

Development Services Advisory Team Feedback

1. **Conditional Approvals** - There was discussion about implementing and/or expanding the notion of 'conditional approvals' to enable certain aspects of a project to move forward while other aspects may still be under review. Recognizing that this cannot be apply to all circumstances, can you provide examples or suggestions of circumstances or scenarios when a 'conditional approval' would be appropriate and beneficial, e.g. what stage of the process could be streamlined by introducing a 'conditional approval' option.
 - Conditional approval is sort of like a Foundations/early start permit, however the inspectors will not allow inspections to take place if a review is not complete, but we typically need to be able to work off signed and sealed sketches, especially during foundations.
 - Demo/Early start permits will not be issued to projects in flood zones. Even if FEMA forms have been provided recently for the building.
 - THIS is an ISSUE for Interior remodel – absurd. New construction – OK. SOLUTION - If 50% rule is the issue, perhaps only allow those not exceeding 25% to proceed with a quick calc on the spot.
 - ISSUE - Early start permits are currently being held up by UTL (water/wastewater) required application.
 - I think this could be valuable if there are design or site development issues which can be resolved during the process of demolition or vertical construction review. i.e. building design elements, tree issues, right of way or side walk issues etc. Hillsborough County requires a hold harmless agreement for this. I am getting a copy.
 - I would think a conditional approval should/could happen when it is non-structural. If it is a note that was incorrect or a drainage arrow or just the common sense items that get rejected all the time. Things that would allow a project to move forward and can be an as-built update later. I would think most of these items could also be a simple red line on the city reviews behalf. Maybe dimension is conflicting between details. That doesn't need to be a resubmittal when in the field it will be figured out and corrected. Would prefer approved with conditions of fixing items with the condition being an as-built submitted before CO. Why slow down the process with resubmittal of minor adjustments and or comments. If commented and red lined by reviewer then inspector will see that it needs to be right in field and will not pass if incorrect regardless. I also think companies should become city verified based on how they submit plans, how they have a relationship with reviewers and inspectors in the field. As a company that is always above and beyond not only on the design side but on the build side we should be granted a "fast pass" or a "pre-screen" by the city to be trustworthy company. The DMV has this on your driver license, TSA has this for security lines. I would think this could be an application and fee.
 - Early Demolition Permit to include moving existing MEP scope of work, site prep, underground utility coordination
 - I am responding to your memorandum of July 24, 2019, in which you requested the possible certain aspects of a project to move forward while other aspects may still be under review. One such opportunity may lie in the area of trees and landscape as they relate to the new tree code. While there has been much discussion and dismay regarding the removal of trees without permits or mitigation, this scenario will not greatly affect our current tree code requirements. This is especially true with commercial development. The new tree codes require a much greater footprint of responsibility and reporting in the field to Natural Resources. The new requirements require additional field measurements and analysis; especially true with grand trees. This enlargement of responsibility regarding field analysis and reporting results in a greater work product effort and a greater system of checks and balances between the field and administration. The arborist responsible for the fieldwork, calculations, and data is presumed to be of the highest professional

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standards with accompanying credentials. Arborists seeking to do work in the city of Tampa must also go through a special training program with the result being credentialed to do tree work and analysis in the city of Tampa. The delays between the time of report submission by the arborist in the field to Natural Resources grows exponentially with significantly more time and effort being invested by Natural Resources than by the arborist. The time it takes Natural Resources to verify the data and analytical assumptions and results from the arborist in the field are significant and demanding. Meanwhile, while the exceptional and credentialed staff at Natural Resources runs at full speed to stay in place, the backup of paperwork are causing job delays, money, frustration, and anger. Perhaps there might be an approach to a conditional approval based upon the credentials of the arborist in the field, including the special training and credential which shall be issued by the city of Tampa soon

