



Project Fast Forward Planning and Land Services

Date: October 15, 2005

Memorandum

To: John W. Ladenburg, Pierce County Executive
Shawn Bunney, Chair, Pierce County Council

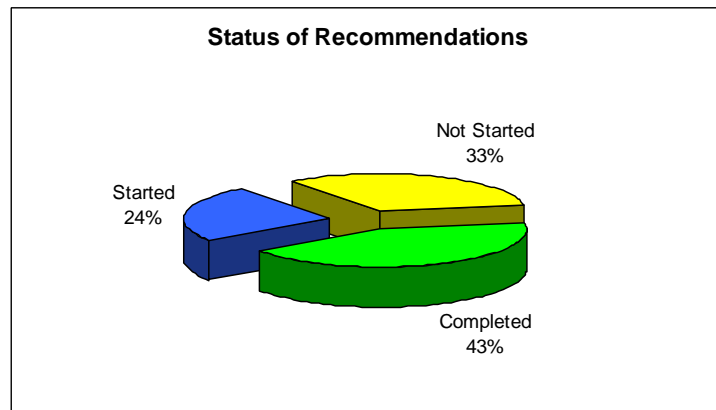
From: Gordon L. Aleshire, Building Official

Re: Update on the Implementation of the 2004 Zucker Systems Audit

In November of 2004 an audit of the development permit process by Zucker Systems was presented. The audit contained 188 recommendations aimed at improving the permit process in Pierce County.

The PALS response to these recommendations over the past year has been impressive, especially in light of other matters PALS was dealing with. There was an existing effort for self examination called PALS on PALS. There was a new building code adopted in July of 2004. The first major revision since the 1997 Uniform Building Code. Then the Directions ordinance went into effect March 1, 2005. The local market took off. The result is the busiest permitting year in the County's 150 year history.

PALS could well have imploded. We didn't. Thanks to the efforts of the staff not only are we reducing the backlog during this record year, we have also implemented over 81 recommendations. That's 43% of all of them. We have another 24% of the recommendations started in some form of review.



The accompanying Excel spreadsheet lists all of the recommendations in order. In the first column the status of the recommendation is given. It will note either, Completed, Started, or Not Started. The report also underlines each recommendation to correspond with the pie chart on the previous page.

"Completed" has a broad meaning in this context. In most cases the recommendations were implemented as suggested. Others were modified and a slightly different change was made to get the same result. In a small number of cases the decision was made to not adopt a recommendation. Item 44 Post Job Inspection Card, is an example where we decided to keep our current inspection report.

The audit noted "It is customary in most jurisdictions to issue a building sign-off card to record all approvals. Using these cards is a good method to document approvals and job progress information as they are posted on the job site. A sign-off could be included on these cards for Fire and Engineering." Our current inspection report did all this plus contained up to date information on any special approvals that might be needed.

Lastly, most of the items in the spreadsheet have a note in the right column providing additional detail on what has been done to date. If you have any questions about any of the PALS implementation notes, please contact me for additional information.

We are excited to take the implementation to the next level next year.

Status as of October 15, 2005

General

Completed	1. Distribute report for review. Completed	The report was sent to interested stakeholders and placed on the County Webpage.
Completed	2. Agree on an implementation plan. Completed	A plan was presented and adopted by the County Council in March 2005. Except for the reduction of backlog, it did not contain a time table as suggested in the audit.
Completed	3. Adopt short term implementation plan. Completed	Several of the eleven recommendations proposed for this short term plan were implemented. Others will wait pending funding or other resource needs.

Customer Issues

Completed	4. Solve customer concerns. Completed	The recommendation was to share the report with staff for the purpose of brainstorming ideas to answer customer concerns. We have done this and will continue to do more. Designating the item done does not imply that we have solved all of our customers concerns, but only that we have shared the report and continue to brainstorm.
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Overall Findings and Approach

Completed	5. Adopt overriding mission and goals. Completed	Items in the proposed mission statement are implied in our current statement. The mission statement is reviewed annually. The proposed statements may be addressed in some form at the next review.
Started	6. Adopt guidelines for the development permitting system. In progress	Many of the elements proposed are current goals in our ongoing development of the permit system or process. Others are dependent on additional staffing or other initiatives. As we work through recommendation #117 these items will be part of our review.
Started	7. Address PALS management issues. In progress.	Listed by oversight committee as an item to be addressed but not part of the top 8 items for 2005.

