

DURHAM



1869
CITY OF MEDICINE

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PROCESS PERFORMANCE AUDIT

SEPTEMBER 2015

DURHAM



1869
CITY OF MEDICINE

CITY OF DURHAM
AUDIT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

*“Provides independent, objective
assurance and investigative services”*

Director of Audit Services

Germaine Brewington, PhD, CPA, CFE, CGMA

Assistant Director of Audit Services

Sonal Patel, CPA, CIA, CGMA

Senior Internal Auditor

Claire Mufalo, MBA, MHA

Internal Auditor

Ora Horton

Administrative Analyst

Patsy Lockamy

FRAUD, WASTE & ABUSE HOTLINE | 919.560.4213, EXT. 3

WWW.DURHAMNC.GOV/DEPARTMENTS/AUDIT

DURHAM



1869
CITY OF MEDICINE

CITY OF DURHAM

Audit Services Department

101 CITY HALL PLAZA | DURHAM, NC 27701

919.560.4213 | F 919.560.1007

www.DurhamNC.gov

To: Audit Services Oversight Committee
From: Germaine F. Brewington, Director
Audit Services Department
Date: September 28, 2015
Re: Development Review Process Performance Audit
(September 2015)

The Department of Audit Services completed the report on the Development Review Process Performance Audit dated September, 2015. The purpose of the audit was to determine if the City-County Planning Department's Site Plan, Exempt Plat and the Final Plat Approval Process was efficient.

This report presents the observations and results of the Development Review Process Performance Audit dated September, 2015.

The Department of Audit Services appreciates the contribution of time and other resources from employees of the Departments of City County Planning and Technology Solutions in the completion of this audit.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

BACKGROUND INFORMATION	5
-------------------------------	----------

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	8
--------------------------	----------

OBJECTIVES, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY	9
--	----------

AUDIT RESULTS	11
----------------------	-----------

RECOMMENDATIONS	23
------------------------	-----------

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Development Review Process in the City of Durham is a complex multi-step process which frequently requires several months from project inception to construction release. The process includes review and coordination by many different functions within the City, as well as outside agencies. This audit focuses on **the Site Plan/Preliminary Plat/Final Plat/Exempt Plat Approval Process** that is coordinated by the City-County Planning Department of the City of Durham.

The City-County Planning Department is the primary agent in the Site Plan/Preliminary Plat/Final Plat/Exempt Plat Approval Process and assists in coordinating the review by other agencies. Site Plans are grouped in the following categories by the City-County Planning Department:

Site Plans Approved Administratively

Level 1 Site Plans – typically involve requests with no increase in impervious surfaces, new land disturbance, building area, or changes that would require review by any agency or department except the Planning Department.

Level 2 Site Plans – typically involve requests that require review by multiple departments or agencies. There are two types of Level 2 Site Plans:

- 1) Level 2A Site Plan involves less than 200 square feet of new impervious surface and no change in stormwater management; and
- 2) Level 2B Site Plan involves 200 square feet or more of new impervious surface and no change in stormwater management.

Level 3 Site Plans – typically involves requests that require new stormwater management or a change to existing stormwater management.

Level 4 Site Plans – typically involves requests requiring a traffic impact analysis (TIA).



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Site Plans Approved by the Governing Body

Major Site Plans – typically involve requests that, according to the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) requires governing body approval; requires a major special use permit (UDO Section 3.9); or are located in a Watershed Protection Overlay Critical Area, with an impervious surface that exceeds the maximum permitted by the Low Density Option under Sec. 8.7, Watershed Protection Overlay Standards.

