



**City of  
Portland, Oregon  
Bureau of Development Services**

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**BDS FY 2009-10 Service Improvement Plan  
Spring BMP Update  
April 19, 2010**

BDS continually strives to improve the service that it provides. In FY 2009-10, the bureau identified particular areas of focus including the collocation of permitting services, technology improvements, and the facilitation of sustainable development. These efforts have been tempered by the effects of the recession, including a significant reduction in bureau staff in summer and fall 2009.

**Collocation - Improving Plan Review and Permitting Services**

Staff from as many as seven different city bureaus takes part in reviewing development permit applications. This decentralized review system unnecessarily complicates and lengthens the City's plan review process. To address this issue, City Council on April 16, 2009 directed that all programs and personnel necessary for development-related plan review and permit issuance be relocated from the infrastructure bureaus (most of which are located in the Portland Building) to the 1900 Building with BDS.

It was anticipated that the collocation of staff would lead to greater efficiency and enhanced customer service delivery through the standardization of benchmarks, fees, and processes related to plan review and permitting services.

An Interagency Team submitted status reports to City Council in July, September, and December 2009, and staff from the infrastructure bureaus was relocated to the 1900 Building in early December 2009. Several proposals have been adopted by Council to foster an improved permit review process, including SDC Code and Administrative Rule Changes, Fee Code changes, a combined appeals process for the infrastructure bureaus, and Interim Rules that allow for the rollout of the public works permitting process. BDS will report to City Council by July 1, 2010 on the effectiveness of collocation.

**Technology Improvements**

BDS is working to leverage technology tools to enhance both the efficiency of our services and our customers' experience.

*Mobile TRACS*

This concept uses technology to allow inspectors to work primarily from their cars, with limited time spent in the office. Inspectors will use laptops equipped with wide-area wireless network cards and web browsers for remote access to BDS's permit tracking system (TRACS). The proof of concept phase of the project demonstrated that the technology is workable and effective.

The bureau had hoped to pilot this technology in 2010 and then roll out to all inspection groups over the following year. However, the Mobile TRACS project manager's position was among those cut in summer 2009, and the project has been put on hold.

#### *Online Access to Information and Services*

The bureau has been exploring various initiatives to increase customers' ability to access bureau services and information online. Currently customers can purchase trade permits (that do not require plan review) on the BDS website, as well as look up information on their permit or case. Other initiatives included an automated fee calculator, upgrading the internet permits application, making additional permit types available for purchase online, and upgrading the online appeals application. However, due to the budget and staffing cuts at BDS in 2009, these initiatives have been put on hold.

Late in 2009, the bureau began investigating options for investing in long-range technology improvements. 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 giving them 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 it reduces its reliance on paper plans and records.

City Council discussed this proposal at a work session on February 9, 2010. BDS is working with the Office of Management and Finance, the Bureau of Technology Services, the State of Oregon Building Codes Division, and a vendor regarding funding, contracting, and other implementation details.

#### **Facilitating Sustainable Development / Green Building**

In FY 2009-10, BDS will expand its role as a sustainability and green building resource for the development community by working on initiatives geared toward encouraging builders to employ more sustainable building methods and technologies in their projects, while looking for opportunities to remove barriers to building "green".

### *Portland Energy Efficient Home Pilot*

The Portland Energy Efficiency Home Pilot (PEEHP) is a competitive program that awards grants to generate residential construction that will provide the industry and public with information on the building methods and materials necessary to build cost-effective, energy-efficient homes. PEEHP grant funds offset the costs of constructing homes that perform 15% and 30% more efficiently than the requirements of the 2008 Oregon Energy Code. The first PEEHP grants were awarded in late May 2009. In October 2009, the deadline for submitting applications for PEEHP grants was extended through June 30, 2010. To date four grants have been awarded to eight homes that meet the program's energy-efficient requirements. All of these homes are entry level or affordable housing. It is anticipated that the remaining PEEHP funds will be awarded by the end of the fiscal year (June 30, 2010).

### *Green Building Local Code Amendment*

BDS was pursuing the development of a local building code amendment addressing more sustainable buildings practices. In 2008 the bureau assembled a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) composed of building and sustainability experts to craft code provisions that would augment existing State building code requirements. The TAG completed proposed code language that was to be made available for public review and comment, and they intended to present a final draft amendment to City Council by the fall of 2009. However, due to the significant staffing reductions at BDS in 2009, the TAG's work on the building code amendment was suspended as of July 16, 2009. BDS intends to resume work toward a building code amendment as soon as possible once sufficient staffing is available.

### *Alternative Technology Advisory Committee*

The Alternative Technology Advisory Committee (ATAC) was established in early 2009 to evaluate innovative, sustainable building technologies and construction methods. The committee is composed of building contractors and design professionals who are experts in sustainable development and who can advise the bureau on new technologies in the context of existing building code requirements. The ATAC is the first of its kind in the nation and is looked to as a model for other cities interested in promoting green building practices. In 2009 the ATAC completed reviews of three applications for alternative heating and plumbing technologies.

### *Green Building Early Assistance Appointments*

The Green Building Early Assistance Appointments proposal would provide green building assistance to BDS customers by establishing optional pre-submittal meetings for permit applicants with representatives from several green building /sustainability organizations. The appointments would focus on helping applicants make their projects more sustainable and energy efficient and would help customers learn about several aspects of green building, including building techniques, site development, financial incentives, and construction waste management. Due to budget and staffing cuts in 2009, this proposal has not been implemented.