Development Services Division Assessment:

May 2015

Conducted and prepared by:

Contents

1. Executive Summary

BKD, LLP, assisted by Fiscal Choice Consulting ("the BKD team"), was engaged by the Tulsa Community Foundation and the Mayor's Office of the City of Tulsa to provide services to assess the current state of the Development Services Division ("Development Services" or "the Division") and the Division's readiness for the new permitting system that the Division is about to implement.[1]

Throughout the course of the work, the team reviewed documentation and data, visited with Development Services personnel, and conducted discussions with more than 35 other individuals with either specific experience with Tulsa Development Services or general industry knowledge. This resulting assessment includes many observations as well as more than 20 specific recommendations to improve both current operations and preparations for the implementation of the new permitting system.

This assessment documents a number of positive elements of Development Services' operations. For example, the professional competence and commitment of many members of the Division was noted, often by name. Particular individuals were cited as being accessible and willing to work with customers to find solutions to problems. The organization is flat in comparison to similar groups in other communities, especially when it comes to the management ranks. Generally, process timeliness for core permitting processes is in line with what the BKD team has observed in other locations around the country. Fees for service are perceived by many customers as low in comparison both to national averages and local competitors.

However, there are also major areas for improvement. The relationship with some customers is strained, and the Division has no regularly scheduled means of meeting with customers and seeking to resolve issues. Information regarding how to access Division services, both on the web and for the walk-in customer, is very limited. A significant portion of the external customers interviewed are not satisfied with permit timeliness and some believe that operations are headed in the wrong direction. Within Development Services, there is a lack of time devoted to process analysis and improvement because management staff members are directly involved in plan review.

When it comes to preparedness for the new permitting system, there is much to be done. Recent implementations of comparable size at the City, such as time and attendance, have had significant issues. Given that this implementation will impact not only internal customers, but also crucial external constituencies, it should be staffed and planned for accordingly. Understanding that the new software platform has not yet been selected, discussions with other cities that have embarked upon similar permitting system upgrades indicate that they had completed substantially more process work and team development at this point in the selection process. The City must move aggressively to bring in additional resources to play "catch up" at this point.

Permitting services are arcane, complicated, and frustrating, at least to some extent, in almost every community. However, few services are more important to the economic health and vitality of the City. This assessment seeks to identify priorities to further improve Tulsa's efforts and to make it an even more hospitable climate for economic development and community advancement.

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[1] The City has selected the new permitting software.

2. Introduction and Project Charter

BKD, with the assistance of Fiscal Choice Consulting, was engaged by the Tulsa Community Foundation and the Mayor's Office of the City of Tulsa to provide services to assess the current state of the Development Services Division ("Development Services" or "the Division") and the Division's readiness for the new permitting system that the Division is about to implement.

This project addresses the current state of the Division's operations and its readiness for the new permitting system to be implemented. Regarding the Division's current operations, there are concerns among City leaders that developers and builders perceive that the customer service orientation, transactional efficiency and customer satisfaction of the Division warrant significant improvement. A goal of this project is to evaluate the validity of these concerns.

As to the upcoming software implementation, the current vendor (Infor) will no longer support the version of the Hansen permitting system in use, so a change of systems is necessary. Beyond that, the latest generation of permitting systems has the potential to improve employee productivity and customer service in measurable ways. It is not a cure-all, however, and some of the issues facing the Division must be addressed by other means.

This assessment identifies a number of ways that current operations may be improved. It also provides some guidance as to how the Division may act to improve the likelihood of a smooth and successful permitting system implementation.

3. BKD's Assessment Approach

Development Services has been subject to several previous reviews. It was not the purpose of this review to retrace those steps, but rather to focus on the following questions:

1. What is the current performance of the Division in terms of customer service orientation, transactional efficiency, and customer service satisfaction?
2. What should be done prior to the implementation of the new permitting system to improve current performance?
3. Is the Division ready for the new permitting system and, if not, what should be done to improve readiness?

3.1. Document Review

The BKD team reviewed a variety of documents related to Division operations, including:

- The Division website and its various pages, including:
  - o Instructional material for applicants on the Commercial and Residential permitting processes and the description of fast-track procedures
  - o Multiple linked pages for checking permit status
  - o Directions advising on How to Schedule an Inspection
- The current FY2015 departmental budget
- The RFP for the new permitting system
- 12 pages of Division flow charts processes[2]
- The data output from the current permitting software for all permits issued during 8/2013-6/2014

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[2] Of the 21 process recommendations, three recommendations were rejected (one by the Director and two by City Council); of the remaining 18 recommendations, 50% have been implemented per Development Services 4.7.2015.

3.2. Discussions within the City and INCOG

BKD met with and interviewed the following individuals:

Employee	Title and Department
Terry Ball	Field Engineering Manager
Clay Bird	Director of Economic Development
Rich Brierre	Executive Director, INCOG
Rick Bruder	Assistant Fire Marshal
Michael Dellinger	Chief Information Officer
Terry Baxter	Manager, Project Services, IT
Yuen Ho	Assistant Director of Planning & Development
Susan Miller	Director, Land Development Services, INCOG
Cheryl Reichman	Permit Center Manager
Michael Radoff	Director, City of Tulsa Customer Care Center
Henry Som de Cerff	Design Engineering Manger
Harold Tohlen	Retired from the Department of Planning & Development
Jerry Tweedy	Formerly with Tulsa's IT Department as Project Manager for new permitting system
Jim Twombly	City Manager
Dawn Warrick	Director of Planning & Development
Dwayne Wilkerson	Assistant Director of Land Development Services, INCOG
Paul Zachary	Director of Engineering Services

Table 1

The discussions included an assessment of current levels of service and customer satisfaction, as well as readiness for the new permitting system.

3.3. Discussions with Other Stakeholders and Governments[3]

3.3.1. Builder Community

BKD conducted 30-90 minute interviews with eleven customers of Development Services (builders/developers/architects/attorneys) to discuss their customer service experiences with Development Services and to gain insight on desired improvements. In order to preserve the anonymity necessary to solicit frank input, these meetings took place away from City Hall and did not include any City staff or officials. The builders interviewed represented an array of construction types: residential and commercial, large and small, single family and multi-family, and included those with downtown development experience.

3.3.2. Governments with Recently Installed Permitting Systems

Prior to this project, BKD has worked with other local governments on permitting operations and permitting system-related issues. For comparison purposes, the team selected a few that met three criteria:

- They are communities of roughly similar size and variety of construction types;
- They have recently installed new permitting systems and, therefore, have relevant and recent experience to share; and
- In the team's experience, they are well-run, provide timely service, and maintain good relationships with the building industry.

With the participation of Director Warrick, BKD spoke with three communities: the City of Tampa, Florida; Manatee County, Florida; and the Metropolitan Government of Nashville & Davidson County, Tennessee.

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[3] See *Appendix A* for a complete list of interviewees

3.3.3. Other Local Governments

In order to gain insight into how the Division's operations compare, BKD also surveyed other local governments of cities with similar sized populations in the region, including Oklahoma City, Kansas City, Dallas, and Broken Arrow.[4] It should be noted, however, that development services organizations are notoriously challenging to compare between cities given the diversity of building codes, fee structures, market composition and demand, and permitting technologies across communities.

4. Current Status of the Division of Development Services

The Development Services Division is part of the City's Department of Planning & Development. One Director (Dawn Warrick) oversees the Department's two key functions—planning and development services. An Assistant Director of Development Services (Yuen Ho) is the second level of command for Development Services.

The City operates within a lean budget in which revenues are highly susceptible to swings in the local economy. Given the fact that approximately 82% of the City's non-Enterprise Fund revenues come from taxes on economic activity occurring within the City[5], it is essential that the City of Tulsa presents itself as a welcoming and attractive location for expansion and new development. To do so, it should regularly and accurately assess its attractiveness relative to other competing locations, both within the metro area as well as regionally.

Section 4 is organized with observations throughout the report, with a single table of accompanying recommendations that can be found in the final subsection, 4.8.

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[4] See *Appendix A* for a complete list
[5] From City of Tulsa FY15 Adopted budget, counting sales, use, franchise, hotel/motel, and ad valorem taxes

4.1. Organization

4.1.1. Staffing
Based on feedback received from numerous industry leaders throughout the country, BKD has found that it has become difficult to recruit and retain a sufficient number of quality plan reviewers and inspectors. The implementation of Tulsa's new permitting system has the potential to significantly improve the Division's productivity and customer service by reducing the time required to perform such tasks as:

- Submit applications, plans and payments;
- Provide and transmit comments on plans;
- Schedule and route inspection stops; and
- Enable customers to check the status of applications, even from mobile devices.

However, given the fact that full implementation of the new system is likely at least one to two years into the future, the efficiencies that will be brought by the new permitting system will not be realized in the short term.

