CITY OF

PORTLAND, OREGON

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March 30, 2012

TO: **Mayor Sam Adams**
Commissioner Nick Fish
Commissioner Amanda Fritz
Commissioner Randy Leonard
City Auditor LaVonne Griffin-Valade
Bob Tomlinson, Bureau of Financial Planning
Sara Lowe, Bureau of Financial Planning

FROM: **Dan Saltzman**
Commissioner of Public Affairs

SUBJECT: **Budget Monitoring Report - Spring 2011-12**

Attached is the Spring 2011-12 Budget Monitoring Report for the Bureau of Development Services.

The report includes the following requests:

1. **Repayment of the Operating Loan**
   On March 10, 2010, the City Council passed resolution No. 36768 authorizing a temporary operating loan from the Bancroft Bond Interest and Sinking Fund to the Development Services Operating Fund in the not-to-exceed amount of $1,500,000 with a repayment schedule of principal and accrued interest due by June 30, 2011. The purpose of that loan was to avoid cash flow issues that BDS anticipated. To mitigate any possibility of negative cash flow, BDS repaid the first loan with accrued interest on February 16, 2011 and requested a second loan for the same amount effective on February 17, 2011 to be repaid no later than June 30, 2012. Resolution 36846 authorizing both transactions was passed at City Council on 2/16/11. This adjustment is needed to record the repayment of the second loan with the accrued interest.

2. **Technical Adjustment – IA with the Facilities**
   An adjustment of $100,000 to the interagency agreement with Facilities to add appropriation for internal moves and prevent over expenditure.

3. **Technical Adjustment – IA with the Printing and Distribution**
   An adjustment of $120,000 to the interagency agreement with Printing and Distribution to add appropriation for microfilm services and prevent over expenditure.

4. **Technical Adjustment – IA with the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability**
   An adjustment of $27,873 to add appropriation to the interagency agreement with the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability. Bureau of Development Services is providing services to the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability associated with illegal dumps and no garbage service cases.

5. **Technical Adjustment – Scanning Equipment**
   An adjustment of $10,000 to add appropriation to the capital outlay for the purchase of scanning equipment.

6. **Technical Adjustment – Portland Milwaukie Light Rail Grant ($33,000)**
   An adjustment to add appropriation to expenditures and intergovernmental revenues for services provided to TriMet related to the Portland Milwaukie Light Rail project.

7. **Technical Adjustment – COPPEA Training Fund**
   An adjustment of $9,142 for the bureau's share of the COPPEA Training Fund budget.

If you have any questions, please contact Denise Kleim in the Bureau of Development Services at 823-7338.

BUDGET AMENDMENT REQUEST

Bureau of Development Services | PERIOD Spring BuMP | FISCAL YEAR FY 2011-12

DS_008 - Repayment of the Operating Loan

On March 10, 2010, the City Council passed resolution No. 36768 authorizing a temporary operating loan from the Bancroft Bond Interest and Sinking Fund to the Development Services Operating Fund in the not-to-exceed amount of $1,500,000 with a repayment schedule of principal and accrued interest due by June 30, 2011. The purpose of that loan was to avoid cash flow issues that BDS anticipated. To mitigate any possibility of negative cash flow, BDS repaid the first loan with accrued interest on February 16, 2011 and requested a second loan for the same amount effective on February 17, 2011 to be repaid no later than June 30, 2012. Resolution 36846 authorizing both transactions was passed at City Council on 2/16/11. This adjustment is needed to record the repayment of the second loan with the accrued interest.

Dollar Amount:	$1,530,000
Type:	Technical Adjustment
Resources:	Internal Transfer

DS_009 - Technical Adjustment – IA with the Facilities

An adjustment of $100,000 to the interagency agreement with Facilities to add appropriation for internal moves and prevent over expenditure.

Dollar Amount:	$0
Type:	Technical Adjustment
Resources:	Internal Transfer

DS_010 - Technical Adjustment – IA with the P&D

An adjustment of $120,000 to the interagency agreement with Printing and Distribution to add appropriation for microfilm services and prevent over expenditure.

Dollar Amount:	$0
Type:	Technical Adjustment
Resources:	Internal Transfer

DS_011 - Technical Adjustment – IA with the BPS

An adjustment of $27,873 to add appropriation to the interagency agreement with the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability. Bureau of Development Services is providing services to the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability associated with illegal dumps and no garbage service cases.

