necessary information needed to schedule an inspection. Once the call is complete, the system would automatically transfer the information to text format and integrate it into the permitting software and send an inspection request.

Additionally, all departments that require inspections should utilize an online application system. This approach would allow the applicant to select the type of inspection being requested and would be linked automatically to the form. This would help ensure that the proper inspections are requested. Based on the inspection date selected, the software would automatically generate the inspection request list for each day. The implementation of an automated system, whether online or voice activated, would expedite the inspection request process and make it easier to track the inspection requests. This approach is only feasible with the implementation of the appropriate software solutions and one that ties all permitting information together in same software solution.

**Recommendation #37: Implement an automated voice-activated and online inspection request system to receive inspections and automatically link requests to the permit.**

**Key Stakeholders: Building, Fire, Land Development, Public Works.**

## **8 INSPECTORS SHOULD UTILIZE TABLETS IN THE FIELD TO COMPLETE THE INPUT OF THE INSPECTION RESULTS AT THE TIME OF INSPECTION.**

Each Inspector is provided a tablet for their use in the field. Current capabilities between departments varies and some, such as Building are limited in what information is accessible on their tablets. The functions of the tablet are essentially limited to inspectors using it to answer technical questions and keep in contact with the department throughout the day. Furthermore, the Building Inspector tablets are not linked to the permitting

system and does not have the property record and/or limited permit information is available. To increase efficiency, all Inspectors should have the capability to access relevant permit file information on their tablet and be able to input the result of the inspection on the tablet. Also, the tablet should have the capability to take pictures and attach them to the permit file.

By implementing a portable field reporting system, the inspectors can fill out the information while on site, and transmit the results of the inspection to the applicant. This would eliminate the additional time spent by inspectors inputting the results of the inspection on their desktops at the end of the day. Implementing this approach would create greater efficiencies for inspection staff and reduce the documentation at the end of their workday. Also, the applicant would know the results of the inspection immediately and eliminating the needs for them to call the City to find out the result of the inspection.

**Recommendation #38: Utilize tablets in the field for all development Inspectors to access relevant permit information and input their inspection results upon completion of the inspection.**

**Key Stakeholders: Building, Fire, Land Development, Public Works.**



## 4. Staffing, Organizational, and Management Analysis

One of the primary areas of focus of the development review analysis is to ensure that the staffing levels, organizational structure, and management practices within the City are sufficient to meet desired service levels. The focus of this chapter is to evaluate the key components that impact the staffing needs of key partners in the development review process and to address any necessary organizational structure changes.

### 1 ALL DEPARTMENTS INVOLVED IN THE DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PROCESS SHOULD DEVELOP A SUCCESSION PLAN.

Currently, each department/division has various succession plans (or lack thereof) related to the completion of tasks related to the development review process. The Planning Division has cross-trained staff, but they have no formal succession plan for when staff are absent or leave the organization, on how projects are transferred to other Planners. The Building Division has some cross-training of inspectors, but other staff have received little cross training. For other departments whose primary function is not development review, cross-training is mostly non-existent and development review functions fall upon only select individuals (e.g. Police Department, Water, etc.).

Succession planning serves two primary purposes. These purposes include cross-training of staff so that tasks are continued to be completed when staff are not available. Second, succession planning is critical to providing staff with career mobility. Succession planning allows for operations to continue regardless of who is generally available, but more importantly it provides for a well-trained workforce. First, succession plans should be developed for all functions, especially for those that have only one or two individuals involved in the development function. This would include the creation of a desk manual for all employee classification levels that may be consulted in the event the primary reviewer is absent. This will allow for the continuation of development review functions. Secondly, back up staff should be required to perform the development review duties they are to back up, on a quarterly basis, providing for the ongoing maintenance of development review skills.

Succession planning is important to maintain engagement for staff who are primarily involved in the development review process (e.g. Community Development staff). Based on the nature and complexity of the projects that are typically reviewed by staff, it is important for staff to be well trained and provided mentorship opportunities to build the skills necessary to progress up the career ladder. Currently, there are several long tenured staff in the City that have vast quantities of institutional and project specific knowledge. While these staff are valuable resources for the team, it is not the most efficient and effective way for staff to achieve their goals and objectives. It is important to have proper metrics in place to transfer knowledge and skill sets to junior staff before senior staff leave the organization. Implementing a formal succession plan provides multiple benefits. These benefits include:

- Broadening staff's knowledge of the development review process.

- Provide framework for staff to learn and problem solve while making decisions.
- Identifying key staff members who exhibit career ambitions, and show the potential to achieve those ambitions, and mentoring them for advancement.
- Define performance metrics that may be used as part of annual evaluation.
- Outline specific steps and actions for staff advancement.
- Formalize mentoring programs to provide skill sets other than planning and review process (e.g. management, public speaking/engagement).
- In the event of staff turnover, internal staff have the necessary skill set to backfill a position until a new employee is hired. Also, the onboarding process for the new hire will be streamlined.

In order to develop a comprehensive succession plan, it is important for plans to be created for specific functions (e.g. Planners, Construction Technicians, Inspectors, etc.). This will result in a tailored approach that will identify current skill sets and knowledge base within each functional area. Additionally, succession plans should be updated every three years or after staff turnover, resulting in an up-to-date succession plan that is achievable and effective. A key component of succession planning is the development of processes and systems that are defined and provide guidance to staff who step into their next role or for new staff joining the team. A succession plan should provide the framework for staff to focus on the mission and understand their individual role in the process and the role of the team.

**Recommendation #39: Develop and implement an employee succession plan to identify mentoring and cross training opportunities for staff and identify key staff members who can progress up the career ladder.**

**Key Stakeholders: Planning, Building, Fire, Land Development, Public Works, Water, Economic Development**

## **2 FEATURES IN THE PERMITTING SOFTWARE SHOULD BE UTILIZED TO TRACK WORKLOAD DATA AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES.**

The City currently utilizes an older version of EnerGov that provides little support or accessibility. However, the system still allows for the tracking of workload data to accurately provide relevant information. Despite the availability of this feature on EnerGov, it is not utilized to its fullest potential.

Divisions involved in the development review process are inconsistent in their methodology and approach to tracking performance measures. Interviews with staff and observations from project team members indicated that performance measures are

seldom tracked on a monthly basis, but rather annually or when requested. This adds to the inconsistency, as the figures are not reported on a more periodic timeframe. This results in many divisions not monitoring Key Performance Indicators, but rather plugging in new information and numbers to prepare for the annual review. Furthermore, since Planning does not utilize EnerGov for their applications and permits, then relevant performance measurement is not available in the system. Additionally, these performance metrics are not utilized in Planning.

With the anticipated update in permitting software, it is crucial for all aspects of workload data to be entered into EnerGov to ensure accuracy in performance measures.

**Recommendation #40: Utilize features in EnerGov for workload data and performance measures to accurately track information.**

**Key Stakeholders: Planning, Building, Fire, Land Development, Public Works, Water, Economic Development**

### **3 FEATURES IN THE PERMITTING SOFTWARE SHOULD BE UTILIZED TO TRACK TIME SPENT ON ALL STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS AND GENERATE REPORTS.**

Similar to workload data, features in EnerGov should be utilized to track the time spent on all stages of the development process. Tracking time spent on all stages will benefit the process by providing an accurate display of the timeline of the process. For example, Building Inspection utilizes the system to track the number of inspections conducted by the staff, but does not fill in the specific time information. Tracking the number of hours it takes to conduct specific types of inspections would benefit Building Inspection immensely. The division could use that time information to determine a more efficient and effective scheduling of inspections. This is an important data point to have for online inspection requests, especially in the event the City was to incorporate a time scheduling component for when inspectors will arrive and complete their inspection. Furthermore, tracking staff's time in the software will be beneficial when the City conducts annual fee studies. This will provide an accurate estimate of time required for different application types and provide data to update fees charged for review.

The time information collected from aspects of the development process should also be available in an easily accessible report format. The permit processing system should have the features available to automatically generate comprehensive reports on the time information tracked on development activity. The periodic review of the automated reports would provide better insight on the aspects of the process that are taking longer than anticipated or expected. Staff could then use this information to make the necessary minor adjustments to the process to increase efficiency.

**Recommendation #41: Utilize features in EnerGov to track time spent on all stages of the development projects (e.g. inspection, plan check, etc.).**

**Recommendation #42: Utilize features in EnerGov to generate comprehensive reports on time spent on development activity.**

**Key Stakeholders: Planning, Building, Fire, Land Development, Public Works, Water, Economic Development**

**4 A FORMAL SURVEY TO OBTAIN CUSTOMER FEEDBACK PERIODICALLY SHOULD BE IMPLEMENTED TO MONITOR CUSTOMER SATISFACTION WITH DEVELOPMENT PROCESS.**

An important aspect of the development review process is the periodic monitoring of customer satisfaction. There is currently no formal survey adopted by the City of Ventura where customers can provide feedback on their experience with the development process. The adoption of a formal survey is important because it provides staff with an insight on the specific aspects of the process that customers may be the most frustrated or pleased with. Staff would periodically monitor the results of the surveys and the information can be used towards making a more informed decision in adjusting the development review process with the thoughts of the customers in mind.

A formal survey can be created using many different platforms (e.g. SurveyMonkey, Google Forms) for easier use. Staff can make the survey available in the counter area on a computer or tablet. The department may also distribute surveys through the permitting software. The permitting software may be programmed to automatically send a survey link to the applicant upon issuance of a permit and when the building permit is finalized.

This process would also allow for the applicant and permit holder to have the opportunity to provide input. The limited access ensures that only those who interact with the process take the survey and the results are not tampered with. Staff would then utilize the platforms features to download comprehensive reports that break the survey results down to display a clear picture of the opinions of a majority of those who interact with the development process.

**Recommendation #43: Administer a formal survey to obtain customer feedback periodically and utilize the information to monitor satisfaction with the development process.**

**Key Stakeholders: Planning, Building, Fire, Land Development, Public Works, Water, Economic Development**

**5 THE CITY SHOULD HOST REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETINGS WITH THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY.**

A similar feedback mechanism to that of customer feedback should be adopted focused on resolving current issues with the development review process. The feedback mechanism should not be limited to a survey, but should be periodic focus groups or roundtables. The inclusion of a meeting opens dialogue between the City and

development community and will help determine what aspects of the development review process are most problematic. This approach has recently been utilized by the Building Division for accessory dwelling units and Thomas Fire expedited plan review. These meetings will help bridge the gap between the City and development community and provide a means to receive feedback on current issues. Furthermore, they may be utilized by City staff to share potential modifications to the development review process, or provide a quick tutorial on issues inspectors have experienced in the field, etc.

**Recommendation #44: Community Development should host a regularly scheduled meeting between the City's development reviewers and the local development community.**

**Key Stakeholders: Planning, Building, Fire, Land Development, Public Works, Water, Economic Development**

## **6 ALL CURRENT AND FUTURE CONSTRUCTION TECHNICIANS SHOULD BE REQUIRED TO OBTAIN CERTIFICATION.**

The job description provided by the City's Human Resources Department does not currently require construction technicians in the Building division to obtain certification. The description of the job encourages technicians to obtain certification, but does not make it mandatory. Currently only two of the construction technicians in the department have some form of certification. The Community Development Department should make it a requirement that all construction technicians obtain certification within a certain period of time from employment.

A common practice among cities in California requires licensing and certification to be obtained for new hires between six to twelve months from hire. The city should adopt that practice and make it a mandatory requirement for new technicians to gain certification. The job description and requirements should also be updated to reflect these changes. Current permit technicians already employed by the City that do not have certification should also be encouraged to complete the necessary requirements to obtain certification. Having all of the construction technicians in the Building Division obtain certification, ensures that all technicians are up to date with current practices and standards involved in the industry.

The Fire Department has a Preservation Services Technician that performs similar duties to Construction Technicians in the Building Division. As such, the Preservation Services Technician should obtain certification as well.

**Recommendation: #45 Require all future Construction Technicians to obtain certification and update the job description to reflect the requirement.**

**Recommendation: #46 The Fire Preservation Services Technician should be a certified position.**

## Key Stakeholders: Building, Fire

### 7 MAINTAIN THE FOUR FULL TIME CONSTRUCTION TECHNICIAN POSITIONS.

A total of four Construction Technicians (permit technicians) are responsible for operating the public counter for the Building Division. Currently an Extra Help Secretary is utilized to provide clerical, administrative, and accounting support for the Building Division. This position also assists at the public counter.

The public counter serves as the hub for Building Division activity and is frequently busy. The following table presents the number of customers assisted at the public counter over the last four years.

**Front Counter Customers Assisted**

Year	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	Total
2015	968	877	979	928	898	1,038	1,064	921	989	908	805	747	<b>11,122</b>
2016	755	998	1,006	1,019	1,004	1,102	1,017	1,168	1,009	982	1,014	855	<b>11,929</b>
2017	933	831	1,001	964	1,002	1,108	1,036	1,132	975	1,285	948	690	<b>11,905</b>
2018	2,310	1,131	1,192	1,262	1,473	1,344	1,467	1,500	1,263	1,707	1,382	1,022	<b>17,053</b>

This is a significant number of customers who are assisted each year. Based on 240 business days per year, this was an average of 71 customers per day in 2018. Implementing the recommendations submitted in this report, especially related to electronic submittal of applications, should dramatically reduce the number of customers assisted. The following table shows the number of permits issued over the last five years.

**Permits Issued**

Year	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	Total
2014	360	320	323	350	317	396	417	358	406	389	345	310	<b>4,291</b>
2015	382	338	356	355	275	423	375	345	384	379	369	325	<b>4,306</b>
2016	319	351	420	384	393	427	312	421	352	355	361	325	<b>4,420</b>
2017	331	341	464	487	508	445	339	442	429	416	413	276	<b>4,891</b>
2018	442	486	371	420	515	435	463	522	515	556	452	423	<b>5,600</b>

An average of 4,701 permits have been issued annually for the last five years. If 80% of these permits were applied for and received online, then this would reduce the number of counter visits by 7,500, (application drop off and permit pick up). This is a 43% decrease in the number of customers.