One measure of staff sufficiency is overtime. In Tulsa, Assistant Director Yuen Ho reported the following information on overtime utilization:

Period	Hours of Paid Overtime
January 1-24, 2015	150
2014	650
2013	850
2012	950

Table 2

While the amount of overtime for a staff of 69 authorized employees is not, in itself, an issue, the amount of overtime paid out in the first three weeks of January—an amount equal to 23% of the total amount incurred in 2014—raises some concerns regarding the burn rate for overtime in the new year.

Plan reviewers report that they work lengthy days, arriving between 6:30 AM and 7:00 AM and staying until 5:00 PM. Some of this work is completed by exempt staff for which no overtime data is kept, so the overtime figures do not capture the full extent of the work done.

The project team compared staffing and application numbers to other select municipalities detailed in Table 3. These municipalities were chosen based on BKD's familiarity and relationships with the departments and a rough similarity of operations. This comparison data indicates that Tulsa's workload is substantial, but it is not outside of the range. While Tulsa's plan review staffing as a percent of total staff is at the high end, its applications per plan reviewer

metric is slightly higher than average as well, although lower than three out of the four comparison sites. This comparison does not take into account the differential impact that different permitting systems can have on the efficiency of the process in these locations.

4.1.2   Management

In contrast to comparable organizations, the City of Tulsa's Development Services Division is at the low end of the range when it comes to management positions as a percentage of total staff. While this laudable in the sense that it is clear that the City is trying to be frugal with public funds, this also limits the time available for senior operations personnel to address organizational and strategic issues. It was noted that all available staff members within the Division (including the Assistant Director) are involved in the direct provision of service, leaving little time to identify and develop necessary process improvements rooted in data analysis. In fact, staff members indicated that while productivity reports

Comparative Management and Staffing Levels for Municipal Permitting Divisions

	Total Dept. Staff	Managers	Managers per Total Staff	Plan Reviewers per Total Staff	Plan Reviewers	Applications	Applications per Plan Reviewer per Year	Population
Tulsa	69[6]	6[7]	9%	32%	22	28,898	1,314	398,121
Average of comparable departments in other cities	115	14	12%	17%	20	25,273	1,264	592,586
Montgomery County, MD	213	31	15%	23%	49	33,565	685	1,016,677
Tampa, FL	56	5	9%	29%	16	34,500	2,156	352,957
Nashville, TN	94	6	6%	6%	6	11,027	1,838	658,602
Manatee County, FL	96	15	16%	9%	9	22,000	2,444	342,106

Table 3

[6] Authorized positions
[7] Includes the Director

are available, reviewing them and making process changes on a consistent basis is not practical under the current workload. Likewise, the time available to regularly interact with the customer community is minimal.

The consequences of this limited management focus impact today's operations but, just as importantly, raise questions concerning Development Services' readiness for the implementation of a new permitting system. This will be discussed in detail in Section 5.

4.2. Permitting Procedures

Tulsa adopted the Oklahoma Uniform Building Code, which is derived from the 2009 International Building Code ("IBC"). It has also adopted international (or Oklahoma's version of) codes for structural, plumbing and mechanical work and the National Electrical Code. This promotes consistency between jurisdictions and represents a best practice for safety.

The Development Services Division periodically updates the City Code to reflect IBC changes. It is important to note that with the release of an updated Code, Division staff members must familiarize themselves with the changes. The Code is extensive and staff members must be familiar with it to properly review plans and enforce it. Division management alluded to the fact that despite Code updates, plan review workloads do not change, and, as a result, staff members must learn the updates "off the clock" and in between reviews as they can.

Permit applicants fall into two broad categories: (1) professional builders familiar with City codes and permitting procedures who routinely interface with Development Services, and (2) do-it-yourselfers or small contractors who are likely less familiar with the processes and the Division.

While the more complex permit applications come from professionals, these applicants are more likely to know how to submit a compliant set of drawings. As Tulsa moves to the use of more online services with its new permitting system, the barrier for the second group of users may become more daunting. Therefore, the Division will need to be very focused on addressing the needs of that second group.

4.3. Measured Permitting Timeliness

In response to the BKD's data request, Development Services provided a summary of more than 2,200 recent commercial applications dated between August 2013 and June 2014. Excluding permits still open in the period, as the number of days open cannot be tallied for those, the data show that on average, permits are open for a few weeks to a few months.

Overall, the review of the timeliness of Development Services' permit processing shows average processing times generally consistent with those of other communities across the country, with only a handful of exceptions. This indicates that the staff members are generally productive, knowledgeable, and hard-working.

Such assessment is based on a comparison of Tulsa permit processing times with those of other comparable agencies with which BKD has experience working with in the past. Again, given the wide diversity of development service operations from community to community, it is impossible to compare processing timeliness on a true "apples to apples" basis.

It should be noted, however, that numerous communities have stated review timeframes that are faster than Tulsa's "actuals," as noted in *Appendix B.* Whether these communities are hitting these standards on a consistent basis has not been determined.

Finally, the reader must also understand that it is impossible to tell, from this aggregate data, which party bears responsibility (City or customer) for periods of delay within the overall permit issuance process. Greater insight into the responsibility for such delays should come with the new permitting system.

The categories—or permit *Class* types—listed in Table 4 are in use in Tulsa's permitting system and are also referenced in Tables 5, 6 and 7.

Permit Class Types for Tulsa Development Services Permitting

Class	Definition
ADDITION	Addition to existing building
ALTEREXT	Alteration, exterior
ALTERINT	Alteration, interior
NEW	New construction
REPAIRDT	Repair, (Deterioration)
REPAIRFR	Repair (Fire Repair)
USECHANG	Change of Use/Occupancy

Table 4

Undeniably, *unexpected* delays cost the building community time and money. Therefore, another way to analyze timeliness is by measuring the percentage of all permits that are finished within the expected timeframe. For the purpose of this analysis, "expected timeframe" is defined as not more than twice the number of days of the average category. Thus for new residential permits this expected timeframe would be four weeks and for new commercial permits it would be two months.[8]

As Table 6 shows, for **commercial permits** (other than for New Construction), 89% or more of all permits are approved within the expected timeframe of not more than double the category average number of days.

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[8] Selection of a time standard as reasonable is a subjective exercise, but in the project team's experience, double the average days (since average days as shown below are not unreasonable) is appropriate. Further, there are multiple reasons for a project delay, some the responsibility of the City and some the responsibility of the builder.

For **new commercial construction**, only 82% of permits are approved within this expected timeframe of 2X the average, indicating a somewhat greater number of instances in which this permit category falls outside of the expected timeframe. For most **residential permit** categories, fewer than 10% of permits require more than twice the average number of days, with the exception of Repair (Deterioration) and Repair (Fire Repair).

Permits Opened and Closed by Class (8/2013-6/2014)

Class	Total Number of Permits Closed	
	Residential	Commercial
ADDITION	246	279
ALTEREXT	91	81
ALTERINT	68	822
N/A	0	256
NEW	1125	674
REPAIRDT	40	31
REPAIRFR	57	21
USECHANG	0	102

Table 5

	Residential			Commercial		
	Mean Days	2x Mean Days	% requiring 2x Mean Days	Mean Days	2x Mean Days	% requiring 2x Mean Days
ADDITION	13	26	9%	32	64	9%
ALTEREXT	17	33	8%	28	56	10%
ALTERINT	14	28	9%	23	46	11%
NEW	10	20	9%	34	68	18%
REPAIRDT	6	11	19%	8	16	10%
REPAIRFR	9	19	12%	9	18	13%
USECHANG				56	112	10%

Table 6

Table 7 illustrates (1) for the average new residential project, the permit is open for approximately two weeks; and (2) new commercial permits are open approximately one month.

In sum, while there are outliers, most permits handled by Development Services appear to go from applications to closure in what BKD considers a reasonable period of time based on experience with similar organizations throughout the country. **This does not mean that that there is no room for improvement in permitting timeliness. Particular categories of permits, especially those requiring the involvement of other City agencies, show substantially increased permit timeliness averages.**

The graphical breakout on the following page (Figure 8) further visualizes the varying averages of days that permits are open by both *Revision Type* (which notes the fact that the particular permit needed to be reviewed by another City department) and *Class* (which is the category/ type of permit requested). Average issuance times for permits involving watershed and traffic engineering reviews are approximately 90 days and longer.

When averages are reasonable but complaints persist, the task is to reduce the number of outlier events – regardless of whom or what is causing them. The Division must identify the applications past a reasonable standard and communicate with all those involved. This will require the active involvement of management – an issue that will challenge Development Services as long as it is so thinly staffed at the management level.