Issues Impacting All Functions

Completed	8. Calculate backlog of cases. Completed	The number of backlogged applications was calculated in Nov of 2004. We continue to report backlog on a monthly basis.
Completed	9. Allocate \$400,000 for consultants and backlog. Completed	The County Council allocated \$700,000 in March of 2005.
Completed	10. Adopt guidelines for fees and budget. Completed	The 2006 budget process was completed. At this time there is no recommendation to change the budget process or funding priorities.
Completed	11. Initially absorb PALS facility upgrades in General Fund. Completed	Facility upgrades will be funded through under expenditures in 2005. Decisions about the funding sources in 2006 will be made as part of the budget process.
Completed	12. Change PALS budget document. Completed	The budget document is reviewed annually as part of the budget process. There were minor changes in the 2006 document. The recommendations in the audit were not incorporated this time.
Completed	13. Adopt Advance Planning annual work plan. Completed	The Advance Planning work program is reviewed by the Planning Commission and County Council before it is implemented.
Started	14. Study centralization of Code Enforcement functions. In Progress	An initial study of County regulations has been done to see if there were any legal constraints. The next phase of the review has not been assigned.
Started	15. Modify Chapter 18 of County Code. In progress.	Will be reviewed with item 117 "20 Minute Lobby Waits", in the last quarter of 2005.
Completed	16. Declare planning permits "complete" on acceptance of application. Completed	All applications accepted by PALS meet this standard. It is unclear why the audit thought there was a difference with planning applications. We will confirm with Zucker Systems as we work on item 117 "20 Minute Lobby Waits".
Not started.	17. Create integrated time system and payroll system. Not Started	
Completed	18. Resolve PALS data issues. Completed	PALS Plus is addressing some of the issues raised. Inconsistent data entry is also addressed in the training plan on the new permit system. The use of drop down selections rather than codes is expected to address the inconsistency issue.

Completed	19. Conduct PALS space study. Completed	Erickson McGovern has been hired. The final report was due in early August '05. We have reviewed a draft and reworked some recommendations. We have started some moves.
Completed	20. Provide annual overtime budget of \$100,000 for PALS. Completed	The County Council addressed this issue as part of item 9.
Started	21. Adopt overtime rules. In Progress	The Department's informal overtime policy follows the general points outlined in this recommendation. A more formalized version may come out of our work on item 117 "20 Minute Lobby Waits" later this year.
Completed	22. Increase commitment to PALS on PALS. Completed	The department is fully committed to following through on this process. A second employee survey is expected to happen in 2006.
Completed	23. Perform comprehensive first time reviews. Completed	This item is done. This has always been a standard/theme for the department. It is not however, memorialized in a Peabody policy.
Not started.	24. Develop a public awareness program. Not started	
Completed	25. Review sick leave data. Completed	Sick leave data was reviewed early in 2005. Supervisors are watching for inconsistencies.
Started	26. Install field computer system. In progress.	The permit system is designed with field operations in mind. Developing an operational field system is now underway with the development of the Fire marshal phase of PALS Plus.
Completed	27. Provide training on County View. Completed	Training is offered on an as needed basis. It is a key component of the permit system.
Completed	28. Resolve addressing issues. Completed	PALS has an ongoing coordination with the GIS department. While not all issues are resolved the recommendation is to work with the GIS department and we are doing that.
Not started.	29. Consider requiring electronic final plat submittals. Not Started.	This issue may get included with our work on 117 "20 Minute Lobby Waits".
Not started.	30. Install optical imaging system. Not started.	This issue may get included with our work on 117 "20 Minute Lobby Waits".
Completed	31. Support PALS+ expenditure needs. Completed	The project budget was extended to June of 2006.

Completed	32. Prepare data entry specifications for pals Plus. Completed	The programming for Pals Plus addresses the points raised in this recommendation. As with item 23 there is no formal policy on this topic but the concepts are being used.
Completed	33. Incorporate PALS+ improvement needs into budget. Completed	The ongoing support staff were included in our 2006 budget requests.
Completed	34. Return phone call the same day. Completed	The department has had a policy of returning phone calls within 24 hours since the mid 1990s. The department has decided to stay with this policy and to look at ways to monitor how successful we are.
Progress	35. Improve phone system. Needs funding.	While we have made some improvements the proposed changes in this recommendation are very costly. As we continue to look at process improvements under item 117 "20 Minute Lobby Waits" this item may be reviewed.
Started	36. Expand E-government.	This topic is one that we would like to move forward on. While it might get some attention during our review of 117 "20 Minute Lobby Waits", it needs to be on hold until PALS plus has completed the phasing out of all DCIS permits.

