

# Tampa



# Open for Business

Report from the Mayor's  
Economic Competitiveness Committee



April 2016  
Update

**Mayor Bob Buckhorn**  
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**[www.tampagov.net](http://www.tampagov.net)**

Most of the recommendations of the Mayor’s Economic Competitiveness Committee have been implemented while others are in progress.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS: CODES AND ORDINANCES (1-11)**

### **1. Create a Single Comprehensive Construction Technical Standard**

#### **Challenge:**

Technical standards used for site plan and building plan review are located in many different codes sections in the City Code. Conflicts exist in the Code, ranging from definitions to development standards, since the codes were not written in an integrated fashion. Resolving these conflicts takes time and can cause delays.

#### **Recommendation:**

Compile all Construction Technical Standards into a single document to complement consolidated Land Development regulations, to include the following:

- Ch. 5 - Building Code
- Ch. 13 - Tree and Landscaping Code
- Ch. 14 - Fire Prevention
- Ch. 17.5 - Planning and Land Development
- Ch. 20.5 – Signs
- Ch. 21 – Stormwater
- Ch. 22 - Streets and Sidewalks
- Ch. 23 – Subdivision
- Ch. 25 – Transportation
- Ch. 26 - Solid Waste

#### **Status: UNDERWAY**

As the consolidation of the land development code is in its final stages, efforts over the next several months will be to review the construction technical standard consolidation. After extensive study, staff is preparing a major rewrite of the Chapter 13 – Tree and Landscape provisions (merging it with Chapter 27) in preparation for public and industry input.

### **2. Consolidate Land Development Code and Establish a Single Authority**

#### **Challenge:**

Historically, the City of Tampa has prepared, adopted, and amended land development regulations as part of “stand-alone” ordinances on a subject-by-subject basis. Many of these ordinances have been similarly codified as “stand-alone” chapters in the Code of Ordinances. This practice has resulted in regulations that are not fully integrated, which lack consistent authority, conflict in parts, duplication and overlap, and general difficulty of use.

#### **Recommendation:**

“Re-organize/consolidate land development regulations, and identify Comprehensive Plan policies that are regulatory. Evaluate whether to change each identified policy to a land development regulation. A unified code leaves less conflict in interpretation and reduces the “unknowns” for developers and the general public.”

**Status: ONGOING**

Consolidation effort with most codes is complete. Others being evaluated for inclusion into new “Zoning and Land Development” code.

**3. Vest Entitlements Earlier in the Process**

**Challenge:**

The inability to rely on specific and certain entitlements sooner in the development process creates undue financial risk. It is a particularly sensitive situation in the current economy to have gone through zoning and site plan approval with no entitlement vesting until building permit. In Hillsborough County, a project becomes vested with an approval of the Preliminary Site Plan. Concurrency and any improvements are agreed upon. It is at this stage that a customer gets a better understanding of the issues and costs before proceeding with full engineering and architecture designs. It also allows the customer to finalize their financing if necessary. This will also reduce the upfront cost burden and speed re-zoning process and increase inventory of land ready for development and broaden the base of potential developers.

**Recommendation:**

The City should seek a process, policy or code revisions that allows a development to vest property entitlements for uses, densities and intensities sooner in the overall development process.

**Status: TO BE ADDRESSED IN THE FUTURE**

Several code revisions are complex and time consuming efforts. This recommendation will be addressed at a later date.

**4. Create Flexible Codes**

**Challenge:**

The City’s zoning procedures and processes are unwieldy and create barriers to many types of development. The codes are out-dated and seem to be directed at developments that are not reflective of the current or projected market conditions. As a result, developers and property owners are faced with meeting unnecessary requirements. The City’s urban landscape varies, requiring different approaches and processes to promote development that is in harmony with the surrounding neighborhoods, yet responsive to market demands. City codes and associated procedures should reflect these varying needs.

**Recommendation:**

The Committee recommends that the City’s zoning code and associated processes be more flexible to reflect variations in community preferences and market forces. Also, the committee has several specific code/process recommendations to improve the process immediately:

**Status: PARTIALLY COMPLETE AND ONGOING**

*(items “in progress” will be implemented by specific geographic area, i.e. updates to overlay districts and special districts as first phase, then possibly city-wide)*

Items and code sections below have been revised to implement recommendation:

- Recommend RO, RO-1 and CN revert to being Euclidean districts (non-site plan). **COMPLETE**
- Reduce side setbacks in RM Districts to 5'. **COMPLETE**
- Allowing the use of a 6' high PVC/Alternative material solid fence in lieu of wall in 15' buffer areas. **COMPLETE**
- Reduce drive aisle width from 26' to 24'. **COMPLETE**
- CBD Signs: Allow 2 square feet per linear building frontage for building signs on tower (top) of tall (high-rise) buildings. **COMPLETE**

Items and code sections below are processing in current cycle:

