



City of Colleyville

City Council Worksession

Agenda

City Hall
100 Main Street
Colleyville, Texas 76034
817. 503.1000
www.colleyville.com

Wednesday, April 16, 2014
6:00 p.m.

Executive Conference Room
Third Floor, City Hall

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

- 2a** Presentation and discussion of the preliminary design of the Glade Road Project
- 2b** Presentation and discussion of the development review process

3. ADJOURNMENT

I hereby certify this agenda was posted on City Hall bulletin boards Friday, April 11, 2014, by 5:00 p.m.

Amy Shelley, TRMC
City Secretary

Any matter on this agenda may, at the discretion of the governing body, be opened for public comment and discussion.

If you plan to attend this public meeting and have a disability that requires special accommodations, please advise the City Secretary at least 48 hours in advance at 817.503.1133, and reasonable accommodations will be made to assist you.



City of Colleyville Colleyville City Council Worksession Agenda Briefing

City Hall
100 Main Street
Colleyville, Texas 76034
www.colleyville.com

Agenda Number 2a

Agenda Date 04/16/2014

Number

Type Presentation and Discussion

Department Public Works

Title

Presentation and discussion of the preliminary design of the Glade Road Project

Explanation

Chad Gartner with TranSystems, the design engineer for the Glade Road Project, will present responses to the questions and comments of City Council at the March 3, 2014 worksession.

As a point of reference for the City Council, the Glade Road Project presentation from the March 3, 2014 worksession is attached to this briefing. The consultant is finalizing some new exhibits for the April 16, 2014 worksession, and they will be provided under separate cover prior to the worksession.

Attachments

1. Glade Road Project presentation



GLADE ROAD PROJECT

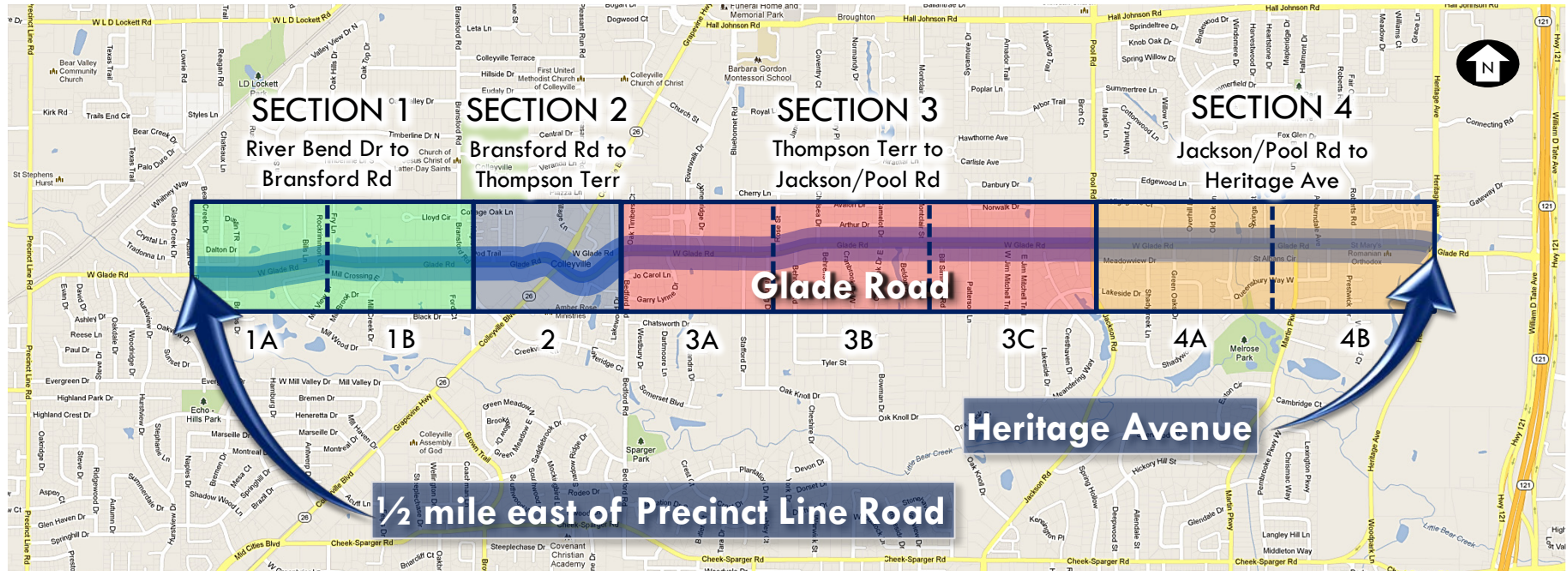
Workshop Agenda

- **Overview of Project and Study Approach**
- **Summary of Public Involvement**
- **Survey Results and Recommended Alternatives**
 - **Overview of Alternatives, Roadway Section, Intersection Type**
- **Survey Results and Recommendation of Corridor Features**
 - **Curb Type, Pavement Type, Sidewalks, Street Lighting**
- **Proposed Construction Schedule**
- **Next Steps (Public Meeting, Report....)**



Purpose:

Provide a vision and plan for future improvements to Glade Road.