As discussed in a later section, there is significant sentiment among builders/developers/architects that permit timeliness is an issue within Development Services. **The fact is that Tulsa must compete with regional smaller communities for the same investment dollars. Those smaller communities, customers report, generally have faster processes.**

Average Days Open for Permit Classes by Type: Residential (Res.) and Commercial (Comm.) Permits[9]

Type	New		Plan Revision		Plan Revision – Architectural		Plan Revision – Watershed		Plan Revision – Zoning		Traffic Engineering	
Permit Type	Res.	Comm.	Res.	Comm.	Res.	Comm.	Res.	Comm.	Res.	Comm.	Res.	Comm.
ADDITION	13	32	27	69	33	82	35	91	57	95		
ALTEREXT	17	28		97	14	67	23	139		80		
ALTERINT	14	23	61	40	35	48		73	93	76		
N/A[10]		18				188				8		
NEW	10	34	32	61	42	86	50	89	45	92		95
REPAIRDT	6	8	65		113							
REPAIRFR	9	9		167		24				167		
USECHANG		56		17		21				61		

Table 7

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[9] Analysis represents Permits for Applications Dated 8/9/13 – 6/30/14 that were both opened and closed during the period. Blanks indicate that no permits for those particular class and revision type combination were requested during the period analyzed.
[10] N/A refers to uncategorized revision types

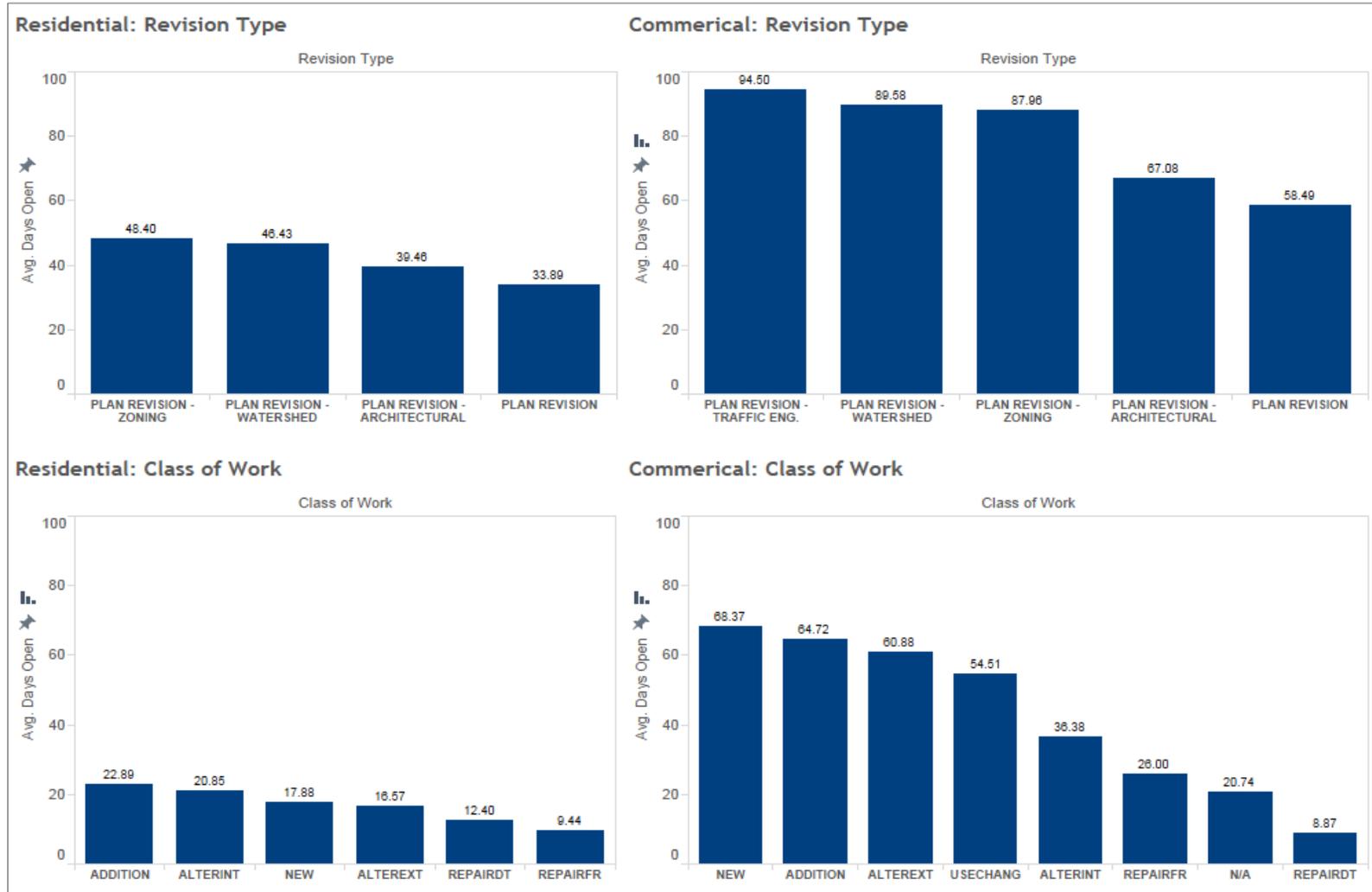**Average Days Open for Permit Classes by Revision Type: Residential and Commercial Permits[11]**

Figure 8

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4.4. Assessment of Online Capabilities

Development Services has a webpage on the City of Tulsa's site, where documents are posted that explain the commercial and residential building permit processes and that provide other useful permitting information.

The pages for the Division, however, are fairly difficult for users to navigate. Few builders cited the website as a point of reference, and, rather, explained that they would go into the office or call with questions. Although some information is available via the website and the ability to track permits was cited as a positive by some customers, the website is limited and instructions for proper navigation are sparse—only veteran builders were even aware that online permit checking was possible.

It is understood that the Division will be working over the next several years to implement a modern permitting system. However, during the interim, there are opportunities for the Division to close gaps that may cause customer frustration in the process with the current system and procedures. While there is no generally-accepted standard for what makes for a good webpage, common elements cited include:

- Clarity of purpose
- Simple organization
- Appropriate images
- Ease of navigation
- Limited text

Understanding that customers will not be able to e-file permit applications until the new system is implemented, **there are opportunities that can and should be addressed in the interim to leverage currently available technology.**

The recommendation table in Section 4.8 further cites selected recommendations to improve Tulsa's permitting-related webpages and highlights examples of municipal permitting agency websites that best incorporate some of the principles mentioned.

4.5. Leveraging Use of Tulsa's Customer Care Center

4.5.1. Customer Service Call Centers—Capturing Efficiencies

With the development and implementation of highly specified scripts and training, call centers nationwide routinely enable their staff members to handle customer inquiries requiring significantly detailed subject matter. Whether further integrating Development Services with the Tulsa call center makes sense depends largely on (1) understanding what it would it take to make this happen and (2) whether the Development Services Division can manage the integration at the same time that it is preparing to undertake a new permitting systems implementation.

The process for developing call scripts involves the use of keywords that enable the person in the call center to guide the discussion to the appropriate path. Customer Care has done this for other Tulsa City services and appears to have the professional expertise to do so for Development Services.

4.5.2 Interaction with the City of Tulsa's Customer Service Center

Tulsa has a Customer Care Center with approximately 46 positions that is tasked with assisting the public with inquiries about how to obtain City services. It is a professionally managed call center. In the recent past, Customer Care management staff members approached Development Services with an offer to assist with customer call intake by integrating certain routine questions and requests for building services into their scripted capabilities.

The Customer Care team first worked with the Permits Center in 2013 in preparation for moving toward a consolidated 311 customer service operation. Sean Ratliff and Michael Radoff spent a considerable amount time shadowing the employees in the Permit Center and learning how their business operates.

To summarize their findings, they prepared a report in which they identified several functions within the Division that would be good fits for consolidation into the Customer Care Center and provided recommendations. The report addressed three groups within

permitting services, listed with their responsibilities in Table 9. Their report concluded with recommendations for the Front Lobby Customer Service and the Contractors Permit Line groups. Development Services has implemented only the Front Lobby Customer Service recommendations, as captured in Table 10.

Development Services Group Responsibilities

Group	Responsibilities
Front Lobby Customer Service	• Employees in the permit area work personally with each citizen and handle inbound calls from the Building Permit Call center line • Inbound calls cause the agent to make the citizen wait while they are handling the call • 45 calls per day on average are received through this inbound (596-9601) ACD group • 35% of the inbound calls abandoned daily on average
Contractors Permit Line	• Handle inbound (596-9656) ACD calls from contractors and perform clerical tasks • Daily call volume average of 130 calls per day • 8.86% abandoned rate • 40.73% employee occupancy[12]
IVR Self Service	• Automatic phone system used to schedule inspections for contractors/citizens • This system produces reports for the field inspectors to route their inspections

Table 9

Front Lobby Customer Service Group Status

Timeframe	Status
Aug 2013 Recs	• Calls from the Building Permit Call center (596-9601) ACD should be redirected to a Customer Care Center group. • This will allow the Front Lobby agents to focus on the needs of the citizens at their desk.