While the number of face-to-face customer interactions would decrease with digital submittals and permit issuance, the workload would still exist for processing applications



and permits. However, Technicians would not have to input the application into the permitting software system, as this would be populated by the applicant. The Technicians would review the application materials for completeness electronically versus on paper, they would not have to retrieve the approved plan set, process payments, etc. The workload associated with the public counter is significant and by transitioning to digital submittals, the time required to complete much of the workload would be reduced. Based on the recommendations, the number of Construction Technicians should remain at four at this time. This is especially important as the workload associated with the Thomas Fire should begin to decrease dramatically over the next six to 12 months.

After the full implementation of digital application submittals, the Building Division should complete an audit of the tasks assigned to Construction Technicians and determine the level of efficiency gained. Based on the level of efficiencies gained, Construction Technician duties may need to be expanded or reallocated (e.g. one position serve as the permitting software administrator/trainer, etc.).

**Recommendation #47: Maintain the position of Senior Construction Technician and three Construction Technician II positions. Upon full implementation of digital application submissions, audit the roles and responsibilities of these positions and expand roles based on efficiencies gained from digital application submittals.**

**Key Stakeholder: Building**

**A TOTAL OF THREE FULL TIME AND THREE CONTRACT SENIOR CONSTRUCTION INSPECTORS ARE NEEDED FOR THE CURRENT INSPECTION WORKLOAD.**

Currently, Building utilizes Senior Inspectors to perform all building inspection activities. Senior Inspectors are certified in all trade areas and can conduct all types of building inspections. In the past, the City has utilized Building Inspectors who are not cross-certified and are limited to specific inspection types. Best practice is for building inspectors to be cross-trained and certified in all areas, which the City currently meets through the use of in-house and contract Senior Inspectors.

Another best practice is for inspectors to complete between 10 and 15 inspections per a day and that inspections are completed the next day after the request. Ventura meets both of these best practices by allowing inspections to be scheduled up to 5 p.m. the day before and have a goal of completing 12 inspections each day. The following table presents the historic inspection workload.

**Inspections Completed**

Year	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	Total
2014	609	702	664	654	646	757	848	733	787	892	757	640	<b>8,689</b>
2015	773	768	840	772	706	782	842	849	858	847	832	747	<b>9,616</b>

2016	687	794	830	728	813	825	802	901	837	827	788	672	<b>9,504</b>
2017	673	668	1,008	839	1,093	1,113	1,020	1,236	1,229	1,412	1,422	980	<b>12,693</b>
2018	1,434	1,373	1,235	1,456	1,438	1,448	1,315	1,457	1,339	1,633	1,270	1,122	<b>16,520</b>

The inspection workload has increased approximately 90% since 2014. The increase in inspections in 2018 is primarily due to the Thomas Fire rebuild. For staffing calculations, the project team will utilize the five year average of 11,384 inspections annually, or 45 inspections per workday. It should be noted that in 2018, an average of 66 inspections per day and this has resulted in the two in-house inspectors working 10-hours of overtime each, and the Supervisor maintaining a full inspection workload.

The following assumptions were made related to determining the number of building inspectors needed:

- Inspectors will conduct 12 inspections per day.
- Inspectors are available an average of 220 days per year. This accounts for holidays, vacation, and sick leave, and certification maintenance.
- The Inspection Supervisor is available 50% of the time to conduct inspections.

Annual Inspections	11,384
Average Workload Per Inspector	2,640
<b>Total Number of inspectors</b>	<b>4.3</b>

Based on the five year average inspection workload and availability, a total of 4.3 inspectors are needed. Currently, a total of two senior inspector positions are authorized and is augmented by two contract inspectors. Additionally, the Inspection Supervisor is carrying a full inspection workload to meet current demand. The project team recommends three senior inspector authorized positions, three full time contract senior inspectors, and the Inspection Supervisor conducting six inspections per day. After the Thomas Fire rebuild is primarily complete, the number of contract inspector positions should be reduced to one position.

**Recommendation #48: A total of three Senior Construction Inspector positions should be authorized which is an increase of one position.**

**Recommendation #49: A total of three contract Senior Construction Inspector positions should be utilized until the Thomas Fire rebuild is mostly complete, then staffing should be reduced to one position. This is an increase in one contract position from the 2019 budget.**

**Key Stakeholder: Building**

## **9 THE APPROACH TO CONDUCTING PLAN CHECK SERVICES SHOULD BE MODIFIED.**



Building Plan Check is provided by a combination of internal and contracted plan checkers. Contracted plan check services augment internal plan checkers for areas that require additional expertise and for the most complex projects. Internal plan checkers conduct over the counter, accessory dwelling units, Cal green plan checks, and historically the Chief Building Official has conducted commercial plan checks. Additionally, plan checkers calculate permit and development impact fees and resolve issues between the applicants and contract plan checkers. This approach provides a high level of customer service and clearly delineates what applications will be reviewed internally versus externally.

However, outside of commercial plan check services conducted by the Chief Building Official, plan check functions are narrowly focused on accessory dwelling units and Cal Green application types. These plan check services are primarily conducted by the Permit Supervisor and Senior Plans Examiners. The types of applications that are plan checked internally should be expanded. Currently, the Permit Supervisor and Plan Examiners spend a significant portion of their time calculating permit and impact fees. With the implementation of the new permitting software system that is capable of calculating fees, staff will have additional time available to conduct more plan check functions. Ideally, the Permit Supervisor and Plan Examiner II should be able to complete some types of commercial permit applications in addition to expanded residential plan checks. This approach will create a staff succession plan, and better serve the division in the event of staff turnover.

The use of contract plan check consultants should continue as a relief valve when workload dictates the need for additional support and for complex projects where staff may have limited experience. Also, contract plan check consultants should be utilized for expedited plan check services.

The current staffing level of a Chief Building Official, Construction Permit Supervisor, and two Senior Plan Examiners is adequate. However, their roles will need to be modified with the implementation of the new permitting software system and the type of plan checks completed by the team as a whole should be expanded to include a wider array of permit application types.

**Recommendation #50: Continue the use of contract plan checkers for select permit and application types, especially for expedited plan check services.**

**Recommendation #51: Maintain the Construction Permits Supervisor and two Senior Plan Examiner positions but expand the types of applications that plan check services provide internally.**

**Key Stakeholders: Planning, Building, Fire, Land Development, Public Works, Water, Economic Development**

**THE HOUSING AND GRANT PLANNERS AND MANAGEMENT ANALYST (II)  
11 SHOULD REPORT TO THE ASSISTANT COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
DIRECTOR.**

There are two Planners and a Management Analyst that are focused on grants and housing related programs for the City of Ventura. These positions have been shifted throughout the Department in the past, and until June 2019 was supervised by the Advance Planning Principal Planner. However, these three positions have very little to do with long range planning efforts and are specific to housing and grant programs. Ideally, these three positions should report directly to the Assistant Community Development Director, which was implemented in September 2019, which we support. This organizational alignment would better serve these staff members as their duties do not align well with Planning. Often times housing and grant programs require review, approval, and signature from the Assistant Director or Director.

**Recommendation #52: Keep the Housing and Grant staff under the Assistant Community Development Director.**

**Key Stakeholder: Planning**

**HAVING A PLANNER ASSIGNED AT THE PUBLIC COUNTER IS  
13 CONSIDERED BEST PRACTICE AND SHOULD CONTINUE WITH  
MODIFICATIONS.**

The Planning Division has an Associate Planner assigned to the public counter. This individual is tasked with serving the public, processing small and medium scale planning projects, review sign permits, and conducting zoning compliance on building plan check applications. By having a Planner assigned to the public counter, it provides an exceptional level of customer service and a subject matter expert who can answer a multitude of questions. While having a primary staff person assigned to the public counter provides for consistency in this role, it creates challenges when this staff member is absent and restricts developing skill sets for other planners. It is important to rotate the Assistant and Associate Planners at the public counter to ensure consistency in the approach to performing the duties for this position and provide increased opportunities for all staff.

Based on the current allocation of four Associate Planners, one planner should be the primary planner assigned to the public counter two to three days per week, and then the other planners should rotate to staff the counter. For each two week period, an Associate Planner should be assigned to the public counter at least one day. This approach is consistent with the succession planning recommendations made in this report.

**Recommendation #53: Maintain an Associate Planner at the public counter. One Planner should serve as the lead (or primary) public counter staff, but all Associate Planners should staff the public counter a minimum of one day every two weeks.**

## Key Stakeholder: Planning

### 14 PLANNING WORKLOAD DATA IS SPORADIC AND THE WORKLOAD ASSOCIATED WITH PLANNERS VARIES BY APPLICATION TYPE.

As discussed in other sections of this report, the Planning Division has traditionally not utilized the permitting software system to track their applications and subsequent workload. In lieu of using the software system, staff track applications in an Excel file. The project team was provided a copy of the Excel file and analyzed the current and historic workload.

Workload data was provided for ongoing projects and applications that have been fully reviewed and a final determination has been made. The following tables present the historic workload for projects that have completed the review process that went before a committee or commission (as of June 30, 2019). This data is sorted based on the initial application date.

**Historic Workload**

Year	AHO	HPC	DRC	PC
2013	44	14	30	24
2014	58	25	32	14
2015	35	9	20	6
2016	2			1

As seen in the table above, no projects that were started in 2017 and only a few started in 2016 have completed the review process.

The project team was provided with a current project listing. A total of 141 applications are still under review. In reviewing individual applications, submission dates range from 2005 to 2019. A revised current project listing as of October 31, 2019, show a total of 100 applications still under review. This shows that in a four-month period, the Planning Division completed or closed out 41 more applications than were submitted. With eight planners handling these applications, that is an average of 14 applications per planner. Noting various degrees of complexity.

Based on the two data sets, it is clear that the review timeline associated with planning applications that go before HPC, DRC, and/or Planning Commission is a timely endeavor. The following table summarizes the review timeline from when an application was submitted and when the first hearing was held by the respective body. The data set is from applications processed between 2016 and 2018.

#### Administrative Hearing Officer

Processing Times	# of Applications	Avg Turnaround Time (Days)	% of Total
1-90 Days	312	51.8	80%
90-180 Days	53	124.2	14%
180+	27	420.6	7%

#### Design Review Committee

Processing Times	# of Applications	Avg Turnaround Time (Days)	% of Total
0-90 Days	86	49.5	47%
90-180 Days	37	130.0	20%
180+	61	472.1	33%

#### Planning Commission

Processing Times	# of Applications	Avg Turnaround Time (Days)	% of Total
0-90 Days	66	54.4	37%
90-180 Days	31	134.8	17%
180+	81	712.8	46%

#### Historic Preservation Commission

Processing Times	# of Applications	Avg Turnaround Time (Days)	% of Total
1-90 Days	54	45.6	65%
90-180 Days	16	122.5	19%
180+ Days	13	370.4	16%

The tables above confirm that the review timeline is relatively long, especially for applications that go before DRC and the Planning Commission. 33% and 46% of the applications took longer than 180 days to review before they went to a hearing. Granted part of the delay in processing times is the fault of the applicant and not necessarily the fault of staff.

Best practice processing times for applications that go to public hearing is between 60 and 90 days for projects that only require one hearing. For projects that must go before two committees/commissions, the ideal processing time is between 120 and 150 days from the time the application is deemed complete until it is approved or denied by the hearing body. It is clear, that a significant number of applications are not meeting best practice targets.

The City should monitor the number of days before a complete application goes to a hearing body, with the goal to be no more than 30-45 days depending on the hearing body. Establishing such goals would ensure that applicants provide sufficient information to make their application complete will be processed in a timely manner.

The workload data and review timeline data presented above showcase the following challenges with the current process. As discussed in the Process chapter, there are multiple recommendations made to streamline the process. These recommendations include:

- Changing the scope of, or eliminating DRC and/or HPC, which will shift more applications to administrative actions, which have faster review cycles. Developing design review and historic determination guidelines should be a part of this process.
- Transition to digital application submittal, which can increase the efficiency for review by having all applications reviewed concurrently, and allow for reviewers to see all review comments. Concurrent review is important as some applications currently only require three plan sets, which is less than the total number of review entities.
- Define what applications are required to go to the internal Development Advisory Committee, in order to limit the possibility of additional requirements after the initial application.
- Develop a more concise staff report that reduces the amount of staff's time dedicated to composition of the report.
- Have project planners serve as the project manager for their respective applications, which will increase communication between reviewers and reduce the review timeline.
- Utilize the permitting software system, which will provide workload levels in real time.
- Develop review timeframes for applications to go before committees and commissions after the adoption of revised decision authorities.

Each recommendation will have an impact on the overall workload level and impact staffing needs. The overall impact on the number of planners is unknown, as many of these recommendations will have a significant impact. By utilizing a consultant team to manage the General Plan update, impacts on Planning staff will not be as significant as if staff were handling the update internally. The Planning Division is in the process of combining Current and Advance Planning in order to better allocate resources to tasks at hand. The Division should maintain the current staffing level of one Planning Manager, one Principal Planner, and eight planners ranging from Senior, Associate and Assistant levels. In one year, after the immediate and short-term recommendations made in this report have been implemented, the City should evaluate the workload associated with planning and adjust the allocation of planners (number and title) to correspond with the current workload demands.

**Recommendation #54: Re-examine Planning staffing levels in one year to determine if additional resources are necessary to maintain the 30-45 day goal of having a complete application go to a hearing body.**

**Key Stakeholder: Planning**

**15 THE FIRE DEPARTMENT PRESERVATION TECHNICIAN SHOULD FOCUS SOLELY ON FIRE PREVENTION AND DEVELOPMENT REVIEW ACTIVITIES.**

The Fire Marshal's Office has a Preservation Technician who is responsible for processing and routing plan sets to the reviewer, issuing comment and permits to the applicant, and provide additional administrative support to the Fire Prevention team. Additionally, this individual serves as the Weed Abatement contract manager for the City. The weed abatement duties for the Technician removes them from the office to conduct periodic field inspections and monitor the work of the contractor. The weed abatement duties fluctuate greatly throughout the year and can change between years, depending on climate conditions and the level of work being completed by the contractor.

