

CITY OF PORTLAND, OREGON - BUREAU OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

1900 SW Fourth Avenue, Portland, Oregon 97201, www.portlandoregon.gov/bds



Bureau Mission

The Bureau of Development Services (BDS) promotes safety, livability, and economic vitality through efficient and collaborative application of building and development codes.

Bureau Vision

BDS is committed to being the best development services agency in the country by providing the best service possible and having in place programs and services that are effective, efficient and relevant.

Bureau Overview

BDS is an integral part of development in the city of Portland. Bureau staff actively works with developers, builders, and homeowners to guide them through the development process.

State Statutes and Administrative Rules: City enforces a variety of state and local statutes.

The City of Portland has been regulating construction since the late 1800s, with local ordinances passed by the City Council as early as 1892. In 1973, the State legislature pased requirements for a State Building Code mandating uniform statewide enforcement, which required Portland to begin enforcing the State-adopted codes with State-certified personnel.

BDS is also responsible for administering a variety of local regulations adopted within the City Code, including the Zoning Code under Title 33, Floating Structures (Title 28), Erosion Control (Title 10), Signs (Title 32), Noise Control (Title 18), and Property Maintenance (Title 29).

Strategic Plan

BDS is re-starting a strategic planning process that was well underway in 2008 before the recession. Much of that work remains relevant, allowing the bureau to renew the planning process without having to completely start over.

The bureau has selected a consultant to faciliate meetings with employees and stakeholder groups and to help produce the final plan documents. Strategic Plan focus areas include:

- Customer Experience
- Programs & Services
- Technology
- Workforce Developement
- Community Awareness

The bureau plans to hold several large and small group meetings in early 2013, and will also use social media and online surveys to solicit input from stakeholders and the community. BDS intends to implement the new plan by early summer 2013.









Functional Areas & Work

Administration and Director's Office staff provides public information, performs community outreach, implements technology services and improvements, administers the bureau's emergency management program, and provides a variety of services to BDS staff, including human resources, budget and finance, training, safety, and risk management.

Land Use Review implements the goals and policies of the City's Comprehensive Plan, including neighborhood and community plans, by administering the Portland Zoning Code (Title 33). Annual Land Use Review & Final Plat applications three year average is 558.

Plan Review staff reviews building and mechanical plans for residential and commercial structures and helps customers understand and apply code regulations regarding life safety, energy conservation, accessibility, and other related issues. For the past 3 years, the average building permits issued for residential and commercial work is 7,639.

Inspections Services performs permit inspections on one- and two-family residences, multi-family dwellings, and commercial, retail, and industrial construction projects. The average annual inspections for the past three years is 122,000.

Enforcement Program: Compliance Services and Neighborhood Inspections staff investigates and resolves construction code violations and property maintenance violations, enforces zoning code regulations, issues home occupation permits, administers codes related to dangerous buildings and multi-family dwellings, and implements the Noise Control program.

The annual three year average for:

building code violations: 315zoning code violations: 3,045

• housing & nuisance intakes: 5,856

BDS Projects

Information Technology Advancement Project (ITAP)

On November 3, 2010 City Council authorized BDS to move forward with plans to purchase an online plan review and permitting system that would provide much greater access to information and services for customers, staff, and stakeholders. BDS envisions a system that will include the following capabilities:

- 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
- Electronic access to all historic permit and land use records for customers and staff

This system will save customers and stakeholders time and money by giving them remote access to information and services and decreasing the need to visit the Development Services Center (DSC) or BDS offices. BDS will experience efficiency gains in its land use review, plan review, permitting, and inspection processes as it reduces its reliance on paper plans and records.

After a competitive selection process, City Council gave BDS approval to enter into a contract with the selected vendor in December 2012. Contract negotiation should be completed in spring 2013.

In the meantime, BDS is working internally and with other development bureaus to ensure that review processes are well-documented and streamlined in order to support effective ITAP implementation. Project "go-live" is scheduled for the winter of 2014-15.

