

Memorandum

City of Lawrence and Douglas County Planning & Development Services

TO: David L. Corliss, City Manager

FROM: Scott McCullough, Director

CC: Cynthia Boecker, Assistant City Manager
Diane Stoddard, Assistant City Manager

Date: January 21, 2009

RE: Matrix Study Status Report

On April 29, 2008 the City Commission directed staff to provide a status report on the recommendations of the *Management Study of the Development Review Process* (Matrix Report). The Matrix Report involved a review and analysis by Matrix Consulting Group of the City's development process. The City Commission formally received the report on November 14, 2006 and directed staff to work on an implementation plan to begin to implement many of its recommendations.

The table below demonstrates that many of the major recommendations have been implemented, including:

- Adoption of the ICC family of building codes.
- Reorganization into one department to implement efficiencies and work toward the goal of a One Stop Shop.
- Reassigning plan review from building inspectors to plan reviewers.
- Taking advantage of technology to become more efficient and customer friendly.

It is important to note that the newly merged department, along with other city departments, is constantly reviewing processes to make the many varied functions work more efficient. Notable accomplishments to date include:

- Implementing online planning commission and historic resources commission packets.
- Creating mechanisms to bolster communications between historic resources staff and plan reviewers.

- Merging the Planning and Development Services website.
- Holding review meetings with applicants early in the process to provide comprehensive information to them from city and outside agencies.

The Matrix Report encouraged greater customer service through several recommendations, some of which have an impact on the budget. While many have been implemented, several impediments and challenges have slowed the drive toward meeting the highest level of efficiency. These include the following as examples:

- Many of the same frustrations exist for the development community since a true One Stop Shop has not been implemented and the recommended staffing and reorganization in the Planning Division has not been fully implemented.
 - The reduction in building permits has been accounted for by reducing staffing levels through attrition and reallocating positions in the Development Services Division.
 - The reduction in building permit activity does not correlate to a reduction in all other workload categories.
 - There should be a clear recognition that development in the city will always be challenging due to a very engaged development community and citizenry.
 - Recognition that the governing body reviews only 30% of applications, often when there has been a challenge of some sort related to the project.
- The following statistics are provided for 2007.

- The Planning division of Planning and Development Services had the most exposure to the Commission in 2007.
 - There were 55 regular agenda planning items.
 - There were 81 consent planning items.
- The department processed 474 city applications in 2007 and 576 total items, including county items.
- The City Commission reviewed roughly 12% of the 474 city applications on their regular agenda and 17% on their consent agenda for a total of roughly 30% of all applications being reviewed in some fashion by the Commission.
- Roughly 70% of 474 applications processed by the Planning Division were not reviewed by the Commission and were processed without much incident.

The table below lists the report's sixty-seven (67) recommendations and their status to date. The status of each was derived from the Director's review of each recommendation, including follow up with the staff responsible for the recommendation. The dollar figures were taken directly from the 2006 report and are likely more in current dollars. The following categories were used in the status column and contain the following meanings.

- Implemented – Planning and Development Services Department (PDS) or the city has either implemented the recommendation or something that clearly addresses the issue the recommendation was intended to address.
- In progress – PDS or the city is working to implement the recommendation and has the resources to accomplish implementation.
- Desired but unfulfilled – PDS or the city would like to implement the recommendation but lacks resources to implement it.
- Not implemented – PDS or the city has decided not to implement the recommendation, typically either for cost reasons or did not find value in the recommendation.

It is important to note that while the governing body accepted the recommendations in November 2006, the city purposefully delayed action on certain recommendations to install a permanent planning director and for reasons related to the budget.

Of the 67 recommendations:

- 41 have been implemented or partially implemented to the extent currently possible
- 11 are in progress and estimated completion dates have been provided
- 9 are desired but unfulfilled (usually for cost reasons)
- 6 have not been implemented

The table of recommendations below is grouped by category instead of how the recommendations were presented in the Matrix Study to make them more readable. The categories include:

- Software
- Performance Measurement
- Staffing
- Operational / Procedural
- Training
- One Stop Shop

