

MEMO



CITY OF BEND

To: Mayor Kebler and City Councilors

From: Colin Stephens, Community and Economic Development
Department (CEDD) Director

Date: 1/18/2023

Re: Permit Review Timeline Progress and Initiatives

In anticipation of the upcoming January 19th City Council Listening Session, I would like to take this opportunity to update the Council on CEDD permit timeline progress. Since the July 2022 Quarterly Update where I gave the Council the Planning, Building and Engineering permit metrics, I have worked with CEDD managers, the City's Office of Performance Management (OPM), and members of the local development community to identify inefficiencies in the existing process, develop strategies and initiatives to improve timelines and gather information on what submitters and review staff recommend as effective changes to the system.

One overarching take-away is that it is a complex set of factors that influence the permitting environment: high submittal volumes, new building types for Bend, challenges with infill development, etc. There is no easy fix; no simple levers to pull. It will take efforts by staff and cooperation from the development community to move the needle in a positive direction. The City's review team is profoundly aware of the impact of permit delays on the development community. We have skilled and experienced review staff and managers who have been in the permit review field for many years and are actively working to make improvements. Permit review timelines are tracked on the Council's Goal Data under Accessible and effective Government:

[**https://councilgoals2123-**](https://councilgoals2123-)

[**bendoregon.hub.arcgis.com/pages/6ec44ecfb26e4dc599010a1d84aae8d5**](https://councilgoals2123-bendoregon.hub.arcgis.com/pages/6ec44ecfb26e4dc599010a1d84aae8d5)



Staff will continue to analyze and refine this data to provide the most up-to-date information about processing timelines.

Some issues that the Department has been able to make progress on since July are hiring and training of staff such that staffing levels are now at an acceptable level. Further, the relatively new permitting software, CityView, has been upgraded and further stabilized to the extent that it no longer a major impediment to the process. I also note that many of these process improvements noted below are now part of the draft 2023-2025 CEDD Department goals that will be further discussed as Council goal setting progresses.

During the fall of 2022, CEDD worked with CONSOR Engineers, a national consulting firm, to prepare and facilitate two workshops between local design professionals and City staff. One session was with the Building Safety Division and the other with the Private Development Engineering Division. The sessions identified and refined concepts intended to improve efficiencies in permit review. Attached is a summary from the consultants as well as the PowerPoint slide decks from the workshops. In addition, I have summarized the most immediate strategies below; all timelines are on the calendar year.

Building Safety Division

Institute “Prescreen” Process – A commercial Plans Examiner II will review each building permit (residential and commercial) when it is first submitted to ensure that all essential elements necessary for a complete review are part of the submittal. A permit that passes prescreen will be placed in the queue to be picked up by the next available Plans Examiner in the order that the permit passes prescreen. This will eliminate situations where a permit waits in the queue for weeks only to have it rejected for lack of adequate information, or for the Plans Examiner to spend an inordinate amount of time on the review because necessary information is not present. ***Target implementation – Quarter 1, 2023***

Require Commercial Permits to have a Cover Sheet – A review of best practices by other jurisdictions identified the practice of requiring a building permit to have a



standardized cover sheet that lists out each of the submittal requirements. The cover sheet will serve as a reminder to the submitter of all necessary information and will assist prescreen staff in identifying each submittal item and what may be missing from the application. ***Target implementation – Quarter 1, 2023. Soft rollout in February 2023; required in six months - August 2023.***

Sort Commercial Permits into different review tracks – An issue identified by our partners in the development community is that all commercial building permits end up in the same review queue, regardless of their complexity. To address this, the Building Safety Division will institute a sorting process at the prescreen step to put each permit into one of three review tracks:

- **Track I:** Simple interior projects, commonly referred to as tenant improvements (TIs) that do not need to be reviewed by the Planning and/or Engineering Divisions. Examples include simple interior remodels, mechanical equipment replacement or installation of a new roof. Permits that qualify for this review track will be issued immediately after prescreen with the understanding that code compliance will be verified at inspection.
- **Track II:** More complex commercial interior remodel than those that qualify for the Track I path, but not complicated enough for the full commercial review track. Examples include adding or reconfiguring interior office space, new sprinklers and/or fire alarms, and other interior work that does not change the footprint of the building. Permits in this track will be routed by the prescreen staff to a commercial Plans Examiner for priority review.
- **Track III:** This track is for new commercial construction and complex, large-scale remodels. By removing the Track I and II permits from this queue, the Plans Examiner IIIs will be able to begin their initial review sooner than the existing system where all commercial permits are pulled from the same source. ***Target implementation for all tracks –Quarter 1-2, 2023, after prescreen is established***

Private Development Engineering Division

Institute “Prescreen” Process – Like the corresponding Building Division’s prescreen process, the Engineering Division will assign an existing staff member(s) to review each engineering permit to ensure that every element necessary for a complete review is present at the onset, before the permit gets into the queue for formal review. ***Target implementation – Quarter 1, 2023.***

90 Percent Plans Required – Based on staff comments during the workshops on how submittal quality impacts review effort, the private sector participants agreed that the city should require Tier III Engineering Permits be at a 90% design quality, which some submitters are already providing. This advanced stage of design will reduce the time the review staff must spend on compiling extensive revision comments during the first review cycle. ***Target Implementation – Quarter 1, 2023***

Two-Week Re-Review Commitments – Once initial review comments are issued for Tier III Engineering permits, Engineering Division staff will commit to processing the applicant’s responses within 10 business days (initial testing is necessary to finalize this deadline). ***Target Implementation – Quarter 1, 2023***

30-day Sewer and Water Analysis and Transportation Facility Report Commitment
Most large-scale projects require sewer/water analysis and a transportation facility report review before the Planning Division may begin the land use process. Input from the development community indicates that delayed review times for these studies impacts the overall permitting timelines. As such, the Engineering Division will prioritize these requests and issue results within 30 days. ***Target Implementation – Quarter 1, 2023***

Pre-submittal and Post-review Meeting – Engineering Division staff will make themselves available to applicants for a voluntary meeting both prior to the submittal of a Tier III permit and after staff comments are provided from the review. The purpose of the pre-submittal meeting is for the applicant to describe any unusual circumstances or exceptions to standards that may be present in the application. This will give the review staff the opportunity to request additional information and make them familiar with the



project before it is submitted. Similarly, the post-review meeting will allow the private design engineer and the City review staff may go over review comments to ensure that there is clear communication regarding the details of the review comments. ***Target Implementation – soft launch is in place; formal launch end of Quarter 2, 2023***



CityView

Bulk Uploading of Application Files – Comments received from the City’s development partners indicated that uploading applications into CityView can be time-consuming and inefficient because individual plan sheets must be uploaded one by one. The City of Bend’s CityView Support Team are working on changes to the software to allow bulk upload of files. This effort will also include the formalization of file naming conventions, which was identified as an efficiency measure during the developer workshops. **Target Implementation - End of Quarter 2, 2023**

Bulk Downloading of Application Files – Similar to the uploading of files, applicants would like to have a bulk download option for their permit files once approved by the City. The bulk uploading of files as described above will also make downloading of files more efficient. As a longer-term project, because of the current CityView product capability, the City will request the software provide to develop a download option.

Target Implementation - TBD

Attachments:

- 1) Workshop Summary (CONSOR)
- 2) Developer Workshop Presentations