The Site Plan, Exempt Plat/Final Plat/Preliminary Plat Approval Process is as follows:

- The applicant may request a pre-submittal meeting to discuss the requirements for each project. The meeting is attended by staff from multiple City departments.
- If an applicant chooses to proceed, the applicant submits a Site Plan application to the City-County Planning Department. The Department reviews this application, and distributes the submittals to other departments and/or outside agencies for review. The correct number of plans and fees must be submitted for the application to be considered complete.
- Each area reviews the application and provides written comments to the applicants which are accessible in the Land Development Office (LDO) System.
- Based on the review comments, the applicant makes needed adjustments to the Site Plan and resubmits the application to the City-County Planning Department.
- This revision and resubmittal process can occur several times before all comments are resolved.
- Once all comments are addressed and all required outside agency/City department approvals have been received, the senior planner contacts the applicant and advises them on the number of copies required for approval and distribution. The Departmental requirement is to approve the application within a 24-48 hour period.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Review times vary by the type of application. Approval times effective as of January 1, 2015 are identified in Table 1.

**Table 1:
Review times**

Review Item	Review Schedule
Level 1 Site Plans/Exempt Plats	1 ½ weeks (all reviews)
Level 2 Site Plans	2 ½ weeks (all reviews)
Level 3 Site Plans	3 ½ weeks (initial review)
Level 4 Site Plans/ Preliminary Plats	3 ½ weeks (initial review)
Major Site Plans	3 ½ weeks (initial review)
Final Plats	2 ½ weeks (all reviews)
Re-reviews	2 ½ weeks

Land Development Office System (LDO)

The City-County Planning Department uses the Land Development Office System to track the approval of Site Plans, Exempt and Final Plats. Once an application is received it is entered into the LDO System and is also assigned to different reviewers in the LDO System. The reviewers approve the applications and enter review comments in the System. The applicants can also track the status and comments of a submittal on the LDO website.

Based on the information obtained from the LDO System, Table 2 shows the following applications processed for FY 2014 and FY 2015:

**Table 2:
Applications
processed**

	FY 2015	FY 2014
Exempt Plat	200	190
Final Plat	82	86
Level 1 - Administrative Site Plan	148	166
Level 2A - Simplified Site Plan Small	119	55
Level 2B - Simplified Site Plan Small	85	142
Level 3 - Simplified Site Plan Large	92	69
Level 4 - Minor Site Plan	16	44
Minor Preliminary Plat	8	1
Preliminary Plat - Cluster/Conservation Subdivision	4	2
Major Site Plan		3
Grand Total	754	758



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose

The Audit Services Department performed this audit to determine the operating efficiency of the Site Plan, Exempt Plat, and Final Plat Approval Process in place at the City-County Planning Department.

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient and appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Results in Brief

Adequate controls existed over the fee collection process. While controls are adequate over cash collections, overall, opportunity exists to improve the operating efficiency of the Site Plan, Exempt Plat, and Final Plat review process in the following areas:

- Timely review of Site Plan, Exempt Plat and Final Plat applications is vital to the development review process overall. Application processing by other City and County departments and outside agencies involved in the review process has not been timely. Even though the Planning Department is responsible for the approval process, they do not have authority to hold other City departments or outside agencies accountable for meeting timeliness standards;
- Exploring the possibility of using an Electronic Plan Submission system could allow for a quicker turnaround time in reviewing applications;
- Enhancing the information presented on the City of Durham's website pertaining to the Site Plan, Exempt Plat and Final Plat Approval Process;
- Enhancing the performance measures pertaining to this Process; and
- Strengthening the quality review process.

OBJECTIVES, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

Objectives

The objectives of the audit were to determine :

- The operating efficiency of the Site Plan, Exempt Plat, and Final Plat Approval Processes in place in the Planning Department;
- The adequacy of controls over the Fee Collection process for the Site Plan, Exempt Plat, and Final Plat applications; and
- The adequacy of the quality control process over the Site Plan, Exempt Plat, and Final Plat Approval Process.

Scope

The scope of this engagement included the Site Plan, Exempt Plat, and Final Plat Approval Process administered by the City-County Planning Department. Overall the Development Review Process includes several other processes in addition to the Site Plan, Exempt Plat, and Final Plat Approval Process; however, the Audit Services staff did not review those other processes as a part of this audit.

