

Customer Service Advisory Committee

The Customer Service Advisory Committee was created in September 2006 to assist all City bureaus in working collaboratively with their employees to improve customer service. Building a culture of customer service will ensure that the City government is seen, both internally and externally, as a reliable partner and steward in running the City.

In 2005 the Bureau Innovation Project #7 was charged with developing recommendations for improving customer service policies and procedures across all City bureaus. In adopting the BIP #7 recommendations, the City Council endorsed an ongoing process of customer service improvement, beginning with clearly defining a culture of customer service, then ensuring employees have the tools to meet those expectations, then surveying customers to assess the effectiveness of improvement efforts.

The Customer Service Advisory Committee (CSAC) has prepared guidance and collected examples in the three priority areas of **defining the culture of customer service, workforce development, and customer service surveying**. That information can be found in the Customer Service Toolkit page of the CSAC webpage:

<http://www.portlandonline.com/index.cfm?c=44197>

During the FY 2007-2008 budget process, the Mayor asked all bureaus to report on implementation of the BIP #7 recommendations. Each year going forward, the CSAC is requesting a status report on customer service efforts in the three priority areas. The intent is to gather information from bureaus on their activities during the current program year, for an annual report to Council. The status report template is attached.

The CSAC intends to be an ongoing resource to assist bureaus in customer service improvement efforts. Bureaus should feel free to contact any member of their committee site team for assistance. A current list of site team members can be found at

<http://www.portlandonline.com/index.cfm?c=44198>

Questions? Please contact Committee Chair John Dutt, Office of Neighborhood Involvement at (503) 865-2625

Customer Service Improvement Status Report (FY 2009-10)

Bureau: Bureau of Development Services
Staff Contact: Mark Feters, Sr. Management Analyst
Phone: (503) 823-1028
Date: February 1, 2010

Bureau Mission and Goals: Please attach copies of your bureau's mission, goals, and any workplans or other policy documents that specifically address customer service improvement efforts. Please describe how your strategic plans include customer service, and any plans for improvement.

Customer Service Culture

Over the last several years BDS has successfully integrated a customer service ethic into the fabric of the organization. The bureau's mission requires being responsive to the development community, neighborhoods and citizens. BDS's vision is to be the best development services agency in the country by deploying development review systems that meet the time-sensitive needs of the development industry and by satisfying neighborhood organizations' and citizens' concerns about the quality of development and the need for access to information.

Service to customers and stakeholders is reflected in several of the bureau's key planning documents, including the Mission, Goals, and Values; Management Principles and Expectations; Strategic Plan Framework; Customer Service Solutions; Diversity Committee Charter; and the BDS Employee Handbook. Copies of these documents are attached, including chapter three of the Employee Handbook (Customer Service and Communication with the Public).

The bureau remains committed to these goals as it copes with the serious financial challenges facing the development industry and the overall economy. BDS reduced its staff by one-half in 2009 due to declining permit revenues, and the bureau is struggling to meet a workload increasingly dominated by smaller projects that generate less revenue. BDS continues to communicate with customers and stakeholders regarding their needs and the bureau's ability to provide services while experiencing financial and staffing constraints. Bureau staff are dedicated to working collaboratively with customers to problem-solve and reach solutions.

Strategic Plan

In 2008 BDS launched a strategic planning process that identifies customer experience as one of its key areas of focus (see attached Strategic Plan Framework). The planning process has involved staff from all levels of the bureau as well as customers, stakeholders, and industry partners to ensure that their needs and interests are clearly understood and addressed. The implementation of the Strategic Plan was suspended in 2009 due to the severe budget and staffing reductions, but the bureau intends to revisit the Strategic Plan in 2010 and produce a plan that will reflect current realities and guide the bureau as it moves forward.