Dollar Amount:	$27,873
Type:	Technical Adjustment
Resources:	Internal Transfer

BUDGET AMENDMENT REQUEST

Bureau of Development Services PERIOD Spring BuMP FISCAL YEAR FY 2011-12

DS_012 - Technical Adjustment – Scanning Equipment

An adjustment of $10,000 to add appropriation to the capital outlay for the purchase of scanning equipment.

Dollar Amount:	$0
Type:	Technical Adjustment
Resources:	Internal Transfer

DS_013 - Portland Milwaukie Light Rail Grant

An adjustment to add appropriation to expenditures and intergovernmental revenues for services provided to TriMet related to the Portland Milwaukie Light Rail project.

Dollar Amount:	$33,000
Type:	Technical Adjustment
Resources:	Internal Transfer

DS_014 - COPPEA Training Fund

An adjustment of $9,142 for the bureau's share of the COPPEA Training Fund budget.

Dollar Amount:	$0
Type:	Technical Adjustment
Resources:	Internal Transfer

Fund Projection Report

	Spring BuMP Revised Budget	FY 2011-12 YTD Actuals Thru AP8	Spring BuMP Year-End Projection	% of Projected Actuals to Revised Bud
Development Services Fund				
EXPENDITURES				
Personnel Services	$19,216,653	$12,272,353	$18,417,664	96%
External Materials and Services	$2,501,387	$515,141	$772,711	31%
Internal Materials and Services	$6,860,813	$4,066,259	$6,327,500	92%
Capital Outlay	$10,000	$3,520	$10,000	100%
Bond Expenses	$2,285,372	$160,130	$2,285,372	100%
Fund Transfers - Expense	$2,172,972	$1,448,649	$2,172,972	100%
Contingency	$1,064,017	$0	$5,151,536	484%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	**$34,111,214**	**$18,466,051**	**$35,137,755**	**103%**
REVENUES				
Budgeted Beginning Fund Balance	$515,338	$0	$2,223,151	431%
Licenses & Permits	$18,410,488	$13,109,390	$19,664,085	107%
Charges for Services	$6,632,427	$4,777,552	$7,166,328	108%
Intergovernmental Revenues	$5,000	$2,684	$5,000	100%
Interagency Revenue	$883,283	$733,185	$855,410	97%
Fund Transfers - Revenue	$3,031,800	$1,942,930	$3,031,800	100%
Bond and Note	$2,602,149	$0	$0	0%
Miscellaneous	$2,030,729	$1,461,321	$2,191,981	108%
TOTAL REVENUES	**$34,111,214**	**$22,027,062**	**$35,137,755**	**103%**

Fund Projection Narrative

The bureau is continuing its progress toward implementing the Information Technology Advancement Project (ITAP), which will greatly enhance the level of automation in development review and improve public access to information. In the FY 2011-12 budget development process, the bureau budgeted approximately $2.6 million in costs for the ITAP, the majority was budgeted in "External Materials and Services" as payments for services provided by the contractor; funding for the project in the same amount was budgeted under "Bond and Note". During late FY 10-11, BDS re-evaluated the project direction and it was decided that a Request for Proposal was the appropriate route. Therefore the funds for a contract were not expended in FY 11-12.

ITAP is proceeding however. Already much work has been done to review business practices and then map those processes, so BDS will be ready for the selected vendor to begin work. In addition the BDS Finance Committee, an advisory committee composed of local economic and real estate experts, reviewed the bureau's revenue projections, contributed their advice and were satisfied with the outcome of the projections.

The bureau issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for vendors in early February 2012, with vendor selection taking place by summer 2012. In the meantime, BDS is working internally and with other development bureaus to ensure that review processes are well-documented, improved, and streamlined in order to support efficient and effective ITAP implementation. ITAP implementation will likely start in fall 2012, with project “go live” at the end of 2014.

The differences in Budgeted Beginning Balance and Contingency are due to higher than anticipated revenue collections in late FY 2010-11 and FY 2011-12.

