



**LOVELAND PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
AGENDA**

**Monday, April 8, 2013
500 E. 3rd Street – Council Chambers
Loveland, CO 80537**

THE CITY OF LOVELAND DOES NOT DISCRIMINATE ON THE BASIS OF DISABILITY, RACE, CREED, COLOR, GENDER, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, RELIGION, AGE, NATIONAL ORIGIN OR ANCESTRY IN THE PROVISION OF SERVICES. FOR DISABLED PERSONS NEEDING REASONABLE ACCOMODATIONS TO ATTEND OR PARTICIPATE IN A CITY SERVICE OR PROGRAM, CALL 962-2523 OR TDD 962-2620 AS FAR IN ADVANCE AS POSSIBLE.

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. REPORTS:

a. Citizen Reports

This is time for citizens to address the Commission on matters not on the published agenda.

b. Staff Matters

c. Committee Reports

d. Commission Comments

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Review and approval of the March 25, 2013 meeting minutes.

V. REGULAR AGENDA:

1. 2012 Accomplishments / 2013 Goals.

Review adjustment to 2013 Goals from March 25th discussion. This is an administrative matter.

2. Development Permitting Process Report.

This report compiles information about the development review and building permitting process over the last several years. It identifies progress in the implementation of the SMART Objectives that were initiated in January, 2010. This is an administrative matter requiring no formal action by the Commission.

VI. ADJOURNMENT



MEMORANDUM

April 8, 2013

To: Planning Commission
From: Bob Paulsen, Current Planning Manager
Subject: **Development Permitting Process Report**

Attached you will find a copy of the recently completed Development Permitting Process Report. The Report is provided for your review and discussion at the April 8, 2013 Planning Commission meeting.

You will note that the Report focuses on the process improvements that were developed with the SMART Objectives initiative that stemmed from the work of Bob Tipton in 2009. The SMART Objectives process has resulted in a restructuring of the development review and building permit process, with the most notable change involving the placement of site plan and civil plan review in the planning or development review process. This change has simplified and shortened the building permit process, and has resulted in a better-coordinated site planning process. Other major accomplishments include the implementation electronic submittal and review process, improved coordination between city departments, improved communications with applicants, and overall time-savings in the development permitting process.

Numerous other improvements have been implemented, and several more are underway. In preparing for the discussion on April 8th, I would ask that the Commissioners pay particular attention to the 2012/2013 DRT Work Plan Matrix—which is Attachment B to the Report.

City of Loveland

DEVELOPMENT PERMITTING PROCESS

IMPROVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

SMART Objectives Status Report

April 2013

I. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

This report summarizes the on-going initiative being undertaken by the City of Loveland to improve the development permitting process for both planning and building permit applications. The initiative is implementing SMART Objectives – objectives that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-based. The SMART Objectives were developed in January 2010. The primary goal of the SMART Objectives is to speed up the review and approval process and sequence permit issuance with the sequence in which construction actually occurs in the field.

II. HISTORY

Starting back in late 2004, there has been a concerted ongoing effort to improve the development permitting process.

In November of 2004, R. S. Tipton, Incorporated, was hired to provide a detailed, process map-based understanding of the Development Review Team (DRT) process for planning applications. Mr. Tipton interviewed over 40 individuals, including City Council members, City executives, DRT members, and local developers. In March of 2005, Mr. Tipton presented recommendations to City Council in three areas: quick wins, critical policy issues, and needed systemic changes. Based on Mr. Tipton's recommendations, a number of changes were implemented in the DRT process, including: (i) creation of the Development Center at the Fire Administration Building; (ii) implementation of the early check-in process; (iii) collaborative review by DRT before meetings with developers; and (iv) written comments provided at CRT meetings.

In August 2009, Mr. Tipton was again hired to create a detailed process map-based understanding of the Building Permit process. Mr. Tipton conducted interviews with over fifteen individuals of the local development community. These interviews resulted in Mr. Tipton's identification of the "Development Community's Top 10 Concerns".

III. DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY'S TOP 10 CONCERNS

- 1. Loveland's building permit process is extremely slow when compared to other communities in Northern Colorado.**
- 2. Lack of integration between the planning process and the building permit process.**
- 3. The development community (all but one) would prefer a repeatable, consistent, and dependable process**
- 4. When everything is expedited, nothing is expedited.**
- 5. Many builders/developers work in Loveland only because they "have to", not because they choose to.**
- 6. The requirement for 11 paper copies in the 21st century is not only expensive, but arcane as well.**
- 7. Comments from reviewers seem to always take the maximum amount of time.**
- 8. New comments from reviewers show up in subsequent review cycles.**
- 9. Permit applications are often rejected for seemingly minor things (a simple phone call...).**
- 10. The fee calculator doesn't include all fees.**

IV. SMART OBJECTIVES

Starting in early September 2009, Mr. Tipton conducted three workshops with the DRT members to understand and address the Development Community's Top Ten Concerns. The most significant outcome of these workshops was the establishment of the SMART objectives in January 2010.

- **Restructure site plan and civil improvement construction plans process**
- **Improve coordination of inspections and acceptance of civil improvements**
- **Simplify building permit process**
- **Electronic submittals and review**
- **Improve communications**
- **Implement/assess/adjust**

The following paragraphs describe each of the six SMART Objectives and, under "Results", how each objective addresses the Development Community's Top Ten Concerns. The Progress Matrix (*Attachment A*) illustrates the multi-year implementation schedule for the 2010 SMART Objectives.

1. Restructure Site Plan and Civil Improvement Construction Plans Process

Goal: To approve development plans and issue permits in a sequence to allow over-lot grading and the installation of utilities and other infrastructure to commence, while other project plans are being reviewed concurrently.

- a. **Eliminate redundancy:** In the past, the project site plan and civil improvement construction plans (PICPs) were reviewed by both the Planning Division and Building Division. The site plan and PICPs were not given final approval until approval of the building permit. This redundant review process also increased the potential for new comments being provided during review in the Building Division. A new process was established, referred to as a Site Development Plan (SDP), to allow the project site plan and PICPs to receive final approval by the DRT in the planning process and, therefore, eliminate the need for any further review with the building permit application. A new policy was also initiated to limit new comments after the first round of review to those related to new information or revisions provided by the applicant or corrections required to avoid a threat to public safety.
- b. **Concurrent review:** The SDP process allows the DRT to authorize submittal of a building permit application prior to final approval of the SDP and PICPs. The DRT may also authorize the issuance of a partial or full Site Work Permit to allow the developer to start over-lot grading and the installation of utilities and other infrastructure prior to final approval of the SDP, PICPs or building permit.

Results: The elimination of redundant review of the PICPs and allowance for review of the building permit application concurrently with review of the SDP and PICPs addresses Top Ten Concerns #1 and #2. This SMART Objective has resulted in much shorter review cycles in the building permit process and provided better integration between the planning and building permit processes. The policy regarding new comments after the first round of review has addressed Top Ten Concerns #8.

Status: Complete

2. Improve Coordination of Inspections and Acceptance of Civil Improvements

Goal: To simplify the transition from planning and building permit approvals to final acceptance by City inspectors of completed civil improvements and, therefore, allow project construction to commence sooner.

In the past, there was little coordination of field inspections of civil improvements by the Water and Power Department and Public Works Department. There was no single City official assigned the responsibility for coordinating the field inspection process and no official document was issued by the City to indicate that the civil improvements had received final acceptance. Now the Field Engineering Supervisor in the Public Works Department is responsible for issuance of partial or full Site Work Permits and coordination all field inspections for civil improvements.

Results: Improving the efficiency of the field inspection process for civil improvements has reduced the time delay from approval of the PICPs to the start of actual construction of the project. This SMART Objective addresses Top Ten Concern #1 by reducing the processing time prior to start of construction.

Status: Complete

3. Simplify Building Permit Process

Goal: Minimize the number of different plans and documents that must be reviewed as part of a building permit application to reduce overall review times.

- a. **No review of project site plan or PICPs required:** With the SDP process in place, the project site plan and PICPs are given final approval in the planning process. Therefore, review of the building permit application can focus on review of the building plans only.
- b. **Collaborative review scheduling:** In the past the process for determining time periods for the DRT to complete a review cycle was predetermined based on the type of application and automatically set for 2, 3 or 4 weeks. A new internally integrated process for determining when an application is completed and can be accepted for review and a collaborative scheduling process has been implemented so review periods are based on the collective work load of the DRT members.

Results: Being able to focus review of the building permit application on the building plans only and scheduling review dates based on actual work load addresses Top Ten Concerns #1, #2 and #7 by speeding up the building permit review process, improving the coordination between the planning and building permit processes, and eliminating the automatic 2, 3, or 4 week review cycles.