To allow the Fire Preservation Technician to focus more on fire prevention and development review activities, the contract monitoring functions of the weed abatement contractor should transition to another City department that has similar functions (e.g. Public Works, Parks, Code Enforcement, etc.). Weed abatement contract management should be consolidated with a City department that performs similar services.

**Recommendation #55: Weed abatement contract management should be consolidated with another City department that performs similar services.**

**Key Stakeholder: Fire, City Manager, City Council**

**16 AN ADDITIONAL 1.5 FIRE INSPECTORS ARE NEEDED TO CONDUCT CONSTRUCTION AND FIRE PLAN REVIEW AND INSPECTIONS.**

The Fire Prevention team is comprised of a total of six staff members: Fire Marshal, Fire Prevention Supervisor, two Hazardous Material Specialists, Fire Inspector, and Preservation Services Technician. In addition to these positions, they utilize a combination of contracted and part time staff to conduct plan checks and inspections.

Due to recent changes in personnel, the project team was provided with annual averages for workload. The following workload does not include the workload associated with the Thomas Fire rebuild.

Additional details on Fire issued permits and resulting workload are provided below. 2010-2016 (7 year) averages:

- 177 fire construction permits issued annually

- 442 fire permit plan reviews performed annually
- Construction inspection estimates: 485 annually

2017-2018 (2 year) averages:

- 352 construction permits issued annually (193 more or a 109 % increase)
- 880 fire permit plan reviews performed annually (438 more or a 99% increase)
- Construction inspection estimates: 1,126 annually (641 more or a 132% increase)

Additionally, Fire Prevention Division staff are responsible for implementing four community risk reduction programs, which is mandated by state law and require over 1,000 plan reviews and 2,000 inspections annually.

*It should be noted that the project team was not provided with permitting and inspections data related to Hazmat permits.*

In order to determine the staffing needs for the Fire Prevention, the following assumptions were utilized:

- Fire construction permit plan review takes an average of three hours to complete.
- Fire permit plan reviews take an average of one hour to complete.
- An average of 10 fire inspections for construction can be completed per day, or one hour for each inspection.
- Community Risk Reduction Program plan reviews take 1.5 hours.
- An average of 10 Community Risk Reduction Program inspections can be completed on average for each day.
- Staff are available an average of 215 days per year when excluding holidays, vacation, other leave, and training.
- Workload levels utilized was an average between 2010 and 2018 and included the additional workload associated with the community risk reduction program.

The following table calculates the staffing needs for plan review and inspections.

#### **Workload and Staffing Needs**

Year	Construction Permits	Fire Permit	Construction Inspection	CRRP Plan Review	CRRP Inspection
2010	177	442	485	1,000	2,000
2011	177	442	485	1,000	2,000
2012	177	442	485	1,000	2,000
2013	177	442	485	1,000	2,000
2014	177	442	485	1,000	2,000
2015	177	442	485	1,000	2,000
2016	177	442	485	1,000	2,000
2017	352	880	1,126	1,000	2,000
2018	352	880	1,126	1,000	2,000
<b>Average</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>539</b>	<b>627</b>	<b>1,000</b>	<b>2,000</b>
Hour Per Task	3	2	0.75	2	0.75
Total Time (Hr)	648	1,079	471	2,000	1,500
Total Hours					5,697
<b>Total Staff</b>					<b>3.3</b>

Overall, a total of 3.3 staff are needed for plan review and construction/fire permit inspections. The overall staffing needs for this function include a Fire Marshal, Fire Prevention Supervisor, and 2.5 Inspectors. This is an increase in 1.5 authorized Inspector positions. The recommended staffing level will allow the Fire Prevention Supervisor and the Preservation Services Technician to focus on their primary duties and ensure compliance with state mandates. This staffing level will help expand the proactive capabilities of the team and increase educational programming to the community.

**Recommendation #56: Staffing needs for Fire Plan Review (construction and fire permits) should include a Fire Marshal, Fire Prevention Supervisor, and 2.5 Fire Inspectors. This is an increase of 1.5 authorized Inspector positions.**

**Key Stakeholder: Fire**

## **16 ADDING AN ASSOCIATE ENGINEER TO VENTURA WATER WILL ALLOW WATER AND SEWER MODELING TO BE CONDUCTED INTERNALLY.**

Land Development currently utilizes a contractor to perform water and sewer studies when required for development applications. The City has oscillated between using a contractor and in-house staff based on staffing levels and the skill set of individual staff. In order to provide consistent and a high level of service to the public, this should be conducted in-house. In order to complete modeling in-house, the City should consider hiring an Associate Engineer to complete these functions, along with completing other development review functions performed by the Contract Engineer. This will provide for quicker turnaround for studies, provide a dedicated staff member to update the modeling as new development is completed, and transition more plan review services in-house versus the use of contract staff. Additional cost savings may occur for the City and customers by adding a position to perform plan review in-house.



**Recommendation #57: Bring water/sewer modeling in-house by adding an Associate Engineer. Additional duties may be transitioned in-house based on the skill set of the staff member and reduced reliance on the Ventura Water Contract Engineer.**

**Key Stakeholder: Water**

# Appendix A: Descriptive Profile

---

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The descriptive profile outlines the organization, structure, and staffing of the various departments involved in the development review process, including Community & Economic Development, Fire, Police Department, Public Works, Ventura Water, Parks & Recreation and Finance. The information contained in the profile has been developed through a series of interviews conducted at all levels of the organization, including managers, supervisors, and line-level staff, from the various departments.

The primary objective of this profile is to document the current approaches utilized and workload associated with the development review process. Additionally, it enables us to confirm our understanding of the roles and responsibilities of individuals involved in the development review process. Consequently, no analysis or findings are contained in this document. Instead, the report focuses on outlining the following items:

- The organizational structure of development review entities within the project scope.
- The roles, responsibilities and service delivery approaches for each participating department / division.
- The allocation of staff by position classification assigned to each unit, including contracted positions.

Once the profile is finalized, it will serve as a summary of the “current state” of staffing allocations and duties and processes utilized. This will allow us to compare our recommendations to the current state and demonstrate the impact of the proposed changes.

Please note that the roles and responsibilities descriptions for each position are not intended to provide a job description level of detail but simply to highlight the most important or core functions of the position related to the development review process.

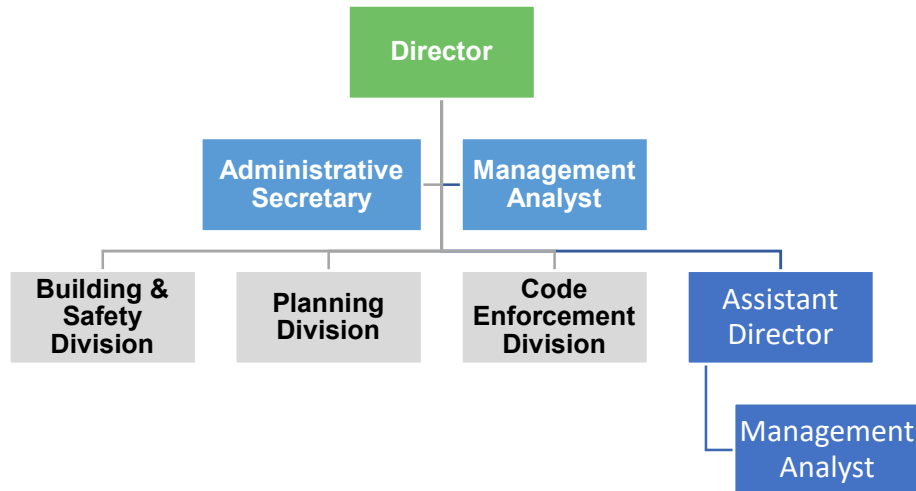
## 2 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT - ADMINISTRATION

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Community Development Administration is comprised of the management and support staff for the Community Development Department. At the time of this profile, the department has a Director, vacant Assistant Director, Administrative Assistant, and Management Analyst.

### 2. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The organizational structure of Community Development is presented in the following chart. It should be noted that Code Enforcement is not included in this study, since they are not primarily involved in the development review and permitting process.



*Please note that Housing and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) functions are excluded from this study and therefore are not shown in the organizational chart.*

### 3. STAFF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The following table details the number of staff, by position title, for Administration and summarizes the major duties of the position relative to the development review process.

Position Title	Authorized Positions	Key Roles and Responsibilities
Director	1.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oversees all planning, building and safety activities of the City.</li> <li>Establishes overall work priorities and policies of the Department.</li> <li>Serves as a member of the City's executive team.</li> </ul>

Position Title	Authorized Positions	Key Roles and Responsibilities
Administrative Secretary	1.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides administrative support to the Director and Assistant Director.</li> <li>Assists with scheduling, department budget monitoring, contract monitoring, purchasing, and other various administrative tasks as assigned.</li> </ul>
Assistant Director	1.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assists the Director in oversight of the Department through the development and implementation of policy and procedures, customer service, and supervision of direct reports.</li> <li>Manages the DAC.</li> </ul>
Management Analyst II	1.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assist the Director in performing a wide variety of tasks including: special project coordinator, development of RFPs / contracts, serves as the PIO for the Department, review staff reports, liaison to Information Technology, permitting software administrator, and grant administrator.</li> </ul>
Management Analyst I	1.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitors and maintains HUD financial database for CDBG grants. Also serves as liaison for CDBG, HOME, and Redevelopment in the budgeting process.</li> <li>Processes and reviews documents for loan assistance program.</li> <li>Assists and manages special projects as assigned.</li> </ul>

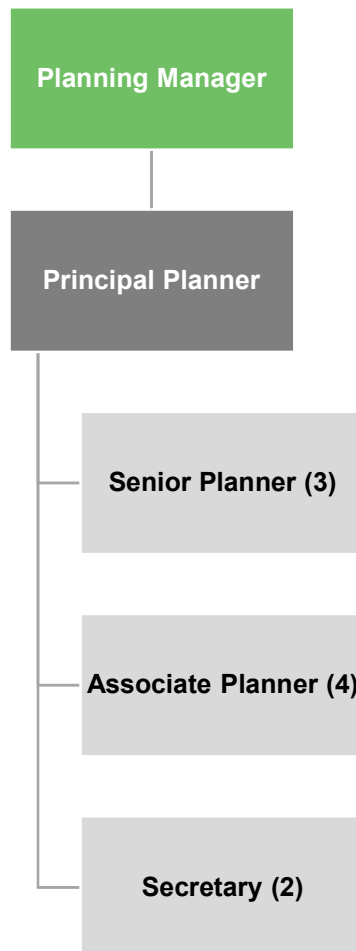
### 3 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT - PLANNING

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Planning Division is responsible for the enforcement of the City's zoning and land use codes and ordinances, long range planning efforts including the completion of the City's General Plan, and ensures all development complies with adopted local, regional, and state ordinances.

#### 2. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The following chart outlines the organization of functions in the Planning Division.



#### 3. STAFF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The following table details the number of staff, by position title, for the Planning Division and summarizes the major duties of the position relative to the development review

process.

Position Title	Authorized Positions	Key Roles and Responsibilities
Planning Manager	1.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oversees the daily operation of the Planning Division, including the development and implementation of department goals, objectives, priorities, and resolution of complaints.</li> <li>Provides direction and interpretations related to the adopted land development regulations.</li> </ul>
Secretary	2.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Responsible for administrative tasks of the division including: budgeting, contracts, account receivable / payable, plan review deposits, develops ordinances / resolutions, file storage, records management, public noticing, update website, and distributes packets to land use boards.</li> <li>Serves as the clerk to land use boards and prepares notices, minutes, and distributes final resolution to applicant.</li> </ul>
Associate Planner	1.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assists with updating the General Plan, assists with the development of small area plans and other special projects as assigned.</li> <li>Reviews environmental documentation for compliance.</li> <li>Provides inner agency reviews for projects within the sphere of influence that conflict with General Plan policies.</li> </ul>
Principal Planner	1.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Serves as the front-line supervisor overseeing the day-to-day functions of planning.</li> <li>Involved in resolving issues with customers, occasionally review complex applications, and attend public hearings.</li> <li>Processes sensitive entitlement applications, studies or special projects.</li> </ul>
Senior Planner	3.0 (1 Vacancy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Processes and reviews medium to large scale entitlement applications, long range planning studies or special projects. Including presentations during public hearings.</li> <li>Serves as a project manager for special projects.</li> </ul>
Associate Planner	4.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Processes and reviews current small to medium scale current planning cases or long range planning studies, including presentations during public hearings</li> <li>One staff is primarily assigned to the public counter and processes over the counter permits.</li> <li>One staff is primarily assigned to conduct plan check for building applications.</li> </ul>
Assistant Planner	0.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conducts application review for smaller to medium scale projects, review sign permits, and assist with building application plan checks.</li> <li>Reviews sign permit applications.</li> </ul>
Contract Planner	0.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides support for Thomas Fire application review.</li> </ul>

The Planning Division utilizes consultants for environmental (CEQA) and historic preservation services. The following table provides a summary of the consultants utilized by the Planning Division.

Service Focus	Consultants
<b>CEQA</b>	Environmental Science Associates Michael Baker International Rincon Consultants Wood Environment and Infrastructure Solutions
<b>Historic Resource Assessment</b>	Chattel Historic Resources Group Rincon Consultants

#### 4. WORKLOAD

The project team was provided with workload data related to the development review process from FY 2016 – 2018. The project team sorted the data by decision-making authority by processing times.