Business Area Projection Report

	Spring BuMP Revised Budget	FY 2011-12 YTD Actuals Thru AP8	Spring BuMP Year-End Projection	% of Projected Actuals to Revised Bud
Bureau of Development Services				
EXPENDITURES				
Personnel Services	$19,236,653	$12,278,634	$18,437,664	96%
External Materials and Services	$2,509,387	$517,825	$780,711	31%
Internal Materials and Services	$6,860,813	$4,066,259	$6,327,500	92%
Capital Outlay	$70,000	$3,520	$70,000	100%
Bond Expenses	$2,285,372	$160,130	$2,285,372	100%
Fund Transfers - Expense	$2,172,972	$1,448,649	$2,172,972	100%
Contingency	$1,064,017	$0	$5,151,536	484%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	**$34,199,214**	**$18,475,017**	**$35,225,755**	**103%**
REVENUES				
Budgeted Beginning Fund Balance	$515,338	$0	$2,223,151	431%
Licenses & Permits	$18,410,488	$13,109,390	$19,664,085	107%
Charges for Services	$6,632,427	$4,777,552	$7,166,328	108%
Intergovernmental Revenues	$93,000	$25,342	$93,000	100%
Interagency Revenue	$883,283	$733,185	$855,410	97%
Fund Transfers - Revenue	$3,031,800	$1,942,930	$3,031,800	100%
Bond and Note	$2,602,149	$0	$0	0%
Miscellaneous	$2,030,729	$1,461,321	$2,191,981	108%
TOTAL REVENUES	**$34,199,214**	**$22,049,720**	**$35,225,755**	**103%**

Bureau Projection Narrative

The bureau is continuing its progress toward implementing the Information Technology Advancement Project (ITAP), which will greatly enhance the level of automation in development review and improve public access to information. In the FY 2011-12 budget development process, the bureau budgeted approximately $2.6 million in costs for the ITAP, the majority was budgeted in "External Materials and Services" as payments for services provided by the contractor; funding for the project in the same amount was budgeted under "Bond and Note". During late FY 10-11, BDS re-evaluated the project direction and it was decided that a Request for Proposal was the appropriate route. Therefore the funds for a contract were not expended in FY 11-12.

ITAP is proceeding however. Already much work has been done to review business practices and then map those processes, so BDS will be ready for the selected vendor to begin work. In addition the BDS Finance Committee, an advisory committee composed of local economic and real estate experts, reviewed the bureau's revenue projections, contributed their advice and were satisfied with the outcome of the projections.

The bureau issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for vendors in early February 2012, with vendor selection taking place by summer 2012. In the meantime, BDS is working internally and with other development bureaus to ensure that review processes are well-documented, improved, and streamlined in order to support efficient and effective ITAP implementation. ITAP implementation will likely start in fall 2012, with project “go live” at the end of 2014.

The differences in Budgeted Beginning Balance and Contingency are due to higher than anticipated revenue collections in late FY 2010-11 and FY 2011-12.

BUREAU OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Report on FY 2011-12 Budget Notes and Add Packages

FY 2011-12 Budget Notes – None

FY 2011-12 Decision Packages

DS_01 – Improve Overall BDS Service Level
Package Summary:
The staff additions in this $1.5 million decision package will allow the bureau to return services to minimally-acceptable levels. Bureau revenues are projected to increase in FY 2011-12, providing sufficient funds to add approximately 13 positions and increase the level of service to customers. These positions will be added as revenues are realized. The expected workload for FY 2011-12 would dictate that another 10 positions are needed in addition to what is being requested in order to provide acceptable levels of service for the bureau's highest priority service improvement areas.

Update
Most of the positions are filled, remaining positions are being filled as workload increases and revenues recover.

DS_02 – Healthy Homes
Package Summary:
This decision package adds one-time General Fund support of $231,484 for two Housing Inspector FTEs that had previously been supported with federal CDBG funds (no new FTE are created) through the Portland Housing Bureau (PHB). The positions will continue a pilot project in East Portland for enhanced complaint inspections, as recommended by the Quality Rental Housing Workgroup and approved by City Council in 2008. It is projected that the inspectors will be able to conduct approximately 1,200 rental inspections in FY 2011-12.

Update
Positions are filled. FY 2011-12 projections (based on the data through 02/29/12) include performing 1,129 rental inspections and inspecting 1,680 rental units.

DS_03 – Tree Program
Package Summary:
This decision package adds $58,570 in one-time General Fund resources for 0.5 City Planner II FTE in BDS to help implement the City's new Tree Code. The position will perform tasks that are critical to enabling BDS and the Parks Bureau to administer the new Tree Code, including website design, public outreach, and coordination with programmers on incorporating tree permitting and code requirements into the existing permit database system.