Status: Complete

4. Electronic Submittals and Review

Goal: To reduce costs to the developer associated with the significant amount of paper applicants have to deliver to the City for each round of review and make distribution of plans and documents amongst DRT members more timely and efficient.

In January 2011 the City launched an electronic review process. Since then, copies of plan sets and documents can be submitted to the Planning Division and Building Division in electronic

format. These plan sets and documents are then loaded into an electronic folder that is accessible by all DRT members. The electronic submittal and review process has been well received by the development community. The new process has also made distribution amongst DRT members much quicker, reducing review times for each submittal/resubmittal by at least three days.

Results: Implementation of this SMART Objective addresses Top Ten Concern #6.

Status: Complete

5. Improve Communications

Goal: To reduce review times by improving both written and verbal communications between the DRT and applicants and amongst DRT members.

- a. Mandatory DRT meeting after second round of review:** If, after the second round of review, the applicant's resubmittal does not adequately address the corrections or inadequacies identified by the DRT, it's an indication that there may be a lack of clear communication. The normal review and resubmittal process is put on pause and a meeting scheduled with the developer's entire team, including the property owner. The purpose of the meeting is to make sure everyone understands the remaining issues and to provide a venue for collaborative problem solving.
- b. Customized submittal checklists:** Submittal checklists identifying the information requirements for each application type are being updated and improved to be easier to understand, with the objective being to have more applications accepted as complete when first submitted.
- c. Thursday morning DRT meetings:** In addition to the regular Conceptual Review Team (CRT) and DRT meetings, the DRT has reserved Thursday mornings each week for extra meetings with developers to encourage collaborative problem solving.
- d. Red line notes on electronic documents:** The new electronic submittal process now allows DRT members to incorporate more red line corrections directly on electronic plan sets. This process more clearly communicates required corrections than narrative descriptions alone.
- e. Customer surveys:** As part of closing out an application, members of the developer's team are asked to complete a survey evaluating the overall performance of the development permitting process. Results of these surveys are evaluated to identify areas for future improvement. Many of these areas for improvement have been included in the DRT 2012/2013 Work Plan Matrix (see Attachment B).
- f. DRT collaboration:** The DRT now meets every Wednesday to review their comments on projects to resolve any inconsistencies amongst reviewers prior to the comments being provided to the applicant.

Results: Collectively, the sub-elements of this SMART Objective address Top Ten Concern #3. The results of improved communications with applicants creates a more repeatable, consistent and dependable process.

Status: Complete/Continuing

6. Implement/Assess/Adjust

Goal: After the new permitting process had been implemented for 6 months and City staff had received comments from the development community, a comprehensive reassessment of the entire process was undertaken in June 2011 to identify opportunities for further improvements. Five areas for further improvement were identified by the DRT in September 2011.

- a. **Can application check-ins occur more frequently as a result of the efficiencies of electronic submittal and distribution of development plans?** In June 2012, a process was initiated to allow for daily check-in of development applications in both the Building Division and Planning Division. In the Planning Division check-in was being done once a week and in the Building Division, twice a week. The new daily check-in process has reduced City review times in the Building Division by as much as two days for each round of review.
- b. **Establishing reduced time period for review of less complex applications:** Simple planning applications, such as lot merger, boundary line adjustment, and some minor subdivision plats are now reviewed within a one week time frame. Review times for simple building permit applications that use to be put in the review queue with other more complex applications are now being placed in an expedited review queue, with most permits issued within less than a week. Review times for these less complex applications in both the Planning Division and Building Division have been reduced from 2-3 weeks to generally less than a week.
- c. **Allowing approval of civil drawings in two phases:** As part of the new Site Work Permit process an applicant can request a Partial Site Work Permit to allow over-lot grading to commence before the full set of PICPs have received final approval.
- d. **Consider allowing submittal of certain plans now required with SDP review to be delayed until submittal of building permit application:** The objective here is to establish criteria to allow projects that require very minor changes to the project site to submit a site plan directly to the Building Division, instead of going through the SDP process in the Planning Division. This item is on the current DRT Work Plan with completion anticipated in the third quarter of 2013.
- e. **Further steps to be taken to promote active problem solving:** In the first quarter of 2012 the directors of those departments having staff on the DRT formed the DRT Executive Group to promote active leadership, problem solving and collaboration amongst DRT members and with the development community. The purpose of the committee was to provide the managers of those divisions with members on the DRT with unified and consistent direction on initiatives to improve the development permitting process and to establish leadership expectations. The directors and managers to date have discussed the following topics:
 - i. Define success – who are we measuring ourselves against?
 - ii. What criteria will be used to measure success (speed, accuracy, professionalism)?
 - iii. Define flexibility – provide flexibility throughout the review process, but maintain high quality City standards.
 - iv. DRT philosophy as problem solvers.
 - v. Performance measures – what does ‘best’ look like.
 - vi. Leadership/Communication – gold mine vs. land mines (i.e. take actions that result in rewards versus repercussions) / protocols for action.