- There are several points at a project that conditional approval would be helpful. In the interior construction world, conditional framing approval would be very helpful. In fact, in every case where a conditional approval could be provided as long as the item that was not approved is not concealed would be helpful. It is my understanding that many of the third party inspectors operate this way.
- Conditional approval for demo and structural repairs would be beneficial on renovation projects
- Examples:
 - A Foundation Permit with a conditionally approved DDR awaiting FAA, or HCAA (We have been currently receiving this conditional approval)
 - DDR pending a traffic study (when density and zoning is already defined under the DRI)
 - DDR approval pending a future roadwork modification (example: DDR is conditionally approved until roadwork which is part of a larger development may occur later than the start of an individual building within the development starting)
 - Conditional Approvals should be allowed both in the PLN as well as the BLD permits and should be considered at the permittees request. There is not a one size fits all approach to a conditional approval as they could be granted for many reasons.
 - ❖ There should be a simple process whereby the permittee (owner) can formally request a conditional approval. The permittee should provide a short explanation of the Conditional Approval that is being sought, the justification for it (as to why it will not cause risk to the City) and the proposed language to be placed as the “condition” on the approval.
 - ❖ The conditional approval should request to be reviewed by City and unless there is risk to City/public. The conditional approval should be granted.
 - Conditional approvals should be granted to permits when the following applies:
 - An outstanding issue or unresolved comment from a single department is preventing a permit submittal from being approved, and all other departments have approved the submittal.
 - Resolution of the issue would take a significant amount of time (over two weeks) and/or extensive coordination to resolve.
 - Resolution of the issue will not require significant changes to the overall project or design intent of the submittal.
 - Resubmittal of the project plans will not require full review by all departments previously assigned to the project.

The terms of the conditional approval should be documented by the City staff member or department seeking resolution of the subject issue, and this documentation should be uploaded to Accela as an attachment to the permit documentation. A conditional approval should be treated as a full approval for all facets of the project except for those associated with the issue. Once a conditional

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approval is granted, other departments that have previously approved the submittal cannot reverse their approval or require additional conditions to be met. A conditional approval will be changed to a full approval once the documented conditions of the conditional approval are met to the satisfaction of the City staff member or department who originated the conditional approval.

Positive example:

In December of 2018, Plan # was approved by all departments except for two outstanding transportation comments generated by an employee of the transportation dept upon the Final Plans submittal. These comments requested that we add new curb ramps at two locations just outside of our project area and edgeline pavement markings for all streets. All other departments had approved the plans and there was a narrow window of opportunity for a portion of the project's construction to be completed. A conditional approval was granted because the comments were not applicable to this particular segment of construction and the time that would have been required to revise and resubmit the plans would have pushed the construction schedule beyond the available window. Because of this conditional approval, we were able to continue construction on schedule.

Negative examples:

In January of 2019, Plan # was disapproved by a different employee of the transportation dept over separate issues from those outlined in the original comments back in December of 2018. This disapproval caused delays in several other processes that had begun under the assumption that we would have approval of the plans in January after resolving the original comments. This disapproval and associated comments prompted an additional review by the other departments. The traffic signalization department in turn generated their own new comments with potentially major changes to the intent our original design despite their previous approvals. It is now approaching August of 2019 and we are still seeking approval of PLN-18-0000014.

Recently, we submitted plans showing future conditions with specialty paving in City ROW. City staff asked us to remove the specialty paving from the plan submission because it was not included in a maintenance agreement or update our maintenance agreement before proceeding with the approval of the specialty paving. We elected to remove the specialty paving to keep moving on the project. Now, we will need to revise our plans once again, resubmit later in the process. An approval with the condition that we update our maintenance agreement would have led to a more efficient result.