Methodology

To accomplish the objectives of this audit, Audit Services staff performed the following steps:

- Obtained and analyzed a list of all Site Plan, Exempt Plat and Final Plat applications processed in FY 2014 and FY 2015 categorized by:
 - The department involved in the review process;
 - The type of application;
- Interviewed appropriate personnel;
- Researched best practices and processes at other cities;
- Verified that the overall review of applications was performed on a timely basis in line with Department performance measures for FY 2014 and FY 2015, specifically examining the following:

OBJECTIVES, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

- Timeliness of the reviews performed by the Planning Department;
 - Timeliness of reviews performed by other City departments and outside agencies;
 - The number of review cycles it took to receive final approval; and
 - The total number of days from the time the application was assigned in the LDO System to final approval;
- Verified the monitoring activities in place over the approval process;
 - Interviewed reviewers in other City departments and outside agencies that are involved in the approval process;
 - Analyzed all applications processed to determine the frequency of re-reviews based on application types;
 - Reviewed a sample of applications to determine reasons for re-reviews based on case notes in the LDO System;
 - Determined the adequacy of the information provided to the applicant at the pre-submittal meeting;
 - Analyzed all applications processed in FY 2015 by the case manager and by applicant information;
 - Selected a sample of voided transactions and determined if a valid reason was noted in the LDO System;
 - Verified the accuracy of the fees charged for a selected sample of applications;
 - Reconciled the fees collected per the LDO System to the fees per the MUNIS System for FY 2015;
 - Determined the adequacy of controls over the Fees Collection Process;
 - Verified job descriptions and certifications for departmental staff involved in the approval process; and
 - Verified the quality control process in place.

During the audit, the staff also maintained awareness to the potential existence of fraud.

Effective Practices:

- Staff performance measures are tied to the timeliness of the review;
- Reviewers indicate whether a comment was a repeat comment or a new comment on the Review Comments document provided to the applicant. This allows the supervisors to determine whether a re-review fee reduction should be approved;
- A pre-submittal meeting option is available to the applicants to meet with staff from various City departments that are involved in the approval process in order to discuss and understand the requirements;
- The Planning Department staff have a good working relationship with other departments/agencies, based on interviews with reviewers from other City departments and outside agencies;
- Standard operating procedures are adequate; and
- The department tracks customer satisfaction.

Objective 1

To Determine the Operating Efficiency of the Site Plan, Exempt Plat, and Final Plat Approval Processes in place at the City-County Planning Department

An efficient Development Review Process is critical to ensure that the expected growth in the City's residential and commercial development is achieved in line with the Department's set standards, as well as the community expectations. Timely review of Site Plan, Exempt Plat and Final Plat applications is vital to the Development Review process overall. Audit Services staff analyzed the data to understand the following as it relates to the timeliness of processing the above mentioned applications:

- 1) Timeliness of the reviews performed by the Planning Department staff;
- 2) Timeliness of reviews performed by other City, County departments and outside agencies involved in the review process;

AUDIT RESULTS

- 3) Number of review cycles before final approval; and
- 4) Total number of days from the time the application was assigned in the LDO System to final approval (Does not include applicant resubmittal time).

Planning Department staff did not meet the established target for the performance measure related to the timely review of applications for FY 2015

The City-County Planning Department tracks performance measures related to the timely review of applications. Overall, the Departmental target was to ensure 95% of the reviews of public and private land development proposals were completed within the established timeframes for FY 2015. The established time frames vary based on the type of application submitted.

Audit Services staff requested the Technology Solutions (TS) Department staff generate reports designed for this engagement from the LDO System in order to verify the performance measures data. Based on the data obtained from the LDO System, the Planning Department staff did not meet the 95% target for processing site plans within their respective timeframes. Overall, 89% of the applications were processed in line with established timeframes. However, the actual percentage of site plans reviewed within the respective time frames had significantly increased from FY 2014. Only 70% of the overall site plan applications were reviewed on a timely basis for FY 2014. The Department was experiencing staffing shortages and therefore revised its established time frames to accommodate this staffing shortage from 2013 to December 2015. Effective January 1, 2015 the reviewers were expected to revert back to the original time frames and review applications within those time frames. Delays in reviewing applications can place a burden on applicants, the community and all other stakeholders involved in the process.

