

Development Review Process Task Force Survey

Summary of Results – Staff

Staff Survey – 23 total respondents

Question 2. Do you believe that the current review process works adequately?

Lack of clear and consistent requirements and guidelines

- I think the requirements, expectations and roles are not clear nor are they consistent between applications. It should be able to be reduced to a checklist. It is unclear for staff - therefore it must be so for the applicants and public.
- An up-to-date, detailed, step-by-step outline of the process a staff person should follow to undertake the review is not available, but should
- Does not layout to the staff or developer what the expected outcome is.
- Need clearer expectations for both applicants and reviewers. Too much confusion about what is needed.
- Projects can be very complex and the items to be considered are extensive without clear expectations and priorities established by decision-makers. Applicant submittals are very often inadequate for expected review.

Insufficient staffing

- The biggest inadequacy is in having sufficient staff to assist with the review.
- the legislative program staffing has never kept up with the demands - including the number of applications, the complexity of the applications, and the level of effort staff must expend in order to achieve the board's vision for the development areas

Insufficient application information/inattention to existing guidelines

- We accept incomplete applications, which means that much of the review time is spent attempting to get sufficient information to begin the review. . . If the applications were complete, or reasonably close, from the beginning, these delays could be avoided more often. * Applicants who are not development professionals are not sufficiently informed about the process before they begin
- I think applicants need to understand that a good final product may take longer than they expect if they do not take advantage of the guidance provided by the Design Manual, Comp Plan, and ZO. The Design Guidelines, and by extension, the Comp Plan and ZO provide all the information needed to respond with a proposal in keeping with the County's goals. Many times, the guidelines are not reviewed before submitting.
- A lot of time is spent on requesting and having applicants make time consuming and last minute revisions for things that should be standardized.

No differentiated process

- Needs to be two processes: one for very simple applications that really don't require an in-depth review and analysis. More complex and controversial applications need the in-depth review.

Question 3. Specific improvements you would like to see made to the process

Clearer roles, guidelines, expectations - standardization

- checklists for staff & applicants; b) clear roles between reviewers; c) BOS make decisions, including decision to deny, in a reasonable timeframe without referring to committee or further work sessions when issues have not been addressed and d) more of a preliminary overall review & approval at legislative stage, allowing details such as engineering to remain flexible and be resolved with plan & plat.
- Clear expectations of applicants and staff. Let's agree what is considered acceptable and stop worrying about whether it is as good as it can be.
- Application expectations set out - guidelines and checklist; prioritization of issues to be considered by decision-makers; more direction regarding proffers –

- Proffers, codes of developments, and general development plan formats and content should be standardized as much as possible. A requirement of submitting a rezoning should be that information is provided in these standard formats.

Sufficient staff

- Provide sufficient staff in Engineering and Zoning to help with reviews. 2. Provide information to staff and to applicants on what can be expected if deadlines are not met. For staff -- if deadlines aren't met, other staff may have to live with what they get; for applicants, they will not be able to stay on schedule and should not expect to meet the published schedule for action.
- If we want to have smooth, efficient reviews, we need to have staffing, especially in Current Development, raised to the point that project loads are more reasonable

More upfront information to applicants

- Better inform applicants about the process in general, the concerns it addresses, the role of the comprehensive plan, and the difference between ministerial and legislative decisions. * Require special use permit and rezoning applications to be complete, according to an accepted and easily-understood checklist, before they can be accepted.

Differentiated processes

- After an initial review to determine how complex an application is, have a very brief review of the short, uncomplicated ones.
- I recommend that a streamlined process be established for minor amendments to rezonings. The review of such an amendment would be confined to the requested revision.

Limit time expended/deferrals granted, etc. per application

- We need more specific direction on how much time and effort should be put into working with an applicant to get a project "the way we want it". Then everyone needs to follow that direction equally. If an applicant doesn't respond with the information we've asked for, why keep asking over and over again?
- Do not accept deferrals that are really requested as stalling techniques. If an item is heard (work session or public hearing) and revisions are requested - do not accept more than one deferral. . . Develop a proffer policy so that developers will know what is expected of them before they apply for a rezoning. . . . Don't accept changes to proffers that staff and the public have not seen.
- Time limits, minimum content requirements, minimum number of submittals per application before decision, no work sessions, minimum number of deferrals, and simpler reports.

