

From: [Debbie Tarry](#)
To: [Heidi Costello](#)
Cc: [Pollie McCloskey](#)
Subject: FW: Adding planning staff
Date: Monday, May 23, 2022 1:09:37 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)

For Green Folder – Item 9(b)

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From: Debbie Tarry
Sent: Monday, May 23, 2022 1:07 PM
To: Betsy Robertson <brobertson@shorelinewa.gov>; John Norris <jnorris@shorelinewa.gov>
Cc: Rachael Markle <rmarkle@shorelinewa.gov>
Subject: RE: Adding planning staff

Betsy –

We will put this response in the Green Folder.

Rachael will be glad to answer questions that you have tonight also. The proposal of adding basically another full development review team to give us 5 teams, basically increases resources by 20%. As such staff is hopeful that this should translate into improving our review times by the same amount if current activity levels continue and once staff are fully in place and trained. We know that this will take some time of course to get all the pieces in place. As you saw in the staff report, single family remodels and additions are generally getting fully approved within the targeted deadline. Although this is the case, there is quite a bit of work that comes in as work without permit in this area and those take longer, because usually people have not put together plans, etc. that are required for the permit process. Single family new construction is currently taking longer.

In 2020 we were able to get some information on review times from other organizations in response to a question from Councilmember Roberts during the 2021-2022 budget process. Here is that information and of course this was during the first waves of the pandemic so comparisons could be different today.

Item/Issue: **6. Councilmember Roberts asked why Building & Inspections' Efficiency Measures on p. 221 of the 2021-2022 Proposed Biennial Budget book are projected to remain flat or go down as is the case of Average Weeks to 1st**

Review/Approve New Multi-Family permits. In addition, he would like to see a comparison of Shoreline's times to peer cities and a determination of the ideal turnaround time.

Question: Why are Building & Inspections' Efficiency Measures on p. 221 of the 2021-2022 Proposed Biennial Budget book projected to remain flat or go down as is the case of Average Weeks to 1st Review/Approve New Multi-Family permits? In addition, he would like to see a comparison of Shoreline's times to peer cities and a determination of the ideal turnaround time.

Department: Planning and Community Development

Final Answer: Building & Inspections' efficiency measures for average weeks to first review and approval for new commercial, new commercial tenant improvement, new multifamily, and new single family addition/remodel permits are projected to remain flat with 2019 actual data due to the uncertainty of COVID-19. Because 2020 is an outlier year with much of construction operations being shut down and delayed for a couple months in the spring, Planning & Community Development would like to gather more data before making further assumptions about permit turnaround time in 2020 and in future years.

The average weeks to first review and approval for new single family permits is projected to decline in 2022 to be on par with new commercial permit turnaround times, as Planning & Community Development expects to have additional review and inspections staff hired and trained at that point, which is expected to improve those turnaround times. Additionally, the new townhouse developments were being tracked as single-family permits. A new category, Townhouse, has been created to track these projects separately. Townhouse projects are generally more complex than single family projects, therefore lengthening the average review times for the single-family category.

Regarding comparisons to peer cities on permit turnaround times, the Planning & Community Development Department has conducted some initial research and data gathering, as this data is unfortunately not aggregated in a single place. Further data collection would require the development of a survey to be distributed to cities in Washington, which would be a long-term project. PCD's initial research shows the following insights:

Time to 1st review: The Cities of Seattle, Tacoma, Bothell, Mount Vernon, and Issaquah provide estimates and targets on the weeks to completing the first review for select permit types, but do not provide exact data. Based on these cities' estimates and permit types included, the City of Shoreline may take longer to complete the first review, though it can be difficult to compare the estimates and targets provided to the City of Shoreline's actual data.

- Commercial: The City of Seattle estimates that new building, multifamily, and commercial permits will take approximately 4 weeks to first review. The City of Tacoma's target for completing first review for commercial new building permits is 8 weeks, with most permits meeting these targets in the past six months. The City of Bothell estimates 5 weeks for the 1st review for commercial and multifamily new construction permits.
- Tenant improvement: The City of Bothell estimates 2 to 3 weeks for the first review for tenant improvements depending on the complexity of the project.
- Multifamily: The City of Seattle's estimates for multifamily permits is the same

as their commercial estimate at approximately 4 weeks to first review. The City of Bothell's estimates for multifamily construction are also the same as their estimates for commercial construction at about 5 weeks for the first review.