Status: Complete/Continuing

V. DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY'S TOP TEN CONCERNS

In addition to the SMART Objectives, operational policies regarding the development review process have been put in place to address the Development Communities Top Ten Concerns.

- 1. When everything is expedited, nothing is expedited:** Implementation of the SMART Objectives has significantly reduced the total review times for both planning and building permit applications, which has in turn, reduced the need for an expedited review process.
- 2. Many builders/developers work in Loveland only because they "have to", not because they choose to:** City staff is working hard to improve the overall permitting process through implementation of all six SMART Objectives, but only time will tell if these improvements change this opinion.
- 3. Permit applications are often rejected for seemingly minor things (a simple phone call...):** A cultural change has taken place with regard to the importance of effective communications with applicants. An operational policy has been initiated requiring project planners and building division personnel to communicate with developers and builders on a more regular basis and to not rely solely on e-mails or written comments. The goal is to keep everyone associated with the project better informed of issues and project status throughout the review process.
- 4. The fee calculator doesn't include all fees:** Several of the fees charged for development applications are calculated based on factors that vary depending on the specifics of a particular project, such as fees for water rights and water tapes. These fees could not be incorporated into the fee calculator with a suitable level of accuracy so, to avoid inaccurate estimates, the fee calculator is no longer available on line. Accurate fee estimates can now be obtained by submitting a form directly to the Building Division. The form is available on the Building Division web page.

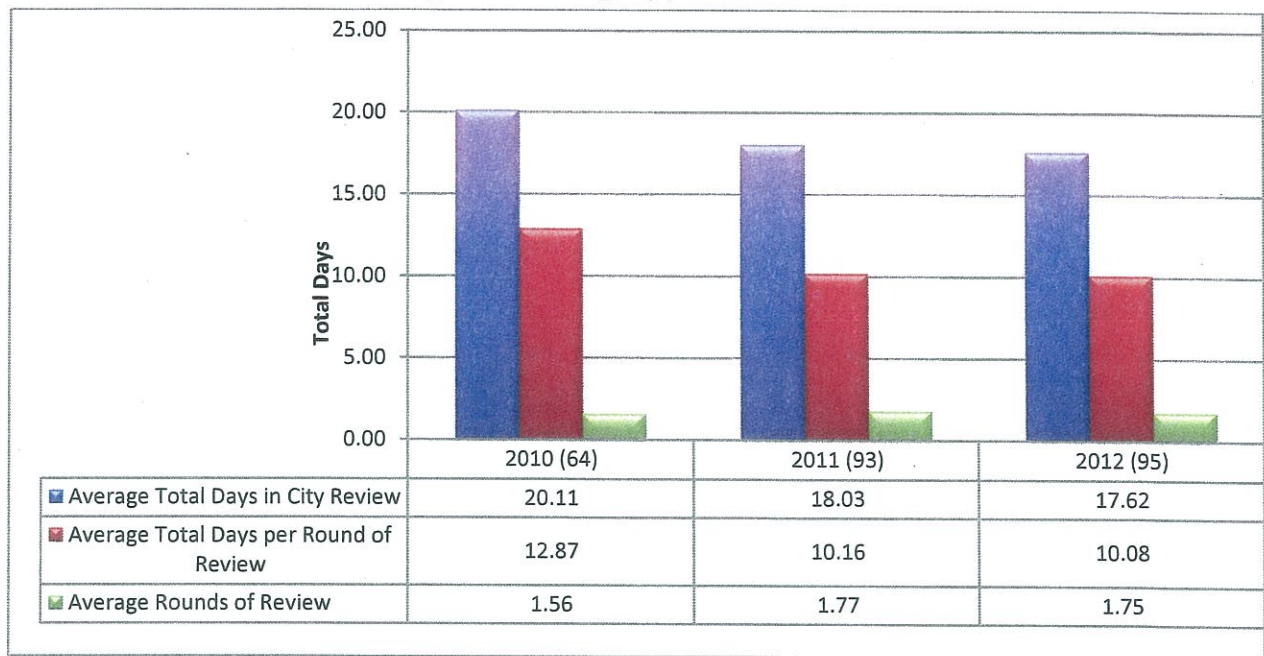
VI. PERFORMANCE

The graphs on the following page depict data retrieved from the City's new application tracking software for the two year period starting in January 2010 through the end of 2012.