A lack of timeliness existed for application processing by other City and County departments and outside agencies involved in the review process which are outside the control of the City – County Planning Department

The City-County Planning Department is the primary agent in the Site Plan, Final Plat and Exempt Plat review process and assists in coordinating the reviews performed by other City departments and outside agencies. When an application is submitted for review, the Planning Department staff will determine which other City departments, County departments and outside agencies need to be involved in the approval process and disseminate the information accordingly. Therefore, the amount of time it takes to review site plans is also dependent on the ability of these departments/outside agencies to complete their review on a timely basis. Review by the Planning Department staff occurs simultaneously with review from the other City departments, County departments and outside agencies.

In an effort to determine if there were specific areas outside of the Planning Department that were more commonly responsible for delaying the approval process, Audit Services staff analyzed data obtained from the LDO System. Not all applications processed by other City departments and outside agencies met the set Planning Department reviewing timeframes. On average approximately 71% of the applications were reviewed on a timely basis in FY 2015. For FY 2014, approximately 77% of applications were reviewed on a timely basis.

Exhibit 1 on page 14 shows the timeliness of other City departments and external agencies that are involved in the approval process. The numbers are an approximation and do not include applications that were under review as of June 30, 2015.

AUDIT RESULTS

**Exhibit 1:
External &
internal
review
timelines**

EXTERNAL TO THE CITY	VOLUME OF APPLICATIONS	PERCENT ON TIME
NCDOT	372	52%
County Sedimentation and Erosion Control	312	88%
Bike/Pedestrian*	114	37%
County Fire Marshall	55	75%
County Stormwater	48	92%
County Utilities	33	67%
County Open Space	1	100%

INTERNAL TO THE CITY	VOLUME OF APPLICATIONS	PERCENT ON TIME
Public Works - Stormwater	526	68%
Public Works - Transportation	481	93%
Building Inspections	462	69%
Public Works - Engineering Development Review	431	71%
Water Management	302	85%
Building Inspection - Fire	291	24%
Solid Waste	149	88%
Parks and Recreation	134	75%
Technology Solutions*	60	77%
Planning Design Compliance	117	91%
Urban Forestry	14	7%
Public Works Floodplain*	5	40%

*These internal/external organizations serve in an advisory capacity and their comments are not required

The Planning Department staff have the responsibility for timely approval of applications; however, the staff do not have the authority to hold other City departments or outside agencies accountable for meeting timeliness standards. The case manager assigned to the application contacts the representatives from these agencies /City departments to understand the reason for the delay. However, as they do not have authority over these individuals, they cannot hold them accountable. Delays in reviewing applications can place a burden on applicants, the community and all other stakeholders involved in the process.

AUDIT RESULTS

Audit Services staff interviewed reviewers from some of these other City departments/outside agencies to gain insight into their review process. According to these reviewers, staffing shortages in their respective departments contributed to the delay. All staff interviewed stated that they had a good working relationship with the Planning Department staff.

The internal City departments should work towards a unified goal.