Update
The full-time, limited-term one-year Program Coordinator position was filled in August, 2011.
Work completed:

- Process mapping for Type A and Type B Tree Removal Permits, tree questions when the tree is regulated by Title 33 overlay zones or plan districts, and street tree pruning
- Development of draft job description for possible new job classification for Single Point of Contact for all tree inquiries
- Compilation of existing brochures and website info (BDS and Parks) related to trees; all existing application forms (BDS and Parks) related to tree removal, tree planting, tree pruning, etc.; problematic code sections that need to be amended/fixed; and commonly asked questions from customers, and drafting what the answers are under the new regulations
- Several instruction guides for staff, to help them navigate the new code and assist customers, to ensure the right questions are asked, and consistent steps taken
- Internal Review Draft of Code Amendments.
- Development of a draft communications plan for first phase of project.
- Assessment of what changes are needed in TRACS to implement the new code, including new permit types and appeal procedures, etc.
- Initial design work on the City's new Tree Website.

The Decision Package to extend this position for one year to enable the incumbent to continue to work on necessary preparation for implementing the Citywide Tree Code was submitted with bureau's FY 2012-13 Budget Request. Without someone coordinating these efforts with BDS and Parks staff, and getting much of the leg-work done themselves, it will not be possible to implement the code on its adopted effective date (Feb. 1, 2013) or even with the delayed effective date proposed by the bureaus (July 1, 2013). The Bureaus don't have capacity to absorb the staff hours needed to complete the many remaining tasks before either effective date.

DS_04 – Improve Neighborhood Inspections Program
Package Summary:
This decision package provides $372,327 in one-time General Fund resources to add 3 FTE to BDS's Neighborhood Inspections program. Adding these positions will bring substantial improvements to the program, including:

- Significantly increased responsiveness to fire, life, safety and health, and sanitation issues for occupied rentals; housing complaints will be investigated within 3-5 days.
- Case management duties (re-inspections, code hearings) will be restored, facilitating more timely compliance.
- Staff will be able to respond to housing complaints involving exterior maintenance issues on owner-occupied and non-residential properties.
- The number of housing inspections and nuisance inspections will increase to 5,000 and 7,900 per year, respectively.

Update
Positions are filled. FY 2011-12 projections (based on the data through 2/29/12) include performing 1,184 inspections and inspecting 1,198 housing units. Since hiring positions response times are generally meeting service level goals and staff is able to respond to all housing complaints, including owner-occupied and non-residential properties.

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FY 2011-12 Service Improvement Plan
Bureau of Development Services
Spring BuMP Update
March 30, 2012

The Bureau of Development Services (BDS) is committed to continuously improving its services to customers and the community. The bureau remains dedicated to this commitment in Fiscal Year (FY) 2011-12 as it copes with the serious financial challenges facing the development industry and the overall economy. BDS began implementing a variety of cost-saving measures in 2008 as permit revenues began to decline, and was eventually compelled to reduce its staff in 2009 and 2010 by over one-half in order to maintain financial stability. Since the layoffs, the bureau has been struggling to meet its workload demands.

BDS continues to communicate with customers and stakeholders regarding their needs and the bureau's ability to provide services while experiencing serious financial and staffing constraints.

In light of these realities, this Service Improvement Plan focuses on obtaining the resources that will enable BDS to continue to provide quality services to its customers and the community.

Information Technology Advancement Project (ITAP)
The budget and staff reductions at BDS have compelled the bureau to downsize and re-engineer some of its processes. In the course of reshaping the organization, it became clear that BDS's current levels of automation, transparency, and public access to information hinder the bureau's effectiveness and ability to be efficient with limited resources. The bureau had been proceeding with implementing an 18-month plan to improve its technology tools; however, significant cuts in the budget stalled this plan.

On November 3, 2010 City Council authorized BDS to move forward with an online plan review and permitting system that would provide much greater access to information and services for custom. BDS envisions a 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

Customers and stakeholders will be able to perform much of their land use review, permitting, inspection, and research work online, including submitting applications, retrieving inspection results in real-time, and being notified of issued checksheets electronically. This system will save customers and stakeholders time and money by giving them remote access to information and services, decreasing the need to visit the Development Services Center (DSC) or BDS offices. BDS will experience significant efficiency gains in its land use review, plan review, permitting, and inspection processes as it reduces its reliance on paper plans and records.