SOFTWARE

Recommendation	Suggested Timeframe	Estimated Cost	Status
The City of Lawrence should implement a comprehensive software package for the Development Review Process. All Departments involved in the Development Review process should be required to utilize the selected system for scheduling, processing, and reporting on work activities.	1 st Quarter 2007	Depending upon bids and software selected. Estimated at \$250,000 to \$700,000.	Desired but unfulfilled (cost – Staff will be exploring options in the coming year)
The City of Lawrence should form a steering committee made up of city employees, industry representatives, customers, and other stakeholders to guide the definition of system needs, review various software packages, and guide the implementation of the selected product.	1 st Quarter 2007		Desired but unfulfilled (cost – Staff will be exploring options in the coming year)
The City should modify its approach to data collection in the HTE building permits module to capture additional information regarding processing times.	1 st Quarter 2007		Implemented
If an alternative software is not chosen, the City should acquire and install the HTE Planning and Engineering module.	1 st Quarter 2007	\$75,000 to \$150,000	Not Implemented (Too costly and desire more user-friendly comprehensive software package)
Utilize The Click2Gov Module From HTE To Provide Public Access for Building Permits	1 st Quarter 2007		Implemented
Acquire and Utilize The Click2Gov Module From HTE to Provide Public Access for Planning and Engineering Permits.	1 st Quarter 2007	\$20,000	Desired but unfulfilled (Too costly and desire more user-friendly comprehensive software package)

Recommendation	Suggested Timeframe	Estimated Cost	Status
The City should acquire and utilize the Click2Gov wireless module from HTE for building inspectors to record inspection results and print correction notices.	1 st Quarter 2007	\$15,000-20,000 for 3 Bldg and 3 Code Enforcement Inspectors	In Progress
All of the departments and divisions should utilize the HTE automated permit information system for all aspects of the development review process.	2nd Quarter 2007		Not implemented (Too costly and desire more user-friendly comprehensive software package)
Modules, applications and reports should be developed within the HTE automated permit information system to support the work of these departments and divisions.	2nd Quarter 2007		Not implemented (Too costly and desire more user-friendly comprehensive software package)
Training should be provided to staff as appropriate in the use of the HTE automated permit information system.	2nd Quarter 2007	Can be performed in-house.	Implemented (Ongoing training provided as needed to Building Safety Division)
The City should expand the use of HTE to enable applicants for single trade permits to complete a permit application online.	3rd Quarter 2007	Can be performed in house	In progress (Working with IS staff to finalize. Estimate completion by Spring '09. The majority of single trade permits are faxed, emailed or phoned in.)

Comment: Of the 10 recommendations that are desired but unfulfilled, four of them are related to purchasing and implementing a comprehensive software package for the development review process. This software would be used by several departments. The Matrix Study recognized the current disjointed system of each department using different types of tracking software. While this is desired and would provide several benefits to the staff, development community, and public the assumed cost of \$250,000 to \$700,000 has delayed any real analyses of its implementation. However, the City Manager has expressed interest in receiving a report from staff on its real cost in the coming year.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

Recommendation	Suggested Timeframe	Estimated Cost	Status
The Neighborhood Resources Department should modify the dates maintained in the HTE building permit module to include the dates that each division and department completes their plan check – 1 st check, 2 nd check, 3 rd check, etc. – the date the applicant is notified that their plans are ready to be picked up after each plan check – 1 st check, 2 nd check, 3 rd check, etc., and the date(s) the applicant submits and re-submits the building permit plans.	1 st Quarter 2007		Implemented
The City should revise the building permit plan check timelines.	1 st Quarter 2007		Implemented (Working to provide more consistent implementation of meeting established goals of reviewing permit applications within 5 working days for residential permits and 15 working days for commercial permits. Recent revisions to the Plan Review personnel and processes have shown significant improvement.)
The Neighborhood Resources Department should increase the number of building permits issued over-the-counter to 55% to 60% of all building permits issued.	3rd Quarter 2007		Implemented (60% for 2007)
The Neighborhood Resources Department should adopt formal service level targets. Performance against these targets should be monitored on a regular basis.	4 th Quarter 2006		Implemented

Comment: The Development Services Department is improving tracking mechanisms to be able to recognize trends. This will be important when the

permit applications increase in the future. We will need such data to gauge when resources will need to be increased.

