

REPORT / RECOMMENDATION



To: PLANNING COMMISSION

Agenda Item #: VII.B

From: Ross Bintner PE, - Environmental Engineer

Action

Discussion

Date: October 8, 2014

Information

Subject: Residential Redevelopment Update

Action Requested:

No specific action requested.

Information / Background:

A near doubling of permit applications and residential redevelopment activity between 2009 and 2014, consistent staffing levels, and specific concerns for the impact of construction activities and associated drainage issues on nearby residents and property has led to an evolving community consensus that has raised the expectation of service for permitting redevelopment.

Reacting to the above, the residential redevelopment permit review, inspection and enforcement process has undergone significant changes in the last two years. This report summarizes recent process changes and process improvements and compares actual and perceived service levels, and actual and desired outcomes.

Following the creation and revision of City code pertaining to demolition of single and two-family dwellings, requirements for engineered plans and construction management plans, staff from the Planning and Building divisions, and Engineering Department undertook a variety of efforts to update permit review, inspection, and enforcement practices. This review starts by trying to define the service provided by the review and issuance of building permits for residential redevelopment, both demolition and new home construction, and major remodel and addition.

Service Definition

Core services provided by the City of Edina that are influenced in part by residential redevelopment and controlled through the residential building permit process include: public safety, sanitation and public health, and orderly land use and transportation.

Viewed from the perspective of an individual permit application, or the residential redevelopment subset of all permit applications, it is not always evident how individual plan elements, permit requirements, or a department's review helps to deliver the core service. As an initial attempt to help make these connections more apparent, City staff drafted a building permit service delivery chart (see attached.) In this chart you will see core and ancillary services described as well as select permit review process, and enforcement tools used to deliver these services.

While the core and ancillary services described in this model are the ultimate goal, the methods and process of service delivery are very important. In fact, when viewed from the perspective of a resident with an issue,

or a builder with a permit, the process may be all that matters. In addition to a high expectation of customer service, the permit review process is complex. The permit review process is delivered through three departments, is focused on no less than four core City services, and is delivered one permit at a time for unique project sites hundreds of times per year. Viewed from this perspective it's easy to see coordination and communication are fundamental to the success of any one redevelopment permit. With a framework for understanding the residential redevelopment permit process service delivery; this review now summarizes recent changes to the residential redevelopment permit process.

Summary of Recent Changes

This topic was last reviewed with the City Council on February 11, 2014. At that time drainage and erosion control, shoring, building heights and floor elevations, parking and general construction impacts were issues of primary concern. The summer construction season saw process or code changes to address each issue.

- Shoring: New code section that allows building official to require shoring plan when foundation excavation is near a property line.
- Parking: New code section that allows residential redevelopment coordinator to enforce parking.
- Building Heights and Floor Elevations: Planning review during permit application and final, better coordination of elevations with building and engineering review.
- Drainage: New engineering memo-format review, site inspection and enforcement.
- Erosion Control: New engineering memo-format review, site inspection and enforcement.

The changes made this summer were implemented with some communication and technical hurdles but the results bring the permit review process, and resulting approved plans, much closer to the standard set out in ordinance. The next challenge will be to ensure, through active inspection and enforcement of these issues, that the level of implementation by builders results in outcomes that deliver on the core services.

Stormwater policy has been a focus of the planning commission in recent years. A water resources specific policy chart is attached to help frame a conversation specific to water resources and the two relate core services. An August 27th workshop with the planning commission began this conversation.

Process Improvements for Consideration

Staff met to propose an initial list of perceived problems and associated process improvements for the next step in this multi-departmental effort to more effectively deliver core services to the public, while meeting a standard level of customer service to builders and neighboring homeowners. Attached you will find a chart that describes this effort. A revised checklist for residential applications, a digital plan review process and a new grading permit application and stormwater and erosion control guidance were rated high in a staff prioritization of next-steps. Council and Planning Commission input are sought on service level definitions, perceived problems and next-step process improvements.

Much has changed in the last two years to better coordinate an interdepartmental permit review, inspection and enforcement process. Staff continues to react to perceived service problems and proactively improve our process to better the public good while meeting City of Edina customer service standards.

