

Boise, ID

Mayor H. Brent Coles

Reorganization & Reengineering in Boise City

Recognizing that the City's ability to expand the local economy and remain competitive in the years to come, the Planning & Development Services Department (PDS) recently embarked on a series of reorganization/reengineering projects designed to streamline the City's permit process and improve the business climate for small businesses. Prior to the reorganization/reengineering effort, many small business owners were forced to postpone business operations while trying to resolve permitting issues. These additional costs were then passed on to the community in the form of higher prices.

Before beginning the reorganization/reengineering process, the PDS Department employees were educated on basic quality management and the importance of customer service. Focus groups were also conducted to understand the Department's various customers and stakeholders. From these and other sessions, the staff gained a greater appreciation for the concept of customer service and developed an awareness for the need to change. Building upon the foundation of customer service, the Mayor's Development Services Advisory Committee made the following recommendations which were implemented by the PDS Department.

One-Stop Shop

On October 21, 1997, the PDS opened a one-stop shop permit center. The One-stop shop includes staff members from various departments and agencies (building, planning, environmental, health, public works, transportation, and fire) in one physical location, which makes it possible for applicants to obtain information, application materials and pay fees for necessary permit and development approvals in a consolidated location. The One-stop shop has also helped to eliminate confusion and red tape surrounding the permit approval process by providing direct access to staff who have the authority to immediately sign-off on minor, administrative permits that require little or no review.

Fast Track Permit Process

The PDS Department also instituted an expedited "Fast Track" permit review

process, whereby a team oriented development procedure is utilized to streamline the entitlement/building plan review requirements. The Fast Track process utilizes a pre-development review process to identify incoming permits and direct them along a path of least resistance towards an efficient and timely issuance.

Project Coordinator

To coordinate the Fast Track process, the PDS Department created a Project Coordinator position to guide applicants through the permit process and inform them of steps necessary to comply with local permit regulations. The Project Coordinator carries the Fast Track applications from the pre-application screening discussions through the approval process, and into follow-up and enforcement of permit conditions.

Computerized Permit Tracking

The PDS department's Permit Plan tracking system has also helped to expedite the permitting process by making immediately available current project and permit information. The Permit Plan tracking systems allows all of the permit review departments access to information entered at any terminal tied into the City's computer network. The tracking system provides staff members working in separate permit departments access to the same on-screen information and eliminates the need to copy and circulate application materials among several departments. In addition, applicants may track the progress of their permits on-line by accessing the City's web page.

CONCLUSIONS

With the new organization and processes in place, the City has both reduced permit cycle times and strengthened its relationship with the small business community. Furthermore, the new processes have allowed the Department to offer new and expanded services with current resources.



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"Partnerships always make the best practices. Our efforts to work with the small businesses who rely on our planning and development services staff has been a win-win. Boise's one-stop shop provides better service for these businesses, while making our city business more productive."

Program has been running three+ years

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