Project Study Approach

Gather / Analyze Data

Roadway Geometry
Traffic Data
Accident Data

Public Involvement

Public meetings and presentations
Gather public input

Develop Alternatives

Present Alternatives / Gather Public Input

Make Recommendation

Develop a preferred alternative that fits Glade Road
Mitigate issues with strategic improvements

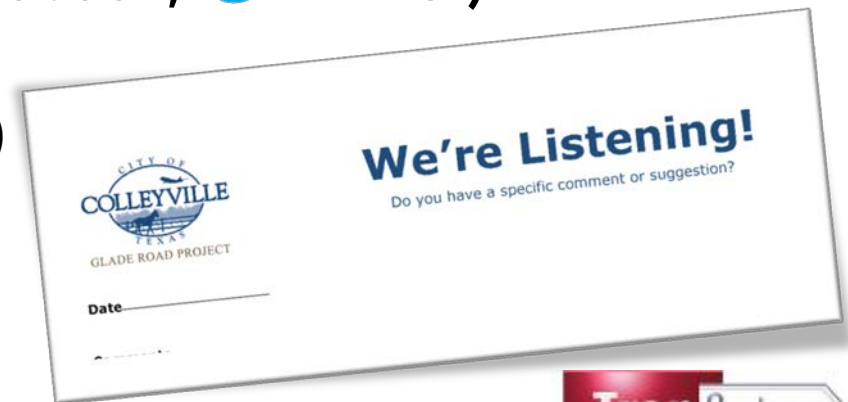
Summary of Public Involvement

• Public Involvement – Early and Often

- Public meetings and presentations to community groups.
 - Homeowner Associations
 - Chamber of Commerce, Lions Club, Woman's Club, Rotary Club
- Approximately 200 people at public meeting May 23rd, 2013
 - 142 Comments Received
- Approximately 350 people at public meeting November 18th, 2013
 - 393 Surveys Received

• Online Presence (Website, Facebook, Twitter)

- Web: www.gladeroadproject.com
 - Over 2,363 unique visitors (3,255 total)
- Email: info@gladeroadproject.com
 - Over 500 e-newsletter subscriptions



Summary of Public Involvement

We're Listening!

Please indicate your preferences or provide comments.



Name: _____

Address: _____



- 1) What is your preferred roadway configuration for **Section 1?** (River Bend Dr. to Bransford Rd)
 - a) Two lanes with left-turn lanes where warranted
 - b) Two lanes with continuous left-turn lane
 - c) Two lanes with medians and left-turn lanes
- 2) What is your preferred roadway configuration for **Section 3?** (Riverwalk Dr. to Jackson/Pool Rd.)
 - a) Two lanes with left-turn lanes where warranted
 - b) Two lanes with continuous left-turn lane
 - c) Two lanes with medians and left-turn lanes
- 3) What is your preferred roadway configuration for **Section 4?** (Jackson/Pool Rd. to Heritage Ave.)
 - a) Two lanes with left-turn lanes where warranted
 - b) Two lanes with continuous left-turn lane
 - c) Two lanes with medians and left-turn lanes
- 4) Do you have a preference on which pavement type is used for Glade Road?
 - a) Yes, asphalt
 - b) Yes, concrete
 - c) No preference
- 5) Do you have a preference on whether curb and gutter or a ribbon curb is used for Glade Road?
 - a) Yes, curb and gutter with storm drain
 - b) Yes, ribbon curb with engineered swales with storm drain
 - c) No preference
- 6) Would you like to have sidewalks/trails along Glade Road?
 - a) Yes, 5' sidewalk on the south side and 10' trail on the north side of Glade Road
 - b) Yes, 5' sidewalk on both sides of Glade Road
 - c) Yes, 5' sidewalk only on one side of Glade Road
 - d) No preference

OVER

We're Listening!

Please indicate your preferences or provide comments.

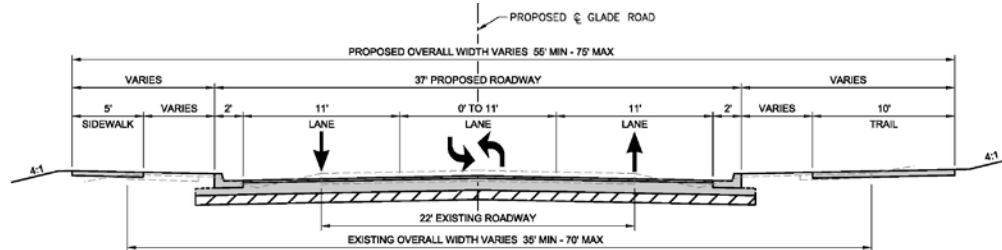


- 7) At the intersection of Glade Road and **Bransford Road** I would prefer to see:
 - a) A roundabout
 - b) A traffic signal
 - c) Stop sign controlled
- 8) At the intersection of Glade Road and **Bedford Road** I would prefer to see:
 - a) A roundabout
 - b) A traffic signal - Bedford Road realigned to improved sight distance
 - c) Stop sign controlled - Bedford Road realigned to improved sight distance
 - d) No improvements
- 9) At the intersection of Glade Road and **Riverwalk Drive** I would prefer to see:
 - a) A roundabout
 - b) A traffic signal
 - c) Stop sign controlled
- 10) At the intersection of Glade Road and **Bluebonnet Road** I would prefer to see:
 - a) A roundabout
 - b) A traffic signal
 - c) Stop sign controlled on Bluebonnet Road only - Improve sight distance and remove stop signs on Glade Road
- 11) At the intersection of Glade Road and **Martin Parkway** I would prefer to see:
 - a) A roundabout
 - b) A traffic signal
 - c) Stop sign controlled
- 12) At the intersection of Glade Road and **Roberts Road / Prestwick Drive** I would prefer to see:
 - a) A roundabout
 - b) A traffic signal
 - c) Stop sign controlled

