



The Plans Examiner

Public Works Permitting: Timely. Reliable. Practical

On April 16, 2009, Council directed the public works bureaus and the Bureau of Development Services to plan and implement a comprehensive set of improvements to Portland’s development review and permitting services.



As part of the new process, public works review staff from the Water Bureau, Transportation Bureau, and Environmental Services relocated to the 1900 Building in early December. Locating staff in one location is intended to bring efficiencies to both the City’s public works permitting and land use review functions.

January started the rollout of several new practices and procedures for the review of Public Works Permits, including:

- A new pre-submittal process and reduced turnaround times
- Predictable fees
- A revised appeals process patterned after BDS building code appeals
- Project-specific portion of Conflict Resolution

This is a new process for both staff and applicants. Training sessions began in February and are scheduled through March for frontline staff, review groups, applicants and other users. The next public training is a Lunch & Learn session and scheduled for March 16.

The Public Works website (<http://www.portlandoregon.gov/?c=43826>) is continually being updated with informational handouts, fee information, applications, and checklists for the revised procedures as they become available. All public works permits submitted after January 1, 2010 will be reviewed using the updated process.

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Records Requests Fee Schedules & Processes

In order to ensure that all records requests made of the Bureau of Development Services (BDS) are processed consistently and that our costs for making the records available are reimbursed, a Records Requests Fee Schedule and Process Policy has been established.

Effective March 1, 2010, the following fee schedule and process will be applied to all requests for public records retained by BDS, including but not limited to all permit, inspection, land use and enforcement records. Oregon state law considers a public record to include “any writing that contains information relating to the conduct of the public’s business . . . used or retained by a public body regardless of the physical form or characteristics.” Oregon Revised Statutes § 192.410(4) (a) (2007). Some complainant and personnel records are protected by state law and are not subject to Public Records Requests.

The Bureau of Development Services maintains records in several different formats and sections of the Bureau. Following is a list of the three primary sections that maintain public records and a general list of the records that can be made available.

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Records Requests Fee Schedules and Processes

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1. **Resource/Records Counter:** The Resource/Records Counter maintains the following types of documents: microfiche copies of drawings for issued building permits; permit inspection cards for electrical, plumbing, mechanical, and building permits; Sign Permits, Certificates of Occupancy, Building, Mechanical, Plumbing, Electrical Code Appeal Decisions; Unincorporated Multnomah County Permits and Microfilm reels; Sanborn Maps; War Code and Chapter 13 files.
2. **Land Use Services Division:** The Land Use Services Division maintains all records for land use review cases, pre-application cases and zoning confirmation letters.
3. **Enforcement Program:** The enforcement programs maintain records for Housing, Nuisance, Zoning, Noise, Dangerous Buildings, Work without Permit, Signs and Home Occupation Permits.

Active Permits and Cases: Records for permit or case types listed above that are in "active" status are generally available for review free of charge. Photocopy charges and copyright regulations do apply. To view the complete records request fee schedule and process, go to www.portlandoregon.gov/bds/index.cfm?a=287796.

If you have questions or concerns about our Public Records Request process, please contact Ross Caron, BDS Manager and Public Information Officer, at (503) 823-4268 or ross.caron@portlandoregon.gov.

BDS Budget Update

BDS submitted its Fiscal Year (FY) 2010-11 Requested Budget and 5-Year Financial Plan on February 2nd. Both documents provide updates on the bureau's financial status and highlight plans to rebuild BDS financial reserves and improve services to customers. The budget request reflects the fact that BDS cut approximately 150 staff in 2009 due to declining permit revenues and workload.

However, it has become clear that permit revenues have fallen more dramatically than the workload. The economy has halted nearly all construction of large development projects, significantly reducing the bureau's revenues. Permit fees are calculated and charged on the basis of evaluation. Larger projects cost more and hence yield higher permit fees, conversely, smaller projects that are less expensive generate less permit fees. As a result, BDS cut staff positions to balance the budget and now does not have sufficient staff to meet its current workload. Service levels throughout the bureau have fallen significantly, impacting bureau customers, development projects, and neighborhood livability.