Results to Date	• Customer Care now responds to the (9601) ACD calls (those that were previously being directed to the front counter) which should mostly be basic information calls. However, Radoff explained that, "A good portion of these calls are the more specific ones that scripts are not setup to answer effectively." [13]
	
	• Radoff estimates that Customer Care has taken 1 FTE of work from Development Services, but has not gained a staff member (from Development Services/Permit Center)
	
	• During January 5, 2015-March 27, 2015, Customer Care took 1,624 permit-related calls.
	
	  o Of those 1,624 calls, nearly 80% needed to be transferred from Customer Care due to the center's lack of materials and direction in handling the inquires.
	  o 25-28% of the calls are abandoned.
	  o The most experienced Customer Care agent is transferring 68% of these calls, likely to Development Services, and the next most experienced is transferring 75%

Table 10

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[12] Employee occupancy is defined as "amount of time employees were on the phone helping a customer"; call statistics reflect data collected Dec 2012 to July 2013

[13] *Samples of the questions and issues that Customer Care often receive calls for which they do not have the proper scripts or systems access to handle often include PSO calls to reinstall electric meters and questions on water heater setups. Customer Care also explained that they often get calls from customers who think the phone number they are given is for a specific plan reviewer in Development Services and want to follow up directly with that person on an individual issue.

4.5.3 Additional Opportunities

In response to the recommendations from the 2013 report, the Development Services Permit Center employees have expressed concern about how the arrangement with Customer Care is working and are not convinced that individuals outside of the Division can consistently address the nuances of citizen needs when it comes to permitting. Accordingly, Development Services discontinued discussions with Customer Care regarding further integration.

Customer Care leadership believes that it is capable, with the right training and support, of taking on additional Development Services responsibilities and shared that now would be a good time to do so because of the CRM (Kana) implementation which is planned to go live in June 2015. Conversely, Development Services leadership expresses that the Division has spent sufficient time working with Customer Care and has provided an extensive Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document to support call intake.

Given the inherent complexity of the work, the already thinly-stretched staff, and the upcoming permitting system implementation, Development Services is skeptical concerning the cost-benefit value of spending more time working to enable Customer Care to handle additional Development Services responsibilities.

Customer Care cites a few main concerns impeding their ability to effectively intake Permit Center Calls:

- There is currently no "resident expert" (such as a Permit Center staff member) working with the Customer Care team to take calls when a call center staff receives a call they are not trained to take.

- Call intake transitions require ample participation by both parties to be successful, often requiring on-going, regularly-scheduled meetings to identify issues and map improved processes. Development Services did spend some time working with Customer Care to start this process, but Customer Care believes that more could be done to facilitate knowledge transfer and further, on-going process improvements.

- Customer Care asserts that it does not receive sufficient feedback from Development Services when a call is forwarded from the Call Center, even when things are done wrong. Successful call center optimization (in public and private sector client situations) typically requires that the client (in this case Development Services) listen to 10-15 calls per week to provide feedback, process mapping, and further direction to improve call center capabilities.

In BKD's opinion, it appears that while there are many instances in which some of the nuanced needs of customers calling into the Center cannot be answered by scripted calls, there are multiple opportunities to streamline calls by type and also opportunities to better equip Customer Care with tools to assist customers without transferring many of the routine calls types back to the Permit Center.

Table 11 outlines two alternative approaches to more fully leverage Customer Care to assist Development Services.

4.6. External Perceptions

At times in the past, Development Services has had processes in place to take customer feedback. **However, at this time, there is no process for systematically soliciting and analyzing customer feedback with an eye towards improving processes and customer satisfaction.**

From BKD's discussions with the Division and its customers, the regional Home Builders Association of Greater Tulsa ("HBA") meetings appear to be the only regular means of communication.

In order to gain some customer perspective, BKD met with eleven customers (builders/developers/architects/engineers) to discuss their experience with Development Services. Additionally, BKD interviewed some internal City and INCOG employees who work extensively with Development Services.

Integration/Assistance Models for Development Services and Customer Care

Customer Care assumes more Development Services customer calls		Customer Care serves as "internal consultant" to improve Development Services customer contact skills and management	
Development Services dedicates additional time to explain the work to a Customer Care resource (a business process liaison) who is temporarily embedded in Development Services in order to facilitate the development of detailed call scripts		Engage Customer Care to identify opportunities for improvement and to provide customer service training and continuing input	
Pros	**Cons**	**Pros**	**Cons**
• Will increase Development Services' capacity as more resources are freed up • Opportunity for Customer Care staff to also participate in the training on the new system • Tracking and analysis of inquiries available as calls are routed through Customer Care • Improved/consistent service and answers received by those contacting the City on Development Services issues	• Time to enable Customer Care to learn the Development Services operation will demand more of both organizations in the short term • May be harder to maintain cross-agency contact to ensure updated scripts than it would be to handle the communications internally	• Allows for a direct transfer of professional customer care methodologies into Development Services operations through a one-time and/or periodic analysis by Customer Care resources • Maintains current organizational structure • Does not require continuous on-going interaction between teams	• Given shortage of Development Services management staffing, it is uncertain how much attention could be paid to ensure the effective transfer of Customer Care training delivered to Division personnel • Both teams are busy; finding the time and resources to do this may be challenging

Table 11

4.6.1. Observations of Other City Departments

BKD met with individuals from other City departments, as well as from the Indian Nations Council of Governments ("INCOG"),[14] to understand how other these organizations interact with Development Services. The project team asked those interviewed to provide an overall numeric assessment of the Division in three areas: customer orientation, timeliness and professionalism.

As listed in the "City Depts." column in Table 12, the individuals from these other organizations have a generally positive assessment of Development Services' efforts. They believe that Development Services staff members are working hard to improve the quality and timeliness of the processes. However, the individuals interviewed did raise number of issues that should be addressed to further improve the coordination between organizations and the overall effectiveness of processes and made suggestions for improvement. See *Appendix C* for a table of these issues and associated recommendations.

[14] INCOG interacts extensively with Development Services in such development-related matters as staffing the planning commission and board of adjustment, verifying the permitted use when a non-residential building permit is applied for, and administering the subdivision process (per discussion with INCOG on 4/1/2015).

**City Department & Customer
Perceptions of Development Services**

Area of Service	Explanation	Average Rating 1-5 (low 1 to high 5)	
		City Depts.	External Customers
Customer Orientation	How the interviewee perceives Development Services' focus on the interviewee's needs as a customer	4	3
Timeliness	The speed at which Development Services completes its processes	4	2
Professionalism	The level of professional competence that Development Services displays in its work	4	4

Table 12

4.6.2. Customer/Builder Perceptions

The external customers interviewed expressed a wide range of varying opinions as to whether they receive acceptable levels of service from Development Services.

In addition to taking extensive specific input in response to questions, BKD asked those interviewed to provide an overall numeric assessment for the Division in the same three areas discussed above. **Noticeably, the external customers' perceptions are significantly lower than those of the internal employees when it comes to timeliness.**

BKD generally did not hear complaints from customers about professional competence. That by itself is an accomplishment based on the frequency with which these complaints occur elsewhere. **However, there were significant concerns raised by some customers concerning customer orientation, timeliness, and coordination of review processes between Development Services and other City and INCOG individuals.** In some instances, those interviewed made negative comparisons to local and regional competitors.

Some customers have shared their dissatisfaction with Development Services with the City leadership. **This is expected, as there is no standing forum for them to communicate with Development Services on a regular basis–a feature that is common in other cities.**

Customers noted several themes consistently:

1. The Professional Builder Program that Development Services offers results in a significant difference in customer experience. Development Services staff also shared that there is a Residential FastTrack program that "everyone knows about," but could not be located on the website. Development Services explained that those who know about it and qualify can call the office during business hours to schedule a review and to take advantage of the expedited time frame.

2. "You have to know someone in Development Services." If a builder is given a random permit reviewer assignment on an application, they cite that service is less prompt than with the people they know.

3. The intake process is not perceived as welcoming or friendly. It is hard to understand for a newcomer. There are things that could be done, very easily and economically, to make the intake process more understandable and welcoming.

4. The location of the operation is challenging for some customers. Finding downtown parking can be time-consuming (especially when pulling a trailer), as can be getting through City Hall security. It should be noted, however, that the layout has been changed such that all transactions, except for those involving cash (<5%) have been consolidated to a single floor in response to customer input.

5. The City's plan review staff is generally viewed as competent and committed. However, there is a general perception that the staffing level is insufficient for the amount of work that they have to complete.

6. The service received seems to be increasingly "bureaucratic" with less of an emphasis, in comparison to previous times, on working with the customer to find a way to satisfy requirements.[15]

7. **In general, several customers report that they feel less valued in comparison to earlier times and in comparison to how they are received at other localities. Among those interviewed—even among those with a more positive assessment of Development Services—the majority opinion is that service levels are decreasing**.