- Single family, new construction: The City of Seattle estimates that new building for single family residential or duplex permits range from 2 to 8 weeks to first review, depending on the complexity of the building. The City of Tacoma's target for residential new building permits is 4 weeks, with most permits meeting these targets in the past six months. The City of Bothell estimates 3 weeks for the first review single family new construction.
- Single family, addition/remodel: The City of Seattle estimates that addition and alteration permits for all building types range from 2 to 8 weeks to first review, depending on complexity. The City of Tacoma's target for residential alteration permits is 3 weeks, with most permits meeting these targets in the past six months. The City of Bothell estimates 2 to 3 weeks for the first review for single family addition/remodel permits.

Time to approval: The Cities of Bellevue, Seattle, and Tacoma provide a variety of actual and estimated data on time to approval and/or issuance of select permits. Please note that there is typically some time between when a city has approved or completed a permit and when an applicant comes to pick up the permit (issuance), so not

all measures here are exact comparisons.

- Commercial: Bellevue's data for the past year reports that it takes major commercial permits an average of 52.5 weeks to complete, and 22.8 for medium commercial new building projects. The City of Seattle's actual data on issued permits in 2019 shows that it took an average of 53.16 weeks to issue new commercial permits in 2019. The City of Tacoma reports that most permits issued in the past 6 months for commercial new buildings took 49 weeks. The City of Shoreline's average approval time of 26.8 weeks is noticeably shorter than these estimates.
- Tenant improvement: Bellevue reports an average of 4.4 weeks to complete basic tenant improvement permits and 10 weeks for more complex tenant improvement permits. The City of Seattle reports that it took an average of 4.89 weeks to issue commercial tenant improvement permits in 2019. Shoreline's average time to approval is higher than these estimates at 11.42 weeks.
- Multifamily: The City of Seattle's data shows that it took an average of 49.71 weeks to issue new multifamily permits. Shoreline is quicker than the City of Seattle on this turnaround time at 42.29 weeks on average.
- Single family, new construction: Bellevue's data shows that it takes 22.5 weeks on average to complete a permit for a single-family new building. Seattle reports an average of 42.92 weeks to issuance for new single-family permits, and Tacoma reports that it takes most new residential building permits 44 weeks to issuance. At 31.13 weeks on average, Shoreline takes longer than the City of Bellevue on this turnaround time but appears quicker than Seattle or Tacoma.
- Single family, addition/remodel: Depending on the complexity of the addition/remodel, Bellevue reports that it takes an average between 10.6 and 21.8 weeks to complete a single-family addition/remodel permit. Seattle reports an average of 5.78 weeks to issuance for these kinds of permits and Tacoma reports that most permits of this type take about 21 weeks to issue. Shoreline's data, 9.48 weeks on average, shows a faster turnaround time on single-family addition/remodel permits compared to Bellevue and Tacoma, but slower than Seattle.

Ideal turnaround times are in the eye of the customer. We are able to offer a version of ideal permit turnaround times with expedited review. Shoreline “pre-COVID” processed

Over the Counter (same day) and Express Permits (1-3 day turn around for Single Family and 1-5 day turn around for Commercial) building, fire, and wastewater permits. That most likely is meeting most people’s definition of ideal.

Without a comprehensive study across the region that includes defining the data points and factors it is very difficult to impossible to compare jurisdictions. Factors include: staffing levels (including vacancies, leave taken); permit volume; level of experience of staff; training/meeting time tracking verses time spent in review; level of review specificity; and codified procedural differences. Another factor is age of the jurisdiction. Some jurisdictions have been in business for decades and have well-oiled manuals, processes, codes, specifications and plans. Other jurisdictions are still developing that information while they are reviewing permits and as their jurisdiction grows and evolves.

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From: Betsy Robertson <brobertson@shorelinewa.gov>
Sent: Saturday, May 21, 2022 7:26 PM
To: Debbie Tarry <dtarry@shorelinewa.gov>; John Norris <jnorris@shorelinewa.gov>
Subject: Adding planning staff

I understand 17 weeks is the target, but that still seems like a really long time. Maybe not for a big development, but for single family projects in particular. With these additional positions, how do we anticipate the average time dropping? How does 17 weeks compare to other municipalities of similar size? And should we be considering methods to get that number even lower?

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