- Study methods to improve/provide incentives for better lighting and streetscape standards in the CBD. *New CBD Code set for 1<sup>st</sup> reading on 5/12/16; 2<sup>nd</sup> reading on 5/26/16.*
- CBD Signs: Standards should be relative to height of building i.e. signage for podium (pedestrian or street level) versus the tower (top of building). *New CBD Code set for 1<sup>st</sup> reading on 5/12/16; 2<sup>nd</sup> reading on 5/26/16.*
- Update/merge Bonus Criteria (27-328) using methodology in CBD periphery calculation (27-329). **COMPLETE**
- Allow more flexibility for "change of use" or "reuse" of existing structures with some building additions/increase in intensity. Allow for more flexibility in reuse of buildings. Tentative public hearings in July/August 2016 to adopt updates to parking regulations and new valet permit process/criteria.
- Use Seminole Heights form based code as a guide for development of parking trade-offs and parking space reduction to better incorporate buffering and parking areas, and reduce conflicts between zoning and landscape buffers as well as improving the interface between residential/commercial uses. Tentative public hearings in July/August 2016 to adopt updates to parking regulations and new valet permit process/criteria.
- Remove code requirement to provide parking for uses in the Central Business District (let market dictate # of spaces needed). Downtown Partnership currently studying nationwide parking strategies. City Planning staff is engaged.

## **5. Expand Administrative Approvals / Waivers**

**Challenge:**

The City has many professionals whose expertise in their fields can be better utilized; therefore, the role of City Council needs to be re-assessed where appropriate to allow for additional types of administrative approvals, which will improve consistency of decision making and simplify the complexity and cost of the public hearing process.

**Recommendation:**

Broaden ability for administrative waivers and approvals (not related to specific safety or health issues) for certain standards when needed to make common sense decisions.

- Examine and more clearly define special uses by scale/intensity of use. Allow administrative review/approval for small to medium scale/intensity uses, and have larger scale/intensity uses continue as a City Council public hearing.
- Set a formula for the overall reduction of parking ratios for development that:
  - is a mixed use development, and
  - located within ¼ mile of transit stop, or
  - located within ¼ mile of a public parking lot/garage
- Examine allowance of local street access from non-residential parking lots. Set parameters for local street access based on history of waivers granted.

**Status: TO BE ADDRESSED IN THE FUTURE**

As all codes undergo revisions attention will be given to the appropriate use of administrative waivers.

**6. Modify Chapter 21 – Stormwater Code**

**Challenge:**

Stormwater design requirements need to be reviewed. At times ad-hoc requirements have been applied for attenuation at excessive volumes (sometimes doubling or tripling what is necessary) to address known or existing local drainage problems (not project related).

**Recommendation:**

Publish the “redline list” of properties on web. Review current code to find legitimate engineering solutions to stormwater issues that are not overly expensive. Rules should not shift past stormwater problems to new development (i.e. “last one in pays for everyone”).

*Specific recommended change:* Repeal 51% impervious rule for retention on single-family development.

**Status: UNDERWAY**

The Stormwater engineering staff is currently reviewing their Chapter 21 technical standard and red line list criteria in the hopes of addressing some of the recurring flooding challenges

**7. Modify Chapter 22 - Streets and Sidewalks**

**Challenge:**

Sidewalk requirements affect a full spectrum of development types and issues, including dense urban development, single-family development, affordable housing, incomplete connectivity networks, and historic districts. The cost of constructing sidewalks increases the cost of building affordable housing. The required construction of a sidewalk along the parcel frontage is an ad hoc approach for providing a safe, walkable community – at best it creates an incomplete sidewalk network. The process is far too expensive and onerous. The in-lieu fee for not

constructing a sidewalk (\$29/lf) is excessive.

**Recommendation:**

Review the requirements for sidewalk construction. Revise sidewalk provisions to allow exemptions when no sidewalk exists adjacent to a development site. Reconsider the allowance of paver installation as an alternative material. Consider simplifying sidewalk alternative review process and expanding the types of waivers that can be requested.

**Status: TO BE ADDRESSED IN THE FUTURE**

Several code revisions are complex and time consuming efforts. This recommendation will be addressed at a later date.

**8. Modify Chapters 17.5, 22, 25 - Transportation Codes**

**Challenge:**

There exists a great opportunity to re-evaluate new Transportation manual requirements for traffic studies - in light of HB 7207. There is concern that new regulations will significantly increase cost of development/redevelopment, and discourage adaptive reuse/redevelopment due to: cost to complete study; time to complete study and negotiate mitigation; mitigation costs unknown at time of feasibility analysis.

**Recommendation:**

Simplify and revise TCEA traffic study threshold to minimize negative impact on small business. Get rid of capacity-based traffic analyses altogether. In a City of Tampa's size and aspiration, congestion should be a welcomed part of vibrancy and economic competitiveness. Limit transportation review to avoiding safety-related issues and minimizing (not necessarily avoiding 100% in every situation) operational issues. Also make it policy that even those items are relevant in the project's block faces only. Avoid circumstances where, for example, queuing into a City right-of-way at a project entrance drives site design to the point where building square footage or any part of aesthetic appeal is compromised.

**Status: TO BE ADDRESSED IN THE FUTURE**

Several code revisions are complex and time consuming efforts. This recommendation will be addressed at a later date.

**9. Modify Chapter 13 - Tree and Landscape Code**

**Challenge:**

There is no question that trees are a lightning rod for passionate discussion. An intelligent discourse is needed if the City is to improve the way tree protection and the development processes are integrated to result in a beneficial outcome for both. Customers involved in residential improvement and building provided a great deal of the negative feedback on the subject of the restrictive and expensive process and regulations involving protected and grand trees. A few years ago, the Tampa Bay Builders Association lobbied City Council and staff to conduct a tree canopy study. We believe the results of this study should be part of future discussions regarding proposed process and regulation changes moving forward. Monitor the Tree Canopy Study (due Fall 2012) and structure amendments to Chapter 13 that establish goals for canopy structure by land use category and establish a 5 year review cycle of the

Code to coincide with updates to the Canopy Study. Generally the industry is now much more tuned to sustainability / green space and other goals that previously had to be regulated out of developers.