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2. **Express Permitting expansion** – Please provide feedback on application types that you believe could reasonably be considered for ‘express permitting’. The City currently provide express permitting for a range of application types but would like to expand the offering to others.
- Express permitting for activities which are repeated like temporary tents, outdoor activities etc. You could have criteria set for the specific activity once and as long as nothing changes expedite the process
 - Express permit could be utilized for BLD changes that are for drawing revisions specific to a single trade. Currently, it takes 2 weeks or more while ALL departments review for a simple change (i.e. mechanical HVAC revision gets routed to all reviewers again)
 - I think the committee needs to weigh in on this.
 - Express permitting should be anything short of a full house build-out or major development. New & remodel Pools, pergolas, cabana/pavilions, masonry walls, driveways/patios, decks, screen cages, gas/electric and other misc. projects.
 - Small Residential additions, remodels, renovations, miscellaneous residential related projects such as pools, fencing and landscaping
 - Small retail interior build-outs with no structural impact
 - Projects that don’t impact zoning or occupancy of existing buildings
 - Miscellaneous Trades such as canopies/awnings, signage, railings, patio decks at ground level
 - Projects that have gone through 3rd party plan review with a certified plan and code review. (The city should not need to repeat this process. If the issue is the loss of fees I believe many applicants would be willing to pay for more if the permit would be expedited)
 - Safety Improvement Projects
 - Replacement in Kind Projects
 - No change in condition/use Projects
 - LEED projects
 - Revisions (to Public Realm Design or other items) within approved DDR plans subsequent to permit approvals
 - Retail Fitouts
-
- Engineered Canopies/awnings
 - I think all interior renovation and build out projects should be eligible for express permitting as well as early starts. Currently in every case we have requested expedited review, we have been told the City is not offering that service right now.
 - Express permitting for review of revisions would be nice. Since the bulk of the review has already completed, it would be nice if revisions were faster, especially since they typically take place during construction and can hold up inspections

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3. **Best Practices** – Provide specific examples of functions, initiatives, or processes from other jurisdictions that we should consider implementing here.

- We have 21 office buildings in Tampa and ALL are located within the City, so our Tampa construction department only deals with City of Tampa.
- I believe that Jennifer Motsinger was going to weigh in on this from the Builders association.
- Quarterly learning events for GC's, Architects, Designers and Engineers on items commonly missed on drawings site visits, and items relevant to make sure they are implemented during the permit process
- When starting the application for permit process in Accela a prompt should be added so that the person applying can add all necessary parties then. This will expedite the process of notification/responses as soon as City comments are ready
- When printing review comments in Accela it should provide marked-up sheets as well list of comments for better reference to the comments
- In New York City, they allow the architect to self-certify work. I am not sure if this is for all types of projects but it is allowed for an interior build out of an apartment. I think exploring the concept of self-certification would be helpful in an environment like now where the City is short staffed. Could operate in the same way threshold inspections are handed.
- Create a "small project" permit application process with specific city staff team and a "large project" permit application with a different team. This should allow smaller less complex projects to flow through more quickly (i.e. residential homes, additions, etc.)
- Consider dedicating members of team to handle high volume permit requests. (i.e. dedicate an individual to review small cell tower applications that consume city resources. Increase the permit fees to pay for the additional staff)
- City department org chart with notated decision making authority
- Developer handbook with required permits and authorizations and description of process
- Realistic permit and revision review lead times (which can adjust in accordance with work flow)
- Automatic notification when permit delivery commitment is not going to be met with a revised expected target date
- Log of previously approved AMMRs
- Clear direction on stamping of drawings
- Delegated engineering clarity
- Some common sense brought to risk category (and by extension to egress calculations and interpretations)
- Ensuring correct approval authority (so that planning or traffic does not hold up building permits, etc.)
- Reduced review time on 2nd and subsequent reviews
- Have a mandatory meeting with the consultant after 2nd round of reviews
- Set up meeting to schedule projects under review to resolve outstanding comments
- Add Contact information of the reviewers to the comment letters
- Provide Comments in an editable single format to be consistent in preparing the responses.
- Provide a mechanism/means for reviewers contacting (phone/e-mail) the consultants for addressing questions and clarifications
- Address conflicts between the design reviewers and the City construction inspectors to avoid changes/conflicts in the field
- In Boston and D.C. the entitlement/zoning/urban planning processes are divided into different reviews. With the DDR, the City is attempting to accomplish all-in-one. This leads to specific items

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holding up entitlement/construction start that may not need to (hence reliance on conditional approval).