Division of Building Safety and Inspection

Completed	37. Budget to allow for small equipment	Budget always had provisions for small equipment.
Completed	38. Develop Information Bulletin	Several bulletins are available. The specific bulletin referenced was under revision for the new codes. It is now available
Completed	39. Add two Building Inspectors	Inspectors have been added.
Completed	40. Add one Plans Examiner	Plans examiner has been added.
Completed	41. Develop expanded training program	Expanded training plan established. First round of classes set for October.
Completed	42. Expand applicant notification	Applicant notification has been in place for some time. The suggestion of a postcard notice was not implemented. The additional cost and time for mailings did not seem practical.
Started	43. Solve Building Inspector concerns	This issue was first identified in the employee survey a year before the audit. Employees and supervisors had been meeting but not making much progress. We hired De Hicks of SCGI to come in and interview the staff and supervisors to see if he could help identify specific issues. The final report has been drafted and should be delivered in November. We will use the report to continue to work on this issue.
Completed	44. Post job inspection card	The current field inspection report acts as a job inspection card. It contains additional information not found on many job cards.
Completed	45. Add a Civil Engineer III	Engineer CE II has been hired.
Started	46. Establish new time goals for plan check	The new goals were dependent on additional staff and the use of a consultant which have been added. Residential goals were the same as our existing goals. Commercial plan review goals are shorter. Once backlog is eliminated goals will be monitoring our performance to see if the staffing model as proposed is adequate.
Completed	47. Use consultants when plan check goals cannot be met	Current policy always allowed this as a customer option.
Completed	48. Hire consultants to clear up the backlog	Kolke Consulting Group is under contract.
Completed	49. Consultant plan check to be reviewed by PE Supervisor	A QC program has been established. The Plans examiner supervisor is in charge of that effort.

Completed	50. Need for geotechnical report by building plan checkers	By ordinance the need for a geotechnical report is made by DENG not the building division plans examiner. This process has not proven to be a problem.
Completed	51. DENG to communicate geotechnical comments directly to applicant	Each section communicates directly with the applicant.
Completed	52. Have plan check consultants hired directly by the County	Kolke Consulting Group is under contract.
Completed	53. Review ISO evaluation for changes	A cursory review of the report concluded that we should see an increase in our score on the next evaluation.

Current Planning

Completed	54. Team approach for plan and ordinance preparation	Chip Vincent and Vicki Diamond reported to the Oversight Committee the efforts that we have made to coordinate staff in preparation of new code or code amendments. This is ongoing effort made by both Sections
Started	55. Prepare indexed policy and procedures manual	The index for the policy manual has not been completed. The Procedure Manual (SOP Manual) has not been completed.
Not Started	56. Transfer Environmental Coordinator to Current	
Started	57. Add two Planner III positions and one Planner II	One position is in the 2006 budget request.
Started	58. Assign a Planner III to Tech Support team	Under rearview with # 117 Getting to 20 minutes
Started	59. Create four Current Planning teams	Planners are assigned to specific areas of the County. The realignment proposed here is dependent on the reorganization proposed under # 7.
Started	60. Implement project manager approach	Draft policy is being developed. A final will be ready for implementation on October 1, 2005. The PALS model for project managers is different that the one proposed in the Audit. Industry representatives and staff jointly developed a model that works within our system. It will be evaluated annually.
Completed	61. Project managers should intake projects and declare complete	See item #60
Started	62. Change NOA process	We believe we are currently doing the items recommended in this item Timing issues are still in flux until the backlog is gone and additional Staffing is approved.
Not Started	63. Meet with applicant 20 days after NOA is mailed	
Not Started	64. Mail information to applicant within 28 days of NOA	
Completed	65. Planning Project Manager to monitor timelines	See item #60
Started	66. Encourage LUACs early participation in process	
Started	67. Determine level of staff support for LUACs	The County Council does determine the level of support every budget cycle.
Completed	68. Planning Project Manager to review related final & Bldg Pmts	See item #60
Started	69. Implement traffic impact fee	PW&U is currently working on the needed revisions to PCC.