**Recommendation:**

Some of the specific areas to be reviewed include the following:

- Landscaping requirement mandating 6 foot spacing of pavement from tree, while parking lot design allows for 8 foot wide tree island (i.e., 4 foot spacing).
- Need for more flexibility regarding Grand Tree preservation. Laurel Oak should not qualify for grand tree status, as it deteriorates more quickly with age.
- Formalize flexibility for City staff to approve removal of grand trees that aren't aesthetically superior and that can be demonstrated to significantly curtail the feasibility or potential of a proposed use. Allow for balancing of multiple important interests.
- Move administrative review authority for grand trees on private property to the Construction Services Division or to zoning administrator.
- Amend tree requirements in the CBD and other urban neighborhoods, where urban redevelopment is desired. Current requirements regarding removing trees are unrealistic, inflexible, unnecessarily expensive, and often delay the approval process.
- Rescind 50% tree preservation requirement in certain areas of the City. It's a suburban standard that should not be in place in all areas of the City. Allow administrative approval to remove additional percentage with specified criteria, such as the following:
  - "Zoning Administrator may approve an alternative tree protection plan. In evaluating such requests, the zoning administrator shall give priority for protection of:
    - canopy trees;
    - native trees;
    - larger caliper trees;
    - trees in good condition; and
    - grand trees."
- Focus emphasis on protection of the City's tree canopy versus per tree. Often fewer trees that are at critical / functional site locations are more effective at maintaining a high site development aesthetic.
- Focus on the volume and health of the urban forest as a whole; place priority on drawing private investment and planting into public rights-of-way and in the public realm, i.e. set goals / designs for street cross sections.
- Overall cleanup of current chapter 13. It is not well organized and much of the language is vague.

**Status: PARTIALLY COMPLETE AND ONGOING**

Planning and Urban Design (Zoning Administrator) in cooperation with the Legal Department, through a legal services contract completed a complete audit (“Phase I”) of COT’s tree/landscape/wetland regulations, including interviews with interviews of internal and external stakeholder groups and research of and comparison to other Florida cities/counties regulations. The audit is complete. The audit report was used to guide the crafting of the new regulations (“Phase II”). This phase is underway and will include Public information workshops, City Council Workshop and Public Hearings for adoption.

**10. Create Alternative Designs and Code Requirements for Solid Waste Standards (Chapters 26 and 27)**

**Challenge:**

The City’s solid waste service delivery procedures sometimes dictate the building orientation and site access and can impact other requirements, such as parking, particularly in the older, more urbanized and developed areas of the City. Such areas have been targeted for infill development, consistent with the vision expressed in the Comprehensive Plan, but the solid waste requirements tend to discourage infill projects.

**Recommendation:**

New and revised codes would encourage flexibility in service provisions that reflect the more concentrated and dense urban environment. This would also encourage continued redevelopment of urban areas.

**Status: TO BE ADDRESSED IN THE FUTURE**

Several code revisions are complex and time consuming efforts. This recommendation will be addressed at a later date.

**11. Consolidate Code Enforcement Standards into a Single Document (Chapter19)**

**Challenge:**

There are proposals to consolidate land development regulations into a single document as well as consolidating construction technical standards into a single document. This addresses the building and construction end of the process but not ongoing maintenance and enforcement issues.

**Recommendation:**

Expand the scope of Chapter 19 to include provisions for safety and maintenance of various systems in existing private property, including drainage, parking, trees and landscaping, in order to complement the consolidation of the land development codes and construction technical standards.

**Status: TO BE ADDRESSED IN THE FUTURE**

Several code revisions are complex and time consuming efforts. This recommendation will be addressed at a later date.

## RECOMMENDATIONS: PROCESS AND TECHNOLOGY (12-30)

### 12. Purchase and Install a New Comprehensive Permitting System

**Challenge:**

The City's permitting software and associated applications are outdated causing considerable time delays and information gaps that can add costs and frustrate customers. The system needs to be re-evaluated and updated on several levels. The overall permitting workflow system, on-line permitting applications, electronic scanning and documents storage systems, web-based customer service tools and associated staff training and support all need to be updated to support development review requirements for the next several years. Continued lack of investment in this area will place the City of Tampa at a major disadvantage to neighboring communities.

**Recommendation:**

The system must be capable of integrating all entitlement and construction permitting processes. It must support robust online business services, e.g. planning, permitting, inspections, etc. and be capable of providing enhanced services, e.g. electronic plan/document review, GIS mapping interface, etc.

**Status: COMPLETE AND ONGOING**

Recommendation has been implemented. The City's Accela permitting software went "live" on January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2015. All planning, entitlement, and permitting processes are now handled through Accela, and all inspections are scheduled through Accela.

### 13. Utilize Latest Business Support Technology

**Challenge:**

The City's business support technologies are outdated causing unnecessary time delays that can add costs and frustrate customers. The technologies need to be re-evaluated and updated on several levels. Associated staff training and support need to be updated to support development review requirements for the next several years. Continued lack of investment in this area will place the City of Tampa at a major disadvantage to neighboring communities.