To address this workload issue, the budget request includes three requests for additional funding:

- A request for \$1.3 million in ongoing General Fund support for the Neighborhood Inspections and Land Use Services programs. This would restore funding that Neighborhood Inspections lost when it returned to BDS in 2006, and would allow both programs to provide adequate services.
- A request for \$1.6 million in one-time funding to support adding 13.5 FTE positions to the bureau. This would add essential staff and bring bureau services up to more acceptable levels. The positions would be added throughout the bureau.
- A request for \$800,000 in ongoing funding to support an additional 7 FTE positions. This would more fully address the service level impacts being felt throughout the bureau and community, but there would still be delays in all services, including plan review, inspections, land use review, and code enforcement.

You can find all of the bureau's budget and financial plan documents on PortlandOnline at <http://www.portlandoregon.gov/omf/index.cfm?c=44451>.

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BDS Budget Update

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On February 9th, City Council held a special work session to discuss BDS's financial status and its proposed technology initiative (see related article). The technology initiative is a separate funding request and is not included in the BDS budget request. The City has also scheduled three community budget forums during the first week of March to give the public opportunities to view and comment on bureau budget requests; for a schedule visit <http://www.portlandoregon.gov/omf/index.cfm?c=26061&a=285203>.

BDS will formally present its budget request to Council on Wednesday, March 31st. The Mayor's Proposed Budget document will be available on May 18th, and an additional community budget hearing is scheduled for May 20th. Council will take action to adopt the final budget on June 17th.

If you have questions about the BDS budget, Financial Plan, or related issues, please contact Denise Kleim, BDS Administrative Services Manager, at denise.kleim@portlandoregon.gov.

BDS Technology Initiative Update

As BDS has been making changes to its organizational structure since its staffing reductions in 2009, it has become evident that the bureau's current levels of automation, transparency, and public access to information hinder its effectiveness and ability to be efficient with limited resources. Last fall, Commissioner Leonard directed BDS to look at the use of technology in other building organizations of comparable size and scope. Prior to the economic downturn, the bureau had been implementing an 18-month plan to improve its technology tools; however, significant cuts in the budget stalled this plan.

The research and analysis was completed in January, and a recommendation has been made to City Council to make a major investment that will significantly enhance BDS's technology tools over the next two years. The bureau envisions a web-based permitting system that will include the following capabilities:

- Electronic access to all historic permit and land use records for customers and staff
- Online land use and permit application and plan submittal
- Electronic plan review
- Online fee payment and permit issuance
- Electronic entry of inspection results and real-time access for field staff and customers

This system will save customers and stakeholders time and money by having remote online access to information and services, decreasing the need to visit the Development Services Center (DSC) or BDS offices. The bureau should also experience efficiency gains in land use review, plan review, permitting, and inspection processes as we reduce our reliance on paper plans and records.

City Council discussed this proposal at a work session on February 9, 2010. The projected cost to implement the system, including equipment, software, training, data conversion, and digitizing of all paper records is approximately \$5 million. The funding of this initiative is anticipated to be in the form of a loan from the City and is not expected to take away from or negatively impact the bureau's operation and related staffing level needs. Discussion is underway between BDS and the city's Office of Management and Finance staff in working out the details of the funding source.

For more information about the Technology Initiative, please contact Hank McDonald, BDS Restructuring Lead, at hank.mcdonald@portlandoregon.gov.

Stormwater Management Facility Inspection & Permit Changes

On Wednesday, February 17, 2010 at 10:00 a.m., the Portland City Council passed the proposal to transfer responsibility for plan review and inspections for new private property stormwater management facilities from the Bureau of Development Services (BDS) to the Bureau of Environmental Services (BES). The transfer of responsibilities are effective on **Thursday, April 1, 2010**.

Environmental Services is Portland's wastewater utility. The bureau provides water quality protection, watershed planning, wastewater collection and treatment, sewer installation and stormwater management services.

