

# project FAST FORWARD

A NEWSLETTER OF PIERCE COUNTY PLANNING AND LAND SERVICES

APRIL 2005

## Wireless Connection Lets Customers Work While They Wait

On March 31, our lobby officially became a wireless hotspot. This small but significant upgrade will allow our customers with wireless-enabled laptops and handheld devices to access the Internet, check remote email, or even use our own online permitting site. For many visitors, this upgrade will turn our waiting room into a remote office environment, where their work can continue despite the wait.

This is the first step in implementing audit recommendation #97, and is further proof of our continued commitment to create a more customer-oriented environment in the lobby.

### Visualize Handheld Customer Service

The wireless connection lays the groundwork for great leaps forward in future customer service.

Imagine a lobby where staff members consulted with you while you waited, using wireless, tablet PCs to check the status of your application and review your site address via the county's GIS

database. These roaming staff members might perform tasks as simple as ensuring that you are waiting in the appropriate line, or steps as complex as starting your permit applications and calculating fees.

Getting this wireless technology link was the vital first step in this process, making it feasible for Planning and Land Services to explore including hand held devices in our 2006 budget.

### Better Data Solutions Mean More Online Permitting

At the same time, we're working on improved permit tracking systems and other improvements to the way we record your permit information as electronic data.

While these improvements are the first steps of many, they will eventually allow PALS to process even more permits online. We know that it's an improvement to provide a wireless connection in our lobby, but if you can apply for more permits online, you can avoid the lobby altogether.

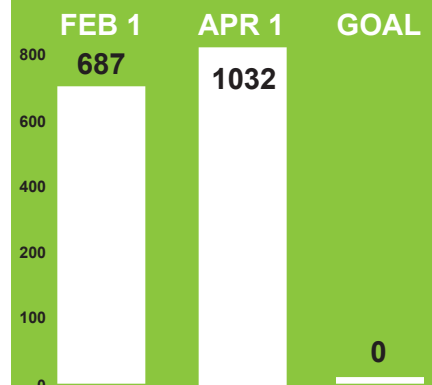


Want to get more work done? A new wireless connection in the PALS lobby gets you online.

### LOBBY WAIT TIMES



### CURRENT PERMIT BACKLOG



# Outside Help for Faster Results

## Signed Contracts With Outside Providers Mean Numbers Should Go Down Soon

The record number of permit applications we received in February are now swelling our permit backlog numbers. In spite of our reduction efforts, April's backlog is the highest of the year.



Pierce County Planning and Land Services is working hard to speed up the permitting process.

To learn more about Project Fast Forward, or to apply for a permit online, visit us at [www.piercecountywa.org/pals](http://www.piercecountywa.org/pals).

You may also stop by our offices at  
2401 So. 35th Street  
Tacoma, WA 98409-7490

Good news—and smaller numbers—are on the way in the form of outsourcing. With the help of outside professionals, we expect to see backlog numbers begin to decline in May.

In the **Building Division**, we've selected Kolke Consulting Group. Within a week, we'll be sending them commercial plan reviews. Their representative will interact directly with applicants, work through the review process, and get packages into a form where we can successfully issue a permit.

**Current Planning** has a Request For Proposals in the final stages of development. The RFP is ready to go to Budget and Finance for final proofing and publication. The selected firm will review documents for land use and commercial use, check for lot size, appropriate density, and related issues.

**Development Engineering** has three existing contracts that are being updated and a RFP will be sent out this week to retain additional firms. Backlog applications will be sent out beginning this week. The selected consultants will be assisting by checking jobsites for street width, checking slopes and runoff plans, and ensuring permit compliance.

**Resource Management** has conducted interviews with RFP respondees and expects to have a signed contract any day. The chosen consultant will begin assisting with wetland and shoreland issues in May.

## Staffing Additions In Place For Faster Permits

On April 15th, the Building Division made four offers to candidates for new positions, including two building inspectors, a plans examiner, and a structural engineer.

In addition to this good news, we've also filled a vacant plans examiner position and have hired five biologists in Resource Management. Look for these energetic and qualified new employees to begin making a big impact on our existing backlog.

We still have a ways to go until we are up to our recommended staff levels, so there's room for even more improvements. Up next is the final screening process of our code enforcement applicants. We also expect to make an offer soon for a new counter tech in our development center.

**What's all this mean?** It means that at PALS we're serious when we say we're committed to making your permitting experience better and faster.

Every week or so, we're able to check off another item from our list of audit recommendations. And every day, we're able to see a positive impact for our customers. Better service is on the way. Expect it.