**Recommendation:**

Updating the business support structure will ensure the City keeps pace with demand and is able to process permit applications efficiently and effectively. The City should proceed with the installation of multiple cashiers at the Construction Services Center to facilitate more efficient processing. The staff should be provided with enhanced computer and communication equipment. All field staff should be provided with mobile technologies, i.e. tablet/laptop computers, smart phones, etc.

**Status: COMPLETE AND ONGOING**

Most Planning and Development Managers, Supervisors, and key project management staff have been supplied with iPad tablets for mobile use in meetings, at City Council and other board hearings, community meetings, and in the field. Inspectors have been supplied with iPhones, upgraded laptops, and many with iPad tablets. Technology for the entire staff is upgraded yearly as budget allows. Other new software in Human Resources, Revenue and Finance, and City Clerk's office has allowed staff to be more efficient and timely in their job performance. All staff has gone through excessive training for proper use in each software module.

**14. Develop and Provide a More User Friendly Website**

**Challenge:**

There is a lack of available information and needed process applications on line. Also, the City's current web site for construction and building does take advantage of a variety of available capabilities, but more customer-focused services are needed.

**Recommendation:**

The website must include all entitlement and construction permitting information, processes and services. It should provide access through a single dedicated portal that is fully integrated into the City's general website, as well as linking to all related citizen and business services. One way to quickly make an impact on the development review process is to add more information and applications on the City's website to help applications better navigate through the process. Such information would include a flow chart of the development review process, simple customer friendly instructions, helpful tips and frequently asked questions, easy to find department descriptions, staff contact lists, etc

**Status: COMPLETE AND ONGOING**

The cities Tampa.gov website has recently been re-designed to be easier and more intuitive to use. The social media aspects of the website have been enhanced and expanded. Accela Citizen Access (ACA), the recently developed Contractors App, Civic Insight and City webpage dash boards achieve this recommendation.

**15. Maintain Addressing Function with Permitting Service**

**Challenge:**

The process of obtaining a valid address is a vital component in the permitting process. It requires coordination with Hillsborough County 911 to ensure no duplication of street names or numbers that could confuse emergency responders. The process must also be completed quickly, since development applications cannot be submitted to the Construction Services Division without a valid address. For years, the City has assigned addresses directly, coordinating first with the affected agencies and ensuring customers are given the most expedient service possible.

**Recommendation:**

There have been preliminary plans to transfer the City’s addressing function to the Hillsborough County 911 Department, which would cause delays in the permit approval process. Customers would have to request an address directly from the County and could not submit an application until they received the valid address. To ensure there are no service breakdowns or customer service implications, the Committee recommends a careful review of any transfer of the addressing function to Hillsborough County 911 and the development of a mitigation plan to address potential impact on the entitlement and permitting processes.

**Status: COMPLETE**

Addressing function has been kept in Planning and Development and is now fully embedded in the entitlement and permitting process.

**16. Provide “One-Stop Shop” Process Strategy**

**Challenge:**

The development review process requires staff input from several departments, which are located in several locations in the City. Customers are sometimes required to travel between the Construction Services Center and City Hall to address permit review requirements. This can be especially inconvenient if a permit application triggers a change in use, thereby requiring variances, transportation reviews or a rezoning.

**Recommendation:**

To expedite reviews and provide a more pleasant customer service experience, the Committee recommends establishing and maintaining a single point of entry into the regulatory system to serve the entitlement and permitting services. There should be a single, convenient location for the public to transact business with the City. The City should co-locate all relevant staff and services into this location. All codes, information and procedures should be consolidated and integrated into a single unified process.

**Status: COMPLETE AND ONGOING**

The Divisions of Land Development Coordination, Architectural Review and Historic Preservation, Construction Services, and Planning and Urban Design have all been located to 1400 North Boulevard. Right of Way Permitting staff and all related functions have been transferred to the Planning & Urban Design Division, housed in the Development Services Center. ROW permitting has also been configured and incorporated in Accela. Review staff from the Water and Waste Water departments who conduct utilization review have been co-located to the building as well.

In addition, the Business Operating Permits (chapter 6) issued by the city are now being submitted at the Development Services Center. Applications include the review for zoning compliance, possible change of use, pursuant to building, construction and land development regulations.

## **17. Develop Service Goals and Performance Standards Metrics**

### **Challenge:**

Customers should have a reasonable expectation as to the time required by the City to complete the permit or entitlement review process. This will allow the customer to plan their financing, construction or development plans accordingly. Service goals and metrics will help to establish predictable turn-around times for plan review, improve quality, and instill a more professional approach by staff, which in turn will result in greater customer satisfaction.

### **Recommendation:**

To improve the level of predictability, the City should develop goals and standards based on customer needs and stakeholder input for the entitlement and construction permitting processes. There should be metrics for intake (application process and permit issuance); review (plan check and document processing) and inspection (field verification).

### **Status: COMPLETE AND ONGOING**

Recommendation is substantially completed - Construction Services has collaborated with the major development and construction stakeholders and established reasonable service goals for the major permitting and inspection processes, i.e. intake, review and inspection. Statistical and management reports are being developed to determine and evaluate overall performance. In addition, many of the metrics regarding the entitlement processes, i.e. departmental review, notice, public hearing, etc. are already established in local ordinances.