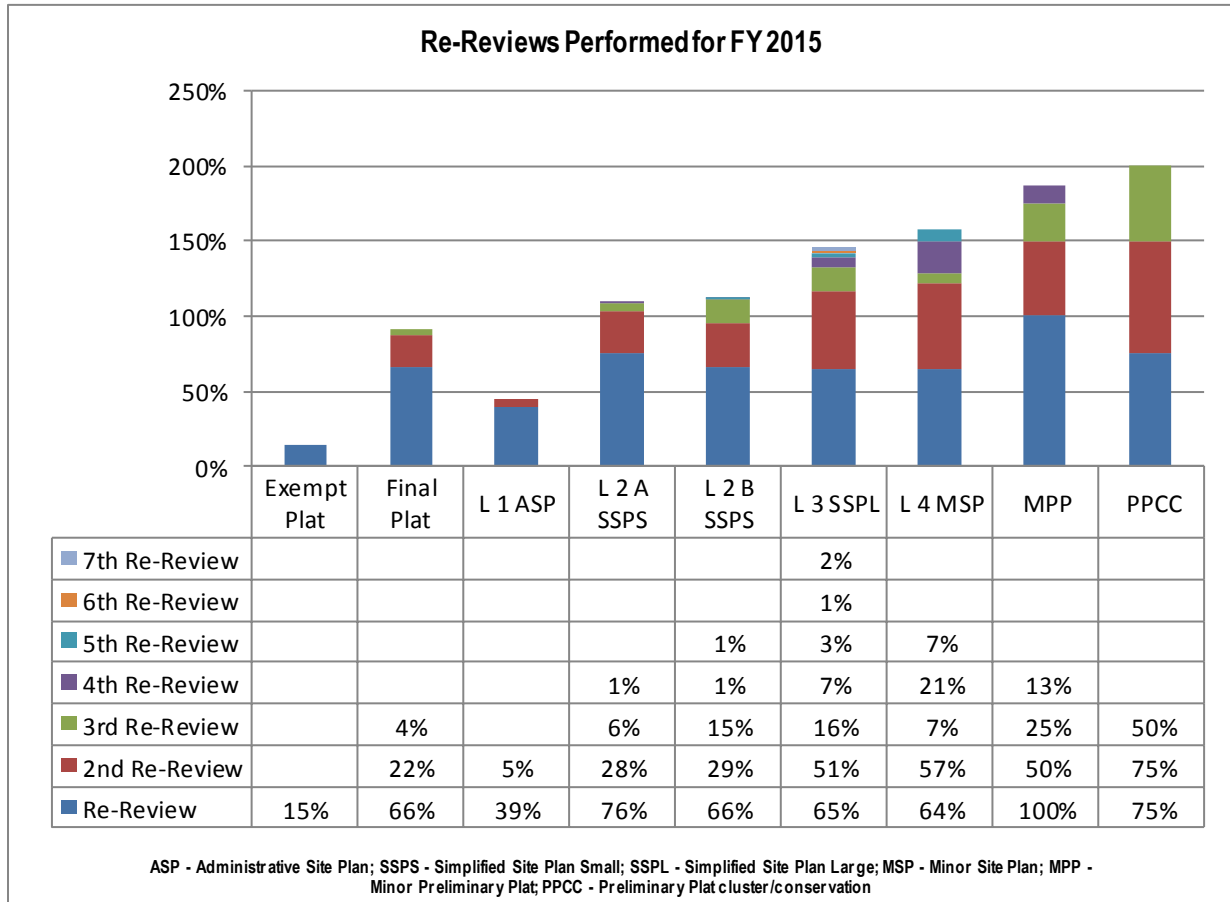
The majority of applications were processed within 3 review cycles, which was in line with the Planning Department's expectations

Applications submitted for review may have to be re-reviewed several times before final approval is provided. The Planning Department staff stated that it is expected that all reviews will be performed in three (3) review cycles. Audit Services staff examined the data obtained from the LDO System to determine the number of re-reviews required to complete the application.

Audit Services staff analyzed the applications to determine the frequency of re-reviews for FY 2014 and FY 2015. Re-reviews performed for FY 2015 are displayed in Exhibit 2 on page 16 by the type of application.

AUDIT RESULTS

Exhibit 2: Review statistics



For FY 2015, the majority of the exempt plat, final plat, and level 1 administrative site plans were reviewed within 3 cycles (2nd re-review).

Department staff currently do not analyze the re-review of applications and this activity was not a performance measure that management monitored. Department staff expect that on average it will take three review cycles to approve a given application. The time spent on each re-review increases the total time it takes to approve an application.

AUDIT RESULTS

The number of days it takes all parties involved in the review process to approve Site Plan, Exempt Plat and Final Plat applications

Audit Services staff used data from the LDO System to determine the number of days it takes review staff to approve applications. Based on the data obtained, the following results in Table 3 were derived for FY 2015. These numbers are approximated.