8. The level of scheduled interactions between Development Services and its customer base is viewed by a majority of those interviewed as insufficient, especially following the assumption of additional duties by Crystal Keller. Customers cite little chance to provide input or to interact with the Division on important issues. While Development Services cites significant efforts to solicit customer input on major issues, such as the zoning revisions, customers

focus on the lack of regular, face-to-face meetings which enhance relationships and foster long-term understanding.

4.7. Fee Competitiveness

The City of Tulsa's leadership is committed to keeping the cost of government low and maximizing what can be done with existing resources. This applies to both fees and taxes. However, fees are different than taxes, in that they charge only the user of the public service and insulate taxpayers from paying for services that the taxpayers do not use.

BKD's experience in the industry indicates that permit fees are rarely more than 2% of total project cost and that comparatively higher fees (within reason) do not serve as a significant barrier to development.

A 2011 survey of construction costs nationwide found that building permit fees are about 1.7% of the construction cost for a single-family residence.[16] In contrast, calculations (displayed in Table 13) show that Tulsa's permit fees at approximately 0.5% of construction cost.[17]

Table 13 presents estimates for median-price detached single-family homes in Tulsa.[18] The City's fee ordinance applies the fee to the construction estimate so the analysis excludes the value of the land (estimated at 25%).

The City also charges a system development (automation) fee for each permit.[19] The fee was established in 2008. Since 2013, the fee per permit is $3.50 plus 5% of the license or permit fee.

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[15] Development Services notes that the Consolidated Appeals Board has now gone 24 months with no appeals processed regarding the trade or building codes.

[16] National Association of Home Builders "Construction Cost Survey: 1998-2011"
[17] Tulsa Ordinance 22826, Chapter 3, Section 302; Trulia.com Tulsa market trends
[18] The median value is from the Trulia.com website
[19] Ordinance 22826, adopted in 2013, amended Title 49, Section 116

	Applies To / Construction Cost	
	3 Bedroom House / $129,000	**4 Bedroom House / $166,500**
1) Base Fee	$180.00	$180.00
2) 0.525% on Amount from $40k to $150k	$89,000 x 0.525% = $467.25	$110,000 x 0.525% = $577.50
3) 0.265% on Amount over $150k	$0 x 0.265% = $0	$16,500 x 0.265% = $43.73
System Development (Automation) Fee	$35.86	$43.56
Total Fee	**$683.11**	**$844.79**
Total Fee / Construction Cost	.5295%	.5074%

Table 13

For this analysis, the permit fee ordinance has three bands, plus the System Development fee:

1. Base Fee
2. Fee on amount between $40,000 and $150,000
3. Fee on amount over $150,000

Usually, a builder has much more cost risk from fluctuating interest rates and labor and material rates than from permitting fees. One Tulsa builder expressed that the cost of time spent in the review process is far more concerning than the fees themselves.

While there are a variety of opinions on the issue, a majority of customers expressed that Tulsa's permit fees are low in comparison to other regional municipalities, and some indicated that Tulsa's fees are often almost half of what a firm pays for similar permits elsewhere.

This is consistent with the project team's experience elsewhere that customers may be willing to pay more in fees if such would bring measurably improved service and timeliness.

The City should consider particular service improvements that could be funded by fee increases – both now and in the future, and consider pursuing an increase in fees.

Specifically, higher permit fees could support strategic investments in additional personnel and an enhanced customer service experience–both online and in person.

However, such fee increases, if pursued, should be done so in a way that involves significant interaction with the customer community in order to clearly explain the intended uses and how such will improve the level of service received by the customer base. If the City believes that the need for the resources is short-term, the City should explain how the increase may be sunsetted, either because of time or the reaching of a particular milestone.

4.8. Recommendations for the Current Status of the Division of Development Services

The table below and extending onto the follow pages provides a summary of the observations discussed throughout Section 4 along with recommendations and select best practice examples that BKD has complied from research and experiences working with other municipalities.

#	Observation	Recommendation(s)	Best Practice Example
	Staffing and Organization		
1	Limited management staffing and insufficient capacity for staff planning and process analysis Management is key participant in plan review day-to-day tasks	• Transition the Development Services manager out of the plan review process and into a true management and analysis role – or add a position focused solely on process analysis, review, and management above the team • Analyze additional positions needed based on a deeper analysis of workflow • Such personnel changes could be funded by permit fee increase	
2	Industry dialogue is less frequent and substantive than in other cities Customers elevate issues to political leadership Some customers express a real breakdown in communication between the Division and its customers	• Meet at least monthly with industry to discuss most common reasons applications are rejected, new code rules, and to build relationships • Manage the agenda such that this does not take an inordinate amount of time for Division personnel – meetings should be structured, focused a few important topics (including topics suggested by stakeholders from prior meetings), and time-limited	Chicago (and many other communities) hold monthly seminars, in formal and less formal settings, to discuss top reasons applications fail and to address questions in a group setting
3	No formal, consistent mechanism for soliciting customer feedback and translating that into process improvements	• Revive, revise, and re-start the customer survey, the results of should be part of annual evaluation of employees to pinpoint performance issues for remediation and to develop database of feedback to measure levels of service • Develop metrics that allow for the on-going tracking of customer satisfaction • Require project closeout survey for every application	

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#	Observation	Recommendation(s)	Best Practice Example
	Permitting Procedures		
4	As documented through discussions with internal (City and INCOG) and external customers, there are still significant issues that arise with the handoff between Development Services and these other organizations Some external customers do not feel that the City has achieved a "one stop shop" Customers are confused on procedures when required to interact with external departments	• Use the feedback presented (*Appendix C*) to identify areas of continuing concern and assign a process improvement resource (maybe from the High Performance Government program or MAAP) to identify specific issues and to drive down process delays and failures	
5	Customers often need clarification for requirements Multiple applicants' permits are sent back for revision with similar issues/errors	• Post examples of high quality plans on the Development Services website • Improve the clarity and simplicity of instruction on the website and in Division materials	The City of Elmhurst, Illinois' Building Department website shows a detailed example of submittal expectations (*see Appendix D*)
6	Some customers have significant concerns regarding the timeliness of the permit review process	• In the short term, ensure that the Division's KPI's present timeliness data broken down for key permit classes • Regularly review such metrics during staff meetings and focus on what can be done to improve performance for particular permit classes • Once the new permitting system and associated procedures are in place, clearly identify permit timeliness standards for commercial and residential permits (*see Appendix B*) and measure and report performance against such standards	

#	Observation	Recommendation(s)	Best Practice Example
	Webpage		
7	Depending on point of entry to permit-related pages, customer experience can differ greatly (See *Appendix E for details*) Unclear flow to webpages for permit-related inquires Finding the information needed may require scrolling around and downloading long pdfs	• Streamline entry links to ensure that all roads lead to same path (*See Appendix E for details*) • Create one main "welcome" page, list options at the top that will route users where they need to, including a "How To's" with clear links to each: what can be done online and what has to be done in the office • Have a short handout available for customers to take at application close on website changes and checklists for completing their particular requirements	• Lake County, IL: clean list of permit types, link for each with step-by-step instructions[20] • Portland, OR: simple, lists several options under an "I want to" header[21] • Oklahoma City has a simple but informative welcome page[22] • "Storytelling" like Raleigh, NC: directs professionals and do-it-yourselfers to separate pages and list directions from there[23]
8	No guidance/samples of acceptable drawings are easily accessible online	• Create or borrow these from other municipalities • Add these to the webpages	Raleigh, NC has a great breakdown by category, and each is available in multiple file formats[24]
9	It is possible to apply for a fast track permit, however that capability is not listed clearly on the website	• Add this to the "How to" list on the "welcome page"	
10	Permit status can be checked online, but it is not an intuitive process at all entry points There are no directions for users on how to interpret status screen once found	• Streamline entry links to insure that all roads lead to same path • Provide a summary sheet for customers that includes how to check permit status online • Add a link with information defining the permit status page terms and visuals	

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[20] http://www.lakecountyil.gov/Planning/Building/Pages/BuildingPermit.aspx
[21] http://www.portlandoregon.gov/bds/
[22] http://www.okc.gov/devservices/buildpermits/
[23] http://www.raleighnc.gov/business/content/PlanDev/Articles/DevServ/DevelopmentServices.html
[24] http://www.raleighnc.gov/business/content/PlanDev/Articles/DevServ/DrawingsStandardDetailsIndex.html

#	Observation	Recommendation(s)	Best Practice Example
	External Perceptions		
11	Unfriendly and non-intuitive intake process and environment leads to confusion and frustration Reception desk is awkward, people can walk past without notice City Hall security lengthens entry time	• Consider relocating office to improve access; however, this idea should be considered in light of the fact that the implementation of the new permitting system should decrease walk-in traffic and in-person meetings significantly • Reposition existing office to funnel foot traffic in a one way flow • Require customer service training for all front counter staff • Consider how Customer Care can further assist, either in taking on more or different calls or, at the least, providing customer service consulting to improve the customer experience • Alternatively, seek High Performance Government (HPG) resource and/or six sigma team assistance in designing an improved intake process	
12	Customers cite inconsistent permit cycle times based on the individual with whom you work	• Standardize customer service processes so that prior acquaintance with someone on the inside is not the key factor in prompt service • New permitting system will expedite intake; system can flag different average times per permit type by employee and lead to identification and dissemination of best practices	
13	Reception spends time checking permit status for customers, many do not realize status is available online	• Develop one page handout for walk-in customers with online access directions for customers, and provide them with it at the close of the service	
	Fees		
14	Fees are perceived by some as low in comparison to national and regional competitors More fee revenue could fund needed new positions	• Develop and gain stakeholder buy-in for a plan to raise fees in order to fund specific needed positions, including a process analysis/quality assurance position as well as additional plan review capacity • Gaining support for the plan will likely require extensive outreach, relationship-building, and specific and measurable commitments to process improvements	

5. Assessment of Current Work Plan for Permitting System Implementation

5.1. Permitting System Implementation Background

The City recently selected a modern permitting system that provides increased functionality and greater processing efficiencies – Energov, owned by Tyler Technologies.