- Bifurcated review process for design review. Some projects should require a simplified process (zoning clearance) while others need to undergo full development review. The triggers for each type of review should be clearly defined. I will follow up with an example of a code by separate e-mail.
- Building review should be assigned differently. Set up a system where smaller projects get reviewed more quickly by “volume reviewers.” Larger projects get reviewed by a dedicated team of specialist reviewers. The idea should be quicker, more efficient review of each type of submission, rather than treating everything the same in a first-come-first-served fashion.
- For a project with complexity, it is my experience that a project “ombudsman” should be assigned by the City to be the point person on all coordination. There should be an Economic Impact Threshold, that if demonstrated by any development would justify the assignment of an individual.

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4. Other Suggestions

- HR issue is the key – not enough staff to handle workload (simple supply/demand issue)
 1. Streamline hiring process
 2. Ensure pay is upper percentile to attract top prospects
 3. Sponsor/support school program/certificate for inspectors/reviewers with HCC or similar
 4. If funding new hires to the level needed becomes an issue, consider funding from general revenue
 5. Hire a top notch head building official. Or perhaps offer Barrios more pay to come back.
- Accept Adobe digital signatures
- FEMA cert. requirement – needs to be tweaked/streamlined. This is holding up projects unnecessarily and bogging down Staff workload. Perhaps a 25% or under via quick check and if so – OK
- Water/wastewater review for projects with “no additional” plumbing should by pass Water/wastewater review – this is a waste of Staff resources. Perhaps having MEP engineer signed/sealed on plans or letter that states – “no additional burden on the water or wastewater system for the building”
- Consider adding a dedicated small project team and permit walkthrough hours (like 2 afternoons per week)
- Growing concern that there seems to be an increase in the number of times that comments on the 1st cycle review trigger a 2nd (which is much more detailed) and sometimes 3rd review, which results in extending the permitting timeline. Perception – looks like staff is merely buying more time/kicking the can, when in fact this only makes the issue worse.
- Threshold Inspectors are required for any work on building over 3 story tall. Example. Small roof top unit is added to the roof. It is required to have a threshold inspector inspect the installation. However, a Threshold inspector would have never inspected this type of structural connect ever. They would examine the main structural components for correct construction/installation. FOR INTERIOR REMODEL – an engineer signed/sealed should be OK, but NOT a “threshold issue”. That should be for NEW construction only.
- Follow City of St. Pete walk-through process & inspector communication app, City of Clearwater building plan review committee <https://www.myclearwater.com/government/city-departments/planning-development/divisions-/construction-services-building/building-plan-review-committee-bprc>

Business Hours:

8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday

8 a.m. to 3 p.m., Wednesday

Last customer taken 1/2 hour prior to closing.

Commercial over-the-counter plan review:

8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. Tues & Thurs

Allow extra time for plan reviews.

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- One major issue lately with the system “upgrade” is the digital signature. DocuSign is no longer accepted as a 3rd party verification, making the 3rd party verification system required extremely cumbersome, costly and inefficient due to the need of a key fob dongle on your person to sign and seal documents. Other jurisdictions allow you to sign and seal a form letter that they keep on file and then assign or link to the design professionals project(s). Then you can use any number of password secure signature programs in order to digitally seal a file. This system in many cases is worse than the old tried and true hard copy raised seal. For instance right now I can't even sign and seal documents without upgrading or re-formatting my computer so my partner is currently signing all our work. That's just not acceptable and isn't an issue in any other jurisdiction we are working in presently.