Significant Critical Issues

Reserve Fund and Financial Status

BDS is established as an Operating Fund with the goal of being 100% supported by permit fees and charges for its construction-related programs. This need to be self-supporting, combined with the difficulty in accurately predicting construction activity and fee revenues, makes it important for BDS to maintain a reserve of funds that can be used to ensure a stable and adequate level of service during times when revenues fall below expectations.

While rebuilding bureau reserves to prudent levels has been a high-priority goal, it must be balanced with the need to meet state and local requirements for bureau programs and services and with the needs of customers and stakeholders who do not have other options for development-related services.

Need for General Fund Support

Besides the construction-related programs which are fully funded with fees and charges, BDS provides services which benefit the entire community by enhancing neighborhood livability, maintaining the City's housing stock, stabilizing or improving property values, and implementing the City's policy goals. These programs are: Neighborhood Inspections, Land Use Services, and Noise Control. Historically these programs have been supported with General Fund. However over the years, the General Fund support has diminished, and most recently only "one-time" General Fund monies have been available.

During the budget preparation process for the current fiscal year, both the Development Review Advisory Committee and BDS's Budget Advisory Committee strongly advocated that these programs should be funded primarily with ongoing public monies rather than through user fees or penalties.

Funding & Cost Recovery

BDS operates two distinct types of programs. State-mandated construction programs (Building, Mechanical, Electrical, Plumbing, etc.) are funded almost exclusively through permit fee revenues. Local programs (Land Use Services, Neighborhood Inspections, Environmental Soils, Signs, Noise Control, Zoning Compliance, and Site Development) implement local regulations or state and federal mandates. Local programs are funded through a combination of fees, fines and charges, and General Fund monies.

Staffing & Service Levels

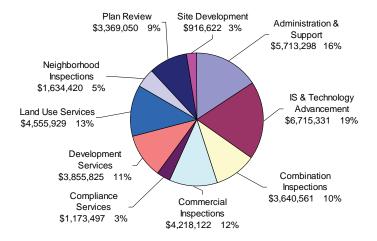
From 2009-2010, BDS lost over half of its staff due to deep declines in permit revenues. However, revenues declined much more steeply than workload, resulting in a bureau that was insufficiently staffed. Bureau services such as building inspections, plan review, permit issuance, and land use review are mandated by law and cannot be eliminated. BDS therefore ceased non-mandatory, low-priority services throughout the bureau and significantly reduced most remaining services.

With revenues slowly improving since 2011, BDS has begun re-building its reserve and rehiring staff to help improve customer service and service level goals. For example, 49 staff were hired during FY 2011-12, and 26 more were added in FY 2012-13. For FY 2013-14, BDS is requesting 14 additional positions.



Bureau Programs

Bureau Expenditures by Program FY 2013-14 Requested Budget \$35.8 Million



Operating Budget FY 2013-14



How We're Funded

Approximately 87% of BDS's budget is funded with fees and charges. Construction-related programs are 100% funded with this source of revenue.

BDS receives support from the City's General Fund for several local programs that provide key services to the entire community, including Land use Services, Neighborhood Inspections, and Noise Control.

BDS Facts at a Glance

• Commissioner: Amanda Fritz

• Director: Paul L. Scarlett

• Full-time Budgeted FTE): 215.57

• Part-time Budgeted FTE: 2.7

FY 2013-14 Total Budget: \$35.3 million

• Permit fee support: 93% (approx.)

General fund: 5% (approx.)

• Other Revenues: 2% (approx.)

Sample Workload for FY 2011-12

- Building permits issued: 8,000 (approx.)
- Building applications received: 7,800 (approx.)
- Permit Inspections: 109,000 (approx.)
- Trade permits issued: 33,000 (approx.)
- Land use cases received: 500 (approx.)
- Housing & nuisance cases received: 6,000 (approx.)