City staff who handle permitting will change, but there will be no change in services provided to permit applicants. BES staff will have more interaction with permit applicants and contractors, and there should be no delays in plan approvals or inspection requests as a result of the change. In fact, it's likely to speed up the process.

Developers of projects in the City of Portland must submit plans for onsite stormwater management on developments on private property. City staff review the plans and inspect the facilities for compliance with city stormwater management requirements.

Currently, BDS and BES each have a role in the review process. Transferring most of the private stormwater facility permitting authority to BES will consolidate plan review, facility inspection and simplify the permitting process.

This change will not increase permit fees or how the city calculates fees, although a BES evaluation of fees and fee calculations could result in future changes.

Spring 2010 Landlord Training Program

The City of Portland, Bureau of Development Services is currently scheduling its Spring 2010 Landlord Training Program for April and May and is jointly funded and sponsored by Portland Police Bureau, Metro Multifamily Housing Council and the Rental Housing Association of Greater Portland. These classes are free and work to build a partnership between property owners, tenants and city agencies to create safe communities and residences.

Topics covered in the 8-hour training session include: property management to prevent crime or loss of investment, best practices in applicant screening, signs of dishonest applicants, rental agreements, crisis resolution/eviction, and partnering with police/crime prevention specialists/housing inspectors. Presentations are made by Housing Inspectors, Crime Prevention Specialists, and Police Bureau Neighborhood Response Team Officers.

At the end of each session attendees are provided a certificate that can be used for 8 hours credit for real estate agents continuing their education. Attendance also is required for the Enhanced Safety Properties program through the Portland Police Bureau and the Office of Neighborhood Involvement Crime Prevention.

This program has received overwhelming positive responses from attendees. Landlords who have taken the course state they feel more confident in their ability to screen applicants, recognize signs of illegal activity and take action or deal with problem tenant behaviors when they arise.

Please check the BDS website www.portlandoregon.gov/bds in mid-March for the Spring dates and locations. Advanced registration will be available once dates and locations are secured.



Portland Plan Update

Workshop Wrap-Up

Jobs, education and walkability are what Portlanders care about the most, so said participants at the Portland Plan workshops in November and December and respondents to the paper and online surveys. To date we have received almost 8,000 surveys — roughly 3,000 online and 5,000 through the mail. We are still accepting survey responses; the new deadline for completing the survey is March 31, and copies are available at the neighborhood association offices as well as online at www.pdxplan.com.

Nearly 1,000 participants attended the seven workshops throughout the city, and Bureau of Planning & Sustainability staff have continued to give presentations about the Portland Plan to nearly 40 community groups and organizations in the past few months. These smaller group presentations are part of our outreach strategy to include underrepresented groups and others that typically don't show up to public workshops. The bureau is also working with the Office of Neighborhood Involvement, the Diversity and Civic Leadership program and the neighborhood coalitions to build on existing relationships and create new ones that will last beyond the life of the plan. And our Community Involvement Committee is helping us make better connections with the business community and develop a more robust outreach program with the schools.



Now that the Round 1 workshops have wrapped up, the bureau is gathering, sorting and inputting the feedback we received from the workshops, group discussions and surveys. We're synching that information up with what we learned from visionPDX and earlier outreach efforts for the Portland Plan, as well as the findings in the background reports, to provide the foundational material for Round 2 workshops.

What's Next?

Round 2 workshops will begin in late April and extend into May. During this next phase, we'll be looking to set a future direction by focusing on objectives for each of the nine action areas and establishing targets to achieve our goals. We'll also be asking Portlanders to weigh in on the barriers to success and drivers or strategies that will help us overcome those barriers and achieve our objectives.

Stay tuned for final survey results, and get ready as we tee up for Round 2. Your voice counts. Visit us online at www.pdxplan.com.

CORNER

GREEN BUILDING

Creating a Relaxing, Healthy Home Haven

In these current times, having a safe, healthy home or apartment to unwind in has untold positive effects for your personal well-being, your family's health and the greater community you participate in. Many individuals and households are currently facing incredibly tough external pressures including employment challenges, financial insecurity, health issues and watching friends, neighbors and local businesses struggling to stay afloat. Regardless of your income, here is a selection of simple actions you can take with minimal effort and cost to instantly boost the rejuvenation rating of your home space.