Other Recommendations

Technology

- Change Accela to allow for 2-way email communication with Applicant
- Establish a Plans on File process for single family and any other application with repetition
- Utilize VuSpex or like program to conduct online, video or photo inspections
- Push notifications to customers on permitting and inspection activity
- Mandate Specific Staff Liaison to control a permit submitted into the Site Review Process
- Customer should see reviewer comment and contact information in Accela with ability to "chat"
- Invest in app designed to assist inspectors map jobs for the day and customer can review progress similar to Uber

Policy

- Establish a level of service of 10 days from submittal to issuance of building permit for single family and establish realistic turnaround times for other types of permits and publish for public certainty
- Use Building Fund/Technology Fund to invest in staff, technology and other resources necessary to maintaining the goal of issuing a single family permit within 10 working days
- Per state statute, No government may not carry a surplus for building dept. and the fund can only be used to enforce the Florida Building Code. If other money is comingled, make changes to comply with state statute and do not require user fee based departments to go through the traditional budgeting process. Money should be spent for resources to facilitate the activity of the department. Customer should have a formal role for input as it's their money.
- Issue real-time reports on permitting timeline, inspection rollovers on the website
- Re-Establish hiring responsibility be manager, not HR on any dept. using customer based fees
- Create a cross-training program for plans examiners and inspectors to increase functionality and reward with increased compensation
- RE-Affirm policy of 30 day notice prior to implementation of any change in development or building review or inspection and written communication to the public/industry.

Process

- Establish meetings with staff to work with industry on process improvements and report quarterly to Chief of Staff on changes that improve turnaround times and inspection times
- Maintain minutes of meetings
- Map every process related to site development from the customer's perspective
- There appears to be no management or control of the review process. There is no one to call or contact when the various reviews are late, you need a meeting, comments are issued out of scope or are not per code, etc.
- Provide transparency in review process by communicating to the customer these key milestones: Who's reviewing what? What are the reviewer's contact information? When are comments due? What departments review my project? Status or reviews, etc.)
- ROW Permits: Review time is lengthy and permits are issued to the contractor, well after construction plan review. Change all right of way permits associated with site construction be reviewed and issued during construction plan review, consistent with Hillsborough & Pasco Counties. The permit conditions can require the contractor to contact the City with work schedule, Maintenance of Traffic Plans & Sidewalk Closure Plans for review prior to construction. This will also free up the Right-of-way departments' workload.

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Project Examples & Specific Issues:

1. Ybor Apartments: Received a stop work order for permitted work within the right-of-way. This was received mid-construction and required significant redesign of right-of-way improvements and also adding improvements well outside of the project limits.
2. Ybor Renaissance: Thru the BLD permit construction plans, we received stormwater comments from 3 different reviewers and utility comments from 2 separate reviewers. Upon addressing comments and resubmitting, we received new utility comments from a 3rd reviewer. None of the reviewers commenting on utilities were associated with the separate water and wastewater utility permit reviews. We understand department crossover, but there needs to be a designated reviewer/manager for each department that compiles and signs off on comments. Also, we received comments that appear outside of the department's review scope: One reviewer commented on ADA parking stalls, hydrant flows and stormwater calcs., which are typically 3 separate departments.
3. Accela: BLD (Building), Planning (PLN) & Utility (UTL) permit lists – see attached examples of permit choices and screen shots. These need to be streamlined, combined or condensed. It's not uncommon to have 2 UTL permits, 2 BLD permits, and 2 PLN permits for a simple set of a one building construction plan set, only to be told to go apply for a couple more permits for various items. How can anyone keep track of these?
4. Accela: See the attached screen shot "Review Process..." The review status of "Assigned to TBD, Marked as TBD, On TBD by TBD" is pretty common, provides no help or confidence that our plans are even being routed or reviewed.

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Building Utility Permit Choices

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Select a Record Type

Notice: Please check the Plat, Survey, Title Policy and all other documentation relating to your property prior to design and construction. The City of Tampa and its staff **DO NOT** review for compliance with individual private deed restrictions and covenants during permit review. The issuance of a building permit by the City of Tampa signifies that the project is in compliance with the zoning codes of the City of Tampa and City of Tampa and Florida building code. The issuance of a building permit **DOES NOT** insure compliance with private deed restrictions or covenants.