Not Started	70. Tech support planner to do SEPA review for some Bldg Pmts	
Completed	71. LUACs and community groups to be considered parties of record	I talked with assistant to PC Hearing Examiner and requested that all LUACs be noted as party of record on the Hearing Examiner's decisions. She confirmed that she had been doing this for some time.
Started	72. Require more Pre-application meetings	See item #60
Started	73. Re-structure pre-application and pre-development meetings	See item #60
Started	74. Decrease non-fee administrative work for case planners	This issue will get addressed in the last part of 2005 through the oversight committee.
Completed	75. Complete assessment of backlog	Assessment was completed in Nov. '04.
Not Started	76. Adopt new performance measures	New performance measures were based on new staffing. Will continue to use existing standards until staffing provided.
Not Started	77. Adopt qualitative indicators	
Not Started	78. Establish mandatory planner rotation	
Completed	79. Advance Planning liaison to Development Center & Current Planning	The last year, an Advance Planner has been assigned to assist in the implementation of new regulations. These individuals are not only available to the public, but assist staff during the initial (6 month) implementation phase.
Completed	80. Create private office for Current Planning Supervisor	Completed in Early '05
Started	81. Establish training program for LUAC members	In LUAC Draft
Completed	82. Set timeline for updating Subdivision Ordinance	We have the proposed Ordinance before the CDC at the end of July, then on to full Council. There were only a couple of items that needed more attention. This recommendation has been completed.
Started	83. More open communication between managers & Staff	Human Resources is working with Development Center to improve open communication. Pals on Pals is reviewed as a part of every staff meeting.
Completed	84. Facilitated staff retreats	There are two meetings that are designed to do what is recommended here. One is SCORE and the other is a supervisor meeting.
Completed	85. Eliminate Permit Coordinator Position	

Completed	86. Development Center Supervisor to have Admin over Tech Support	The Department has begun a restructuring of the Technical Support function. Our solution does not meet the recommendation exactly but after careful study this was determined to be the best solution.
Completed	87. Routine sessions to critique operations	Division Supervisors are meeting regularly to review intake and distribution of applications.
Completed	88. Use focused agendas for staff meetings	Have been using meeting agendas for some time, also publishing meeting minutes.
Progress	89. Consolidate permit categories	This is part of the PALS Plus conversion project. Where appropriate this is being done.
Not Started	90. Simplify noticing requirements	
Completed	91. Revise and streamline codes	This is and has been an ongoing goal of PALS. There is not set schedule for a comprehensive overhaul.

Development Center

Completed	92. Confer during code development	Completed with item #54.
Started	93. Create clear thresholds for project review	This topic will be re-evaluated during our review of 117 "20 Minute Lobby Waits".
Not Started	94. Create standard plan details	
Started	95. Exempt certain projects from DENG Review	This topic will be re-evaluated during our review of 117 "20 Minute Lobby Waits".
Started	96. Re-instate Lobby Service Attendant	This topic will be re-evaluated during our review of 117 "20 Minute Lobby Waits".
Completed	97. Install wireless router in lobby	03/31/2005 completed
Completed	98. Make all of PALS a wireless hotspot	06/31/2005 completed
Completed	99. Install LCD computer monitors in lobby workstations	Completed April '05
Completed	100. Continue changes to permit system for end users	Programmers are always available to staff and respond immediately.
Not Started	101. Assign two Permit Technicians to phone system	New performance measures were based on new staffing. Will continue to use existing standards until staffing provided.
Started	102. Better training for Permit Technicians	With each phase of PALS Plus that is released the staff is getting training. Additional training will follow the conversion.
Not Started	103. Allow staff to attend ICC training courses	
Not Started	104. Expand training for Office Assistants	
Completed	105. Adopt list of over-the-counter permits	Many permits are now processed over-the-counter, tenant improvement permits are currently being added to the over-the-counter list.
Completed	106. Dedicate one Permit Tech to Application & Block Appointments	Effective August 15, 2005, we have dedicated 5 Permit Technicians to appointments.
Completed	107. Schedule Application and Block Appointments in 48 hours	Effective August 15, 2005, we have dedicated 5 Permit Technicians to a new appointment system. Appointments are now made for the next day.
Started	108. Three Permit Technicians dedicated to info * quick apps	We have requested a supplemental budget to increase the number of Permit Technicians dedicated to information & quick applications.
Completed	109. Three Permit Technicians dedicated to Make applications	Effective August 15, 2005, we have dedicated 5 Permit Technicians to appointments for applications.