STAFFING

Recommendation	Suggested Timeframe	Estimated Cost	Status
Responsibility for plan checking residential plans and commercial remodels should be reassigned from building inspectors to the plans examiners.	1 st Quarter 2007		Implemented
The City of Lawrence should authorize two additional Plans Examiner positions	1 st Quarter 2007	\$108,000	Partially Implemented (No positions were added. One reviewer was transferred from the Building Inspections Division and that inspector position has not been refilled. A second reviewer was created by deleting the Plan Review Manager position and incorporating Plan Review personnel under the Building Safety Division.)
Utilize the newly reclassified position of Plan Check Technician to ensure that building permit applications and plan submittals are complete prior to review by Plans Examiners.	1 st Quarter 2007		Partially implemented (While the Permit Tech position has not been authorized, administrative positions are ensuring completed applications and/or informing applicants that incomplete applications will cause delay of building permit issuance)
The Plan Check Technician should be utilized to provide over-the-counter plan checking of minor and miscellaneous building permits.	3rd Quarter 2007		Desired but unfulfilled (Cost – the Permit Tech position has not been budgeted and this work is too technical for the admin positions to complete.)
Two additional current planners should be added to the Planning Department to perform the development review planning functions.	2007/2008	\$55,000 per position (\$110,000 in total)	Desired but unfulfilled (The need has been documented but the '09 budget did not include these positions)

Recommendation	Suggested Timeframe	Estimated Cost	Status
The existing level of building inspection staffing should not be modified.	Immediate		Not implemented (One building inspector was reclassified to the Plans Examiner position, thereby actually reducing the inspection workforce.)
The plan of organization of the Planning Department should be modified, and two Planner positions upgraded to Senior Planner.	1 st Quarter 2007	\$25,000	Desired but unfulfilled (Without hiring two additional planners, as recommended elsewhere, implementing this recommendation would not further the goal to provide greater customer service. The need has been identified but budget constraints prevent implementation.)

Comment: The newly formed PDS Department is seeking as much efficiency as possible given its staffing resources. The need for additional staffing to improve customer service was recognized as a priority by the Matrix Report – “A review of staffing levels against the current workloads in the Planning Department indicates that a total of seven planners should be assigned to the current planning function.” Through attrition there are currently only three Current Planners processing the majority of applications. The Long Range Planners have taken on additional Planner of the Day duties to free up some of the Current Planners’ time and the Planner tasked mainly with GIS duties is currently processing all of the Board of Zoning Appeals applications. Nine employees have resigned and one has retired since July 2007, creating challenges to maintain smooth operations.

Staff acknowledges that there has been a reduction of workload in certain categories and that the workload has been shifted to more administrative processes with the adoption of the 2006 Development Code. The Director also recognizes and supports the efforts of the City Commission and City Manager to wisely manage public dollars in the midst of current economic conditions. However, some of the meaningful goals of the Matrix Study cannot be met as long as resources are not balanced with demand.

OPERATIONAL / PROCEDURAL

Recommendation	Suggested Timeframe	Estimated Cost	Status
The City should adopt the most current version of the International Code Council building codes.	3rd Quarter 2007		Implemented
The City should continue its efforts to fully implement the entire ICC building codes rather than continuing the use of a blended code.	2007		Implemented
The City should adopt an objective of issuing 10% of its building permits online.	3rd Quarter 2007		In progress (Estimate completion date by mid-2009)
Post common plan check corrections on the City's website to provide guidance to architects in the construction requirements in Lawrence.	1 st Quarter 2007		In progress (Estimate completion date by mid-'09)
The plan check checklists developed by Neighborhood Resources Department should be posted on the Department's website.	Immediately		Implemented
Develop standard building permit plans for use by the public in minor residential improvements.	1 st Quarter 2007		In progress (Staffing resources delaying progress. Estimated completion date unknown at this time.)
Develop a "Home Improvement Center" web page on the City's website to assist the homeowner to navigate through the building permit plan check and inspection process.	1 st Quarter 2007		Desired but unfilled (staffing resources leave little time to create but it is planned to be addressed in 2009 – looking to Overland Park as model)