Question 5. Any additional methods that you think would be helpful in creating successful projects?

Question 6. Does current process allow for citizen involvement? If No . . .

Question 7. Any additional methods that you think would improve citizen input?

Better citizen information/education/understanding of the process

- Be sure to inform citizens of the limitations by law, so they aren't frustrated by being brought into a process they think they can influence or deny. I think we need to stop bringing ministerial matters such as site plans and subdivision plats through the PC with citizens being informed that they may object. It sets up a difficult dynamic
- Create a flowchart that shows all the possible steps between rezoning and actual construction. Have the counter planner (or other staff) help a new applicant fill one of these out, complete with possible ranges of time and fees for a typical project. This will eliminate the surprise many first time applicants feel.
- City View Web will enable the public to have an additional source of information
- Citizens are often not aware of the Comprehensive Plan context for any given proposal, and may not have the opportunity to be effective in the input process because they ask for something inappropriate or impossible, through no fault of their own. (For example--citizens asking the PC to deny a 12-lot RPD without knowing what an RPD is, or that the alternative was a 50-lot conventional subdivision.)

- The general public is often frustrated that "by-right" projects aren't influenced much by public input. Perhaps we can help through education of public or by helping create conversation between the public and the applicant. This may at least help the communication process, and the perception of being ignored.
- It could be that each neighborhood in the development area has its own area on the County website that would update the residents of that neighborhood of development proposals and progress over time.
- Post development plans online
- Provision of information on the Comp Plan and the range of possible decisions on a project (and their consequences), rather than a simple letter and list of hearings. *
- Other Counties in the State provide "citizen planning academies" - these are multi-week information sessions that provide in depth instruction to all interested parties with subjects such as: introduction to comprehensive plans, the relationship between comp. plan and land use plan, how both affect rezonings, legal background of Subdivision and Zoning ordinance, plan review process, building permitting, site inspection.

Notification

- Signs should be posted immediately after a project is accepted for review. The signs alert the public that a proposal is in. Signs send a message further than just adjoining properties. Also, signs should be posted in the most visible place possible

Early and more frequent public meeting/public comment opportunities

- Guidelines should be established for developer-managed informational meeting for those living in an area proposed for rezoning or SP. The developer could summarize the meeting and collect written comments from citizens to be submitted at the time an application is made or shortly thereafter
- A standard meeting for rezonings/sp's such as is held for site plans and subdivisions would allow for public input at a much earlier stage of the development and allow it to occur in an orderly manner.
- Have the more complex and/or controversial projects reviewed by the Citizen Advisory Committees established in each of the master planned areas
- Developers/Applicants could be required to seek input as part of their preapplication process or early on.
- Public hearings come too late in the process--for all concerned. The developer needs to know earlier how many are opposed (or have questions), staff feels blindsided, and officials are caught between an application that's way along in the process and an angry public demanding changes.
- For large projects, community meetings and more-detailed mailings * Earlier efforts by developers/applicants to reach their neighbors. * Encouragement of neutral sources of information, including a better-informed and more involved press, that convey facts about projects and options for decision-making, without being tied to either the County or the applicants, either of which might be seen as biased.
- For major development projects, offer a public meeting where the project is explained by the developer, then the public is offered the opportunity to ask questions and make statements. Essentially, this would be similar to a public hearing, but it would happen early in the process and would be held before staff wrote their reports
- A site review type meeting early in the review process to allow public input. A second site review type meeting later in the review process when some but not all of the positions of the county and developer have been established
- Give them an early opportunity to comment 2. Give them easy access to plans and staff comments (City View, PDF plans) 3. Give them information of how evaluations and decisions are made (understand process)
- Having work sessions where citizens can speak.