

Dear Duluth Builders,

With spring still on the horizon, I hope you are all as busy as we are!

During the last few weeks we in Building Safety have been defining our priorities and assessing our processes with the goal of providing the best customer service possible. A significant aspect of customer service is permitting turn around times. Reducing wait times for assistance in the Building Safety office and eliminating repeat visits are also goals.

We have several new ideas that we will implement on Monday April 21st which we believe will improve the timeliness and accuracy of the permitting and plan review process. Our intent is to use these processes for 90 days and at the end of that period evaluate the success and make changes if needed. We will need your help, and, at least in the beginning, your patience while we perfect these routines.

Checklists

We have developed detailed checklists for use by applicants and their plan preparers as well as by our front counter staff. As you assemble the permit submittal package, please use these lists to make sure all components are included and come to Building Safety fully prepared. Use the checklists to make sure you have what you need when you come in to make your applications. If items listed on the checklist are not provided in the submittal package, the Permit Technicians at the front counter will not accept your application and plans. Our intent is to avoid accepting incomplete plans and clogging the plan review pipeline. Please help us avoid those situations. We want as much as you do for projects to run smoothly from the start.

Contact Info

In our experience, email is the best method of delivering plan review comments, so a form has been created which gathers email and other contact info for owners and applicants. Email contact information will be required for all projects, with exceptions only when no email address exists. It will be our routine to communicate plan review comments to the architect if one is involved, the applicant and we will cc the owner whenever possible. This keeps everyone in the loop on the progress of the project and gets the information to you as quickly as possible.

Drop Box Submittal Option

We have a new option for making application for customers who are confident that their submittal package is complete and who choose not to wait in line for a Permit Technician. It will be critical that all items required are submitted, otherwise projects will be delayed. Instructions for drop box submittals are available in the office. Basically, you'll fill out a checklist, provide contact info and a signature and leave the plans in the designated drop box in the Building Safety lobby. A permit tech will call you within a few days to let you know whether your application was complete and accepted. You will always be able to make a face-to-face application if that is your choice. Stop in or contact us if you would like more information about this option.

Better Pre-application Tracking of Project

We have developed a method which we hope will shorten the time you spend at the permit counter on repeat visits. When you come in to start an application for a project, you can expect one of the permit techs to go through your submittal package and the detailed checklist. If everything is in order, you can expect your application to be accepted and the permitting process to begin. If items are missing, you will keep your plans and application and you will receive a copy of the checklist with every missing item indicated. The permit techs will also keep a copy of the checklist and a record of your visit. When you return to the office with the required additional information, only the items indicated as missing the first

time will be re-checked. Even if you are working with a different permit tech, you will not have to start the application review process over again.

Meetings

For commercial and multi-family residential projects, we believe pre-application meetings are positive and result in better projects and smoother plan review and permitting. We appreciate the opportunity to meet one on one with design professionals, contractors and developers. Please continue to bring your projects to us prior to finalization.

Meetings do use a lot of staff time, so we are making some changes to our meeting routine.

- Pre-application meetings will be scheduled on Wednesdays only.
- The standard length of meetings will be 30 minutes. If you have a project you know will take longer, we'll be flexible, but let us know up front what to expect.
- Please request meetings no later than Friday of the previous week.
- Please come to these meetings as prepared as possible. Please do your research. Compile concise questions; bring plans that are as well developed as possible.
- Before the meeting, make sure you have considered all applicable codes and sections within. For example, make sure you have read the accessibility code and know the scope and technical requirements for accessibility.
- Continue to schedule pre-app meetings by contacting Kim Zeleznikar or Wendy Rannenber.

We think these changes will result in better meetings and better use of our time and yours.

Plans Examiners

Plans Examiner's top priority must be plan review. Plans Examiners will be changing our daily schedules, blocking as much time as possible for plan review. This means that, as much as we enjoy doing it, answering code questions, researching building history, and sorting out conundrums of all kinds, will have to be placed second to plan review on our list of priorities. Please continue to pose challenging questions to us. Just realize we might not be able to jump on these kinds of things as quickly as you and we would like. Remember, too, that Duane Lasley, the Building Official, is the final authority on code interpretations, so consider contacting him, too with those code related questions.

Scheduled Plan Reviews

We are implementing a new system of scheduling the time when plan reviews will be done. Once the project is scheduled, customers can know which week their project is scheduled for review. This allows us to arrange our time most efficiently and provides the customer a time frame for expecting plan review comments or approval.

All of the new forms you will need are attached in pdf to this email or are available in the office. If you have any questions about the new forms, please contact us.

Please share with us your comments and observations as we implement these new ideas. We are anxious to learn from you in the industry how we might serve you and your clients best.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation in this effort. We are committed to making significant improvements in the permitting and plan review process.

Best Regards,

Building Safety Permitting and Plan Review staff.

Bill
Karen
Ellen
Kim
Wendy
Cindy H
Duane

Available checklists and worksheets:

[Commercial Intake Checklist Spring 2008](#)

[Residential Intake Checklist Spring 2008](#)

[Deck Permit Application Packet 2007](#)

[Project Information Worksheet Spring 2008](#)

[Project Information Worksheet Spring 2008](#)