BDS is currently working with the Office of Management and Finance and the City Attorney's Office to: negotiate a contract with the system vendor; write an intergovernmental agreement with the State of Oregon; and secure a line of credit to fund the project. ITAP will be key to BDS's ability to provide services effectively and efficiently into the future.

Status: Underway

Estimated Completion Date: 2014

Update (September, 2011): On March 9, 2011, City Council authorized a financing package for ITAP in the form of a line of credit not to exceed $6.6 million, which BDS must repay with five years. Under Commissioner Saltzman's direction, BDS is preparing an ordinance (to be heard in October 2011) that will authorize the publication of an RFP (Request for Proposals) for the project. Pending approval of the ordinance, the bureau anticipates publishing the RFP in late October and receiving proposals by the end of the year.

In the meantime, ITAP staff continues to prepare for the project by reviewing bureau business practices and mapping processes.

The current scope of work and timeline estimates that ITAP will take up to two years to complete.

Update (March 27, 2012): The bureau issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for vendors on February 7, 2012. Vendor selection will take place by summer 2012. In the meantime, BDS is working internally and with other development bureaus to ensure that review processes are improved, streamlined, and well-documented in order to support efficient and effective ITAP implementation. ITAP implementation will likely start in fall 2012, with project "go live" at the end of 2014.

Match Staffing to Workload

BDS cut approximately 150 staff in 2009 due to declining permit revenues and workload. However, a pattern has emerged in which permit revenues have fallen more dramatically than the workload. The bureau's fee structure has been to charge lower fees to smaller projects and higher fees to larger projects due to the presumption that

fees are less affordable for smaller projects. This practice is not unique to Portland and is used by many other jurisdictions. However, the economy has halted nearly all construction of large development projects, thereby significantly reducing the bureau's revenues. 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 help remedy this situation, BDS is requesting to add 13 new positions in its FY 2011-12 budget request. These new positions would be funded with bureau revenues (not General Fund monies) and would allow the addition of essential staff to bring key services up to minimally-acceptable levels. Even with these additional positions, not all high-priority bureau services will be restored to acceptable levels; workload projections indicate that 10 *more* positions (beyond the 13) would be needed to fully restore all high-priority services.

If the budget request is approved, BDS will fill staff positions as revenues recover. Customers will see improvements including: 85% of combination/ residential inspections and 98% of commercial inspections made within 24 hours of request.

Status: The budget request was approved by City Council and the positions have been filled.

Estimated Completion Date: June 2012

Update (September 2011): City Council approved BDS's request to add 13 positions with permit revenues. These additional FTE will improve service levels throughout the bureau by more closely matching staff levels with workload.

Update (March 30, 2012): BDS has filled the 13 positions approved by City Council, resulting in more responsive and timely services to customers.

Neighborhood Inspections, Land Use Services, Sign Enforcement, & Noise Control

BDS Land Use Services (LUS), Neighborhood Inspections, and the Noise Control Program provide a benefit to the public and have historically been supported in part by the City's General Fund. LUS enhances the City's livability through implementation of the Zoning Code. Neighborhood Inspections prevents the deterioration of existing housing and neighborhoods. The Noise Control Program improves neighborhood livability. The benefits of their services go well beyond their fee-paying customers.

All three of these programs have been under-funded and beset by deficits in their reserve funds for several years. Most recently the bureau has reduced services in these areas due to lack of revenues and General Fund support.

In addition, due to reductions in the Sign Enforcement Program, the bureau has ceased most sign enforcement that does not involve life/safety issues, and there have been many signs installed that do not meet the intent of the Sign Code.

To address these needs, BDS's FY 2011-12 Requested Budget includes a request for $668,934 in one-time General Fund support to add 5.5 positions to these four programs. While adding these positions will not return all services to their previous levels, it will restore some key services that have been significantly reduced. BDS's Financial Plan shows that bureau revenues (fees and charges) would support these positions in future years.

Status: Request for 5.5 FTE denied by Council; subsequent request for 3.0 FTE for Neighborhood Inspections Program approved.