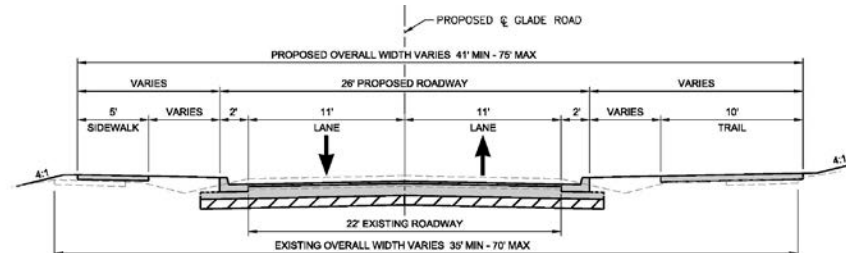
Please give any additional comment in the space provided below:

Overview of Alternatives

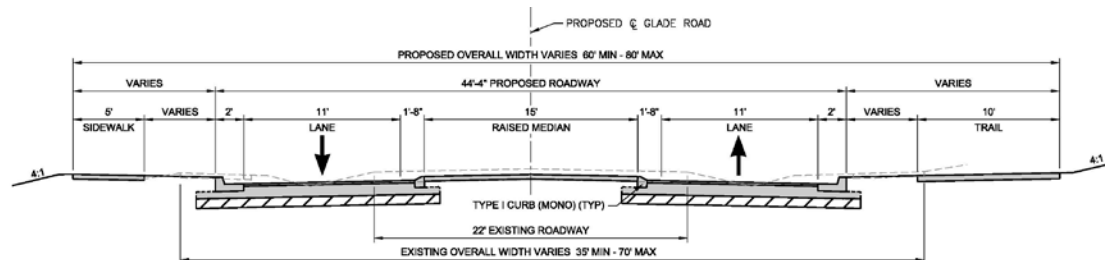
Roadway



TWO LANES WITH CONTINUOUS LEFT TURN LANE



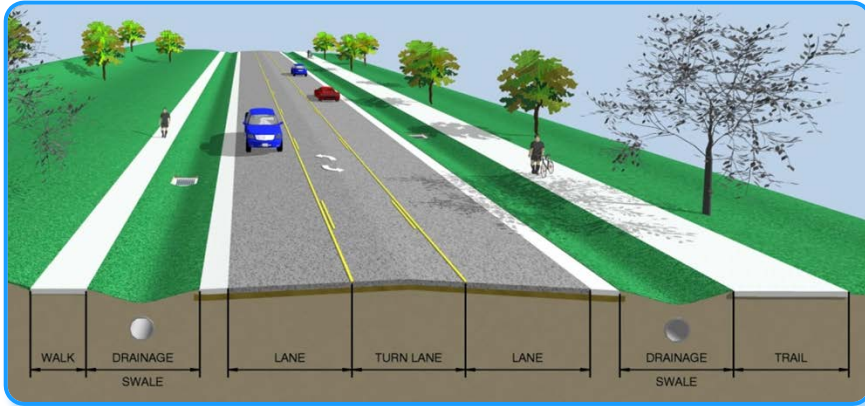
TWO LANES WITH LEFT TURN LANES WHERE WARRANTED



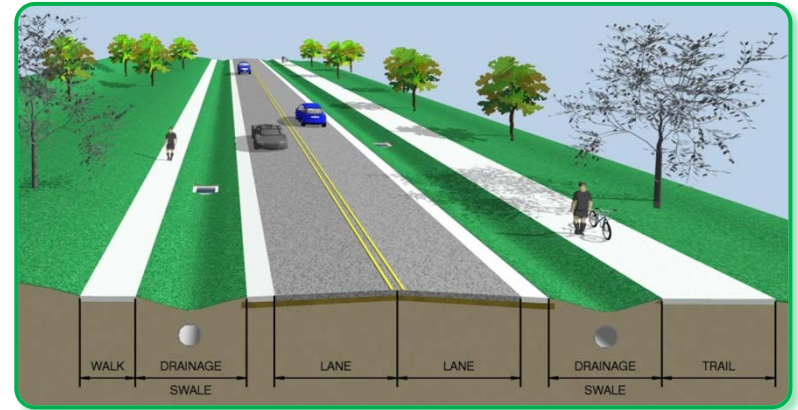
TWO LANES WITH MEDIANS AND LEFT TURN LANES