As a result of the new Accela permitting system implementation, many processes were consolidated and streamlined. As a result, the Construction Services Division modified and updated its' KPIs to reflect the new and revised services, and those metrics are now published on a monthly basis on the City's website.

## **18. Enhance Site Plan Review Process**

### **Challenge:**

The site plan review process should be fully integrated with the entitlement process so as to facilitate timely and orderly reviews. The process should remove requirements for excessive engineering details or information that is not essential to evaluate a site plan.

### **Recommendation:**

Eliminate duplicative requirements between entitlement and construction permitting process i.e. redundant subdivision requirements for townhouse projects and merge reviews when possible, (e.g. zoning) in order to maximize efficiency and familiarity with project.

### **Status: TO BE ADDRESSED IN THE FUTURE**

As all codes undergo revisions attention will be given to eliminating duplicative and redundant processes and reviews. Several code revisions are complex and time consuming efforts. This recommendation will be addressed at a later date.

## **19. Focus on Cost Efficient Changes**

### **Challenge:**

Changes to the development review process should be based on customer/citizen needs. Financial impacts should be considered and costs minimized, wherever possible. The cost- benefit ratio of the operation should be evaluated based on current market conditions and adjusted accordingly.

### **Recommendation:**

A general cost recovery fee strategy should be implemented with emphasis on efficiency and cost reduction first. Cost for specific customer benefit should be recovered, i.e. project plan review, inspections, etc. However, the cost for public-at-large benefit, i.e. general information, planning activities, etc., should not be included in the cost recovery formula.

### **Status: COMPLETE AND ONGOING**

Recommendation is substantially completed - With assistance from the Budget Office, Construction Services has established a special revenue fund and its' permit fee schedule is based on a cost recovery model. Recent budget reports indicate the Division's revenue is covering cost and enabling the Division to develop a modest fund balance.

## **20. Establish Expedited Review Services**

### **Challenge:**

An efficient permitting process is critical to a successful economic development program. Cities such as Atlanta, Charlotte, Dallas and Raleigh provide premium-based expedited permitting options for residential and/or commercial projects. Through these expedited processes, permitting approvals in competing jurisdictions are being obtained either same day or within a one week time frame – all without adding additional financial burden to the local government.

### **Recommendation:**

To remain competitive, the City of Tampa should establish a tiered development review process for standard and premium expedited review services as well as expedited inspection services. A standard expedited review would include no extra charges. This process is currently provided for affordable housing and green projects. It should be expanded to include projects that create a significant number of new jobs, e.g. Qualified Targeted Industries (QTI) projects and small miscellaneous projects. The premium expedited review would offer premium fee based service options at an additional charge. The services would include a guaranteed time certain permit review (i.e., comprehensive same day turnaround, or maximum one week turnaround). Premium service should not affect performance levels for reviews of standard tier projects. Expedited inspection services would be incentivize by providing inspections by appointment, guaranteed date/times, etc. for projects approved on first review.

**Status: COMPLETE AND ONGOING**

Recommendation is substantially completed – Construction Services has instituted “accelerated” review service at no extra charge as described above for projects that are approved as affordable housing, green or job creation projects. In addition, it has initiated premium “expedited” service for an additional fee of twice the plan review fee for both residential and commercial projects. Upon supervisory approval, the appropriate resources are made available without impacting the standard review processes. The client receives his plan review comments in approximately half the typical standard processing time.

**21. Provide Pre-Application Consulting/Review Services**

**Challenge:**

One of the largest complaints made of the City’s development review process is the uncertainty of the process requirements. When a property owner files for a permit and learns that the application triggers other code requirements, this causes significant delays or requirements for new studies, variances or a rezoning. By the time a customer is fully aware of the requirements, he/she has already invested time and money and the additional time and costs may cause financial impacts.

**Recommendation:**

As a service to customers (non-mandatory), provide pre-application technical assistance at no additional charge. The pre-application review should provide a concise checklist and guidelines and be easy to follow. This is a good time to screen applications for sufficiency and completeness prior to intake. For an additional fee, provide enhanced preliminary code review service (office and on-site) for conceptual projects.

**Status: COMPLETE AND ONGOING**

The city currently offers pre-application meetings at no charge to assist prospective clients in the development and permitting process. Afterwards, when the applicant is ready to submit for project permitting they may take advantage of a pre-plan review session. There is a cost for this second consultation. However, it answers a great many of the design, engineering and specific permitting questions proactively as the Development Services Center conducts several of these PPR’s per week.

**22. Provide Outreach, Training, and Education to Customers**

**Challenge:**

The permit and entitlement application processes can be confusing. Submittal requirements are not fully known at the time of application, particularly in the entitlement process, and could change as the various City departments review the application.

**Recommendation:**

Develop programs for Developers, Design Professionals, Contractors, Suppliers and Citizens that help them better understand the requirements of the development review process. Prepare user-friendly educational materials and make them strategically available, e.g. Home Depot, etc. Focus on who, what, where and when of permitting/inspections. Deliver regular training seminars in partnership with trade and professional associations (offer CEU's when possible). Offer programs on general and specific trade codes and standards and provide practical "How to" workshops and provide general public outreach, e.g. neighborhood meetings, etc.

**Status: COMPLETE AND ONGOING**

Prior to the city going live with Accela software staff provided hundreds of hours of training and education to the public. Online to tutorials were available as well as live, in house, hands on sessions. We are also working closely with Hillsborough and Pasco County training and providing education for their upcoming use of Accela programming.