Choose one of the following available record types. For more information on Building record types, please [click here](#).

▼ **BUILDING RECORDS**


- Add Contact to a Building Record
- Add Contractor License To a Record
- Building Plan Revision
- Commercial Annual Facility Permit
- Commercial Building Alterations (Renovations)
- Commercial Building Trade Permit
- Commercial Burglar Alarm/Alarm Components
- Commercial Demolition Permit
- Commercial Electrical Trade Permit
- Commercial Fire Trade Permit
- Commercial Mechanical Trade Permit
- Commercial Miscellaneous Permit
- Commercial New Construction and Additions
- Commercial Plumbing Trade Permit
- Commercial Roof Trade Permit
- Commercial Site Trade Permit
- Commercial Temp Certificate of Occupancy
- Commercial Utility Application
- Flood Verification
- Pre-Application Consultation
- Preliminary Plan Review
- Residential Building Alterations (Renovations)
- Residential Building Trade Permit
- Residential Demolition Permit
- Residential Electrical Trade Permit
- Residential Mechanical Trade Permit
- Residential Miscellaneous Permit
- Residential New Construction and Additions (1 and 2 Family)
- Residential Plumbing Trade Permit
- Residential Roof Trade Permit
- Residential Site Trade Permit
- Residential Utility Application
- Tree Consultation
- Tree Removal and Pruning Permit

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Planning Permit Choices

Choose one of the following available record types. For assistance or to apply for a record type not listed below please contact us.

For a step by step guide on submitting historic preservation applications, please [click here](#).



▼ PLANNING APPLICATIONS

- AB Special Use 1 - Standard
- AB Special Use 1 - Temp (Private) Property
- AB Special Use 2
- Advisory Opinion
- Annexation
- Annual - Vendor
- Annual Report
- Architectural Review Commission - Certificate of Appropriateness
- Barrio Latino Commission - Certificate of Appropriateness
- Binding Letter Review
- Business Permits
- CDD Review
- Certification Letter
- Change of Address
- City Department Work Start Notice
- Clearance Letter Review
- Design District Review
- Design Exception 1
- Design Exception 2
- Design Exception Transportation
- Essentially Built-Out Agreement
- Final Plat
- Formal Decision
- General Land Use
- Infrastructure Construction
- Methodology Review
- Model Home - Sales Center
- Notice of Proposed Change (NOPC)
- PD-A Incremental Review
- Pre-Application Consultation Planning
- Preliminary Plat
- Release of Easement
- Rezoning
- Right of Way Annual Pass Thru Provider Registration
- Right of Way Annual Telecommunications Provider Registration
- Right of Way Permit Standard
- ROW Encroachment
- ROW Vacating
- Sidewalk Cafe
- Signoff (ALF, Daycare, HUD)
- Special Use 1 - General
- Special Use 1 - Temp Vendor
- Special Use 2
- Special Use Substantial Change
- Substantial Change - Site Plan Zoning
- Substantial Change - Special Use
- Temp Special Event
- Variance Review Board

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Review Process for a Building (BLD) Permit

Processing Status	
✔ ▶	Historic Application Review
	Urban Design Application Review
	Water Demolition Review
	Design District Review
✔ ▶	Application Review
✔ ▶	Plans Distribution
✔ ▶	Site Review
▶	Building Review
▶	Mechanical Review
▶	Electrical Review
▶	Plumbing Review
✔ ▶	Fire Review
	Water Review
	Wastewater Review
	Transportation Review
	Transportation ROW Use Review
	Urban Design Review
	LDC Solid Waste Review
	Stormwater Review
	Zoning Review
▶	Natural Resources Review
✔ ▶	Plans Coordination
✔ ▶	Issuance
⌚ ▼	Inspection
	Due On 01/10/2019, Assigned To TBD Marked As TBD On TBD By TBD
	Certification
	Closure
⌚ ▶	Document Review-Threshold Building: Engineer Final Inspection Report-1