Started	110. Schedule appointments within 48 hours for making applications	New performance measures were based on new staffing. Will continue to use existing standards until staffing provided. Up to 12 appointments are now being scheduled the next day.
Started	111. Dedicate five workstations to Technical Support	This topic will be re-evaluated during our review of 117 "20 Minute Lobby Waits".
Started	112. Accept planning applications by Current Planner	This topic will be re-evaluated during our review of 117 "20 Minute Lobby Waits". The version of PALS plus just released would have to be redesigned to accommodate this change. If adopted the change might be delayed until second quarter of 2006 to allow for the completion of the initial conversion to PALS Plus.
Started	113. Planning applications to receive priority by Permit Techs	This topic will be re-evaluated during our review of 117 "20 Minute Lobby Waits".
Started	114. First priority of Technical Support staff to be customers at counter	This item is not done for some divisions. A draft policy is slowly being implemented. This recommendation has the potential to create backlog.
Started	115. Implement project manager system	Draft policy is being developed. A final draft should be ready in August '05.
Completed	116. Have complete codes in Development Center	There are now complete codes in the Development Center. Some of the codes are accessed on the Intranet and some in hard copy.
Started	117. Lobby waits to be no more than 20 minutes	The Oversight Committee will begin an examination of how this can be done. In addition there are several other recommendations that will be reviewed with this effort.
Not Started	118. Complete Information and Quick Processing in 30 minutes	
Not Started	119. Complete scheduled appointments in 90 minutes	
Completed	120. Make appointments within 48 hours of request	Effective August 15, 2005, we have dedicated 5 Permit Technicians to a new appointment system. Appointments are now made for the next day.
Completed	121. Dedicate 75 % of Technical Support staff time to Dev Center	The Department has begun a restructuring of the Technical Support function. Our solution does not meet the recommendation exactly but after careful study this was determined to be the best solution.

Completed	122. Relocate receptionist	Erickson McGovern has been hired. The final report was due in early August '05. We have reviewed a draft and reworked some recommendation. We have started some moves.
Completed	123. Redesign counter area	See item 122
Completed	124. Relocate Development Center Supervisors office	See item 122
Completed	125. Assist some customers at staff desks	See item 122
Completed	126. Merge cashier station and reception station	See item 122
Not Started	127. Expand training for Cashier and receptionist	
Not Started	128. Hire an additional office assistant	
Not Started	129. Hire two new Permit Technicians	
Completed	130. Remove cardboard Stop sign	done
Completed	131. Revise handout materials	ongoing
Started	132. Revise call in system	Made one revision more pending

Development Engineering

Completed	133. Conduct staffing impact analysis on new regulations	This is a current requirement for any legislative change.
Completed	134. Add a Civil Engineer III position	
Completed	135. Assign lead for final plats to Development Engineering	Recommendation was deleted in final Audit.
Completed	136. Furnish data for monthly PALS report	Monthly reports are currently being provided. A more robust report will be available when PALS Plus is complete with Phase III.
Started	137. Consolidate engineering permit fee categories	This is part of the PALS Plus conversion project. Where appropriate this is being done.
Not Started	138. Add one engineer and one engineer tech/inspector for enforcement	
Started	139. Study moving enforcement to Code Enforcement	An initial study of County regulations has been done to see if there were any legal constraints. The next phase of the review has not been assigned.
Not Started	140. Create Surveyor job classifications	
Not Started	141. In-house training program for engineers	
Not Started	142. Publish permit manual	
Not Started	143. Shorten and simplify checklist	
Not Started	144. List permits exempt from engineering review	
Not Started	145. Study additional permits that can be exempt from review	
Not Started	146. Distribute applications to engineering faster	
Started	147. Public Works to communicate directly to applicants	This item is not complete. We have already adopted the stated goal, but need to complete the contract process with some engineering consultants that we have hired, develop some of the process with the consultants and also do some training with the consultants.
Not Started	148. Create quality control program	
Completed	149. 95% of first reviews in 20 working days	We have already adopted the stated goal, but need to complete the contract process. With some engineering consultants that we have hired, develop some of the process with the consultants and also do some training with the consultants.