As the ECC suggested revisions to the Zoning and Land Development Code were underway, the Planning and Urban Design manager and staff provided several workshop sessions in the various affected neighborhoods. This included the neighborhoods in the Seminole Heights.

We have recently implemented a Contractors App for improved communication and more efficient realization of project status. The city also implemented Civic Insight which allows citizens to view permit and development activity within their neighborhood or Council District.

Housing and Community Development has developed educational pamphlets on our various housing and mortgage assistance programs.

Educational materials are currently available. Efforts will take place in the future to reach out to the building suppliers to allow materials to be placed in their stores.

**23. Map All Workflow Processes**

**Challenge:**

It is important to provide customers with a clear understanding of the entitlement and permitting processes, including a workflow chart and organizational chart that is based on efficiency and a clear line of authority.

**Recommendation:**

As a way of educating customers on the general review process, the City should create and maintain a process flow chart for all processes and provide this information to the public. For the entitlement process, include the Subdivision, Rezoning, PD and Special Use review processes. For the construction permitting process, include the Residential - workflow case study and the Commercial - workflow case study. Follow up by implementing streamlining opportunities.

**Status: ONGOING**

Staff is reviewing and updating process workflows to reflect the various changes resulting from the new Accela permitting system implementation. Approximately 75% of the new processes have been updated and mapped with an expectation that all of them will be completed by Summer 2016.

**24. Improve Commercial Site Plan Review Process**

**Challenge:**

The current commercial site plan review process is fragmented and comprised of separate and independent review processes conducted by the various infrastructure departments. For example, Transportation: traffic analysis and right-of-way work; Water and Wastewater service: review and commitment; Stormwater: infrastructure review; and, Parks and Recreation Department: grand tree review.

**Recommendation:**

Departmental review processes should be integrated into a single, more consolidated framework.

**Status: COMPLETE**

The Construction Services division has recently hired several engineers and architects as plans reviewers. They are plans reviewers IV, who can review for all trades. This includes mechanical, building, electrical and plumbing.

All traffic analysis and right-of-way permitting staff and functions has been transferred to Planning and Urban Design Division. Grand tree review is also done in-house at the Development Services Center by the City's Planning and Urban Design Division, Natural Resources Section.

Water and wastewater service review and commitment letters are now and have been done at the development services Center. Personnel have been stationed permanently from those departments and embedded in our review process on site.

**25. Improve Fire Marshal Review and Coordination**

**Challenge:**

The review of commercial site plans can be delayed due to additional reviews conducted by the Fire Marshall. Inspectors need to pay more attention to turn-around times for plan review and inspections. Permit processes that involve the Fire Marshall's Office and other Departments need to be clarified and streamlined where possible.

**Recommendation:**

The Fire Marshal should establish performance measures for plan review and inspection services, with an objective of providing consistent and predictable response times and minimizing delays and disruptions. Standard Operating Procedures for assembly permits, fire watch and fire code compliance inspections shall be created, with a focus on eliminating duplicative review by other agencies and better coordination.

**Status: ONGOING**

Improve Fire Marshal Review and Coordination With the use of Accela software, tablets and laptop computers the fire marshal make complete inspections at a much quicker pace. They are also able to track project review times in Accela.

**26. Improve Water and Wastewater Service Application Review Process**

**Challenge:**

There is redundancy and duplication in applying for water and wastewater service commitments.

**Recommendation:**

Consolidate utility service applications in a single application and maintain a consistent process between departments. Require submission of utility service application/plans at time of permitting intake. Conduct parallel review of utility service application/plans at the one stop shop. Institute a reasonable utility application/plan review fee and limit collection of commitment fees to time of construction permit issuance. Repeal the policy that requires utility review of alterations to existing buildings that are not increasing service demand.

**Status: COMPLETE AND ONGOING**

Staff from Water and Waste Water departments who conduct utilization review have been co-located to 1400 North Boulevard to provide this service. The process to create a unified utility application is underway. Other recommendations are also being considered.

**27. Develop Standard Operating Procedures**

**Challenge:**

Map out the various review processes and identify where the application changes hands; how much time is typically needed. Identify steps that are redundant or unnecessary. Then develop service goals or performance standards for each of the services delivered based on customer needs, i.e. timeliness, quality and customer service.

**Recommendation:**

Create standardized operating procedures (SOP) for all entitlement and construction permitting business processes. The SOPs should include administrative/general business, intake permitting, plan review and inspection.

**Status: UNDERWAY**

The corresponding standard operating procedures are systematically being reviewed and updated to reflect the many changes resulting from the new Accela permitting system. Most of the SOPs have been reviewed and staff has begun the revision process with the expectation that all of them will be updated by Summer 2016.

## **28. Outsource Plan Reviews**

### **Challenge:**

Consider "outsourcing" plan reviews for the major departments with the exception of "Fire". There are plenty of qualified and certified professionals that can review plans for code, etc.

### **Recommendation:**

Establish performance standards and service levels for key processes. Supplement existing staff with third-party plan review and inspection service providers as needed to maintain service levels. Solicit and procure contract for supplemental service on an ongoing basis. The Plan Review services as performed by third party reviewers will be subject to the provisions as currently allowed in the Florida Statutes Chapter 481.222.