Modern permitting systems allow applicants to submit applications, plans, and payments online, allowing for 24/7/365 access. Those able to take advantage of this will functionality rarely need to visit City Hall. This improves service for them as well as for those who continue their work in-person, as City staff should have increased capacity. One community indicated that it gained the functional equivalent of three new inspector positions from the efficiencies associated with the new technology and the ability to support mobile devices.

Other advantages of modern permitting systems include:

- Once an application (with plans) is submitted electronically, the time required to critique and revise plans is reduced.
- For those submitting payments online, the need to visit City Hall will vanish.
- Inspection scheduling and trip routing is more efficient with a new permitting system.
- Comprehensive permit status tracking is available.

Customers generally receive such added features as significant improvements in customer service. Do-it-yourselfers and small contractors may not immediately transition to producing electronic plans but may continue to submit documents the traditional way, in person.

Other things will not change simply because the Division has a new permitting system. For example, applications requiring input from agencies other than Development Services will still require these reviews, even if the other offices have a "seat" on the new permitting system.

5.2. Project Management Team Assessment

BKD met with Michael Dellinger (CIO) and Terry Baxter (Project Manager for the new permitting system). Michael has returned to the City following a stint with another employer but has extensive industry experience. Terry has been with the City for many years and is a lead on systems integration projects.

The concern is that the City had a dedicated project manager assigned to the permitting system initiative, Jerry Tweedy. He resigned in February and is not being replaced. He had worked on this initiative for about a year.

Terry Baxter was introduced to the project as the lead integration manager for this application. He has the experience for this role, but BKD has the following concerns regarding the arrangement:

- Lack of experience with implementing a development services permitting system;
- Concurrent responsibility for installation of three different systems in various stages of implementation: ERP, Permitting, and Police Records Management; and
- The indication that the top implementation priority is Police Records Management, followed by the ERP implementation.

Whether this approach will provide for sufficient resources to implement the permitting system project is unclear, especially as the project work plan to implement the permitting system does not yet exist.

While the IT Department staffing exceeds 115 people, BKD believes that IT should designate a specific project team that will support permitting system implementation effort. A part-time integration manager is acceptable if a sufficient number of other technical staff members are dedicated to the project. However, the membership of

the project team for the new permitting system was not confirmed as of the date of BKD's interviews.

Discussions with other municipal development service leaders shed light on a number "readiness factors" to evaluate Tulsa's preparedness for a project of this type.

5.3. Available Resources to Support Implementation

Since 2013, the system development fee per permit is $3.50 plus 5% of the license or permit fee. For FY15, this fee generated approximately $350,000.[25] Given a current balance of approximately $1.5M, the total funds available to support the project should total around $2.2M over two years without further appropriation.[26]

As soon as possible, the City should estimate the full life-cycle cost of system implementation, including licenses, hardware, training, and a dedicated project manager and support team. The costs of supporting the system post-implementation should also be charged to the fund. The City should estimate its expenses and adjust the fee accordingly so that revenues match the expenses. The requirements of the fund could be estimated using the template shown in Table 14.

To the extent that there are additional financial resources available after this accounting, the Division should enhance the project implementation team with additional functional and technical resources, ideally those who could serve usefully in an on-going role with the Division following implementation.
In terms of the implementation team, BKD recommends that at least two people be assigned full-time, plus the part-time project manager. Table 15 compares Tulsa's preparedness relative to other communities embarking upon a similar effort.

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[25] "Permit Center Statistical Report, 6/2015"
[26] Email from City Finance, 7/9/2015

Current Balance	$1,500,000
Estimated System Development Revenue During 2 Year Implementation	$700,000
Resources Available	$2,200,000
Estimated Expenses	
Vendor Implementation Services	Xxx
Vendor Hosting and Disaster Fees	Xxx
Vendor Hardware	Xxx
Vendor Software Licenses	Xxx
Vendor Training	Xxx
Vendor Ongoing Vendor Maintenance	Xxx
City Integration Team	Xxx
City Software Maintenance Team	Xxx
Estimated Expenses	Xxx
Resources less Expenses	Xxx
Resources Available / Needed	**Xxx**

Table 14

Readiness Comparisons with Other Communities

	Readiness Factor	Comment	Tulsa	Tampa, FL	Nashville, TN	Manatee County, FL
1	"To Be" process is analysis completed before implementation	The goal is to develop streamlined processes that are enabled by the new technology prior to the final selection of the new permitting system	12 pages' worth of "To Be" process plans[27]	"A large 3-ring binder"	160 pages	"A 6-inch stack of flowcharts"
2	There are dedicated business analyst staff positions for the project	Functional staff support for the development of the "To Be" processes and general system implementation support	0	2	1	2
3	PM has familiarity with the development services processes	The PM should be acquainted with development services business processes	No	Yes (Business Analyst in Construction Services)	Yes (Director of Code Enforcement)	Yes (Business Analyst in Building & Development Services)
4	These is an estimated percentage of the PM's time dedicated to project	PM must have sufficient bandwidth to oversee a complex project	25%	100%	25%	100%
5	There is an identified and sufficient level of IT support for the effort	A successful implementation requires both functional and technical resources	Limited (PM is an IT professional, but also responsible for two other high-priority City IT projects)	IT assigned staff to team	IT assigned staff to team	IT assigned staff to team

Table 15

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[27] Development Services notes that this is the result of the previous six years' worth of effort.

5.4. Process Documentation Assessment

BKD focused on permitting system implementation preparations and process documentation efforts in several meetings and during conference calls with the three other development departments (Nashville, Tennessee, Tampa, Florida and Manatee County, Florida).

As documented previously in Table 16, compared to the experience of other city development services offices embarking upon a system replacement, Tulsa appears, to this point, to have accomplished less in the way of both "As Is" and "To Be" process documentation at this stage of the process. The other local governments that we spoke with conducted extensive process review before commencing the permitting system procurement to identify opportunities for process improvement concurrent with system implementation.[28]

"As Is" documentation should address all of the current processes, including application documents and forms, required submissions from customers, decision trees and approvals, file structures, and reports. Processes that should be documented in the "As Is" models include:

- Applications and processing for each permit type;
- Inspection requests;
- Inter-agency coordination;
- Payment processing; and
- Planning, zoning and historic preservation linkages to permitting.

City personnel provided some business process maps of the current system. However, from the project team's discussion with the former

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[28] For example, Tampa hired two business analysts to document processes. These analysts spent a year filling a three-ring binder with flowcharts that a) showed how to streamline service and b) explained to the vendor how it needed to use the system. These two analysts will remain in the department to analyze the data that the new system will produce and find ways to maximize productivity and balance workload.

implementation manager, they learned that the City has limited "As Is" documentation and that part of the selected vendor's responsibility will be to create the "As Is" documentation. In terms of the "To Be" processes, the vendor will be asked to implement whatever represents a "best practices" approach based on the City's "As Is" processes, the software functionality, and the vendor's experience.

Vendors included a project work plan in their September 2014 responses to the City's RFP. BKD reviewed one work plan that included six major tasks. The budget included a task *Assess and Define,* related to the current system and business process as well as a *System Configuration* task. The latter included a significant number of hours, but did not include a significant time commitment to the former. The *Assess and Define* task is where vendors typically develop the "As Is" models or commit significant hours to a critique of the City's "As Is" models.

As part of the March-April 2015 BAFO process, the City asked vendors to "…provide business process re-engineering services to the City related to the business functions covered by this project. The vendor will work with staff to understand "As Is" business processes and define concrete improvement ("To Be") opportunities. These improvement opportunities will be incorporated into the configuration of the system."

Even with the scope amended to include the "As Is" and "To Be" responsibilities, the fixed price nature of the contract means that City's vendor will have every incentive to complete the project as quickly as possible. The issue will now likely be the City's ability to field an implementation team that is of sufficient size and skill to verify that the vendor adequately fulfills these responsibilities.