Overview of Alternatives

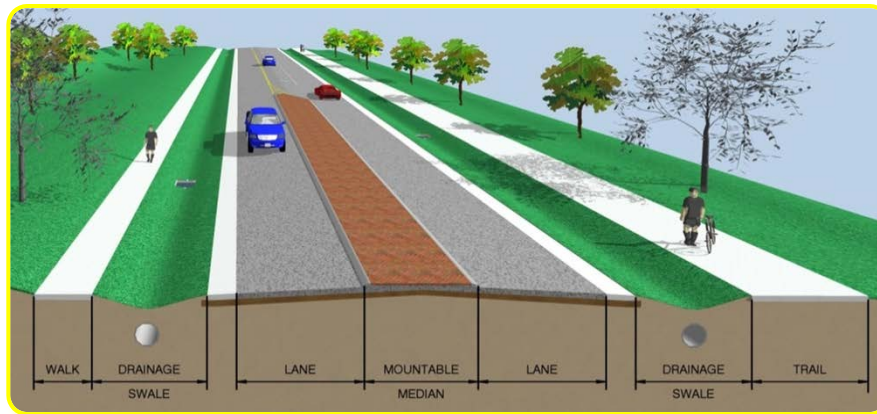
Roadway



**TWO LANES WITH CONTINUOUS LEFT
TURN LANE**



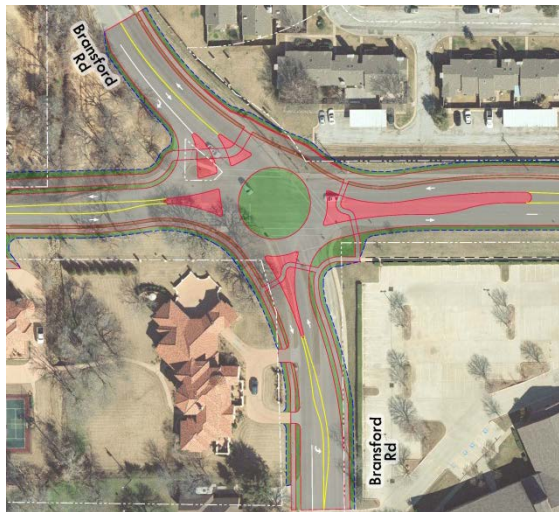
**TWO LANES WITH LEFT TURN LANES
WHERE WARRANTED**



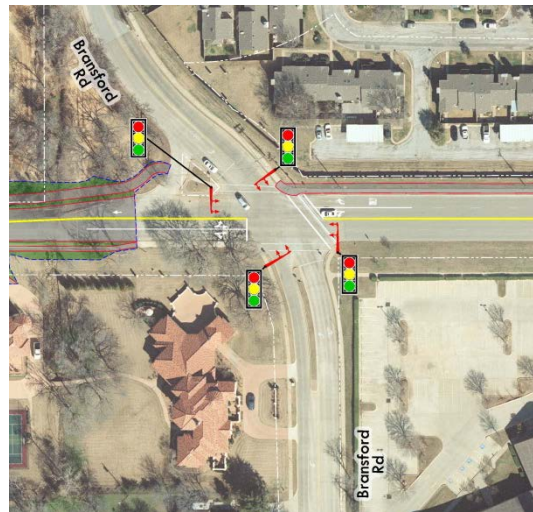
TWO LANES WITH MEDIANS AND LEFT TURN LANES