### **Status: COMPLETE AND ONGOING**

The Construction Services Division contracted with private sector plans reviewers beginning in 2014. The division is currently utilizing 3 contracted plans reviewers. Even though several vacant inspection and plans review positions have been filled the City shall continue to utilize contract employees to maintain service level goals as the economy experiences a rebound

## **29. Fee Review**

### **Challenge:**

To ensure impact and permit fees are fair and reasonable and reviewed regularly.

### **Recommendation:**

Establish a periodic review cycle for all entitlement, permitting and impact fees and perform the review with stakeholder input. Consider the financial impact and minimize cost when possible. The fee calculation methodology should be based on flexible building requirements, i.e. wastewater capacity fee for hi-rise buildings with booster pumps.

### **Status: ONGOING**

Several of our utility fees are embedded in the City's bonding programs and difficult to revise for specific periods of time. Utility fees are reviewed on a regular basis using rate/fee studies. The utility fees that are charged do not cover the actual costs for any particular utility service. Development and permitting fees are reviewed on a regular basis as well. The city has elected to not seek fee increases for construction services review or other zoning and entitlement reviews

## **30. Establish Permanent Stakeholder Advisory Group**

### **Challenge:**

The City needs to maintain effective communication with customers affected by the permit process and development regulations. A permanent Stakeholder

Advisory Committee (similar to the Mayor’s Economic Competitiveness Committee) could provide ongoing input and oversight of all development and permit processes.

**Recommendation:**

Consider establishing an advisory group composed of all major stakeholders to provide support and feedback as needed.

**Status: UNDERWAY**

Planning and Development staff meet regularly with the Tampa Bay Builders Association, THAN members and attend several neighborhood association meetings and forums as well as other citizen and developer associations. A single consolidated stakeholders group has not yet been established.

**RECOMMENDATIONS: STAFF AND ORGANIZATION (31-33)**

**31. Reorganize City Departments and Staff**

**Challenge:**

Planning and permit functions are fragmented. Planning functions and plan review functions should be consolidate from across City agencies into one “Planning and Development Department”. Merger would include relocating the planning/plan review personnel housed in Transportation, Solid Waste, Landscape/Natural Resources (Parks/CSD), Storm Water, and Utilities under the “Planning and Development Department”.

**Recommendation:**

Merge all entitlement and permitting staff into one department to complement consolidated codes, single authority and one-stop shop strategies and recommendations. Consolidate all staff authority into same department. Require several plan reviewer positions to have Design Professional experience and credentials, e.g. Florida registered architects and engineers. Reassign technology staff to provide dedicated support for newly consolidated department, its programs and services, e.g. new permitting system and new web services. Shift planning staff time and function on creative planning focused on bettering the urban environment rather than regulating the details of development

**Status: COMPLETE**

Staff from Transportation, Land Development Coordination, Planning and Development, Historic Preservation, Construction Services, Solid Waste, Landscape/Natural Resources (Parks/CSD), Technology and Innovation and Storm Water have been merged into the Development Services Center to operate the “one stop shop” at 1400 North Boulevard. Water and Waste Water departments who conduct utilization review have been co-located to 1400 North Boulevard to provide this service. Tampa Fire Marshal’s office is also co-located at the same facility to conduct their review and inspections.

**32. Assign Case Manager/Ombudsman to Projects**

**Challenge:**

Currently the review process goes through several departments within the City

structure, none of which have any connection, or do they effectively communicate with each other. The process is cumbersome, slow and customers have to satisfy requirements for comments in different fashions for each department. Establish one highly placed manager to oversee the entire permit review process, who has the power to mediate review issues between departments.

**Recommendation:**

Provide a single point of contact throughout entire process. The contact would provide direct guidance and facilitation of the project. Distinguish between Case Manager and Ombudsman role where the latter is higher-level staff empowered to mediate and make decisions across departmental lines. Staff should be technically skilled and directly involved in the review, not just troubleshooter. The case manager / ombudsman service should be based on customer/project needs, e.g. projects involving many agencies.

**Status: COMPLETE**

Planning and Development hired a Development Services Coordinator to fulfill many of the functions identified in this recommendation.

### **33. Improve City Staff Training**

**Challenge:**

The City staff is in the business of serving its customers and should welcome new business and new developments and view them as valued customers to be treated like any successful “for profit” business would treat its customers. Management needs to create a “service” mindset and instill a policy for quickly responding to phone calls and e-mails. The climate and mentality need to be focused around customer service.

**Recommendation:**

Create a customer centric work environment – one that instills a “Can-Do” attitude throughout the organization. Focus on delivering exceptional and extraordinary customer service. To achieve these objectives, implement ongoing mandatory customer service and team building staff training. Include training on effective employee communication and service delivery consistency.

**Status: COMPLETE AND ONGOING**

City staff is routinely required to attend several professional training and certification maintenance classes. The on line Customer Service Center and Accela software, as well as the Queue-flow system allows management to track volume and wait times in the DSC building. This allows management to monitor and keep complaints and communication disconnects to a minimum. Managers and supervisors also have regular meetings addressing customer service. The no cost pre-application meetings and subsequent pre-plan review session are specifically geared to improve customer service and attention.