BKD believes this advance process documentation and improvement work will greatly improve the system implementation and recommends that the Division works with the vendor to develop a detailed work plan for the "As Is" review. The work plan should address the processes to be reviewed, the respective responsibilities of the City and the vendor, and the timeline for performance of the

review. The vendor should provide the City with its streamlining recommendations *prior* to the implementation of the permitting system.

5.5. Project Timeframe

The proposal reviewed included a sample implementation schedule of 48 weeks. **This would be rather ambitious for Tulsa, especially as the IT project manager is also responsible for two other system installations that are expected to overlap to some degree.** Discussions with the three other communities indicated that their recent permitting system installations took from 14 to 18 months. The former project manager shared that he expected the project to require 24 months, including the development of process documentation that other local governments created prior to selecting a vendor.

5.6. Project Training and Communications

Since the new permitting system is both internal and customer facing, it is imperative that internal and external customers receive necessary training. The vendors offered that they can provide training ranging from *train the trainer* to comprehensive end user training. However, the project plan reviewed provides for a three week training task that will occur about one month prior to project launch.

Without dedicating Division staff to work full-time on this implementation effort, there will be diminished value in comprehensive end user training provided by the vendor. Best results will be achieved by Division staff working closely with the vendor during the entire implementation process. They should then "know and own" the system and become the "go to" people within the Division who can explain how the system works to other staff.

The Division should additionally implement an extensive training program for the builder community in advance of the system "go live". **Given the customer-facing nature of the application and the importance of the function to the City's overall economic health, it is crucial that the City develop a well-constructed approach to proactively engage the development community in advance of the system implementation.**

The Division should develop a webpage and direct all permit applicants to there so that they can learn about the new system and how it will change the way they will interact with the Division. The City of Tampa[29] has a good explanation of the rollout of its permitting system on its Construction Services Division page. The page shows how to obtain training, how to schedule inspections and how to check the status of applications and projects.

The Division can post status reports and information about new features, including how developers will be able to electronically:

- Submit plans;
- Schedule inspections;
- Make payments; and
- Check on application status.

This should encourage developers to prepare for the new system by acquiring necessary software and equipment so they are compatible with the new system. As the new system approaches "launch", the City should schedule public forums for builders to demonstrate the system. These sessions could be taped for on-demand viewing on the City's public access channel.

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[29] tampagov.net

5.7. Readiness Recommendations

The table below and extending onto the follow pages provides a summary of the observations discussed throughout Section 5 along with recommendations and select best practice examples that BKD has complied from research and experiences working with other municipalities.

#	Observation	Recommendation(s)	Best Practice Example
	Project Staffing		
1	The City recently lost its IT project manager for the effort The City has assigned an experienced project manager from IT, but he lacks subject matter familiarity and is concurrently assigned to lead the implementation of higher-priority projects	• Complete the estimated budget process described in section 5.3, seek appropriate approvals, and secure a dedicated IT project manager for the project	In Nashville, the director himself managed the implementation project.
2	No dedicated full-time, functional staffing at this point to support the implementation effort	• Complete the estimated budget process described in section 5.3, seek appropriate approvals, and secure additional functional resources for the project	

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#	Observation	Recommendation(s)	Best Practice Example
	Process Documentation		

3	The level of detail of "**As Is**" process maps is inadequate in comparison to the efforts of other cities embarking on the implementation of similar permitting systems	• Commit to completing process maps to a level of greater detail.
		• Identify ways to improve service and tie into new system
		  1. List existing processes
		  2. List problems that arise from current practices
		  3. Streamline: suggest ways to work faster without sacrificing quality
		• Engage customers in this review
			Nashville, Tennessee's Director of Codes Administration served as the project manager for the new permitting system. The effort included developing approximately 160 pages of flow charts of current process and how to streamline it
			
			Manatee County, Florida engaged all employees in a discussion of how problems arise in doing their jobs and ideas for how to become more efficient and how to improve the customer experience

4	The level of detail of "**To Be**" process maps is inadequate in comparison to the efforts of other cities embarking on the implementation of similar permitting systems	• Commit to completing "To Be" process maps to a level of greater detail	*See Table 15*
	Project Timeline		
5	Implementation schedules are ambitious, especially as the IT project manager is also responsible for two other system installations that are expected to overlap to some degree	• Revise timeline with detailed checkpoints along the way • Ensure that a dedicated project manager has oversight • Verify that all involved and impacted departments are aware of timeline and onboard with schedule	Discussions with the three other communities indicated installations took from 14 to 18 months
	Project Training and Communications		
6	The implementation project approach, as currently envisioned, does not allow for members of Development Services to gain deep knowledge of the software prior to go live	• Staff the implementation team with a functional members and put them in a position to gain "super user" knowledge of the software	
7	The current lack of communication with customers and limited website information indicates there may not be sufficient emphasis put on communicating about the new software with external customers	• Commit the necessary resources to developing a well-developed external communication plan, citing the development of a Tampa-like training website	See example at tampagov.net

6. Appendix A: Interviewees from Other Communities

Discussions with Other Stakeholders and Governments: Interviewees

City and State	Employee	Title and Department
Broken Arrow, OK	Michael Skates	Director, Development Services
Little Rock, AR	Tony Bozynski	Director, Planning and Development
Oklahoma City, OK	Randy Entz, AICP, CNU-A	Section Manager, Current Planning
Indianapolis, IN	Hannah Bain	Director of Constituent Services
Kansas City, MO	Greg Franzen PE, MCP	Assistant Engineering Director, Development Services
Bartlesville, OK	Robert McGuire	Chief Building Official, Planning and Zoning Services
Montgomery County, MD	Diane Jones	Director, Permitting Services
Tampa, FL	John Barrios	Manager, Construction Services
Nashville, TN	Terry Cobb	Director, Code Enforcement
Manatee County, FL	John Barnott	Director, Building & Development Services

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7.   Appendix B: Municipal Plan Review Standards Data

Municipal Plan Review Time Standards[30]

Municipality	Standards
City of Greensboro, NC	Standard Commercial Plan Review: 14-21 business days, depending on Planning Department approval of site plan, if applicable
Cherokee County, GA	Turnaround time for plan review may vary depending on current plan submittal volume
	Target turnaround time for a typical set of plans is 2 weeks (10 business days) Larger and/or more complex commercial projects can take as long as 4 weeks (20 business days)
City of Raleigh, NC	8 business days for initial Residential Construction review cycle
	4 business days for subsequent Residential Construction reviews
	Express permits are typically issued in 2-5 business days following the review when there are no unresolved issues
	Permits for projects with multiple applications are usually issued within five to ten 10 business days, depending on the complexity of the project
San Diego County, CA	Average turnaround time for first review of residential building plan review: 20 work days
	Average turnaround time for first review of commercial building plan review: 30 days
Indiana Division of Fire & Building Safety	Full plan review: 20 days
	Life Safety and Health review: 10 days
	The owner and/or designer has 30 days to respond to an email for additional information or a request for information. DFBS will make a phone call to the owner and/or designer 5 days after the request is sent to confirm receipt. If no response is received after 20 days, a notice will be sent that the application will be denied if the request is not fulfilled. If no response is received after 30 days, the application will be denied.
City of Mesa, AZ	Commercial: 18 business day review; 10 day expedite review (100% of building permit fee); Super expedite review with negotiated turn-around time (200% of building permit fee) Residential: 10 business day review (5 days for master plot plans); 5 day expedite review (100% of building permit fee); 5 day expedite review (100% of building permit fee)
	Signs: 10 business days

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[30] Data collected from municipal websites during 2013-2015