Table 3: Days to approve applications	Type of Plan	Review Time in Days	Percent of Applications Reviewed
	Exempt Plat	10 or less	91%
	Final Plat	48 or less	87%
	Level 1 - Administrative Site Plan	10 or less	82%
	Level 2A - Simplified Site Plan Small	49 or less	87%
	Level 2B - Simplified Site Plan Small	39 or less	77%
	Level 3 - Simplified Site Plan Large	90 or less	81%
	Level 4 - Minor Site Plan	65 or less	85%
	Minor Preliminary Plat	107 or less	75%
	Preliminary Plat - Cluster/Conservation Sub.	74 or less	75%

This data only includes time spent by the City department staff and outside agencies staff to approve the applications. It does not include time taken by the submitting party to respond to comments from staff and revising the plan to gain approval. Taking into account the time it takes for customers to resubmit the revised plans, would increase the total time it takes for processing an application. Since City staff cannot control the time it takes the customer to address the comments and resubmit the application, that time was not included in this calculation. Planning Department staff do not currently track this data. This information could be useful for the applicants.

Opportunities may exist to improve the efficiency of the review process

Exploring the possibility of using an Electronic Plan Submission System

Electronic Plan submission would allow the development community to download plans. This process could allow for quicker turnaround of plans by allowing plans to be sent electronically instead of requiring reviewers to pick up plans. The cities of Greensboro and Charlotte use electronic plan submission systems. The system allows electronic plans and applications to be submitted over the internet.

Educating the applicants to decrease the number of re-reviews

Audit Services staff analyzed comments on cases to determine the potential reasons that could cause re-reviews. Analyzing the re-reviews can identify opportunities for improving the efficiency of the application review process. Based on the review, the following reasons were observed:

- The submitted site plan was not in compliance with all the regulations;
- Applicants did not address comments from previous reviews causing the comment to continue. Therefore, the quality of resubmittals is an issue;
- Applicants made changes outside of the review comments that caused the reviewers to provide additional new comments; and
- In a few instances new comments were added during a later review, which were missed by the reviewer during the initial review.

AUDIT RESULTS

In addition, while performing the research for this audit, Audit Services staff observed that the information presented on the City of Durham website pertaining to the Site Plan, Exempt Plat and Final Plat Approval Process could be enhanced.

Enhancing the Performance Measures

The Planning Department does not currently track the following:

- Timeliness of reviews performed by other City, County Departments and outside agencies involved in the review process;
- Number of review cycles before final approval; and
- Total number of days from the time the application was assigned in the LDO System to final approval. (Does not include applicant resubmittal time).

Tracking these measures could help the Department provide useful information to decision makers.

Objective 2 Adequacy of controls over the Fee Collection Process for the Site Plan, Exempt Plat, and Final Plat processes

Adequate controls exist over the Fee Collection Process. Planning Department staff do not collect cash at their location. Applicants are provided a Statement of Account which details the amount owed. They are required to make the payment to Central Cashiering. This significantly reduces the risk of fraud. Audit Services staff reconciled the LDO System revenues to the revenues reported in the MUNIS system. The two systems reconciled within an immaterial difference. The Department does not currently reconcile the revenues reported in the LDO System to the MUNIS system.

Objective 3 To determine adequacy of the quality control process in place over the Site Plan, Exempt plat, and Final Plat Approval Process

The quality review was not documented; however, the standard operating procedure is to perform quality reviews per month per reviewer. According to the supervisor, due to the current workload, quality reviews have not been performed. The lack of quality reviews could result in: inferior quality of work; or the non-performance of assigned work may not be detected and addressed in a timely manner. One element of internal control is to ensure continuous monitoring of activities through supervision. One aspect of responsible supervision includes monitoring, reviewing and approving the work of those performing an activity to ensure the work is performed correctly.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

The City Manager's Office should designate and empower an individual to coordinate efforts on determining the feasibility of utilizing a system that would allow for electronic plan submission. Electronic plan submission will help reduce the time it takes to review applications.

Recommendation 2

Efforts should be employed to ensure there is internal collaboration on review turnarounds in order to improve the timeliness of reviews performed. The City Manager's Office should designate and empower an individual to coordinate efforts on review turnarounds for all City departments involved in the Site Plan, Exempt Plat and Final Plat Approval Process. In addition, staff should establish inter local agreements / memoranda of understanding with outside agencies for the performance of selected development review duties.