Recommendation	Suggested Timeframe	Estimated Cost	Status
The Neighborhood Resources Department should develop a comprehensive manual of code interpretations. The manual should be utilized for internal staff training and be posted to the website for use by the development and construction communities.	3rd Quarter 2007	Can be performed in house	Implemented
Selected types of building permits should be routed to the Planning Department, Engineering Division, and the Utilities Department for plan checking.	3rd Quarter 2007		Partially implemented (High profile permits receive extra scrutiny but there is no consistent process for fulfilling the intent of this recommendation. Doing so with current staffing resources would add significant delay to processing permits. Co-location will aid in meeting this goal.)
The City should develop and adopt a policy regarding the distribution of the different types of building permit plans to the various divisions and departments involved in the development review process.	3rd Quarter 2007		Desired but unfulfilled (Staffing resources an impediment to implementing this objective. Doing so with current staffing resources would add significant delay to processing permits.)
The Planning Department should establish guidelines for reviewing departments to respond to all submissions by applicants and establish clear timelines at each step.	4 th Quarter 2006		Implemented
The applicant should be informed regarding the name of the project manager assigned to their permit application within five working days of submittal of the application and be provided with contact information.	Immediately		Implemented

Recommendation	Suggested Timeframe	Estimated Cost	Status
The project manager in the Planning Department should be responsible for the communication among the multi-disciplinary team, and the resolution of conflicting conditions of approval or competing code requirements.	4 th Quarter 2006		Implemented (Planners & Director often mediate conflicting requirements and conditions)
The authority of the project manager should be clearly spelled out in a written policy by the Planning Director, and approved by the City Manager.	Immediately		Implemented (The intent of this recommendation has been implemented by department practice)
The Assistant Director should plan and schedule the analysis of permit applications submitted to the Planning Division.	Immediately		Implemented
The timelines for processing permits by the Planning Department should be revised.	2007		Implemented (Revised to provide more meaningful communication with applicants and to reduce deferrals at PC)
The timelines for processing of permits by the Planning Department should be published on the Department's website.	2007		Implemented
The standard conditions of approval utilized by all of the divisions and departments in the review of discretionary and administrative permits should be documented.	1 st Quarter 2007		In progress (Estimate completion by mid-2009)
The adopted standard conditions of approval should be posted to the Planning Department's website.	1 st Quarter 2007		In progress (Estimate completion by mid-2009)

Recommendation	Suggested Timeframe	Estimated Cost	Status
The Planning Department should take lead responsibility in facilitating the development of these written conditions of approval by all of the divisions and departments.	1 st Quarter 2007		In progress (Estimate completion by mid-2009)
The Planning Department should document interpretations of the new zoning ordinance and make these available to the public on the Department's website.	Immediately and on-going		Implemented
The Planning Department should develop a procedures manual.	1 st Half, 2007		In progress (Estimate completion by mid-2009)
The Planning Division should develop and utilize checklists for the review and processing of discretionary and administrative applications by its own staff.	1 st Quarter 2007		Implemented
The checklists should be posted to the City's website for use by those individuals submitting plans to review requirements that will be required and reviewed by staff.	1 st Quarter 2007		Implemented
The Planning Department should conduct training sessions over the next few months to familiarize staff with the new zoning ordinance.	Immediate		Implemented
The Planning Commission should undertake a detailed review of its meeting schedule and agenda management process during its next annual planning meeting. As part of this review, the Commission should have discussions with the City and County Elected Officials regarding the appropriate role of the Commission.	2007		Implemented (Annual training is provided with participation from the County Commission Chair and Lawrence Mayor)

Recommendation	Suggested Timeframe	Estimated Cost	Status
The Neighborhood Resources Department should provide the training necessary to its Combination Inspectors to enable these inspectors to function as Combination Inspectors for residential and commercial inspections.	2007	\$3,500	Partially implemented (Inspectors currently trained and functioning as combination inspectors for residential construction. All inspectors are trained and function in multiple disciplines for commercial inspections, but are not fully trained/certified as commercial combination inspectors.)
Checklists should be provided to each Inspector in the Division and their use required on each inspection.	1 st Quarter 2007		Implemented
These checklists should be published on the Neighborhood Resources Department's website.	1 st Quarter 2007		Implemented
Completed inspection checklists should be stored with the permit files.	1 st Quarter 2007		Implemented
The Building Safety Division Manager should allocate a proportion of his/her time to quality control the consistency of code interpretations by the Building Inspectors.	4 th Quarter 2006		Implemented
The Neighborhood Resources Department should document official code interpretations and publish them on the website.	1 st Quarter 2007		Implemented
Neighborhood Resources should develop policies on how official code interpretations are made and published.	4 th Quarter 2006		Implemented
The current separation of duties relative to plan review for traffic and transportation issues should be combined into a review conducted by the Traffic Engineer.	1st Quarter 2007		Implemented (Traffic and transportation issues are well coordinated between Planning, P.W., and MPO staff)