Overview of Alternatives

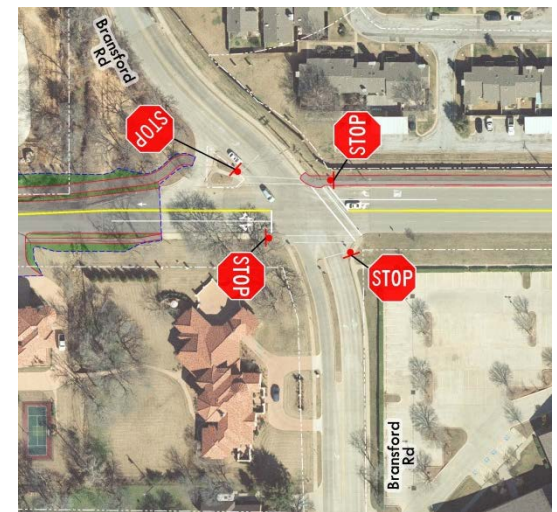
Intersections



a) Roundabout



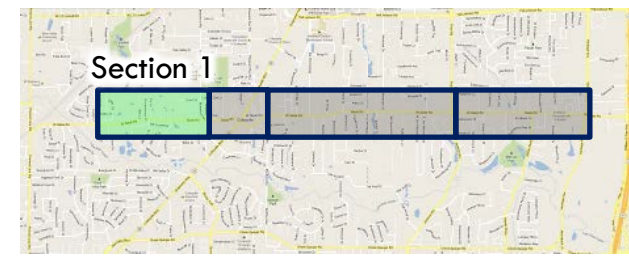
b) Traffic signal



c) Stop sign

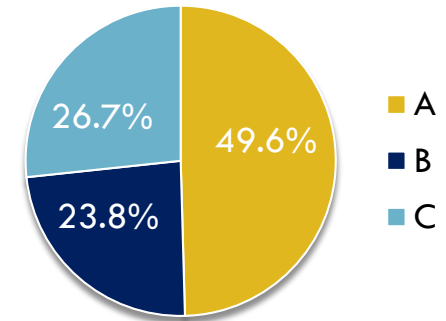
Section 1

Survey Results



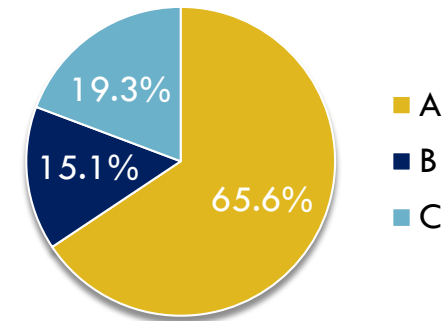
No. 1 - What is your preferred roadway configuration for Section 1? (**River Bend Dr. to Bransford Rd.**)

A) Two lanes with left-turn lanes where warranted	49.6%	169
B) Two lanes with continuous left-turn lane	23.8%	81
C) Two lanes with medians and left-turn lanes	26.7%	91



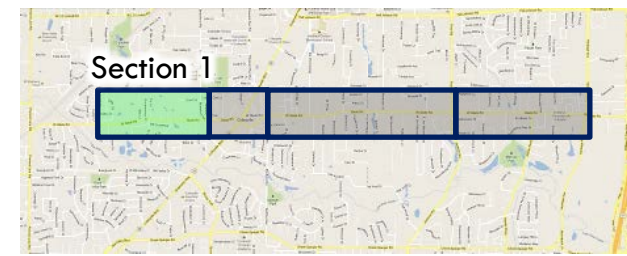
No. 7 - At the intersection of **Glade Road and Bransford Road**, I would prefer to see:

A) A roundabout	65.6%	235
B) A traffic signal	15.1%	54
C) Stop sign controlled	19.3%	69



Section 1

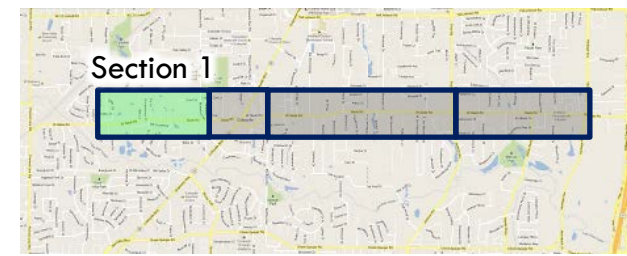
Recommendation



- **Two Lanes With Left Turn Lanes Where Warranted**
 - Provides capacity to handle existing traffic volumes.
 - Minimal development expected.
 - Minimizes impacts to adjacent properties. Approximately
 - 5 trees to be removed.
 - Can improve sight distance at Mill View Drive.
- **Bransford Intersection – Roundabout**
 - Current four-way stop is “Over Capacity”.
 - Traffic signal not warranted by federal guidelines.
 - Adjacent property owner open to roundabout.
 - Estimated construction cost \$750,000 to \$1,000,000.
 - Traffic Signal would be alternate recommendation.

Section 1

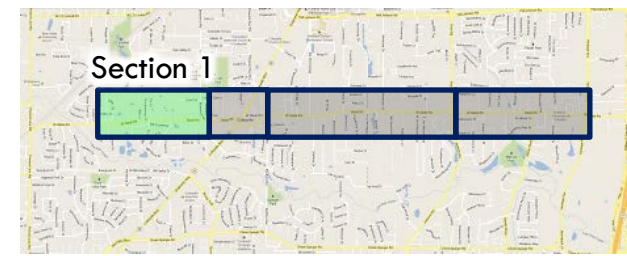
Recommendation



- **Right-of-way**
 - Number of parcels – 20 Time to acquire – 6-9 months
- **Franchise and City Utility Relocations**
 - Overhead electric, gas line and meters, communication lines and boxes
 - Water and sanitary sewer
- **Opinion of Probable Cost - \$4,948,500**
 - Construction Cost - \$4,285,000
 - Right-of-way Cost - \$270,000
 - Design Services - \$255,000
 - Right-of-way Services - \$13,500
 - Construction Services - \$125,000
- **Estimated Construction Time - 13-16 months**