## ITEMS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION:

### 1. Develop a Vision for Economic Development

**Challenge:**

The City needs to have a "vision" for the economic development. The Vision should encourage development in certain areas and focus on the type of development appropriate for the area. Create a code and process to build small "Main Street" type development, but also provides for major employment businesses. The codes and processes should be different to reflect the level of investment.

**Recommendation:**

Conduct a strategic assessment and service level analysis from the top down. Define mission and identify goals and objectives. Identify key business indicators and maintain continuous improvement initiatives.

**Status: ACTIVITIES UNDERWAY**

Several well thought out economic development activities have taken place, beginning with the recently updated Imagine 2040 Comprehensive Plan, the establishment of the West Tampa CRA , the partnership with the Downtown CRA, Hillsborough County and SPP for the billion dollar plus redevelopment of the south end of downtown , the partnership between the Channel District CRA and Port Tampa Bay for the improvement of the road network in the Channel District and the redevelopment of the land owned by Port Tampa Bay in the area. The City of Tampa is actively engaged with a variety of regional partners to promote job creation and the attraction to the area of major employers. The partnership between the City of Tampa, Hillsborough County, the Tampa Hillsborough EDC and the state of Florida has yielded impressive results. Several international corporations including Johnson & Johnson, Bristol Meyers Squibb, Depository Trust, White and Case and Quest Diagnostics have relocated operations to the area creating thousands of valuable jobs. A more complete description of City of Tampa economic development activities can be found on the City of Tampa website.

### 2. Create Riverwalk Overlay District

**Challenge:**

The City needs to find a way to create an active River Walk experience. Craft an overlay district for the Riverwalk and the river. Consider designating the river as an open/park space, which could help grant funding opportunities. The Overlay standards could facilitate the permitting of permanent and semi-permanent/temporary structures. The goal would be to have increased access and possibly allow minimal parking to facilitate loading and unloading for perspective retail/concession kiosks.

**Recommendation:**

Develop comprehensive and flexible regulations that capitalize on the unique characteristics of the river and riverfront. Promote utilization and redevelopment through public-private partnerships, incentives, etc.

**Status: COMPLETE**

There has been a great amount of activity with the river and Riverwalk as its focus creating an active River Walk experience. Various code changes (Alcohol Beverage – Specialty Center Designation) and major milestones for the actual Riverwalk itself have been achieved. The InVision plan supports development that makes the Hillsborough River the center of our downtown and encourages deeper connectivity with surrounding neighborhoods. Waterworks Park and the restoration of Ulele Spring on the east bank will soon be complimented on the west bank with the redesign and rebuilding of the Julian B. Lane Riverfront Park.

As InVision and the west Riverfront plan are completed and implemented the associated comprehensive plan amendments and land development codes will be revised for the entire river front area.

### **3. Encourage Use of Volunteers**

**Challenge:**

Due to budget restraints, build on attracting and retaining volunteers.

**Recommendation:**

Explore opportunities to use skilled volunteers to assist the City in carrying out its responsibilities.

**Status: COMPLETE AND ONGOING**

The city utilizes different volunteer groups for some of its programs. Recently Sustany had been administering it's Green Business Program. The use of other volunteer groups is being explored as well as partnering with the University of South Florida for green and sustainable programs and sea level rising and potential mitigation efforts to protect the City's infrastructure. The City's river cleanups and Clean Cities activities regularly tap into volunteer assistance. The City cosponsors EcoFest, a community event organized by Learning Gate Community School, the City of Tampa and the USF Patel College of Global Sustainability to celebrate the many businesses, organizations, and individuals in the Tampa Bay area dedicated to the principles of sustainability – Ecology, Equity and Economy. Hundreds of volunteers are used.

### **4. Digital Signs**

**Challenge:**

New technologies are reinventing “digital signs”. Digital signs offer greater efficiency in changing copy to market products. Sign code regulations need to be revised to allow digital signs.

**Recommendation:**

Study electronic signs, size, location, illumination, etc., as a separate issue from general sign study.

**Status: ADDITIONAL REVIEW UNDERWAY**

The use of digital signs has been allowed in identifying and detailing their regulatory requirements. Electronic message signs are permitted in place of part or all of the allowable sign area as provided in Chapter 27-289.6(a)(20)

**5. Review Central Business District Boundaries and Standards**

**Challenge:**

Examine development standards for the CBD and other priority redevelopment areas. Review the boundary of the CBD and consider expanding the area to facilitate growth and in-fill development goals. Consider eliminating the requirement for CBD public hearings for high rise buildings.

**Recommendation:**

Develop a mid to long-term strategy to address CBD boundaries to provide for a 20 year vision.

**Status: UNDERWAY**

Code revisions for the CBD have been set for public hearings in May, 2016.

**6. Site Plan Waivers**

**Challenge**

Many planned development (PD) rezonings are pursued for the primary purpose of obtaining waivers to the standard requirements of the Land Development Code. City Council routinely grants the same waivers to site plan districts. Therefore, we need to re-assess the role of City Council, where appropriate, and provide for administrative approvals of regulations that are consistently waived through the rezoning process.

**Recommendation:**

Research typical/repeat waivers granted in PD's (site plan zonings) and Special Uses and generate a list of waivers in context of the request made and list identifiable criteria for

**Status: FOCUS FOR A FUTURE EFFORT**

As all codes undergo revisions attention will be given to identifying the types of waivers that are approved by City Council to various code sections. Several code revisions are complex and time consuming efforts. This recommendation will be addressed at a later date.