Recommendation 3

The City Manager's designee should analyze data to track performance and hold all internal departments involved in the review process accountable for meeting the set performance standards.

Data tracked should include:

- Percentage of applications reviewed on time by all department reviewers;
- Number of re-review cycles required to approve the applications; and
- Total review time (from submission to final approval) to approve applications.

Distribute reports to all reviewers that summarize the above statistics.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 4

The City Manager's designee should determine the reasons for the delays in the application approval process and take the appropriate actions to address the issues identified.

Recommendation 5

The Planning Department staff should enhance their website to facilitate a better understanding of the application review process for the customer.

Recommendation 6

The Planning Department should consider incorporating the following as performance measures:

- Total review time (from submission to final approval) to approve applications; and
- Number of re-review cycles it takes to approve applications.

In addition, the Department should consider revising the estimated review times as business days rather than weeks.

Recommendation 7

The Planning Department management staff should perform periodic re-examinations of sample approved plans to assess the performance of the reviewers.

MANAGEMENT'S RESPONSE



City of Durham | DURHAM COUNTY
North Carolina



MEMORANDUM

To: Dr. Germaine F. Brewington, Director of Audit Services

Through: Keith Chadwell, Deputy City Manager

From: Steven L. Medlin, AICP, Director, City-County Planning

Date: September 23, 2015

Subject: Management's Response
Development Review Performance Audit (September, 2015)

The following provides management's response to the Development Review Performance Audit completed in September of 2015. Thanks to you and your staff for the excellent, courteous, professional and thorough work reflected in the above-referenced audit. As suggested by the responses below, the insights gained from this audit will significantly benefit the Department and the citizens of Durham for many years to come.

Recommendation 1: The City Manager's Office should designate and empower an individual to coordinate efforts on determining the feasibility of utilizing a system that would allow for electronic plan submission. Electronic plan submission will help reduce the time it takes to review applications.

Management's Response: We concur. Management is in full agreement with the recommendation. We would further suggest that an electronic plan submittal *and review* (as opposed to electronic submittal only) is critical to contribute towards reduced review times.



As discussed with the Audit Services team, the Planning Department does allow for electronic submittals of plan types under the sole review of the Planning Department (e.g.: exempt plats), but partner Departments have raised concerns to electronic plan submission and review.

As noted in this recommendation, implementation will require partnership between Technology Solutions (as primary implementer of the technology platform[s] required), Finance (primary implementer of digital fee collection system) and the key development review departments (e.g.: Inspections, Public Works, Transportation, and Planning). Additionally, there will be a potentially significant budgetary impact to deployment of digital submittal and review technology. A Deputy City Manager has been assigned by the City Manager to provide support and oversight to support the work of the Planning Department to achieve this coordinated implementation.

Implementation Date: The Planning Department will begin coordination (as noted above) on this item in October, 2015, with a target for an expanded pilot of digital review in FY17.

Recommendation 2: Efforts should be employed to ensure there is internal collaboration on review turnarounds in order to improve the timeliness of reviews performed. The City Manager's Office should designate and empower an individual to coordinate efforts on review turnarounds for all City departments involved in the Site Plan, Exempt Plat and Final Plat approval process. In addition:

- Distribute reports to all reviewers that summarize statistics on the status of applications against the adopted review timeframes; and
- Establish inter local agreements/memoranda of understanding with outside agencies for the performance of selected development review duties.

Management's Response: We concur. Management is in full agreement with the recommendation. Under the leadership of a Deputy City Manager and the participation of representatives from other review departments, Planning staff has been investigating tools and techniques to address each recommendation listed above, with recommendations to be provided to the Manager's office in time for incorporation into the FY17 budget.

Implementation Date: Beginning in FY17.

Recommendation 3: The City Manager's designee should analyze data to track performance and hold all internal departments involved in the development review process accountable for meeting the set performance standards.

Data tracked should include:

- Percentage of applications reviewed on time by all department reviewers; and
- Total review time (from submission to final approval) to approve applications; and
- Number of re-review cycles it takes to approve applications.

Distribute reports to all reviewers that summarize the above statistics.