##### Development Advisory Committee

Processing Times	# of Applications	Avg Turnaround Time (Days)	% of Total
0-30 Days	12	17.9	48%
31-60 Days	7	46.4	28%
60+ Days	6	264.0	24%

##### Administrative Hearing Officer

Processing Times	# of Applications	Avg Turnaround Time (Days)	% of Total
1-90 Days	312	51.8	80%
90-180 Days	53	124.2	14%
180+	27	420.6	7%

##### Design Review Committee

Processing Times	# of Applications	Avg Turnaround Time (Days)	% of Total
0-90 Days	86	49.5	47%
90-180 Days	37	130.0	20%
180+	61	472.1	33%

##### Planning Commission

Processing Times	# of Applications	Avg Turnaround Time (Days)	% of Total
0-90 Days	66	54.4	37%

90-180 Days	31	134.8	17%
180+	81	712.8	46%

#### Historic Preservation Commission

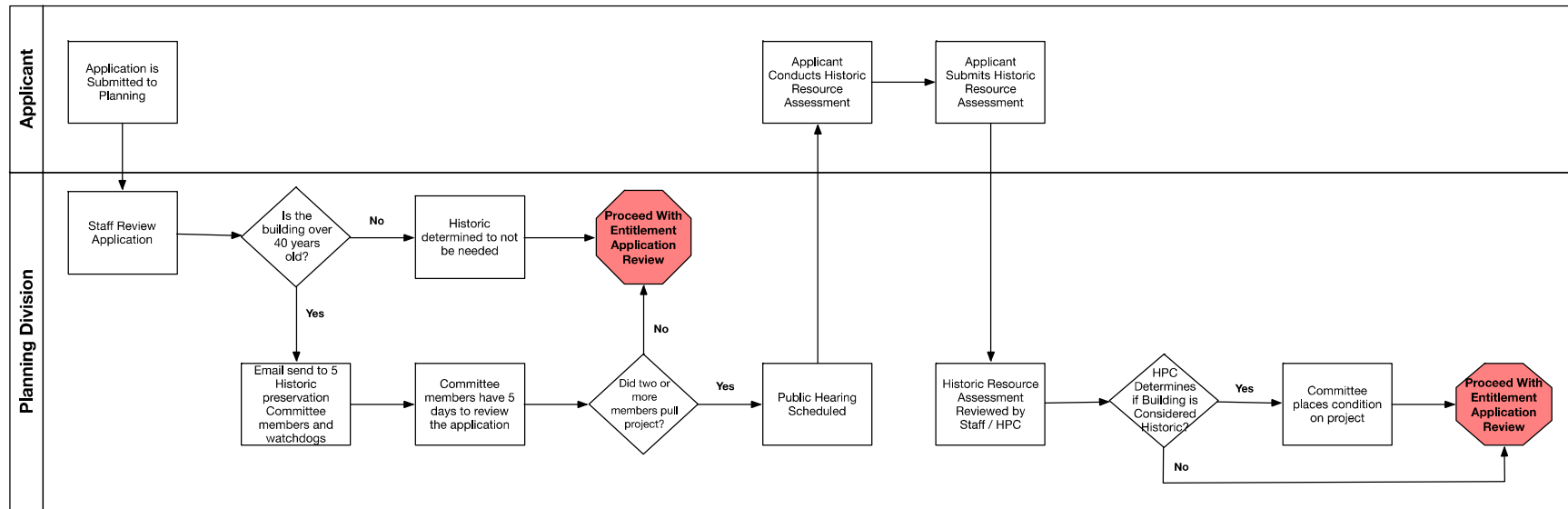
Processing Times	# of Applications	Avg Turnaround Time (Days)	% of Total
1-90 Days	54	45.6	65%
90-180 Days	16	122.5	19%
180+ Days	13	370.4	16%

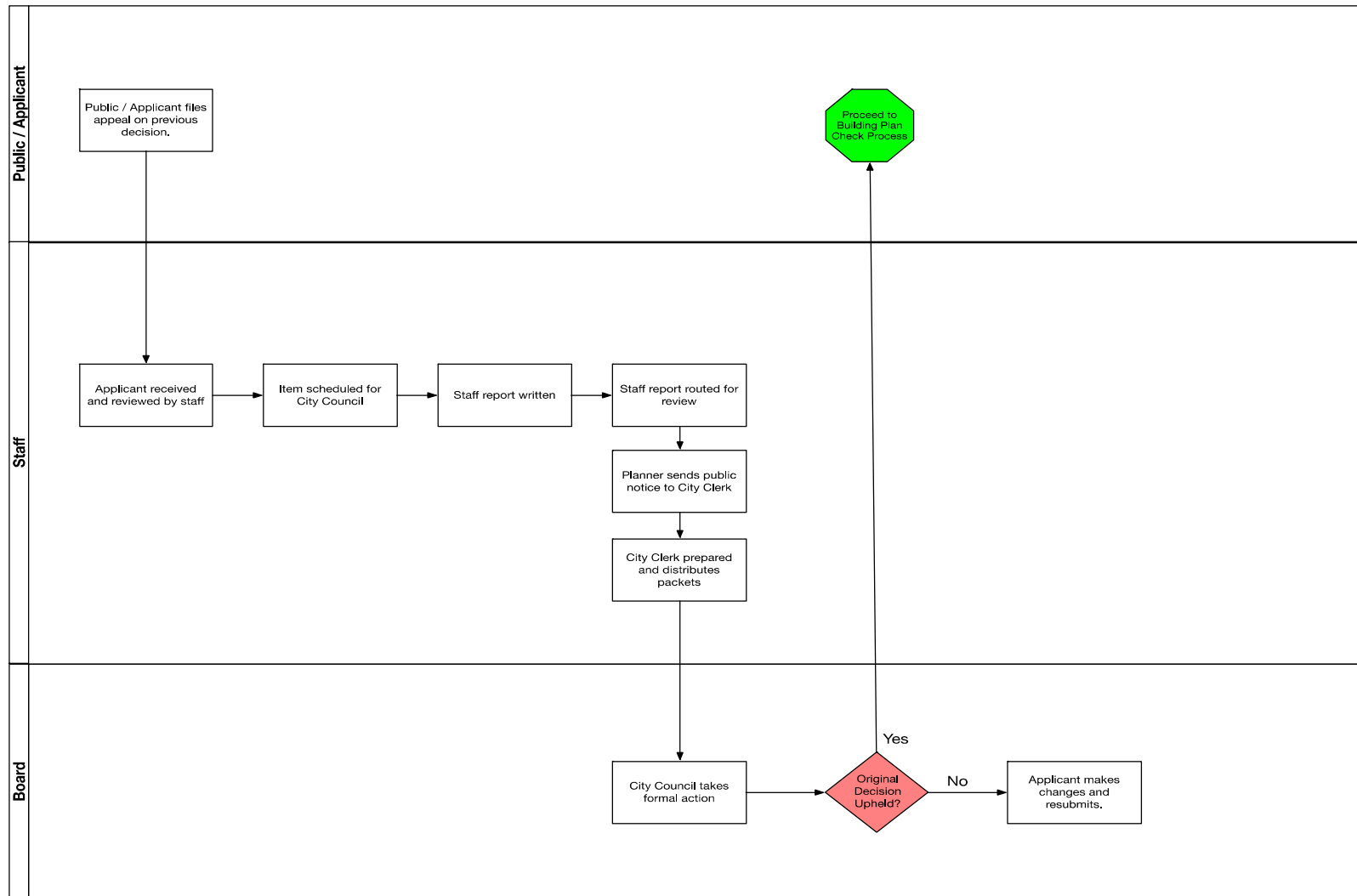
## 5. PROCESS FLOWS

The process flows for historic determination and the public hearing entitlement process were mapped and are presented on the following pages



## Historic Determination



**Call for Review / Appeal**

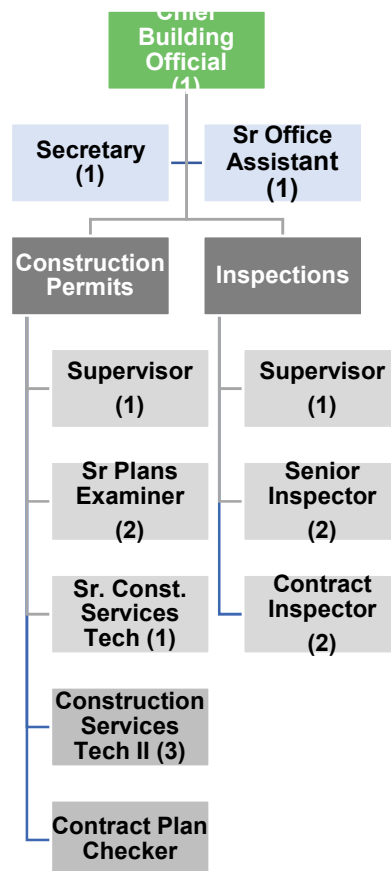
## 4 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT – BUILDING AND SAFETY

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Building and Safety Division (referred to as Building) is responsible for building permit plan check, permit issuance, inspections, and assuring the safety of new buildings, additions and improvements. The intent of the Division is to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the community through enforcement of adopted California Building Standards and locally adopted codes. This is accomplished through the review of building applications and inspecting constructed structures. Operations are divided between Plan Review, and Inspections. It should be noted that contracted services are utilized for both plan check and building inspections in addition to internal staff.

### 2. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The Building Department of the City of Ventura consists of three major functions (that are within the scope of this engagement): Administrative, Permitting and Inspections. There are 15 full-time employees in the department (plus one contract employee) as shown in the following organizational chart.



### 3. STAFF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The following table details the number of staff, by position title, for the Building Division and summarizes the major duties of the position relative to the development review process.

Position Title	Authorized Positions	Key Roles and Responsibilities
Chief Building Official	1.0 (Vacant)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Serves as the Chief Building Official for the City. Provides oversight and direction to the staff of the division.</li> <li>Responsible for all administrative oversight of the day-to-day operation of the division, including the building plan review and inspection process.</li> <li>Staff liaison for contracted consultants.</li> </ul>
Secretary	1.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performs a variety of administrative responsibilities, including basic accounting.</li> <li>Provides clerical support of various functions to department staff and division manager.</li> </ul>
Senior Office Assistant	1.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides clerical support for division programming to management and staff.</li> <li>Serves as a backup for the Secretary.</li> </ul>
Construction Permits Supervisor	1.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supervises, plans and coordinates plan review and building permit issuance.</li> <li>Performs reviews for both scheduled and non-scheduled projects to facilitate and answer questions.</li> <li>Calculates plan check and permit fees.</li> </ul>
Senior Plans Examiner	2.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performs routine plan reviews for building permits to ensure conformance with standards and codes.</li> </ul>
Contract Plan Checker	1.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performs checks and service for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) and Cal Green projects.</li> </ul>
Electrical / Mechanical / Plumbing Plan Checker	1.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reviews over the counter plans if needed.</li> <li>Provides support to front counter staff.</li> <li>Coordinates plan check with contracted plan checkers.</li> </ul>
Senior Construction Services Technician	1.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Issues basic over the counter permits that may require plan checks.</li> <li>Performs a basic review of permit applications for completeness.</li> <li>Calculates review and permit fees.</li> </ul>
Construction Services Technician II	3.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intakes, processes, and records applications and plan sets.</li> <li>Performs a basic review of permit applications for completeness.</li> <li>Gathers data for monthly reports to State agencies and scan documents.</li> <li>Assists at the public counter.</li> </ul>

Position Title	Authorized Positions	Key Roles and Responsibilities
Construction Inspection Supervisor	1.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supervises Construction Inspection staff.</li> <li>Plans and delegates daily schedules and approve routes for Inspectors.</li> <li>Performs routine and complicated inspections</li> <li>Provides customers with code related information and addresses questions and concerns.</li> <li>Conducts inspections as required.</li> </ul>
Senior Construction Inspector	3.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performs routine inspections of new and existing structures for compliance with housing code.</li> <li>Develops daily route and schedule for field inspections.</li> </ul>
Inspector	1.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Verifies and enters inspection information into permitting software.</li> <li>Two positions are contract inspectors who focus on minor inspections or projects.</li> </ul>
Extra Help Secretary	1.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performs a variety of secretarial and administrative tasks.</li> </ul>
Contract Secretary	1.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides clerical accounting support to the Construction Inspection Supervisor.</li> <li>Assists at the public counter.</li> <li>Contract Secretary focuses on Thomas Fire management.</li> </ul>

The Building Division utilizes consultants in a variety of areas, including: inspection, plan review, architectural review and technology. The following table provides a summary of the consultants utilized by the building division, their responsibility and focus:

Consultant	Responsibility	Focus
Stuart Consulting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inspections</li> <li>Plan Check</li> <li>Counter Staff</li> </ul>	Thomas Fire & General
Integrated Scanning Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scanning and Indexing Permits and Plans</li> </ul>	General
R.W. Toedter Engineering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plan Review – Civil Engineering, Structural, Fine Grading</li> </ul>	Thomas Fire & General
Earth Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Geotechnical Review</li> </ul>	Thomas Fire & General
Orion Structural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plan Review – Structural, Multi-Family and Commercial Structural</li> </ul>	Thomas Fire & General
Jordan, Gilbert & Bain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Landscape Review</li> </ul>	Thomas Fire & General
Central Coast Access Spec.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Certified Access Specialist</li> <li>Commercial accessibility Plan Review</li> </ul>	Thomas Fire & General
CSG Consultants, Inc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plan Review – Mechanical, Plumbing</li> <li>Architectural Review – Multi-Family and Commercial</li> </ul>	Thomas Fire & General
Park Consulting Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EnerGov Implementation Project</li> </ul>	General

#### 4. WORKLOAD

The following tables summarize the historic workload for the Building and Safety Division related to plans checks completed and permits issues for the last 5 calendar years.

##### Plan Checks Completed

YEAR	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	Total
2014	37	37	44	48	113	68	64	48	61	53	42	62	677
2015	61	57	68	54	57	74	68	58	63	50	50	52	712
2016	63	51	49	70	79	79	80	82	130	72	62	97	914
2017	42	63	78	81	80	99	88	87	71	76	82	43	890
2018	74	60	77	71	88	99	131	106	98	131	74	80	1,089

The number of plan checks has increased since 2014 with an overall increase of 60.8%.

##### Permits Issued

Year	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	Total
2014	360	320	323	350	317	396	417	358	406	389	345	310	4,291
2015	382	338	356	355	275	423	375	345	384	379	369	325	4,306
2016	319	351	420	384	393	427	312	421	352	355	361	325	4,420
2017	331	341	464	487	508	445	339	442	429	416	413	276	4,891
2018	442	486	371	420	515	435	463	522	515	556	452	423	5,600

The number of permits issued has increased 31% since 2014.