Diversity Development

The bureau's Diversity Committee's mission is "to cultivate the development of a diverse, culturally competent workforce and to create an inclusive workplace culture through strategic initiative planning and implementation." This mission is realized through outreach and education work with BDS employees regarding diversity issues and cultural competency, resulting in better service for the diverse community of Portland. Past efforts have been recognized through diversity awards received by the bureau and BDS staff, including:

- 2007 City of Portland Diversity Award (BDS)
- 2008 City of Portland Individual Contributor Award (Mikal Shabazz)
- 2008 City of Portland Bureau Diversity Committee Award (BDS)

Diversity development has been curtailed somewhat due to budget cuts, but the BDS Diversity Committee is still active and recently hosted a "Doughnuts for Diversity" event for employees (see description under "Workforce Development" below).

Consolidation of Enforcement Hotlines

On May 1, 2009 the Site Services Division merged the bureau's five separate enforcement hotlines serving Compliance Services, Neighborhood Inspections, Noise, Erosion Control and Site Development into a single contact number in an effort to streamline enforcement and improve service for customers.

Customers and citizens can call the new enforcement hotline at 503-823-CODE (2633) to report any of the following types of complaints:

- Construction codes (work without permit)
- Zoning code
- Dangerous buildings
- Noise control
- Nuisance issues on property and adjacent rights-of-way
- Housing maintenance concerns (including illegal occupancies)
- Non-residential structures exterior maintenance concerns
- Derelict buildings
- Disabled vehicles on private property
- Erosion control issues
- Site issues (grading, filling, clearing, drainage and septic systems)

Customer Service Assessment: Please attach a copy of your most recent customer service survey and survey results. Please indicate how your bureau assesses timeliness, accuracy, helpfulness, expertise, and available information. If you do not currently survey bureau customers, please explain any future plans.

BDS conducted annual customer telephone surveys from 2002–2008 using contracts with outside vendors. Each year approximately 675 customers were surveyed regarding BDS land use review, plan review and permit issuance, and inspection services. The survey measured customer satisfaction with the timeliness and quality of bureau services, the adequacy and quality of information provided, and the knowledge, helpfulness, fairness, & availability of BDS staff and development review staff from other bureaus. BDS has used survey results and analysis over the years to guide decisions regarding services, programs, staff training, and budget expenditures.

BDS did not conduct a customer survey in 2009 due to budget cuts, but is including funding for a 2010 survey in its FY 2010-11 budget request. A summary analysis of the 2008 survey results is attached; the full 2008 survey report is available from Mark Fetters, BDS Sr. Management Analyst, at 503-823-1028 or mark.fetters@ci.portland.or.us.

Workforce Development: Please describe any efforts you have made to develop customer service competency within your workforce in the areas of recruitment, training, and evaluation. Please share any details you can provide regarding progress in these areas over the past year (training program information, key bureau contacts, recruitment/evaluation material examples, etc.).

Most of the bureau's specific efforts to develop customer service competency in the workforce have focused on recruitment and training. Due to economic conditions, BDS does not anticipate conducting many recruitments in the near future, and the budget for staff training is limited.

Recruitment

Prior to staff reductions, the bureau's Outreach Committee developed a recruitment plan for each open position in order to better reach underserved populations with employment information. Recruitment plans include methods for reaching diverse populations, such as advertising in ethnic publications or using personal contacts with underserved communities to disseminate recruitment information.

BDS interview panels are provided with guidelines for interviewing and communicating with people from diverse backgrounds. Interview panels are encouraged to include an interview question related to customer service, and this is done in most interviews. Much of the bureau's work involves providing direct services to customers, both over the phone and in person. Because of BDS's commitment to providing outstanding customer service, the bureau places emphasis on candidates with customer service experience, communication and problem-solving skills, and cultural competency.

Training

- Customer Service Training – In 2003 BDS worked with a consultant to develop and deliver tailored customer service training to all employees, with additional training for supervisors and managers. The training covers internal as well as external customer service, and focuses on the unique customer service challenges in code enforcement work. The attached "Customer Service Solutions" document is a product of the training. All new employees go through this training after hire. A training binder is available upon request.
- Doughnuts for Diversity – Since early 2007 the bureau has hosted a series of speakers on a variety of diversity topics as part of the bureau's Diversity Development Program. The meetings are open to all bureau employees and have been well-attended and received. These meetings have facilitated ongoing conversations amongst staff regarding diversity issues and are a key part of the bureau's effort to improve customer service through increasing employees' cultural competency.