Management's Response: We partially concur. Management is in agreement with a portion of the recommendation. Performance measures are intended to track a Department's, a work group's or an individual employee's performance against an adopted measure. Measuring the percentage of applications reviewed on time by all department reviewers is fair and appropriate, as review timelines are controlled by Departments. The other measures recommended by Audit Services, however, do not accurately reflect the performance of the Planning (or other) Department, its work groups or individuals, as the Planning Department (or other Departments) does not control a) the review timeframes of other Departments and b) the quality of submittals by site plan or plat applicants. These latter facts are acknowledged by the Audit Services Department in the above-referenced audit report.

We agree that this information can and should be tracked and shared, as a way of evaluating the overall performance of the development review process (i.e.: Planning Department, other review departments, and applicants). *Please see below for additional elaboration.

Implementation Date: By January 1, 2016 for monthly tracking of requested measures

Recommendation 4: The City Manager's designee should determine the reasons for the delays in the application approval process and take appropriate action to address the issues identified.

Management's Response: We concur. Management is in full agreement with the recommendation. As noted in the Audit report for this item, no Department or individual is currently responsible for identification and evaluation of the cause of delays in the application review and approval process outside of individual Departments, and this fact is a significant cause of delays in application approval. Please note, however, that ensuring that the City Manager's designee has authority to take "appropriate action" will require significant evaluation and decisions regarding the roles and responsibilities between development review departments and the City Manager's designee.*Please see below for additional elaboration.

Implementation Date: Recommendation made concurrent with or prior to the FY17 budget cycle.

Recommendation 5: The Planning Department staff should enhance their website to facilitate a better understanding of the application review process for the customer.

Management's Response: We concur. Planning Department Management is in full agreement with the recommendation. As identified in the Joint Economic Development Strategic Plan and the current year (FY16) Work Program, the Planning Department has begun a "process mapping" exercise to more clearly define the triggers for various approvals (e.g.: final plat, site plan) and summarize these for the Departmental website.

Implementation Date: Initial improvements to website by end of FY16, further improvements in FY17.

Recommendation 6: The Planning Department should consider incorporating the following as performance measures:

- Total review time (from submission to final approval) to approve applications; and
- Number of re-review cycles it takes to approve applications.

In addition, the Department should consider revising the estimated review times as business days rather than weeks.

Management's Response: We partially concur. Management is in agreement with a portion of the recommendation. Performance measures are intended to track a Department's, a work group's or an individual employee's performance against an adopted measure. The other measures recommended by Audit Services, however, do not accurately reflect the performance of the Planning Department, its work groups or individuals, as the Planning Department does not control a) the review timeframes of other Departments and b) the quality of submittals by site plan or plat applicants. These latter facts are acknowledged by the Audit Services Department in the above-referenced audit report.

We agree that this information can and should be tracked and shared, as a way of evaluating the overall performance of the development review process (i.e.: Planning Department, other review Departments, and applicants). We also will revise the estimated review period to reflect business days, rather than weeks, as suggested.*Please see below for additional elaboration.

Implementation Date: By January 1, 2016 for monthly tracking of requested measures and changes to definition of review period.

Recommendation 7: The Planning Department management staff should perform periodic re-examinations of sample approved plans to assess the performance of the reviewers.

Management's Response: We concur. Management is in full agreement with the recommendation. Planning Department Development Review staff already conducts the recommended internal reviews of approved plans, but the timing and consistency of these reviews has suffered due to increases in workload and staffing vacancies. Effective on October 1, 2015, the Development Review Work Group Supervisor will be reviewing one (1) case by each case planner each month for the quality and accuracy of development review comments.

Implementation Date: October, 2015

*This audit has correctly pointed out that the current development review process is challenged by the fact that multiple departments and agencies participate. Further there is not a single or coordinated point of authority that drives a conclusion of partial concurrence with some of the recommendations. Please be aware that since late 2014 at the direction of the City Manager's Office, the Planning Department has been engaged in a project to re-engineer the development review process overall in an effort to address the single point of authority and accountability issue. The Department expects initial recommendations by December 2015. This work is in synch with the findings of this audit.