Started	150. Monitor timelines	This item is not complete. We do have a monitoring system in place (TO-DO list) so that it is simple to tell what is behind, but we are currently in a mode of trying to ship things out to consultants to eliminate our backlog. The proposed recommendation would be best implemented when our backlog situation is eliminated and our workflow is normalized.
Completed	151. Keep Public Works counter with PALS	This item is complete for now. Even though the majority of Public Works has moved out of the Annex they are still maintaining the presence of two employees assigned to public assistance. There is a possibility that these two staff members may be relocated when the Public Works Department builds a new office which would make us non-compliant at that point with this recommendation.
Not Started	152. Send all but 50 plans to consultants for review	
Not Started	153. Send plans that cannot meet performance Stds to consultants	
Not Started	154. New system for abbreviated and minor plans	
Completed	155. Small plan corrections to be field verified	
Not Started	156. Change applicant notification system	
Completed	157. County Engineer to delegate signature authority	Recommendation was deleted in final Audit.
Not Started	158. Meet with Public Works staff for final acceptance	
Not Started	159. Use Public Works sign off form	
Completed	160. Add one engineer inspector	
Not Started	161. Add three Engineer I positions.	

Resource Management

Started	162. Prepare and maintain a policy handbook	Development has started.
Started	163. Develop a training program	Development has started.
Started	164. Make organizational changes in Resource mgmt	See item 7
Started	165. Improve wetland mapping	Partially complete.
Completed	166. Hire consultants for backlog	Contract in final stages
Not Started	167. Add one biologist in addition to any needed for Directions Pkg	
Started	168. Adopt new performance standards	New performance measures were based on new staffing. Will continue to use existing standards until staffing provided.
Not Started	169. Incorporate qualitative indicators in performance standards	
Not Started	170. Expand implementation of mitigation programs.	
Not Started	171. Establish pre-design site assessment for a fee.	
Not Started	172. Establish conservation easement documents	
Started	173. Establish fee for wetland mitigation monitoring	Proposed in 2006 Budget

Fire Marshal

Started	174. Monitor staffing needs	Executive has included a Supplemental for an additional Fire Permit Coordinator and an OA in the FPB budget for 2006. As other departments increase staffing to expedite plan review, FPB continues to be one of the bottlenecks. FPB has utilized outside plan review resources and overtime to expedite review process, but still remains significantly backlogged with reviews. Additional full time staffing in 2006 will significantly improve plan review turn around time and greatly reduce bottleneck potential.
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Health

Started	175. Submit copy of proposed private sewage plan w/bldg permit	This is a PALS submittal standard outside the permitting authority of the TPCHD. This recommendation is part of the review of item 117 Getting to 20 Minutes. TPCHD will participate in discussions.
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Started	176. Perform initial review of private sewage disposal in 21 days	This recommendation continues to be considered. TPCHD has made a commitment to our stakeholders to process applications efficiently and cost effectively. To implement and maintain this level of service at this time would require a significant increase in fees and may not provide a satisfactory level of efficiency. TPCHD will be working with our stakeholders to establish customer service expectations and conduct a fee audit for the 2007 Budget Cycle. Workflows are currently under review to determine where process reduction and coordination of technical review will add to efficiency.
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Completed	177. Develop policy on private sewage disposal system expansion	A policy on private sewage disposal system expansion has been developed for additions to existing structures.
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Public Works Sewer

Started	178. Staff to meet 15 day review for reviews	The Sewer Utility has hired staff to help in the review process, have an open announcement for additional engineers, and have a temporary extra hire review position until the end of the year.
Started	179. Approve simple tenant improvements over-the-counter	Working with Building Division on a proposal for OTC tenant permits.
Not Started	180. Accept credit cards	
Progress	181. Review and implement employees improvement ideas	The Sewer Utility has met with the MBA since the first of the year to address permit issues. Staff recommendations have been incorporated into changes implemented.
Not Started	182. Remove notarization requirement	
Not Started	183. Revise approach to incomplete applications	

Public Works Transportation

Completed	184. Send review comments directly to applicant	Review comments are coordinated through DENG and copied to the applicant upon request.
Completed	185. Adjust staff to meet timelines	This has always been our business practice to the greatest extent possible given other priorities. This would be enhanced with additional staff requested in the 2006 budget.
Started	186. Co-locate traffic review to PALS	The traffic impact fee ordinance if adopted would minimize the expected outcome of this recommendation.
Started	187. Establish fees for traffic review	Discussions are underway as part of the 2006 budget proposal.
Started	188. Complete first review in 10 working days	Additional staff if approved in the 2006 budget request may make this possible.
Not Started	189. Use standby consultants as needed to meet timelines	Not viewed as an efficient use of resources.
Completed	190. Notify Dev Engr/ Current Planning when review is completed	This has always been the case.