##### Inspections Completed

Year	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	Total
2014	609	702	664	654	646	757	848	733	787	892	757	640	8,689
2015	773	768	840	772	706	782	842	849	858	847	832	747	9,616
2016	687	794	830	728	813	825	802	901	837	827	788	672	9,504
2017	673	668	1,008	839	1,093	1,113	1,020	1,236	1,229	1,412	1,422	980	12,693
2018	1,434	1,373	1,235	1,456	1,438	1,448	1,315	1,457	1,339	1,633	1,270	1,122	16,520

The number of inspections has increased 90% since 2014.

##### Front Counter Customers Assisted

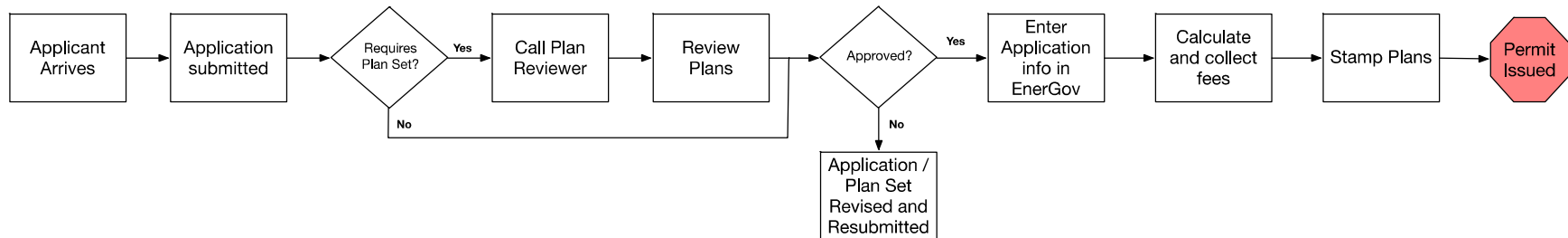
Year	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	Total
2015	968	877	979	928	898	1,038	1,064	921	989	908	805	747	11,122
2016	755	998	1,006	1,019	1,004	1,102	1,017	1,168	1,009	982	1,014	855	11,929
2017	933	831	1,001	964	1,002	1,108	1,036	1,132	975	1,285	948	690	11,905
2018	2,310	1,131	1,192	1,262	1,473	1,344	1,467	1,500	1,263	1,707	1,382	1,022	17,053

The number of in-person customer visits has increased 35% since 2015.

Please note that the Building and Safety front office staff also provides counter support and customer service for the Fire, Code Enforcement, Environmental Services and Water departments: abatement-related permits for Code Enforcement projects, temporary water service for Thomas Fire rebuilds, intake of Private Sewer Lateral reports and documents, among other multi-department processes. The back-office staff of the Building and Safety also team provides ongoing scanning and data management support to the Fire, Code Enforcement, Environmental Services and Water departments.

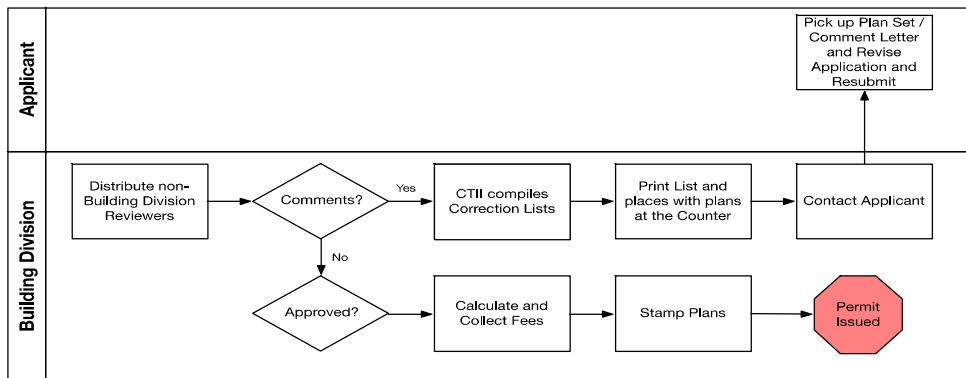
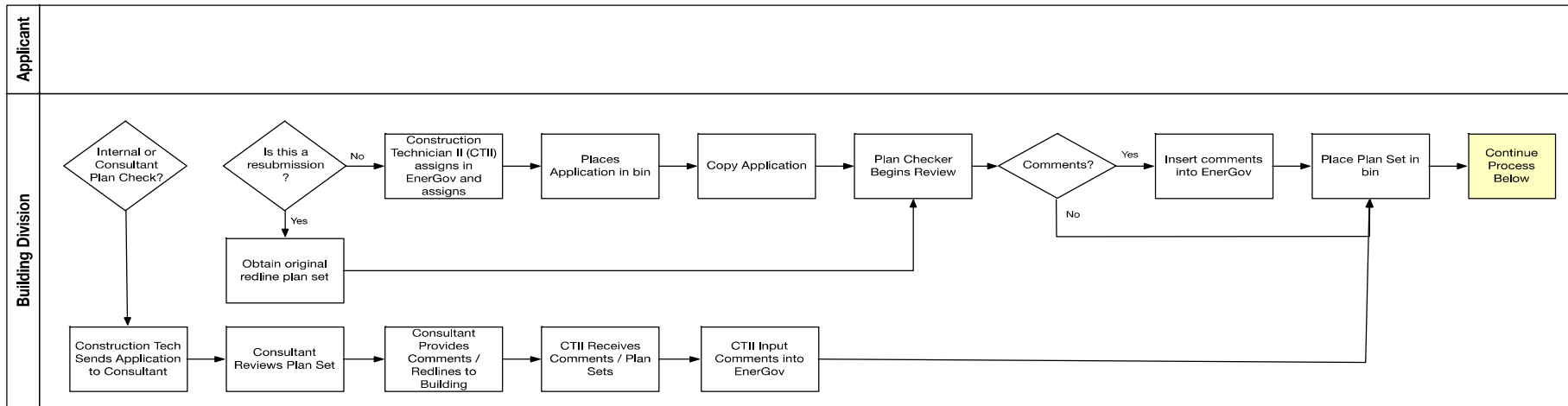
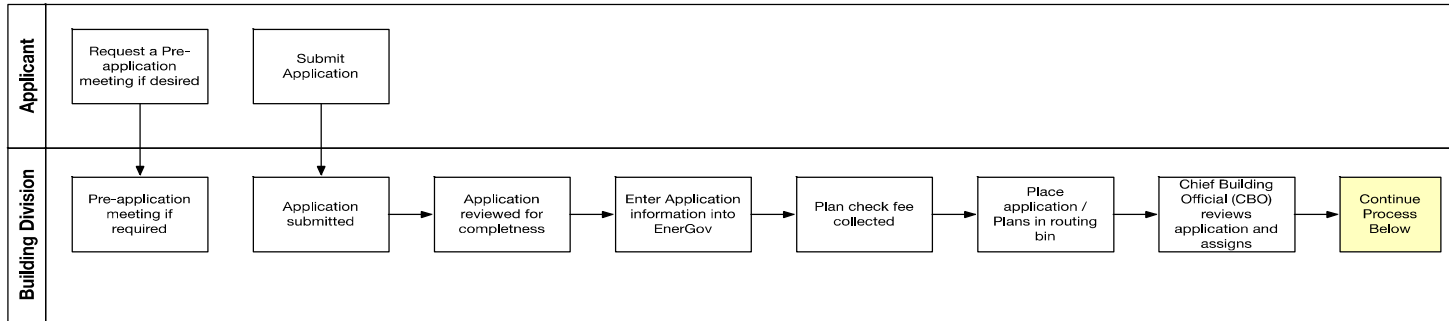
## **5. PROCESS WORKFLOWS**

Each of the major processes were mapped and are presented in the following diagrams.

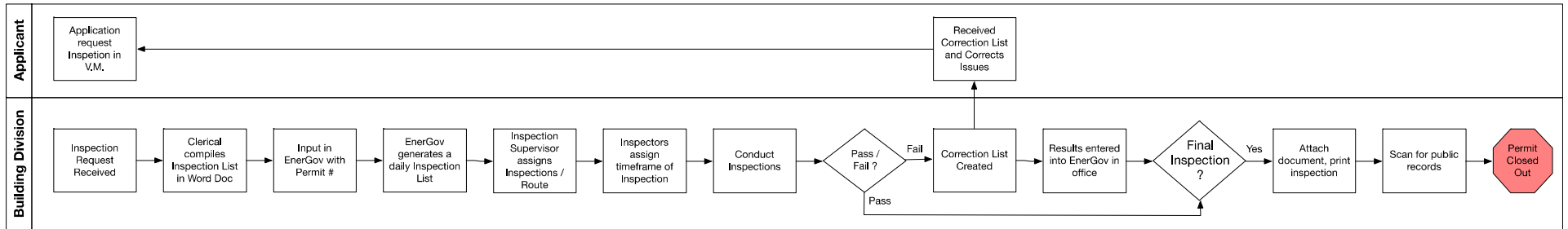
**Over The Counter Permit Process**



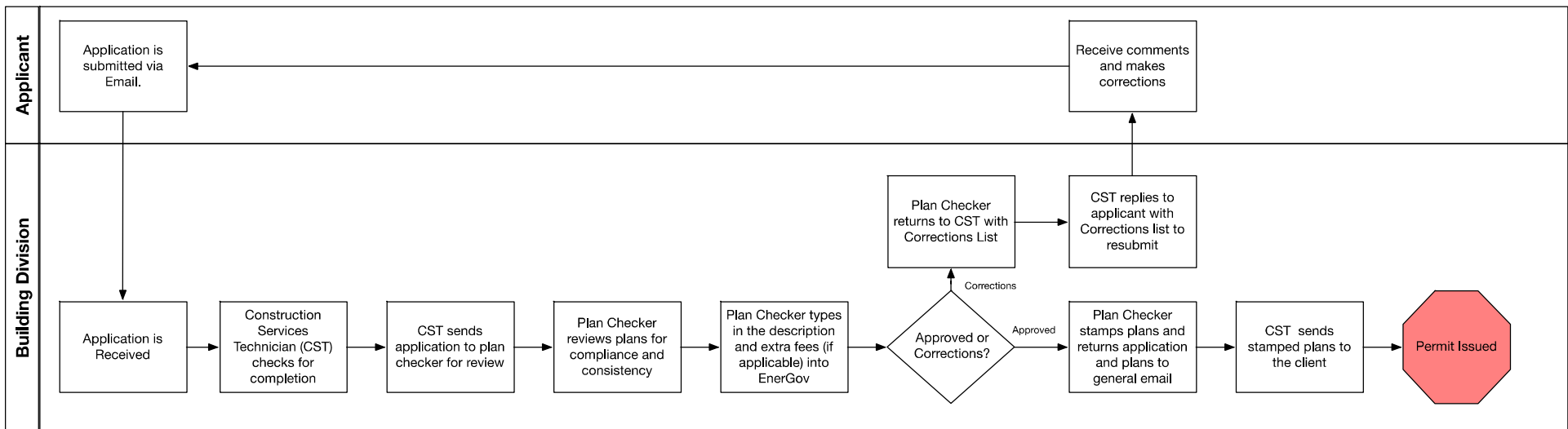
## Plan Check Process



### Inspection Process (including Final Inspection)



### Photovoltaic and Electric Vehicle Charger Application Process



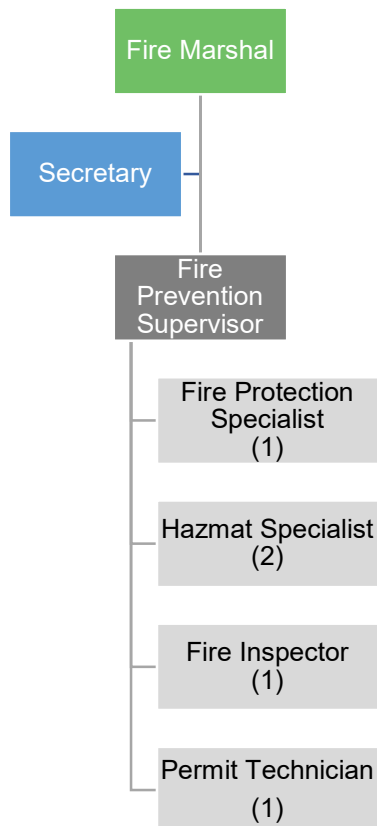
## **5 FIRE DEPARTMENT**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Fire Department Fire Prevention Division is responsible for fire permit plan check, permit issuance, inspection, and for ensuring proper fire and life safety systems for all construction activities within the City. Additionally, Fire Prevention is responsible for reviewing Building, Public Works, Parks, and Planning routed plans including architectural, grading, temporary use and even permit, environmental, and entitlement plans. Fire Prevention is also responsible for the permitting and inspection of hazardous materials. The Fire Prevention Division's mission is to protect life, property, and the environment.

### **2. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

The Fire Prevention Division of the Fire Department is responsible for managing four programs in addition to providing construction permitting, plan checks, and inspections. These four additional programs (Hillside Fire Hazard Reduction, CUPA, State Mandated Existing Occupancy, and Special Event Programs) are not detailed in this report, however it is important to note that these programs and services are performed by the same staff performing development services as shown in the organization chart below (with some contract plan check and part time staffing support in addition to internal staff). The following chart summarizes the positions within Fire Prevention.



### 3. STAFF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The following table details the number of staff, by position title, for the Fire Prevention Division and summarizes the major duties of the position relative to the development review process.