Home health & well-being

The colors surrounding you have a huge impact on your well-being. Painting walls a fresh color is a quick and inexpensive way to improve your mood. Relaxation and calmness come from pale cool blues, warm spring greens or subtle mauves. Energy and invigoration come from buttery oranges or fresh yellows. Reds tend to increase blood pressure and anxiety can be heightened. For high quality, very affordable (\$9 to \$11 per 1-gallon can), 100 percent recycled latex paint, check out MetroPaint, available in 15 pre-mixed colors and now at all Miller Paint stores. Zero- and low-odor paint is preferable for not introducing paint fumes into your space and widely available from the large paint suppliers for the same price as traditional paint.

Make sure you have ample access to outside daylight. Opening up curtains or windows and allowing sunlight and views of nature indoors heightens your sense of well-being. Before the warmer days of summer (when the sunlight is in greater supply), having living greenery and potted plants in your home is a great way to access nature's restorative power and maintain healthy indoor air quality.

De-cluttering and spring cleaning works wonders for creating space. Whether you choose to resell, regift, recycle or donate unused household goods, you create a more restful, calm and open space. To recycle contact Metro Recycling Information at (503) 234-3000 or mri@oregonmetro.gov for recycling drop-off spots near you.



Controlling utility costs

If new ENERGY STAR appliances, heating system or water heating equipment are not in this year's budget, take heart as energy efficient equipment and appliances are only half the story in cutting energy bills. You can reduce your lighting, heating and water bills by practicing *resource conservation* (i.e. reducing your use). This involves strategies like getting in the habit of turning off lights in empty rooms, cooking with a microwave or crock pot instead of the range, unplugging appliances when not in use (coffee makers, TVs, cell phone chargers and stereos), installing an inflatable chimney balloon (about \$50) to stop fireplace drafts, taking shorter hot showers, and setting the water heater at 120 degrees.



Another helpful tool to take the sting out of high bills is the *equal pay* or *budget billing* programs utility companies provide. With one year of past utility history, Portland General Electric, Pacific Power, NW Natural and the Portland Water Bureau will average your projected use over the next 12 months and your monthly bill will be the same predictable amount, with no seasonal variations or surprises.

Do you need *free* water-saving kitchen and bath faucet aerators, toilet tank leak detection tablets or low-flow showerheads to help lower your water bills? Contact the Portland Water Bureau at (503) 823-4527 to have some mailed out to you.

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Creating a Relaxing, Healthy Home ...

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(photo credit: lelo in nopo)

Outside environment

Trimming dark, leafy shrubs that are blocking light against your outside walls or windows will instantly make your home's perimeter more secure. By placing exterior lights on a photocell, they will automatically turn on in the dark and switch off at dawn, saving energy and ensuring brightly lit steps and driveways for your personal safety and for deterring prowlers.



Not only do views of trees have a strong calming effect on our psyche, they provide habitat, shade, seasonal beauty, soak up storm water, clean the air and store away carbon dioxide. Through April, treebates up to \$50/tree are available from the City's Bureau of Environmental Services (BES): www.workinggreenportland.com/systems/water.

Disconnect downspouts (keeping water runoff at least six feet away from basements and foundations) can yield quarterly discounts on the sewer portion of your water bill, and you can also get paid for the initial disconnection. Check out these free BES programs at www.cleanriverrewards.com.



Want to learn how to do more with less?

Contact the Regional Green Building Hotline at (503) 823-5431 or www.buildgreen411.com.