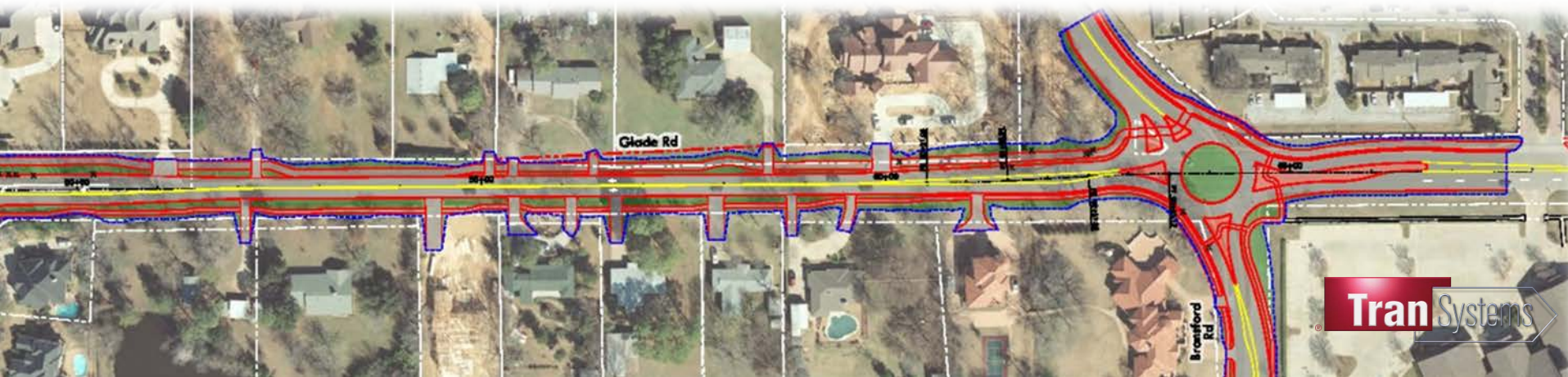
Section 1

Recommendation



Discussion

- **Two Lanes With Left Turn Lanes Where Warranted**
 - Recommendation matches Survey Results
- **Bransford Intersection – Roundabout**
 - Recommendation matches Survey Results



Section 2

Recommendation



- **Pavement Markings, Sidewalk and/or Trail**

- Minimal Changes in Section 2
- Coordination with Whole Foods development.

- **Right-of-way**

- Number of parcels – 13 (sidewalk easements)

Time to acquire – 3-6 months

- **Franchise and City Utility Relocations**

- Minor adjustments overhead electric, water and communications.

- **Opinion of Probable Cost - \$319,000**

- Construction Cost - \$210,000
- Right-of-way Cost - \$80,000
- Design Services - \$15,000
- Right-of-way Services - \$4,000
- Construction Services - \$10,000