Position Title	Authorized Positions	Key Roles and Responsibilities
Fire Marshal	1.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides administrative and day-to-day oversight of the Fire Prevention Division.</li> <li>Serves as Fire Marshal for the City.</li> <li>Oversees all Fire Prevention and Hazardous Materials Program compliance activities of the City.</li> <li>Establishes overall work priorities and policies of the Division.</li> <li>Reviews Alternative Materials and Methods of Compliance proposals for development projects within the City.</li> </ul>

Position Title	Authorized Positions	Key Roles and Responsibilities
Fire Prevention Supervisor	1.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinates and supervises plan check, permitting, and inspection staff and functions for the division and performs complex reviews and inspections. Responsible for reviewing entitlement applications and environmental documents for compliance with applicable fire codes and providing conditions.</li> <li>Reviews environmental documents, ensures fees are paid for construction, water / sewer connection fees, etc.</li> <li>Completes Building, Planning, Parks, and Public Works routed plan check reviews.</li> <li>Coordinates plan check with contracted plan checkers.</li> </ul>
Fire Protection Specialist	1.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Serves as a plan checker for fire prevention, suppression, and fire alarm applications for the City.</li> <li>Completes field inspections for new construction.</li> </ul>
Hazmat Specialist	2.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conducts plan review for hazardous material applications.</li> <li>Conducts inspections during the construction process and as required by law thereafter.</li> </ul>
Inspector	1.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Responsible for conducting annual fire inspections.</li> <li>Responsible for special event and temporary use permit reviews and inspections.</li> <li>Completes field inspections for new construction.</li> </ul>
Preservation Services Technician	1.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Processes applications and routes plan sets to reviewers.</li> <li>Issues permits and comments to applicant.</li> <li>Serves as the weed abatement contract manager for the City and performs annual inspections</li> <li>Issues basic over the counter permits that may require plan check.</li> <li>Intake, processes, and records applications and plan sets.</li> </ul>

The Fire Prevention Division utilizes consultants and part time staff in a variety of areas, including for inspections, plan reviews, and technology. The following table provides a summary of the consultants and part time staff utilized by the Fire Prevention Division, their responsibility and focus:

Consultant or Part time staff	Responsibility	Focus
Collings & Associates LLC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inspections</li> <li>Plan Check</li> </ul>	Thomas Fire & General
Part time staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inspections</li> <li>Plan Check</li> <li>Limited Permitting</li> </ul>	Thomas Fire & General
Park Consulting Group	EnerGov & DHD Project Implementation	General

#### **4. WORKLOAD**

Over the past two years, the demand for construction services (excluding Thomas Fire re-builds) has more than doubled with fire protection system permit issuances increasing to 370 annually (a 109% increase) and construction inspections increasing to 1,126 annually (a 132% increase). Also, as the Community Development and Public Works workload increases so does the Fire Prevention Division workload as a significant number of plans are routed from these departments to the Fire for the Prevention Division's review for fire code compliance.

Additional details on Fire issued permits and resulting workload are provided below.

##### **2010-2016 (7 year) averages:**

- 177 fire construction permits issued annually
- 442 fire permit plan reviews performed annually
- Construction inspection estimates: 485 annually

##### **2017-2018 (2 year) averages:**

- 352 construction permits issued annually (193 more or a 109 % increase)
- 880 fire permit plan reviews performed annually (438 more or a 99% increase)
- Construction inspection estimates: 1,126 annually (641 more or a 132% increase)

These services are provided by the same Fire Prevention Division staff that also manage and implement four other community risk reduction programs which are mandated by state law and require over 1,000 additional plan reviews and 2,000 inspections annually.

#### **4. PROCESS WORKFLOWS**

The review and inspection processes for Fire work very similar to Building and Safety process. The slight difference is that Building staff intake Fire permit applications and Fire staff must pick up the application / plan set from City Hall, take to their location, the Preservation Technician conducts completeness review, and distributes to reviewer for comment and return the plan set / permit to the Building Department for pickup.

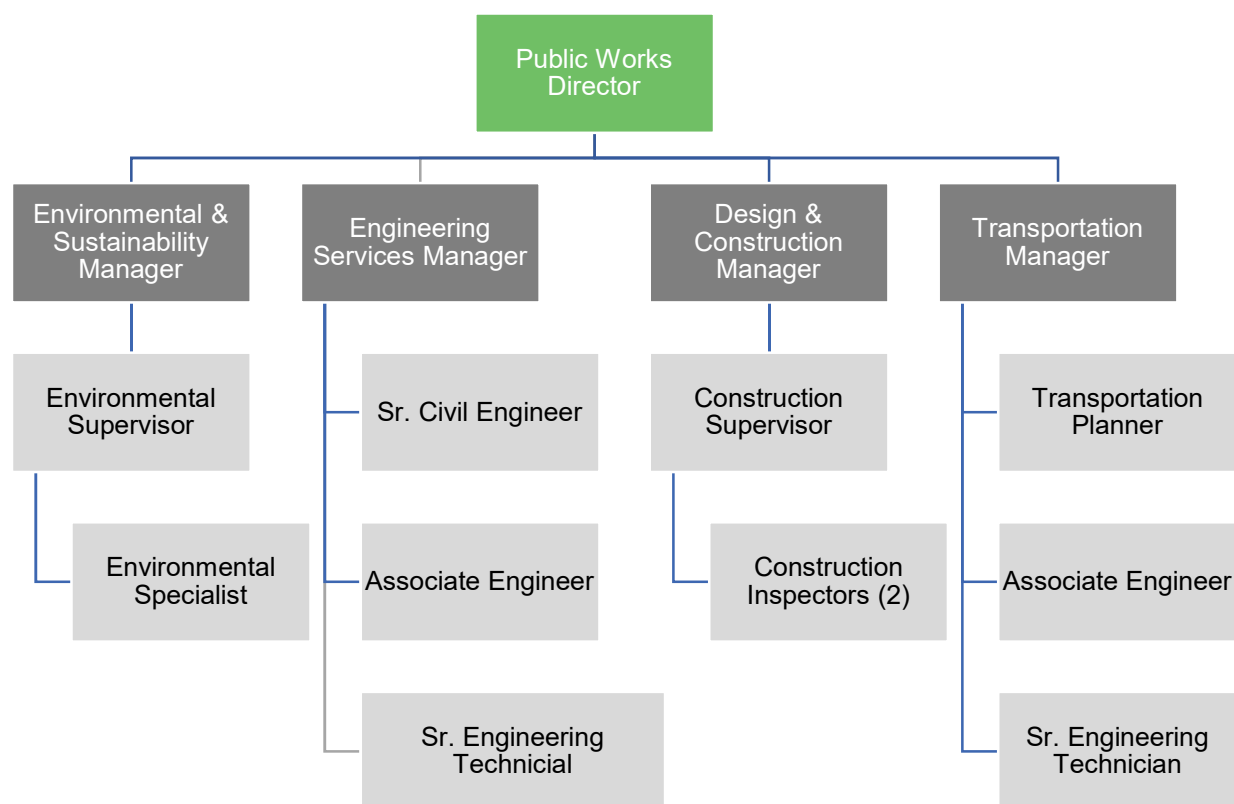
## 6 PUBLIC WORKS

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Public Works Department is comprised of multiple work groups, including several that are involved in the development review and inspection process. Public Work functional areas involved in the development process include: Environmental Sustainability and Engineering Services which includes the subgroups of Land Development, Transportation / Traffic and Design and Construction. This section of the profile focuses on the individuals who are specifically involved in the development process.

### 2. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The following chart summarizes the positions within Public Works that are involved in the land use permitting process.



### 3. STAFF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The following table details the number of staff, by position title, for the Public Works Department and summarizes the major duties of the position relative to the development review process.

Position Title	Authorized Positions	Key Roles and Responsibilities
<b>Environmental Sustainability</b>		
Supervisor	1.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensures compliance with the MS4 (Stormwater) permit.</li> <li>Reviews plans during plan check and entitlement phases for low impact development and / or BMPs are implemented.</li> </ul>
Specialist	1.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reviews waste management plans related to construction.</li> <li>Assists reviewing entitlement plans for trash enclosure compliance, including onsite inspection as part of the final inspection.</li> </ul>
<b>Land Development</b>		
Engineer	3.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reviews applications and issue permits for grading, encroachment, and floodplain development permits.</li> <li>Reviews entitlement applications in conjunction with contracted firms.</li> <li>Coordinates water / sewer studies with outside modeling consultant.</li> <li>Reviews applications for MS4 compliance.</li> </ul>
Technician	1.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oversees the public counter and is responsible for the routing of applications to various Public Works and Ventura Water reviewers.</li> <li>Inputs applications into permitting software system.</li> <li>Calculates and collect fees for Engineering and water / sewer connection fees.</li> <li>Processes Water Department's work orders.</li> </ul>
<b>Design and Construction</b>		
Inspector	2.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performs inspections for private and public development projects, related to infrastructure (e.g. water, sewer, transportation, etc.)</li> </ul>
<b>Transportation / Traffic</b>		
Transportation Planner	1.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performs advance transportation planning for the City, including traffic model and policy documents.</li> </ul>
Engineer	1.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determines if traffic impact analysis is required for entitlement projects.</li> </ul>
Technician	1.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reviews CEQA documentation for traffic analysis.</li> <li>Reviews applications for transportation infrastructure, street lighting, and roadway stripping.</li> <li>Reviews parking requirements as part of entitlement review.</li> </ul>



## 7 OTHER DEPARTMENTS

### 1. INTRODUCTION

This section of the profile will detail other departments that are involved in the development review, permitting, and inspection process. Operations include Economic Development, the Police Department, Parks, and Ventura Water.

### 2. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The following table details the number of staff, by position title, for the ancillary functions and summarizes the duties of the position relative to the development review process.

Position Title	Authorized Positions	Key Roles and Responsibilities
Economic Development		
Manager	1.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Manager: Coordinates with private developers to understand current market conditions, needs and opportunities. Works closely with Community Development, Public Works, Ventura Water, Parks, PD and Fire and the applicant to help the applicant through the review and permitting process.</li><li>• Main Liaison between the City and the Applicant.</li><li>• Management Analyst serves as a resource to the applicant prior, during, and after the review / permitting process.</li></ul>
Management Analyst	1.0	
City Attorney		
Land Use Attorney	1.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provides legal counsel to land use, building, and development related issues for the City. Serves as the legal counsel for the Planning Commission, Historic Preservation Commission, and Design Review Committee.</li><li>• Assists with the development and adoption of applicable zoning, land use, building, and development codes for the City.</li><li>• In-house attorney position was established in July 2019.</li></ul>
Contract Attorney	0.5	
Police Department		
Officer	1.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Responsible for reviewing all ABC licenses and alcohol sales permits.</li><li>• Reviews entitlement applications to identify conditions / issues with business type / location and potential public safety issues.</li><li>• Reviews entertainment permits in conjunction with Planning.</li></ul>
Parks		
Senior Landscape Inspector	1.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reviews entitlement applications for landscape issues and park components.</li><li>• Conducts inspections related to parks, open space, and greenway development as prescribed by City ordinance.</li><li>• Coordinates plan review with Urban Forestry.</li></ul>

Position Title	Authorized Positions	Key Roles and Responsibilities
<b>Ventura Water</b>		
Water Resource Planning Manager	1.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oversees the review of entitlement applications for compliance with applicable water/sewer ordinances, conditions, and review of water/sewer studies.</li> </ul>
Associate Engineer	1.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reviews environmental documents related to water and sewer conditions and requirements, coordinates the water / sewer connection fees and work order fees with Land Development staff.</li> </ul>
Contract Engineer	1.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contractor provides comments / conditions as part of the Building plan check process.</li> <li>Coordinates closely with Public Works on water and sewer studies, modeling, and construction / public improvements.</li> <li>Note: An outside consultant is utilized for Water / Sewer capacity studies.</li> </ul>

## Appendix B: Stakeholder Survey Analysis

As part of the Matrix Consulting Group's study for the City of Ventura, the project team distributed an anonymous survey to prior customers of the City's development services process in order to gauge their opinions on a variety of topics relevant to the study.

This survey generally asked three types of questions:

- **Respondent Demographic Questions:** Respondents were asked to indicate the capacity in which they interact with the City, the frequency with which they use development services, and the types of services with which they are familiar.
- **Multiple Choice Questions:** Respondents were presented with a number of multiple choice questions, or statements where respondents indicated their level of agreement or disagreement with the statement.
- **Open-ended response questions:** As the end of the survey, respondents were given space to provide additional opinions and thoughts about the City's development review process in their own words.

The link to the online survey was distributed in August to a group of 80 prior customers of the development review process that were identified by staff. Out of these, a total of 29 responses were received for a response rate of 36%.

Additionally, the project team conducted a series of stakeholder meetings in early September with prior customers of the development review process. The key themes and findings that was a result from these stakeholder meetings are discussed at the end of this analysis.

### 1 Summary of Key Findings

While a more detailed analysis can be found in the sections below, the following points summarize the key findings from the responses received to this survey:

- Customers generally understand the requirements for approval but feel staff can be more helpful in the process.
- Staff, friendliness, and transparency are identified as the City's greatest strengths.
- Respondents felt that Building and Safety provided a high level of service.

- Communication from staff and some decision-making bodies are not viewed as fair or consistent.
- There is a general satisfaction with the Fire permit review process but communication is an improvement opportunity.
- Most respondents are satisfied with the inspection process.
- Respondents feel the overall permitting process is time consuming and application reviews are performed poorly.
- The City of Ventura's Development Review process is generally perceived as more difficult than other municipalities.
- Slow review timeframes, multiple review committees and a lack of coordination are identified as the areas with the greatest opportunity for improvement in the development review process.

This document summarizes the information and comments received from the stakeholders and represents the perceptions of those who responded but have not been independently validated by the project team. It serves as one data point that will be utilized by the project team as part of the overall evaluation of the development process. Additionally, when inviting feedback from customers in engagements such as this, there is often a greater focus on negatives or improvement opportunities rather than existing strengths or things that are going well.

As a next step, the project team will compare the perceptions identified by the stakeholders and compare this to our independent evaluation of how the development review and permitting processes compare to industry best practices.

## 2 Survey Respondent Demographics

While responses to the survey were anonymous, the project team asked respondents to indicate some information about their role in interacting with the City in land development or permitting activities – such as Architect, Builder, Owner, Contractor, etc. Because of the relatively small number of survey participants, these groups are not used to draw conclusions between different groups of respondents on specific questions.

### **2.1 The Most Common Roles of Survey Participants are Architects, Builders, Contractors, and Property Developers.**

The first question in this section asked participants their role in interacting with the City of Ventura regarding development review or building permitting activities. There were 29 respondents, although they were permitted to choose more than one response. The table below shows responses received.