Keep your indoor air quality as clean as possible. Making your own green cleaners costs about one tenth the cost of store-purchased cleaners. Save money with this easy recipe for a natural, non-toxic, all-purpose cleaner for countertops, floors, walls, carpet and upholstery. Mix these ingredients in a spray bottle:

- 1/4 cup distilled white vinegar
- 1/2 teaspoon vegetable oil-based liquid soap
- 3/4 cup warm water

(more recipes on Metro's Website www.oregonmetro.gov)

Connect with us



Green Development
Resource Center



@greenhotline

Ecoroof Portland

Come learn how ecoroofs work, why they're important, and what's next for Portland's rooftops and skyline. Activities include ecoroof tours, live ecoroof installations, presentations by local and national experts, and workshops to help you get started on your own project. Fair attendance is free.



March 12-13
10 am - 6pm
Left Bank Annex
101 N. Weidler

For more information, visit www.portlandonline.com/bes/ecoroofpdx.



The State of Oregon will be adopting the [2010 Oregon Manufactured Dwelling Installation Specialty Code \(MDISC\)](#), effective April 1, 2010. The MDISC replaces the 2002 Manufactured Dwelling and Park Specialty Code (MD&P) for the installation of manufactured dwellings.

Online in 2010

To receive the Paperless Plans Examiner:

1. Go online to www.portlandoregon.gov/bds
2. On the left side of the BDS Home Page, under Quick Links, click on Join Our Mailing Lists

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How to Reach Us

Visit us in person at
1900 SW 4th Avenue
Portland, OR 97201

BDS Main Office

Monday thru Friday
8:00 am to 5:00 pm

(503) 823-7300
(503) 823-6868 TTY

Development Services Center

Tuesday - Friday
8:00 am to 3:00 pm
Closed Mondays

On the Internet visit:

www.portlandoregon.gov/bds

Building Code Information 503-823-1456 (e)	BUREAU OF PLANNING AND SUSTAINABILITY
Fire Code Information 503-823-7300	Regional Green Building Hotline..... 503-823-5431
Planning & Zoning Information..... 503-823-7526	TRANSPORTATION
24-hour Inspection Request Recording 503-823-7000 (e)	Development Requirements, Right-of-Way Policy, Land Divisions and Transportation Plan Review
Inspection Section, 1 & 2 Family Dwellings 503-823-7388	Kurt Krueger 503-823-6964
Commercial, Plumbing 503-823-7302	Local Improvement Districts, Andrew Aebi 503-823-5648
Building & Mechanical..... 503-823-7303	Street Permit Engineering, Chon Wong..... 503-823-7050
Electrical 503-823-7304	Systems Development Charge
Development Services Center..... 503-823-7310 (e)	Richard Eisenhauer 503-823-6108
Development Services Center FAX..... 503-823-3018	TREES - Urban Forestry (7:00 am - 3:30 pm)..... 503-823-4489
Information, electrical, mechanical, plumbing, sewer, and sign permits..... 503-823-7363	Pruning/Planning/Removal Permits
Newsletter Contact, Colleen Poole..... 503-823-7889	N, Luke Miller 503-823-4511
Permitting Services, Fee estimate and Permit status via voice mail..... 503-823-7357 (e)	N, Jim Field 503-823-4011
Permit status FAXed to you 503-823-7000 (4)	S, Ned Sodja..... 503-823-4440
Permitting resource and records..... 503-823-7660	S, Dave Kahler..... 503-823-1691
FAX requests for records 503-823-7765	Tree Cutting Ordinance and Commercial Planning and Development, Charley Davis 503-823-4523
Septic Tanks / Cesspools 503-823-6892	Transportation Improvements, Joe Hintz 503-823-4025
ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES	Residential Development & Improvement
Development Assistance 503-823-7761	Myles Black..... 503-823-4018
Industrial Source Control..... 503-823-7585	WATER
FIRE BUREAU	Water Service Information..... 503-823-7368
Development Standards, Sprinklers, Alarms	Hydrant Permits..... 503-823-7368
Nate Takara 503-823-3810	Plan Review, Mari Moore..... 503-823-7368
Flammable Liquids, Tanks, Hazardous Processes	Subdivision Planning, Rick Nelson 503-823-7475
Bob Happel 503-823-3934	Backflow Valve Installation Requirements
	Dave Barrigan..... 503-823-7479