Attachments:

Service delivery chart

Process improvement chart

Water resources policy chart

Attachment 1: Service Delivery Through Building Permit Review

Core Service	Ancillary Services	Example	Code/Process	Additional Detail
Public Safety				
	Sound foundations and structures	Fences, Cell Phone Towers, Garages, Dwellings, Apartments, High Rises, Retaining Walls	Building code review	Handouts, Policy info, applications, contact, meetings, red line plans, soils checks, cold weather, wind loads,
	Fire safety	Fire prevention, Fire Sprinklers, alarms	Building code review	Fire sprinkler and alarm review, Material Data info and product
	Flood protection	Set backs and elevations	Zoning Code/Engineering review	FEMA Flood Maps, Local system models
	Safe mechanical systems	Boilers, Heating equipment, cooling equipment, plumbing	Building code review	Inspect and correct, Energy code and HVAC check
	Accessibility	Access to public buildings	Building code review	
Sanitation and Public Health				
	Watertight buildings	Water proof roof, foundation drain tile, gutters, sumps, flashing	Building code review	Inspect and correct
	Plumbing and fixtures	Residential & commercial bathroom, kitchens	Building code review	Inspect and correct
	Functioning and durable utility connections	Sanitary, domestic water, stormwater sump drain	Engineering review	Utility connection permit standards
	Drainage and stormwater	Stormwater sump drain, stormwater catch basins	Engineering review	Stormwater management plans, grading permit
	Sediment and erosion control	Silt fencing, ground stabilization	Engineering review	Erosion control plan, grading permit
	Site grades, soil stability	Redevelopment, major remodel, retaining walls >4', major landscaping,	Engineering and Building review	Shoring plans, grading permit, building permit
Orderly Land Use				
	Standards for construction management	City Code, State Building Code	Planning review/Building	Construction management plan
	Character and scale of neighborhood	Setbacks, building height, sidewall length, etc.	Planning review	Zoning code
Transportation				
	Functioning and durable sidewalk, trails, roadway and road connections	Roads, Sidewalks, bike trails, curb, driveway aprons,	Engineering review	Driveway permit, pavement patching standards, utility permit
	Orderly flow of traffic	Signage and signals	Planning/Police	Parking enforcement
	Accessibility	Parking, driveway standards	Engineering and Building review	

Attachment 1: Service Delivery Though Building Permit Review

Core Service	Ancillary Services	Example	Code/Process	Additional Detail
Perceived services without clear link to core service				
	Aesthetics			
	Quality control			Service not provided
	Economic data			Provide data over the counter / Website
	Environmental data			Provide data over the counter
	Engineering private improvements			Service not provided
	Enforcement of normative behavior	Regulations, stop work, escrow, citations,		Provided though enforcement of all code
	Tree protection			
	Survey data	House file		Records provided over the counter
	Permit records	House file		Records provided over the counter
Customer service expectations				
	Residents expect:	Peace of mind / neutral unbiased source of information		
		Someone to listen		
		Brand ambassador for City		
		Mediation of private disputes, investigation or lawsuit support		Service not provided
		Protection of private property rights (trespass)		
		Advice on plans or choice of contractor		Service not provided
	Builders expect:	Clear communication of standards or proposed change of standards		
		Guidance and assistance for negotiating new purchase decisions		
		Quick permit issuance, prompt inspections		

Attachment 2: Problems and Process Improvements

Problems identified in process and outcomes of permit review and enforcement

Potential process improvements to address problems

Builders	
Application review time increased	
2-3 plans were lost in permit review	Digital plan review project
Survey requirements sometimes unclear or unnecessary	New residential application checklist
Long waits at front counter if planning and building issues need to be solved	
	Annual meeting, better communication with builders and engineers, more practice with memo format
Multiple iterations required with new engineering review	
Final as-built and issuance of CO can hold up sales, Temporary CO needed	
Coordination between architectural and civil issues relating for elevations is difficult	Standard plan sheet / guidance
No communication of grading permit standards	New grading permit application
Level of customer service recently decreased	
No clear checklist(s) for nonstandard applications	New residential application checklist
Perceived unfair treatment for erosion control requirements compared to city projects	Stormwater and erosion control guidance
Temporary cover requirements are inefficient and ordinance doesn't make sense	Stormwater and erosion control guidance
Remodel and addition have uneven enforcement to demolition redevelopment	
	Stormwater and erosion control guidance, improved communication with watershed districts
Watershed permit process can be uncoordinated and kills projects near wetlands	
Neighboring Property Owners	
Perceived gap between ordinance and enforcement	Gap analysis
Service level expectations are not met	Better define service levels
Final floor elevation of new homes is now higher than my house	
Experienced wet basement and suspects it is caused by nearby redevelopment	Stormwater and erosion control guidance
Enforcement of noise or work hours	Review policy of two different work hours.
New Homeowners	
Can inherit issue from builder relating to grading or landscaping	New grading permit application, tracking method for stormwater management plans
Prior promises for hardcover can limit landscaping	Policy review, tracking method for stormwater management plans
Access to rear yards	Policy review