Response	Count	Percent
Architect	13	27%
Builder	6	12%
Business Owner	5	10%
Contractor	5	10%
Engineer	2	4%
Environmental	0	0%
Homeowner	2	4%
Property Developer	9	18%
Fire Prevention	1	2%
Other	6	12%

Architects, Property Developers, and Builders are the most common professions among this group of respondents. The respondents that indicated “other” consist of development consultants, planners, former DRC members and commercial real estate brokers.

## **2.2 Most Respondents Conduct Business Within Ventura County, and a Few in the Greater Los Angeles / Southern California Areas.**

The next question asked where respondents typically conduct business. A total of 29 participants responded although they were permitted to choose more than one response.

Response	Count	Percent
Within Ventura County	25	86%
The Greater Los Angeles / Southern California Areas	8	28%
Outside the Greater Los Angeles Areas	1	4%

A strong majority of respondents to the survey conduct their business within Ventura County, while some serve the greater Los Angeles or Southern California Areas. Only one respondent indicated working outside the greater Los Angeles area.

## **2.3 Land Use Entitlement Application / Permits (Planning) Is the Most Commonly Encountered City Development Function.**

The third question in this section asked respondents which of the City's entitlement and permitting functions they typically interact with. A total of 29 respondents answered and multiple answers were permitted.

Response	Count	Percent
Land Use Entitlement Application / Permits (Planning)	23	79%
Building Inspections	21	72%
Building Permits	19	66%
Land Development (Plan Check and Inspections)	19	66%
Fire Permitting	19	66%

The responses to this question show that Land Use Entitlement Application / Permits are the most common area of interaction for survey participants. However, the respondents were almost as equally involved in all areas of the development review process.

#### **2.4 Most Respondents Interact with the City's Development Review and Permitting Functions Several Times Per Month.**

The next question in this section asked survey participants how frequently they interact with the City's development review and permitting functions. The table below shows the answers received.

Response	Count	Percent
Several times per month	26	90%
Several times per year	3	10%
Once or twice per year	0	0%
Less than once or twice a year	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>100%</b>

The frequency of interaction makes it likely that this group of respondents has a fairly accurate picture of the City's processes.

#### **2.5 Nearly All Participants Have Interacted with the City's Development Review and Permitting Functions Within the Last 6 Months.**

The last question in this section asked participants when their most recent interaction with the City's development review and permitting process occurred. The table below shows the results.

Response	Count	Percent
Within the Last 6 months	26	90%
6-12 months ago,	0	0%
Over A Year Ago	0	0%
Other	3	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>100%</b>

The vast majority of participants who completed this survey interact with the City have recent experience with the City's process.

### 3 Multiple Choice Questions

The bulk of the survey consisted of sections where respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement. The response options were “strongly agree” (SA), “agree” (A), “neutral” (N), “disagree” (D), and “strongly disagree” (SD). Respondents could also choose “N/A” or opt out of responding to the statement entirely.

#### 3.1 Customers Generally Understand The Requirements and Approval But Feel Staff Can Be More Helpful In The Process.

The first section of multiple-choice questions asked respondents about their experience in preparing their application for land entitlements. The response options were “strongly agree” (SA), “agree” (A), “neutral” (N), “disagree” (D), and “strongly disagree” (SD). Respondents could also choose “N/A” or opt out of responding to the statement entirely. The following table shows the number of respondents who selected each level of agreement or disagreement.

#	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	NA	Count
1	I clearly understood what approvals / permits would be required for my project.	15%	44%	15%	15%	4%	7%	27
2	I clearly understood what information and documentation I needed to include in my application.	15%	37%	7%	26%	7%	7%	27
3	I clearly understood the timeline associated with the review process for my project.	11%	7%	11%	26%	37%	7%	27
4	I clearly understood who had the decision-making authority (Design Review Committee, Historic Preservation Committee, Planning Commission, City Council, Administrative Hearing Officer, or staff) for my application.	11%	37%	11%	22%	11%	7%	27

#	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	NA	Count
5	I clearly understood the steps of the review process for my project.	15%	26%	19%	19%	15%	7%	27
6	I clearly understood what fees would be required for my project.	11%	22%	7%	37%	15%	7%	27
7	Staff was helpful in explaining what I needed to do and how to accomplish it.	15%	26%	26%	11%	15%	7%	27
8	The City's web site had the information I needed to prepare a complete application.	7%	26%	11%	22%	22%	11%	27
10	If a study / assessment was required for your project (e.g. traffic, water, sewer analysis), staff communicated that information early in the process.	7%	15%	11%	22%	29%	15%	27

- Customers Generally Understand What Permit and Documents are Required in Terms of Land Entitlement:** Most (59%) respondents have some level of agreement with Statement #1, indicating they understand what permits would be required for their project. A majority (52%) agree with Statement #2, indicating they understand what information and documentation is required, however a third of respondents disagreed.
- Respondents Do Not Understand the Project Review Timeline While Some Understand the Decision-Making Authority:** Most (63%) have some level of disagreement with Statement #3, indicating they do not understand the timeline associated with the project review process. A plurality (48%) agree with Statement #4, and understand the decision-making authority while some (33%) do not.
- Customers Have Some Understanding of the Review Process But Do Not Understand the Fees Required:** A plurality (40%) of respondents understand the steps of the review process, while some (35%) disagree with Statement #5. Most (51%) of respondents indicated some level of disagreement with Statement #6, and do not understand what fees would be required for a project.
- Respondents Feel Staff Can Be More Helpful In Explaining Aspects of the Process:** 40% of respondents agreed with Statement #7, and felt staff was helpful in explaining what needs to be done, but 26% disagreed. 51% disagreed with Statement #9, indicating staff did not communicate well if a study or assessment was required for the project.

Respondents generally understand the requirements for permits in the land entitlement process; however, they do not understand the fees required. Respondents also feel that Planning staff can improve in communicating the steps of the process.



### 3.2 Respondents Understand The Building Permit Process And Find City Staff To Be More helpful Than The Website.

The second section of multiple choice questions asked respondents about their experience in preparing their application for a building permit. The table below shows the number of respondents who selected each level of agreement or disagreement.

#	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	NA	Count
1	I clearly understood what approvals / permits would be required for my project.	15%	62%	4%	4%	4%	12%	26
2	I clearly understood what information and documentation I needed to include in my application.	19%	50%	8%	4%	8%	12%	26
3	I clearly understood the timeline associated with the review and approval process for my project.	12%	35%	15%	15%	12%	12%	26
4	I clearly understood the steps of the review process for my project.	12%	54%	12%	8%	4%	12%	26
5	I clearly understood what fees would be required for my project.	8%	42%	19%	4%	15%	12%	26
6	Staff was helpful in explaining what I needed to do and how to accomplish it.	23%	42%	12%	4%	8%	12%	26
7	The City's web site had the information I needed to prepare a complete application.	4%	30%	27%	12%	12%	15%	26

- **Respondents Understand the Building Permit Process:** Statements #1, #2, #3, #4, and #5 all received more agreement than disagreement, showing that respondents generally understand the required approvals, the information they need to provide, the review steps, and the fees for their project.
- **Customers Find Department Staff More Helpful Than the City's Website:** Most (65%) of respondents agree with Statement #6, that staff are helpful in explaining what is needed for projects, while a plurality (34%) agreed with Statement #7, that the City's website was informative.

The building process is generally understood by respondents and find that building staff are a good resource for information.

### 3.3 Respondents Feel Fire Staff Can Be More Helpful But Have Some Understanding Of The Review Process.

The third section of multiple choice questions asked respondents about their experience with the Fire Permits. The following table shows the number of respondents who selected each level of agreement or disagreement.

#	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	NA	Count
1	I clearly understood what approvals / permits would be required for my project.	15%	23%	4%	27%	4%	27%	26
2	I clearly understood what information and documentation I needed to include in my application.	15%	23%	8%	15%	12%	27%	26
3	I understood where I needed to submit my Fire application.	12%	35%	4%	19%	4%	27%	26
4	I clearly understood the timeline associated with the review and approval process for my project.	8%	27%	4%	19%	15%	27%	26
5	I clearly understood the steps of the review process for my project.	12%	31%	4%	19%	8%	27%	26
6	I clearly understood what fees would be required for my project.	8%	15%	27%	15%	8%	27%	26
7	Staff was helpful in explaining what I needed to do and how to accomplish it.	12%	23%	15%	19%	4%	27%	26
8	The City's web site had the information I needed to prepare a complete application.	12%	15%	15%	8%	19%	31%	26

- **Respondents are Not Satisfied with Staff Communication or Approach:** A plurality (38%) of respondents agreed with Statement #1 and Statement #2, regarding communication and a positive approach used by staff.
- **Some Applicants Do Not Understand Where Applications Are Submitted:** Many (47%) of respondents agreed with Statement #3, indicating some understanding of where Fire applications are submitted, while a quarter (25%) disagreed.
- **Respondents Have Some Understanding of the Review Process:** A plurality of respondents agree with Statement #4, #5, and #6, indicating there is some understanding of the development review process, but improvements can be made in relating the steps and requirements of the process.
- **Customers Find Department Staff Equally As Helpful As the City's Website:** Some (35%) of respondents agree with Statement #6, that staff are helpful in explaining what is needed for projects, while a plurality (27%) agreed with Statement #7, indicating that respondents feel both the City's website and staff can be more informative.

Respondents have a general understanding of what approvals and permits are required for fire, but are confused on where applications are submitted. Respondents indicated that fire permit staff communication as unsatisfactory, however, find the fire staff to be helpful.

### 3.4 Improvement Can Be Made With Communication From Staff and Some Decision-making Bodies Are not Viewed as Fair or Consistent.

The fourth section of multiple choice questions asked respondents about their experience with the land entitlement process. The table below shows the number of respondents who selected each level of agreement or disagreement.

#	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	NA	Count
1	While my development review (land entitlement) application was under review, I received prompt communication regarding the project status.	4%	23%	4%	19%	31%	19%	26
2	Planning staff dealt with me using a positive approach of "here's how to get your application in compliance with applicable City codes".	12%	27%	8%	8%	27%	19%	26
3	The City did a good job coordinating the review process between different departments and divisions.	8%	8%	12%	19%	35%	19%	26
4	The initial reviews of my development review (land entitlement) application were complete and comprehensive.	4%	12%	12%	23%	31%	19%	26
5	Staff comments regarding planning and zoning reviews were on time, clear, and comprehensive.	0%	15%	15%	23%	27%	19%	26
6	After receiving comments on my application, I clearly understood what I needed to do to revise my application to achieve compliance with applicable City codes.	8%	12%	8%	27%	27%	19%	26
7	The Planning Commission fairly and consistently apply the City's codes in determining whether to approve an application	4%	23%	12%	23%	19%	19%	26
8	The Design Review Committee fairly and consistently apply the City's codes in determining whether to approve an application.	4%	8%	0%	19%	50%	19%	26
9	The Historic Preservation Committee fairly and consistently apply the City's codes in determining whether to approve an application.	4%	8%	4%	23%	35%	27%	26
10	The Administrative Hearing Officer fairly and consistently apply the City's codes in determining whether to approve an application.	12%	38%	15%	0%	12%	23%	26
11	City Council fairly and consistently apply the City's codes in determining whether to approve an application.	4%	30%	12%	12%	23%	19%	26

- **There Is A Lack of Communication From Staff:** Half (50%) of respondents disagreed with Statement #1, feeling they did not receive prompt communication regarding project status while a plurality (39%) agree with Statement #2 that Planning staff was positive in their approach to helping applications move along.
- **There is Poor Coordination Between City Departments:** Most (54%) respondents indicated some level of disagreement with Statement #3, indicating the City does not do a good job coordinating between different departments.
- **Staff Are Not Clear and Comprehensive in the Review of Applications and Comments:** Most respondents disagree with Statement #4, #5, and #6, indicating that respondents feel staff are not comprehensive in their review of applications and comments are not clear.
- **The Perception of Fairness and Consistency Varies Between Decision-making Bodies:** There was significant disagreement from respondents when asked about how “fair and consistent City Codes are applied” by the different Boards as shown in the following summary table:

Decision-Making Board	Agreement	Disagreement
Planning Commission	27%	42%
Design Review Committee	12%	69%
Historic Preservation Committee	12%	58%
Administrative Hearing Officer	50%	12%
City Council	35%	35%

Respondents feel that communication between City staff and the applicant can be improved and that Land Entitlement staff can also improve on the comprehensiveness of the reviews they conduct. Respondents also feel the consistency of the decision-making and review bodies can be improved.

### 3.5 Building Permit Reviews Can Be More Comprehensive.

The fifth section of multiple choice statements asked respondents about their experience with the building permit process. Many respondents chose to skip or select “N/A” to these statements. The table below shows the responses that were received.

#	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	NA	Count
1	While my building permit application was under review, I received prompt communication regarding the project status.	8%	28%	8%	12%	24%	20%	25

#	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	NA	Count
2	Building staff dealt with me using a positive approach of "here's how to get your application in compliance with applicable City codes".	17%	33%	17%	4%	13%	17%	24
3	The City did a good job coordinating the review process between different departments and divisions.	12%	24%	16%	16%	16%	16%	25
4	The initial reviews of my building permit application were complete and comprehensive.	16%	32%	12%	12%	12%	16%	25
5	Staff comments regarding building construction (structural, mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems) were on time, clear and comprehensive.	12%	24%	16%	16%	16%	16%	25
6	After receiving comments on my application, I clearly understood what I needed to do to revise my application to achieve compliance with applicable City codes.	12%	36%	16%	12%	8%	16%	25
7	During subsequent reviews (2nd or 3rd reviews), staff comments did not surface that should have been identified in the first review.	8%	24%	4%	24%	24%	16%	25

- **Most Respondents are Split when Asked about the Promptness of Staff Communication and Coordination between Departments:** Respondents were generally evenly split on Statement #1 and #3 regarding their perception on the promptness of staff communications and how well the City coordinated reviews between departments.
- **Respondents' Feeling On The Comprehensiveness of Reviews Are Mixed:** 48% respondents agree with Statement #4 and feel initial reviews of building applications were comprehensive while 24% disagreed. Opinion on Statement #5 is split, indicating mixed feelings related to the level of review comments received.
- **Reviews From Staff Can Be More Detailed:** 48% of respondents agree with Statement #6, indicating respondents generally understand what is needed in revisions; however, 48% of respondents disagree with Statement #7 and feel staff comments in subsequent reviews did not surface that should have been identified in the first review.