- **Estimated Construction Time - 3 months**

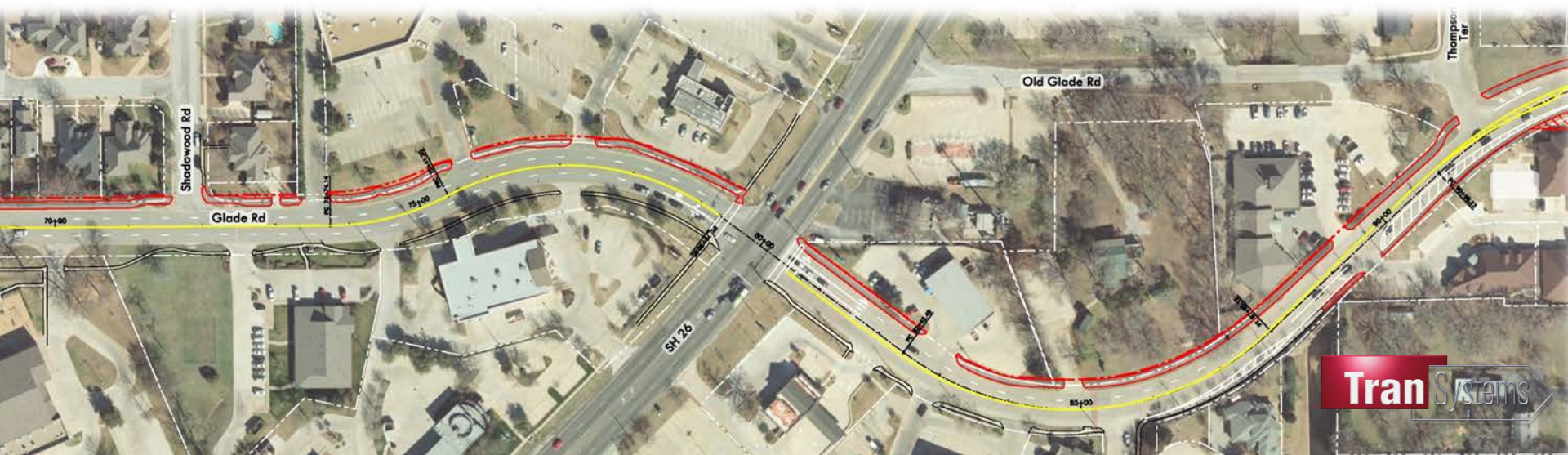
Section 2

Recommendation



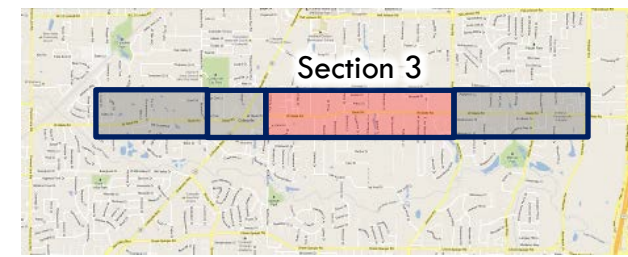
Discussion

- **Pavement Markings and Sidewalk and/or Trail**



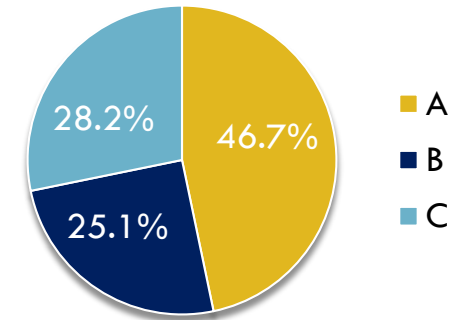
Section 3

Survey Results



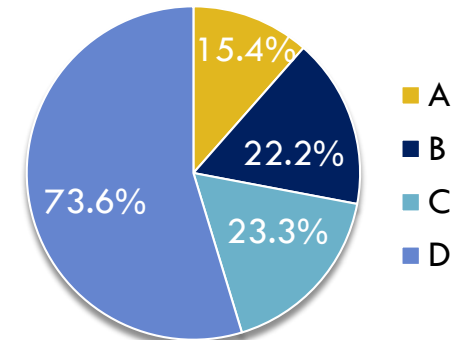
No. 2 - What is your preferred roadway configuration for Section 3? (Riverwalk Dr. to Jackson/Pool Rd.)

A) Two lanes with left-turn lanes where warranted	46.7%	164
B) Two lanes with continuous left-turn lane	25.1%	88
C) Two lanes with medians and left-turn lanes	28.2%	99



No. 8 - At the intersection of Glade Road and Bedford Road, I would prefer to see:

A) A roundabout	15.4%	55
B) A traffic signal - Bedford Road realigned to improve sight distance	22.2%	79
C) Stop sign controlled - Bedford Road realigned to improve sight distance	23.3%	83
D) No improvements	73.6%	262



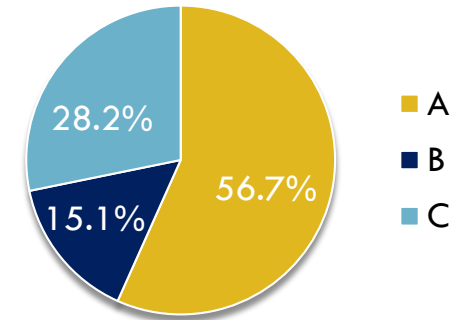
Section 3

Survey Results



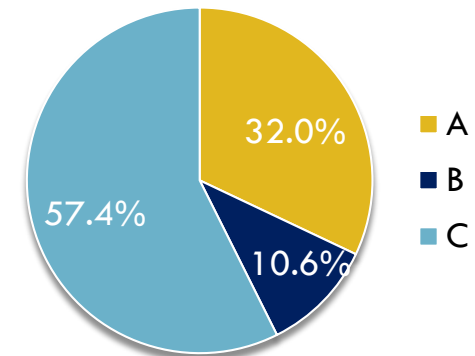
No. 9 - At the intersection of Glade Road and Riverwalk Drive, I would prefer to see:

A) A roundabout	56.7%	199
B) A traffic signal	15.1%	53
C) Stop sign controlled	28.2%	99



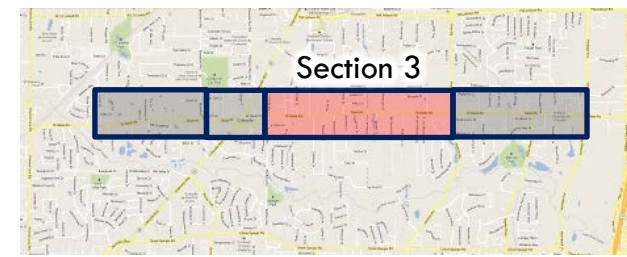
No. 10 - At the intersection of Glade Road and Bluebonnet Road, I would prefer to see:

A) A roundabout	32.0%	115
B) A traffic signal	10.6%	38
C) Stop sign controlled on Bluebonnet Road only – Improve sight distance and remove stop signs on Glade Road	57.4%	206



Section 3

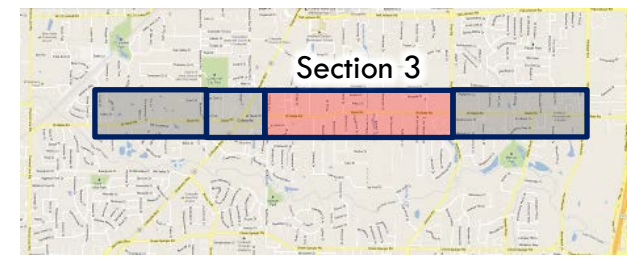
Recommendation



- **Bedford to Bluebonnet - Two Lanes With Continuous Left Turn Lane**
 - Provides capacity to handle existing traffic volumes.
 - Several driveways accessing Glade – Left-turn lanes would overlap.
 - Approximately 37 trees to be removed.
- **Bedford Intersection – Re-align**
 - Improves intersection sight distance by approximately 120 feet.
 - Increases decision time by over 2 seconds.
 - Significant right-of-way required.
 - Estimated construction cost \$75,000 to \$100,000 (when included in larger project).

Section 3

Recommendation



- **Riverwalk Intersection – Roundabout**
 - Will improve peak hour southbound left-turn congestion.
 - Traffic signal not warranted by federal guidelines.
 - This will include drainage improvements.
 - Significant right-of-way required.
 - Impacts to residential property south of intersection.
 - Estimated construction cost \$750,000 to \$1,000,000.
 - Impacts to residential property south of intersection.