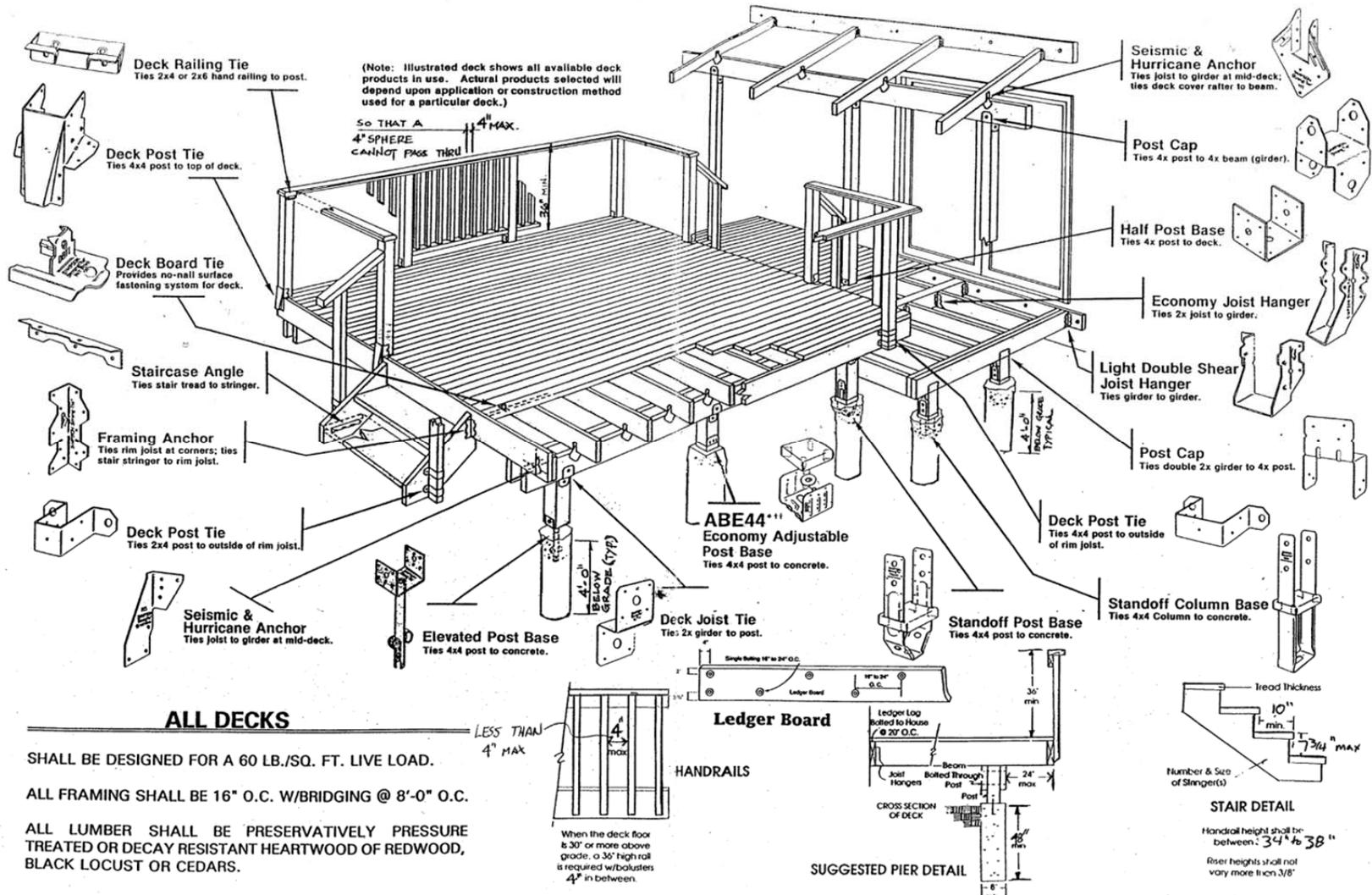# 8. Appendix C: Internal Customer Issues and Recommendations

Individuals from the other internal organizations have a generally positive assessment of Development Services' efforts. They believe that Development Services staff members are working hard to improve the quality and timeliness of the processes. However, the individuals interviewed did raise a number of issues that should be addressed to further improve the coordination between organizations and made initial suggestions for improvement. *BKD has not fully vetted these issues and recommendations, but presents them as the basis for further discussion.*

Recommendations for Improvements to Development Services' Operations

	Issue	Tentative Recommendation
1	Letters of Deficiency cause confusion with customers and are not sufficient	Outline a plan to improve quality, care, direction, and detail in Letter of Deficiency and implement
2	Policies on the infrastructure development side often conflict with zoning code Transportation planning requirements (street alignment and connectivity) are sometimes "seen differently", leaving the customer to wait while internal differences of opinion are sorted through	Bring Planning and Engineering to the table with INCOG to identify conflicts and produce a methodology/set of rules for consistently reoccurring situations Share details on the "hold-up" with customers, don't leave them in the dark waiting
3	Development Services is supposed to represent a number of different departments, but adequate internal communication between those City departments is sometimes lacking; sometimes all necessary City departments are not "at the table" when they need to be	Improve communication or ask that representatives attend meetings to close gaps
4	INCOG will not go to commission until letters of release are received from the infrastructure development group; letters take a long time to get	Pin-point what is taking the most time and identify steps to address (also tied to issue 3)
5	Certificates of occupancy are requested before the project is completed and the lack of liquidated damages limits leverage in getting the builders to complete necessary tasks	If early C of O, then there needs to be liquidated damages for non-compliance
6	Engineering Services is having a hard time getting "as recorded" drawings from developers	
7	Sometime a breakdown in the handoff between getting the permit and coordinating with the construction inspection staff at Engineering Services	Include the pre-construction meeting with Engineering Services prior to the issuance of the permit
8	The IDP does not contain enough enforcement mechanisms to ensure builder compliance	Amend the ordinance to add more enforcement capability

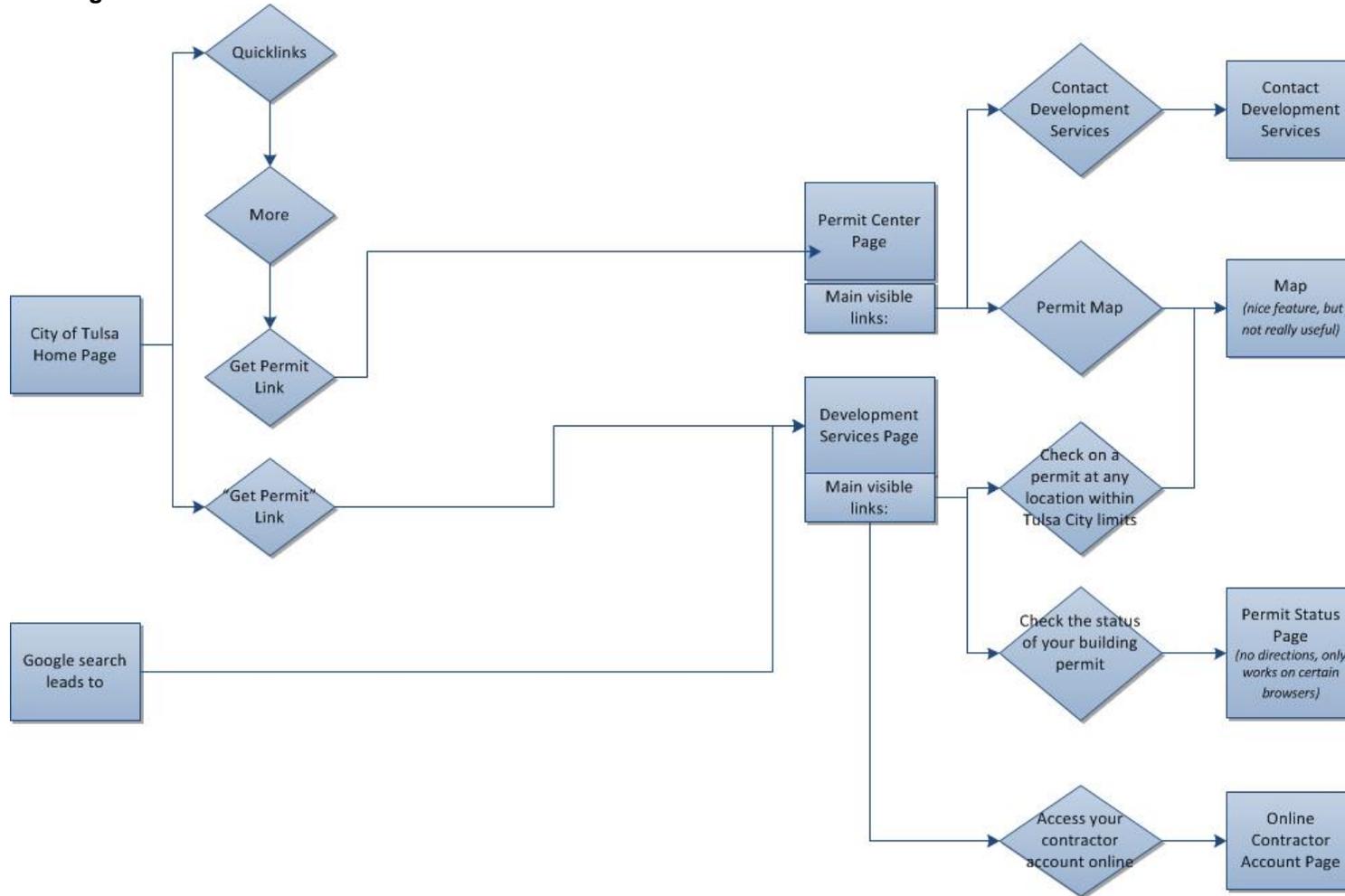# 9.　Appendix D:　Example of Plan Submittal Expectations

City of Elmhurst, IL Building Department Example of Plan Submittal Expectations

10. Appendix E: Website Workflow

City of Tulsa Website's Permit-Related pages have multiple entry points which can lead to different "welcoming" pages and different user experiences. The following graphics outline simple welcome page recommendations to streamline entry and simplify options.

Existing

![BKD LLP CPAs & Advisors]

Proposed

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