The survey respondents identified communication and comprehensiveness as key areas of the building permit process that are in need of improvement. Respondents also indicated feeling a lack of attention to detail.

### 3.6 Respondents Are Generally Satisfied With The Fire Permit Review Process But Indicate Communication Can Improve.

The sixth section of multiple-choice questions asked respondents about their overall experience with fire permits. Many respondents chose to skip or select “N/A” to these statements. The table below shows the responses received.

#	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	NA	Count
1	While my Fire permit application was under review, I received prompt communication regarding the project status.	8%	16%	28%	8%	4%	36%	25
2	Fire staff dealt with me using a positive approach of "here's how to get your application in compliance with applicable City codes".	12%	20%	24%	8%	4%	32%	25
3	The initial review of my fire permit application was complete and comprehensive.	12%	28%	12%	8%	4%	36%	25
4	Staff comments regarding fire and life safety issues were on time, clear and comprehensive.	12%	20%	16%	12%	4%	36%	25
5	After receiving comments on my application, I clearly understood what I needed to do to revise my application to achieve compliance with applicable City codes.	12%	24%	85	16%	8%	36%	25

- **Improvements in Communication Can Be Made:** Few (24%) respondents agree with Statement #1 that communication on the fire permit application was clear while some (28%) are neutral on the matter.
- **Respondents Generally Feel Staff Are Comprehensive in the Permit Review Process:** Participants in the survey answered with more agreement than disagreement for Statements #2, #3, #4, and #5 all of which dealt with the completeness and comprehension of the permit review process.

Respondents are generally satisfied with fire services, however, feel that some communication improvements can be made.

### 3.7 Most Respondents Are Satisfied With the Building Inspection Process.

The seventh section of multiple choice statements asked respondents about their experience with the inspection process. The table below shows the responses that were received.

#	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	NA	Count
1	The City did a good job at communicating what inspections are required.	8%	40%	8%	4%	8%	32%	25
2	It was easy to request and schedule an inspection.	4%	40%	12%	4%	4%	36%	25

#	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	NA	Count
3	Inspectors dealt with me using a positive approach of "here's how to get your work approved".	8%	32%	16%	8%	4%	32%	25
4	If deficiencies were identified during an inspection, inspectors were clear about the reason for failure.	8%	28%	20%	8%	4%	32%	25
5	The time frame for obtaining a building inspection was reasonable.	12%	36%	12%	0%	4%	36%	25
6	The inspector showed up when expected.	8%	38%	17%	0%	0%	38%	25
7	Inspectors were fair and consistent in applying the codes and regulations to my project.	12%	24%	12%	12%	8%	32%	25
8	The process to obtain final inspection and closeout my permit was efficient.	12%	28%	8%	16%	0%	36%	25

- **Inspection Communication, Approach and Clarity Are Satisfactory:** Respondents generally agreed with Statement #1, #2, #3, #4, and #5, and are satisfied with the communication, approach and clarity of inspections.
- **Respondents Generally Feel Inspection Staff Are Prompt, Efficient and Fair:** Participants in the survey answered with more agreement than disagreement for Statements #6, #7, #4, and #8 dealing with the promptness, fairness and efficiency of the inspection process.

Respondents indicated an overall satisfaction with the inspection process, citing communication and clarity as components where staff perform well. The survey also indicated that Inspection staff are prompt and efficient.

### 3.8 Respondents Generally Feel the Overall Permitting Process Is Time Consuming and With Poor Reviews, However, Staff Customer Service is Satisfactory.

The eighth section of multiple-choice questions asked respondents about their experience with the overall permitting process (including applications and permits). The table below shows the responses received.

#	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	NA	Count
1	The permitting process is predictable.	11%	19%	4%	33%	33%	0%	27
2	The City made clear the amount of time it would take to process my application.	7%	15%	4%	33%	41%	0%	27
3	The amount of time taken to review and approve my application was acceptable.	7%	11%	11%	22%	48%	0%	27



#	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	NA	Count
4	The City met its time commitments for processing my application.	7%	15%	15%	26%	37%	0%	27
5	City staff were accessible and responsive if I had questions regarding my application.	15%	33%	22%	7%	22%	0%	27
6	City staff provided good customer service throughout the process.	22%	22%	19%	19%	19%	0%	27
7	The City did a good job coordinating input from different departments.	8%	23%	12%	19%	35%	4%	26
8	The plan check reviewer did a good job communicating with me regarding my application.	15%	12%	19%	31%	19%	4%	26
9	The City's technical requirements were consistent with the codes and ordinances that the city enforces.	12%	31%	12%	12%	35%	0%	26
10	The City's staff did a good job of coordinating my application review.	15%	19%	23%	15%	27%	0%	26

- The Permitting Process Is Unclear and Time Consuming:** 66% of respondents disagree with Statement #1, and feel the permitting process is unpredictable. A strong majority (74%) feel the amount of time it takes for applications to be processed is not clear and disagree with Statement #2. 70% of respondents disagreed with Statement #3 and feel the amount of time it took to review and approve applications is unacceptable, while 63% felt the City did not meet its time commitment for processing applications, disagreeing with Statement #4.
- Staff Customer Service Was Satisfactory:** Participants in the survey answered with more agreement than disagreement for Statements #5, #6, indicating that staff are generally accessible and provide good customer service.
- Staff Communication is Viewed as Poor:** Participants in the survey answered with more disagreement (54%) for Statements #7, indicating they feel the City does not do a good job coordinating input from different departments. Most respondents disagree (50%) with Statement #8 and feel the plan check reviewers communicate poorly.
- Opinion on the Consistency of Requirements and Application Review Consistency are Split:** Participants opinion was split on Statements #9, #10, regarding the consistency of the City's technical requirements and coordination of application review.



Survey respondents generally feel that the overall permitting process can be improved by increasing coordination, communication, and consistency. Respondents however feel that the City provides good customer service.

### 3.9 The City of Ventura's Development Review Process is Generally More Difficult Than Other Municipalities.

The ninth section of multiple-choice questions asked respondents to compare their experiences with the City of Ventura to other municipalities where they have done business. The table below shows the responses received.

Response	Count	Percent
More difficult than other municipalities	17	63%
About the same as other municipalities	8	30%
Easier than in other municipalities	2	7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>100%</b>

Most respondents feel that the City of Ventura is more difficult to deal with when compared to other municipalities. Some respondents feel the City is about the same while only two find it easier.

### 3.10 The Development Review Process Has Stayed The Same Over The Last Year.

The final section of multiple-choice questions asked respondents to their opinion on the development review process over the last year. The table below shows the responses received.

Response	Count	Percent
Stayed about the same level	14	52%
Declined	11	40%
Improved	2	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>100%</b>

Most respondents feel that the service from the City of Ventura has stayed about the same over the past year but 40% feel that it has declined. Only two respondents felt that services have improved.

## 4 Open Response Questions

The final section of the survey asked respondents to respond to a number of questions in their own words. The following points outline the questions and provide analysis of the responses provided by participants.

### 4.1 Respondents Identified Staff, Friendliness, And Transparency As The City's Greatest Strengths.

The first question asked respondents to indicate the greatest strengths of the development review process. Forty-nine responses were received. The most common responses are shown below:

Strengths	Frequency
Staff	7
Friendly	5
Transparency	3
Professionalism	3
City Council	3
Public Involvement	2
One-Stop Submittal	2
Management	2
Knowledge	1

The two most common themes among these answers were the staff (7 responses) and friendliness (5 responses). This aligns with earlier answers, where participants indicated in multiple choice sections that counter staff are typically friendly and helpful. The responses also indicated appreciation with the transparency with the desire to improve the development review process.

### 4.2 Respondents View Slow Review Timeframes, Multiple Review Committees and a Lack of Coordination as the Greatest Improvement Opportunities in the Development Review Process.

The second open response question asked survey participants what they think the greatest improvement opportunities are in the City's permitting process. A total of 63 responses were received, most providing multiple answers. The most common responses are shown below:

Improvements	Frequency
Timeline	9
Multiple Review Committees	7
Coordination	5
Clarity of Process	4
Consistency	3
Speed	3
Efficiency	2

The most common theme among these responses was the timeliness of review (9 responses). Respondents also indicated frustration with the number of review committees in the development review process (7 responses), and a lack of coordination by staff (5 responses) both internally and with customers. These responses generally align with the responses received in previous parts of the survey.

#### **4.3 Respondents Feel That Changes Must Be Made To Increase Efficiency.**

The final open response question asked survey participants to provide any additional input they would like to share about the development review and permitting process of the City of Ventura.

Respondents feel that the direction the City is going is in need of improvement. Some respondents feel positive with the changes that have been made recently and are happy with the process, while others feel it is too slow. There is a general sentiment that the stakeholders feel that the City's process is inhibiting development as they feel the process is slow and time consuming.

## **5 Stakeholder Meeting Findings**

The project team conducted three stakeholder meetings with customers on September 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>. A total of 24 individuals attended these stakeholder meetings. Additionally, the project team conducted 5 individual phone calls with individuals who could not attend the stakeholder meetings.

The stakeholder meetings focused on receiving feedback from customers on their experience with the development review process. The meetings were anonymous, but the project team did ask respective attendees their primary role in the process. There was a wide array of individuals who attended that included individuals who complete single family renovations, new single family and multifamily construction, to developers who are involved in developing individual parcels to large scale commercial development.

Also, attendees were well versed in the process from entitlement to the building / fire final inspection process.

Many of the strengths and opportunities for improvement discussed by stakeholders are similar to those received in the survey feedback. The following key themes were common among all stakeholders:

- The review process is unpredictable and challenging to navigate as stakeholder's perceived the process was always changing.
- The process and decisions made by the Historic Preservation and Design Review Committee were considered subjective and based on the opinion of certain members of the respective decision-making body versus rooted in adopted code / standards.
- The timeline to obtain planning entitlement and design review approval was exceeding long. This was a frustration among all individuals.
- Perception that the respective land use boards (HPC, PC, DRC) and City Council do not understand their role in the process and often overstep their role.
- Believe there is a lack of strategic direction from City Council on the type of development that is desired in the City.
- A lack of communication from specific staff to the applicant and the lack of internal communication between review entities.
- The Building Department and their process is consistent and that staff are generally available when needed / requested.
- Recent changes in personnel has resulted in positive changes in the process.

The above themes align with much of the feedback received in the stakeholder survey and were commonplace among the various participants in the focus group meetings.

## Appendix C: Development Services Review Timeline

---

### **RFP PROCESS**

- Feb 22, 2019: Community Development initiated an RFP for a Development Review Process
- Staff recommended selecting Matrix Consulting Group to lead process
- Council approved \$68,500 contract on May 13, 2019

### **PHASE I – PRELIMINARY GAP ANALYSIS**

#### **Staff, Executive Team, Councilmember and Commissioner Interviews**

Purpose: Evaluate the organization and operations to develop an understanding of the key issues impacting and shaping services requirements for the community. Information gleaned will generate the Descriptive Profile.

- Round 1: May 28, 29, 30
  - Interviewed: 26 employees
- Round 2: June 17, 18, 19
  - Interviewed: 14 employees; Mayor LaVere, Councilmembers Friedman, Heitmann, Weir
- Round 3: June 25-July 12
  - Conference Call Interviews: 7 staff; Executive Team (City Manager, Assistant City Manager, CD Director, Interim CD Director, City Attorney, Land Use Attorney, Water Resources Manager); Councilmember Nasarenko, DRC Chair, HPC Chair, PC Chair,

#### **Customer Service Satisfaction Survey**

Purpose: Anonymous survey to gauge opinions on a variety of topics related to the development review process.

Target audience: developers, design professionals, contractors, homeowners

- August 2019: Distributed electronically by Matrix to 80 prior customers (list provided by Community Development)

#### **Focus Group Meetings with Prior Customers**

Purpose: Opportunity for interactive dialogue with prior customers gain clearer understanding of challenges and opportunities related to the development review process.

Target audience: developers, design professionals, contractors, homeowners

- September 9, 6:30-8:30p
- September 10, 8:30a-10:30a
- September 10, 1-3:00p
- Matrix facilitated individual phone calls with customers that weren't able to participate in one of the above sessions.

### **PHASE II – POLICY, ORGANIZATIONAL AND PROCESS IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

- July 1, 2019: Draft version of Descriptive Profile received
- August 26, 2019: Draft version of Diagnostic Assessment (Best Management Practices) received
- September 18, 2019: Draft analysis of Stakeholder Survey received
- September 20, 2019: Revised Diagnostic Assessment (Best Management Practices) received
- October 4, 2019: DRAFT Final Report received
- October 8, 2019: Development Review Summit facilitated by City Manager's Office, engaging 75-80 City staff around the Development Review Process
- October 14, 2019: Staff received copy of DRAFT Matrix Report for review and comment
- October 16, 2019: Staff comments due to City Manager's Office on DRAFT Matrix Report
- October 17-24, 2019: City Manager's Office organized staff comments
- October 25, 2019: City Manager's Office forwarded comments to Matrix Consulting
- October 25-November 3, 2019: Matrix Consulting incorporated approved changes into DRAFT report
- November 4, 2019: Matrix Consulting returned 2<sup>nd</sup> DRAFT of report to City
- November 5, 2019: City returned 2<sup>nd</sup> DRAFT of report to Matrix
- November 7, 2019: Staff reviewed 2<sup>nd</sup> DRAFT with Department Head
- November 8, 2019: Matrix to deliver FINAL report to City of Ventura
- November 11, 2019: City Council to receive copy of FINAL report
- November 18, 2019: Presentation by Matrix Consultants and City staff to Council on Evaluation of the Development Review Process

## **NEXT STEPS**

- City Manager's Office to coordinate the formation of a Development Review Process Working Group to assist and oversee the implementation of the Matrix recommendations.