Attachment 2: Problems and Process Improvements

Problems identified in process and outcomes of permit review and enforcement

Potential process improvements to address problems

Staff		
	Tracking and sorting permit volume is challenging	Digital plan review project
	Intake process for new submittals in paper and PIMS	Digital plan review project
	Phone and in person desk overloaded at times	Digital plan review project
	Lack of space in the house files for permanent records	Digital online records / Laserfische project
	Coordination between 3 departments of new processes lead to error	
	Complex and varying standards for each site / nonstandard is typical	
	Legacy systems with filing based on PID number and not address	
	Average 100 calls per day	
	SAC/Surcharge reports, keystone reports, dodge report, all paper over the counter	
	House file and survey available over the counter only	
	Permit and payment must be in person for most, e-permits is small subset	
	Limited time to improve processes with workload / no one ultimately responsible	Kaizen Event / Governance and incentive changes
	CO is difficult to use as enforcement leverage	
	\$2500 escrow is not enough leverage and doesn't cover the costs of some issues (driveways)	Policy review / consider single \$5000 for demo that rolls to home, rather than two \$2500 with each permit
	Accounting system for escrow dollars needs work	
	Historic grading permit enforcement was sporadic / majority still occurs unpermitted	
	Enforcement of grading and landscaping is time consuming and low value	
	Permit review record system cannot accommodate multiple iterations of surveys or plans	Digital plan review project, Digital online records / Laserfische project
	Pool permits and associated landscaping are not coordinated in permits	
	Edina requirements are leading, means extra time to educate surveyors, builders, engineers	
	Plans come in incomplete, or iterations come in and are routed to wrong department	
	Small amount of builders/residents take an inordinate amount of our time	
	We have not communicated changes well	
	Topography of neighboring properties needed to understand drainage	Modified survey requirements and guidance
	No parking signs stolen and misused	
	4500 sf sprinkler requirement in 2015	
	Permitting software does not communicate with new enforcement software	

Attachment 3: Water resources policy exploration

Core Service		Policy and Trends
Ancillary Services	Review Level Example	
Public Safety		
Flood protection	Regional FEMA flood regulations requires home minimum low floor elevations to be raised to protect structure.	FEMA defined regional flood elevations are well studied but regulatory elevations are slow to react to new scientific understanding. NOAA Atlas 14 risk model has redefined 1% probability, 100 year event.
Flood protection	Local Comprehensive Water Resource Management Plan (CWRMP) flood elevations require low opening elevation to be raised or grading changes.	Review of local drainage issues is newly added into the development review process, and update of the grading permit process is needed.
Flood protection	Stormwater system limitations require redevelopment in some areas to mitigate flow using infiltration or detention of runoff.	CWRMP model update and major amendment scheduled in 2016 will enhance understanding and management of system. Detention and infiltration goals can sometimes be at odds with drainage, sanitation, and sanitary infiltration goals.
Sanitation and Public Health		
Drainage	Demand good soils for well drained sites is a high priority for builders and homeowners but changes and improvements must be well planned to avoid causing downstream issues.	The high prevalence of irrigation systems and frequent small storm events during periods of wet weather cause nuisance drainage issues (soggy soils, trouble mowing, rutting in laws) that lead to additional projects to landscape and grade soils and improve drainage.
Drainage	Increase site imperviousness can cause increase runoff and the need for good drainage.	Zoning and land cover requirements can provide dual purpose, for character of the neighborhood, and an upper limit on imperviousness and runoff. With a variety of exemptions to hard cover requirements in ordinance the link to runoff limitation is severed.
Stormwater/Clean Water	Increase site imperviousness can cause increase runoff and increase pollutant transport to natural water bodies.	Clean water act requirements, and remediation plans for water bodies require pollutant load reductions for all water bodies. While treatment is installed with city street projects and commercial redevelopment to retrofit old infrastructure, the overall trend is mixed in residential neighborhoods.
Sanitary Inflow and Infiltration	Infiltration and inflow(I/I) of surface waters into the sanitary sewer system causes expensive treatment and conveyance of otherwise clean water.	Sanitary I/I is much reduced with new utilities and new home foundations. Cross connections are illegal but hard to discover. Disconnection of inflow sources can cause long suppressed groundwater issues to reemerge.
Sediment and erosion control	Erosion of exposed soils and resulting sediment get into public system and waters and can cause back ups and water quality degradation.	New permit review process is significant increase in this service level. More changes to construction erosion and sediment controls may be required as part of statewide clean water act permits.

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