Recommendation	Suggested Timeframe	Estimated Cost	Status
The City of Lawrence and Douglas County should consider the joint provision of Building Inspection Services through a cooperative arrangement.	1st Quarter 2007		Not implemented (This recommendation is not being pursued at this time)

Comment: The city has accomplished the most in this category by making significant, as well as subtle, revisions to the processes of development review and increasing transparency of expectations.

TRAINING

Recommendation	Suggested Timeframe	Estimated Cost	Status
A separate training budget should be established for the Planning Commission.	2007		Not implemented (A separate budget has not been established. The PC receives training out of the dept. budget.)
A training needs assessment should be developed for employees in Neighborhood Resources.	4 th Quarter 2006		In progress (Estimate completion by Spring 2009)
The training budget for the Neighborhood Resources Department should be increased	2007	\$5,000	Desired but unfulfilled (cost)
The Code Enforcement Manager should coordinate bi-weekly training and be responsible for the quality of in-house training.	Immediately		Implemented (consistent training provided)
One hour of training should be provided bi-weekly for the staff of the Department.	Immediately		Implemented (consistent training provided)

Comment: Training is adequately performed, but could be bolstered to a greater degree if resources were increased. For example, the Planning Commissioners, but not staff, attended the national planning conference in 2007. Staff is taking advantage of low-cost webinars and local seminars to receive training.

Currently, eight planners and several Development Services employees have certifications that require continuing education. Continuing education does have an impact on the budget. PDS is currently reviewing all of its training needs to be better informed for future budget cycles.

ONE STOP SHOP

Recommendation	Suggested Timeframe	Estimated Cost	Status
All development review should be co-located at a common facility.	4th Quarter 2008		In progress (This may be a recommendation to the City Commission 2009)
The Departments of Neighborhood Resources and Planning should be merged into a new Department of Community Development.	1 st Quarter 2007	\$25,000	Implemented (Merged into Planning and Development Services. Co-location will improve efficiencies.)
The Utilities Department should designate a single individual to be responsible for plan reviews. This individual should be trained in all of the components of plan review for each of the relevant functional areas.	1 st Quarter 2007		Partially Implemented (Rezoning / Site Plan / Plat applications are reviewed by the Utilities Dept, but building permits are not)
The City of Lawrence should devote one employee from the Utility Department exclusively to the performance of development review activities. This position should be located in the One Stop Shop Center.	2007		Partially Implemented (Rezoning / Site Plan / Plat applications are reviewed by the Utilities Dept, but building permits are not. Planning staff is included in the review of public improvement plans. The need to locate a Utility Dept. employee in the One Stop Shop will likely be low and therefore not implemented.)
One individual from Public Works should be assigned to the One Stop Shop to handle all development review functions for the Public Works Department.	2007		Partially Implemented (Rezoning / Site Plan / Plat applications are reviewed by the PW Dept, but building permits are not. Planning staff is included in the review of public improvement plans. The need to locate a Public Works employee in the One Stop Shop will likely be low and therefore not implemented.)

Comments: Depending on budget circumstances, the city may submit options for implementation of this important recommendation to the City Commission in 2009.

Conclusions

Several key recommendations have been successfully fulfilled or are in the process of being implemented; however, many have not been fulfilled, mainly due to the downturn in the economy and the need to remain very wise with public dollars. The efficiencies that can be made have been to a large degree. Implementing additional recommendations of the Matrix Report will require additional resources, particularly in the area of staffing. The Director believes that adding the two additional planners and creating at least one of the senior planner positions, along with co-locating to create a true one-stop shop, would greatly increase the effectiveness of the PDS department, would maintain the commitment to provide increased service to the department's customers, and would produce higher quality projects for the city and county as there would be greater resources to facilitate developments.