



Customer-focused, outcome-based, performance-driven development services

What's working

The reorganization and reconfiguration at Minneapolis Development Review has improved service.

- Minneapolis Development Review changed its arcane process. While the old system was designed to avoid accountability, the new system moves us toward clearer lines of authority and greater accountability. We also instituted timelines for every portion of a project.
- The parking lot is very popular with contractors because it makes it easier to come in, do their business and leave. It was a simple fix.
- Working together at Minneapolis Development Review is so much nicer now. Working in proximity of one another builds ties between staff and means it

takes less time to get things done. Even if we aren't under the same organizational chart, we can look at the same plan at the same time now.

The Business Advisory Committee keeps us on track.

- The Development Review Business Advisory Committee surveys our customers and immediately starts to investigate if it sees customer service ratings go down.

311 serves as a gateway to City services.

- 311 staff is meeting a customer-focused mandate.
- As a caller, I'm a fan of 311. They practically walked me hand-in-hand to the recycling center.

What isn't working

There are still organizational silos and weak inter-departmental connections.

- Preliminary development review is not always happening.
- The planning process can be frustrating — especially if you keep running into additional hurdles. The preliminary development review concept is great, but there is still resistance.
- Inspections and Public Works don't collaborate enough in the development process.
- The concept of development coordinator is working, but approvals still slow down when the project reaches Public Works. Some things happen concurrently — but they are separate processes. Projects are subject to a Public Works review *after* going through the Planning Commission process.
- We don't coordinate the "discovery" phase. We wait until a preliminary plan is ready. If a customer requests early coordination, we'll do that — but the customer has to ask.
- Staff may be assuming that customers are more sophisticated or knowledgeable than they really are. It's not the customer's job to have a list of regulations. There are so many unwritten City policies that it's difficult for unsophisticated customers to understand the process or know how to navigate the system.
- 311 can't do more than departments allow it to do.

- The City hands over too much control to neighborhoods. Neighborhoods do not have transportation/traffic flow expertise. Sometimes the result is a mess.
- To developers, some aspects of neighborhood involvement just look like a delaying tactic that costs them money.
- Right now we have a shotgun approach to development in the core city.

Project complexities and interconnections raise customer service challenges.

- Preliminary development review could work better, but we may never reach 100 percent because of the complexity of real estate decisions.
- Public Works can't do a final approval on a preliminary plan. If something changes, then we need to look at it again. Issues are often complicated and require research. Making connections between transportation issues and economic development policy remains a challenge.
- Where there's not enough right-of-way, we have to make choices.
- The process for erosion control and stormwater runoff review needs re-engineering.

There are customer service limitations because of human limitations.

- It still comes down to individuals. When people are vindictive, it's not a lot of fun.
- The consistency within our own division varies. With multiple department heads involved, holding individuals accountable remains a challenge.

Some processes take too long or are inappropriate.

- Six to 12 months to obtain a wrecking permit is too long.

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What should be done next

Make additional internal process and communication improvements.

- Include a Public Works representative at Planning Commission meetings so Public Works issues don't hang out there.
- Involve Inspections and Public Works earlier in the development process so they can work concurrently.
- Clarify roles and processes to make it clear how these are interrelated. Instill that we're here to be problem-solvers — not just regulators. We shouldn't make it more difficult than it needs to be. The City should determine what the rules are and decide who is accountable and has authority. We should instill predictability by making it clearer that, if a customer does this, here's what the customer will get.
- Develop written policies on issues that relate to development so customers understand the processes and know how to navigate the system.
- Make preliminary development review a more transparent process with clear paths and accountability.
- Use the Business Advisory Committee to improve communication among departments.
- Expand opportunities for e-permits.
- Upgrade technology.
- Collaborate with the watershed district.
- Improve the contractor inspection process.

Refine the neighborhood input process and be clear about expectations.

- Elected officials need to have backbone and better frame what neighborhoods can have input on and what issues will be dealt with by professionals. Elected officials need to help neighborhoods recognize the importance of business and development in their neighborhoods.

When it comes to transportation, think big picture.

- We're on the cusp of huge transportation projects such as the Central Corridor and the Urban Partnership Agreement. We need to know how to finish in such a way that they're connected, so people can get out and walk or shop.
- Transportation planning is more than mass transit. Consider walking, biking, deliveries, access, etc.
- Encourage more rapid transit. When it comes to transportation, don't do what's cheapest — do what's best in the long range.
- Change the rules for parking to encourage people to take mass transit instead of driving.
- Create job centers along transit routes — not just at the end spot. That way, people don't have to drive and then get on a bus or train to come downtown.
- Make City project guidelines apply to private projects.
- Instead of a shotgun approach, focus on retail and entertainment in the core city. Take action to help get people downtown easily and without fear of crime.

"As a contractor, I had a never-again sentiment about plan review five years ago. Now, that sentiment is gone, and I volunteer to go to plan review."

- Architect