Estimated Completion Date: July 2011

Update (September 2011): City Council did not approve BDS' request for additional ongoing General Fund support for these programs for FY 2011-12. However, at Commissioner Saltzman's urging, City Council subsequently approved funding for 3.0 FTE in the Neighborhood Inspections Program. These additional FTE will enable the Program to respond more quickly to complaints and to restore some re-inspection and case management activities.

In addition, City Council approved General Fund support for a 0.5 FTE City Planner II position to help implement the City's new Tree Code.

These additional FTE for FY 2011-12 have improved service levels throughout the bureau by more closely matching staff levels with workload.

Update (March 30, 2012): The additional 3 FTE in the Neighborhood Inspections Program have enhanced neighborhood livability by enabling the bureau to:

- Respond to all housing complaints involving exterior maintenance issues on owner-occupied and non-residential properties (to prevent neighborhood deterioration);

- Significantly increase responsiveness to fire/life/safety and health/sanitation issues for occupied residential rentals; and

- Restore case management duties to facilitate more timely compliance for violations impacting the community at large.

In its FY 2012-13 Requested Budget, BDS has asked that the funding for these 3 FTE be continued. If approved, this will result in 828 additional initial site inspections and 834 additional dwelling unit inspections concerning property maintenance violations on rental, owner occupied, and non-residential buildings. The increase to this basic

citywide service will result in many more complaints being resolved and a reduction in the number of neglected properties that impact surrounding property values.

The "broken window" theory suggests that this will help address neighborhood livability by reducing crime, squatters, vagrants, and service calls to City public safety agencies for neglected properties that have become an attractive nuisance. BDS will be able to investigate owner-occupied and non-residential property maintenance violations. Response times for initial inspections will be shortened and re-inspections, referral assistance, and code hearings to facilitate timely compliance will increase.

The 0.5 FTE City Tree Code position (Program Coordinator, rather than City Planner II) has been implementing Phase 1 of the Tree Code, which commenced in July 2011. This position performs tasks that are critical to enabling BDS and the Parks Bureau to administer the new code, including process mapping; development of brochures, application forms, and training materials for internal and external customers; website design and content; development of a code amendment package; public outreach; and coordination with programmers on incorporating tree permitting and code requirements into the existing permit database system.

Phase II of the project is scheduled to begin in February 2013. As was recognized by City Council previously, a great deal of work remains to be done to prepare for the 2013 effective date. In its FY 2012-13 Requested Budget, BDS asked for the continuation of $144,882 in one-time General Fund monies to support this position and help ensure a timely and smooth implementation of the new code.

Operational Efficiencies - Self-Service Permits and Fee Payment

BDS is reviewing the feasibility of upgrading its IVR (Interactive Voice Response) system as part of ITAP implementation. IVR provides phone access to permit information such as inspection results. The IVR upgrade would include adding notification when the limit on the number of inspections included with a permit is reached (inspection limitation), the ability to order more inspections, and the ability to pay for inspections over the phone with a credit card.

BDS is also reviewing the feasibility of adding inspection limitation functionality to its Internet Permits application. This application currently allows customers to order trade permits (electrical, mechanical, and plumbing) that do not require plan review online, add fixtures to existing online permits, and pay for online permits with a credit card.

Phone and online customer service functionality is important because it allows customers to receive services and make payments without having to make a trip to bureau offices, and it reduces the use of staff time. This allows BDS staff to focus on providing customer service in other important areas.

<u>Update (March 30, 2012)</u>:

BDS is upgrading its IVR (Interactive Voice Response) system as part of ITAP implementation. IVR provides phone access for customers to schedule inspections and obtain permit information such as inspection results and plan review status checks. The IVR upgrade includes adding notification when the limit on the number of inspections included with a permit is reached (inspection limitation), the ability to order more inspections, and the ability to pay for inspections over the phone with a credit card.

BDS is currently working with the IVR vendor to set up the new IVR server and upgrade IVR to the latest software version. The version upgrade involves reprogramming all the code. BDS is reviewing the IVR call flow with internal users , along with creating the final designs for inspection limitation functionality in both TRACS and IVRand credit card payments by phone on IVR. Go-live of the new IVR system is planned for late spring 2012; inspection limitation and credit card payments would follow in summer 2012.

Phone customer service functionality is important because it allows customers to receive services and make payments without having to make a trip to bureau offices, and it reduces the use of staff time. This allows BDS staff to focus on providing customer service in other important areas.