- 1. Planning and Zoning Approvals:** From 2010 to 2011, the total average days in City review was reduced by 10.3% and from 2011 to 2012 by another 2.3%. The total reduction in review time for the two year period was 12.4%.
- 2. Building Permit Issuances:** From 2010 to 2011, the total average days in City review was reduced by 14.5% and from 2011 to 2012 by another 30.5%. The total reduction in review time for the two year period was 40.9%.

The overall improvement in review time has been more significant with respect to building permits due to the new SDP process where the PICPs and site plan are given final approval in the Planning Division. This change has eliminated the review of the PICPs and site plan as part of the building permit process and has allowed the building permit review to focus on just the building plans.

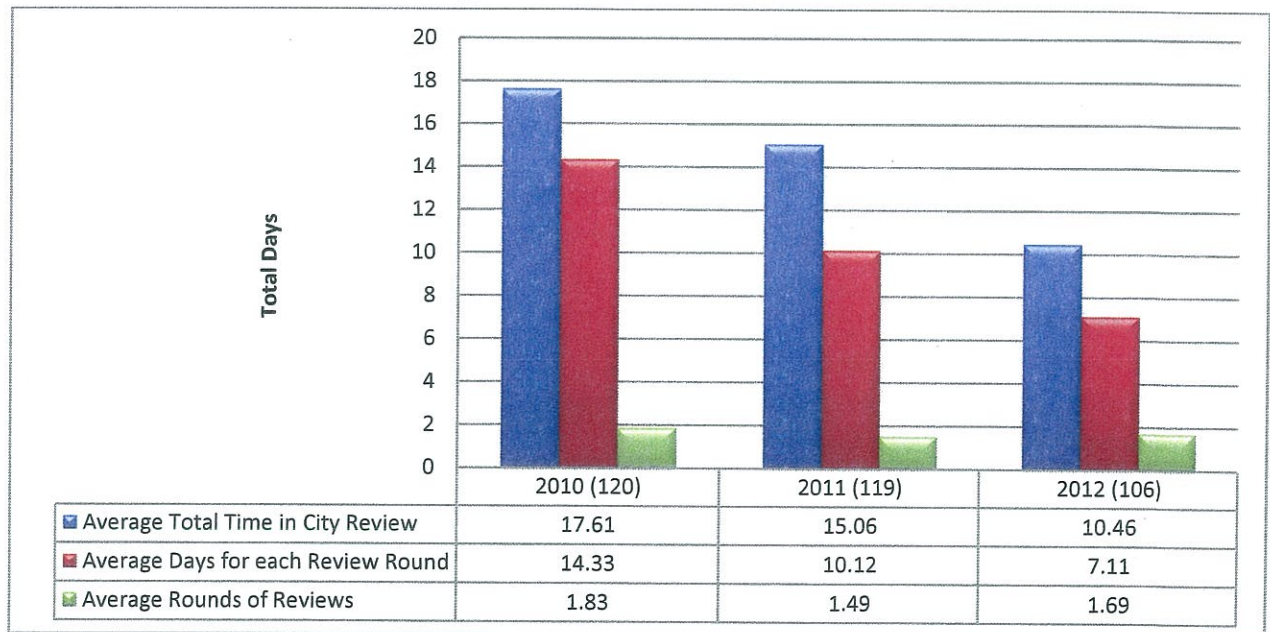
Planning and Zoning Approval Performance



Notes:

1. Application types include: annexations; rezonings; PUD general, preliminary and final development plans; special reviews; site development plans; preliminary, final and amended subdivision plats; and vacations.
2. The numbers in parenthesis indicate the number of planning and zoning applications included in the data set for each year.

Building Permit Issuance Performance



Note:

1. Building permit types include: non-residential additions, interior remodels, new buildings, and tenant finishes.
2. The numbers in parenthesis indicate the number of building permits included in the data set for each year

VII. CUSTOMER COMMENTS

Customer surveys submitted to the Planning Division and Building Division contain both positive and constructive comments about the permitting process. Those constructive comments have helped to identify further opportunities for improvements and develop the 2012/2013 DRT Work Plan Matrix (see **Attachment B**). Positive comments have confirmed that the development community recognizes the improvements made so far in the development permitting process. Some examples from our customer surveys are:

1. "Eplan submittal is a plus."
2. "Continue the good work."
3. "In my 42 years of retail construction, this department has been the most helpful I have ever worked with."
4. "Working with the Loveland Building department and inspectors was a very smooth process."
5. "The Building Division staff is by far the most knowledgeable and professional group I have ever done business with."
6. "The building inspectors – all of them – have been fantastic to work with and always helpful and problem solvers and positive solution providers."
7. "Just a quick note of appreciation for the time you spent with Thad and I yesterday. We were serious when we offered very favorable comparisons of your work and the City of Loveland as a whole, versus our comparable experiences in other NE cities (who shall remain unnamed - except Philadelphia). It's delightful to work with such engaging and knowledgeable folks as you."
8. "Thanks to you and your team, we now can proceed with confidence in the process. To that point, the Board of the Enclave HOA, the Enclave Architectural and Landscaping Review Committee, Greeley Community Management (GCM) and all the members of the Enclave Community give you a virtual "thanks" and a cheer "for a job well done" for your guidance in this matter."
9. "This person went the extra mile to get my questions answered."

VIII. 2012/13 DRT WORK PLAN MATRIX

The current 2012/2013 DRT Work Plan Matrix (**Attachment B**) contains a number of initiatives designed to make further improvements in the development permitting process.

1. Process Improvements:

- a. Improve routing process for external agencies;
- b. Improve coordination of electric transformer locations;
- c. Amend Special Review process;
- d. Update submittal checklist; and
- e. Improve DRT comment review reports sent to applicants.

2. Municipal Code Amendments:

- b. Simplify process for installation of public improvements, issuance of building permits and posting of securities;
- c. Simplify and standardize procedures for public notices;
- d. Clarify regulations for weed control;
- e. Update Site Development Performance Standards and Guidelines; and

- f. Update residential zoning districts.
- g. Reduce submittal requirements for Special Review application prior to being able to receive feedback at the official neighborhood meeting.

IX. SUMMARY COMMENTS

The City is committed to continuing its efforts to improve the permitting process in both the Planning Division and Building Division. City staff is proud of the successes to date, but considers the project to be a work in progress. One of the key SMART Objectives which is to "implement/assess/adjust" is based on the philosophy that there is always opportunities for further improvements in the process, particularly as we receive feedback from our customers and better technologies become available.

2010 SMART Objectives Progress Matrix

Objective	2011				2012				2013			
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th
Restructure Site Plan and Civil Improvement Construction Plans Process	★											
Improve Coordination of Inspections and Acceptance of Civil Improvements						★						
Simplify Building Permit Process – SDP Process	★											
Electronic Submittals and Review	★											
Improve Communications		★										
Implement/Assess/Adjust	→				→				→			
• Daily Check-In						★						
• Reduce Review Times for Less Complex Projects				★								
• Approval of Civil Drawings in Two Phases – Partial Site Work Permit						★						
• SDP Not Required for Projects With Minor Changes to Site Plan											★	
• Active Problem Solving – Further Steps									→			→

Completed ★

Anticipated Completion ★

On-Going →

2010 SMART Objectives

2012/2013 DRT Work Plan Matrix

Objective	2011				2012				2013			
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th
Process Improvements												
• Develop procedures for issuing site work permits					★							
• Initial improvements to routing process for external agencies and second round						★			★			
• Improve coordination of electric transformer locations									★			
• Amend Special Review Process							★		---	---	---	★
• Update submittal checklists									---	---	---	---
• Improve DRT comment review report format sent to applicants									---	---	---	---
• Simplified site plan for submittal with building permit											★	
• Update forms and submittal requirements for CRT applications									★			
• Clarify process for dedicating easements by separate instrument												
Municipal Code Amendments												
• Simplify process for installation of public improvements, issuance of building permits and posting of securities											★	
• Simplify and standardize procedures for public notices										★		
• Clarify regulations for weed control										★		
• Update Site Development Performance Standards and Guidelines												★
• Simplify Site Development Plan process											★	
• Update residential zoning districts												★

Completed ★

Anticipated Completion ★

--- In Process