Section 3

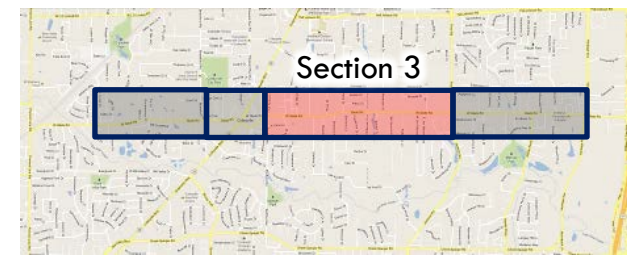
Recommendation



- **Bluebonnet Intersection – Stop Sign on Bluebonnet Approach**
 - Lower intersection 5'-6' to improve sight distance.
 - Removing stop signs on Glade Road will eliminate traffic congestion.
 - Minimal traffic on Bluebonnet.
 - Will require relocation of private drive to Stafford Drive.
- **Bluebonnet to Pool/Jackson - Two Lanes With Left Turn Lanes Where Warranted**
 - Provides capacity to handle existing traffic volumes.
 - Minimizes impacts to adjacent properties.
 - Approximately 16 trees to be removed.
 - Can improve sight distance at various locations.

Section 3

Recommendation



- **Right-of-way**
 - Number of parcels – 45 Time to acquire – 12-18 months
- **Franchise and City Utility Relocations**
 - 2600 LF 8” waterline relocation (Bluebonnet)
 - 4600 LF gas line relocation (Bluebonnet)
 - Overhead electric, gas line and meters, communication lines and boxes
 - Water and sanitary sewer
- **Opinion of Probable Cost - \$8,613,000**
 - Construction Cost - \$6,700,000
 - Right-of-way Cost – \$1,250,000
 - Design Services - \$400,000
 - Right-of-way Services - \$63,000
 - Construction Services - \$200,000
- **Estimated Construction Time - 24-28 months**

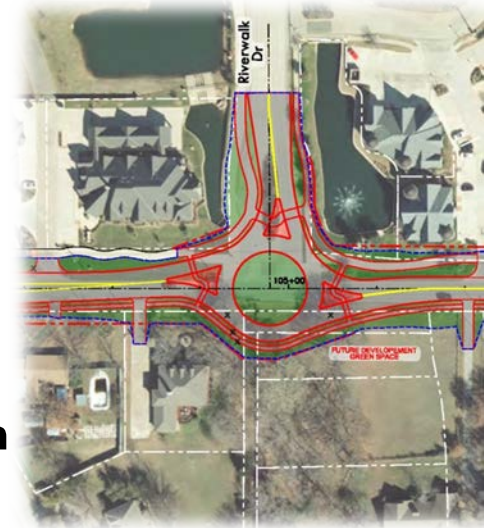
Section 3

Recommendation



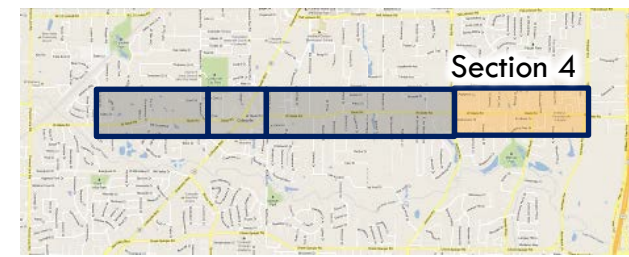
Discussion

- **Bedford to Bluebonnet - Two Lanes With Continuous Left**
 - Survey Results - Two Lanes With Left Turn Lanes Where Warranted
- **Bedford Intersection – Re-align**
 - Survey Results - No improvements
- **Riverwalk Intersection – Roundabout**
 - Recommendation matches Survey Results
- **Bluebonnet Intersection – Stop Sign on Bluebonnet Approach**
 - Recommendation matches Survey Results
- **Bluebonnet to Pool/Jackson - Two Lanes With Left Turn Lanes Where Warranted**
 - Recommendation matches Survey Results



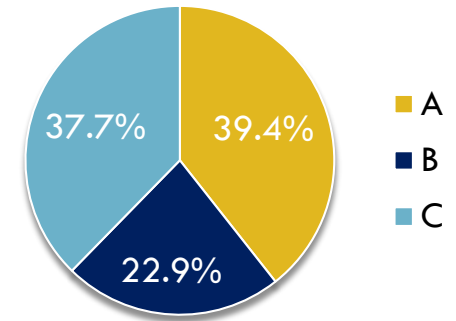
Section 4

Recommendation



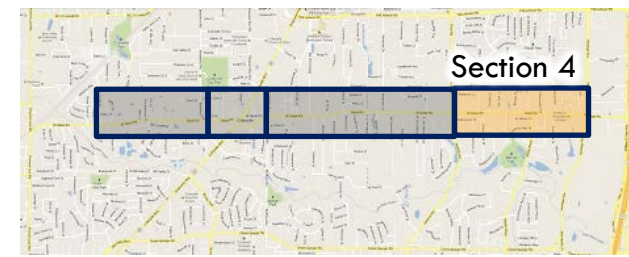
No. 3 - What is your preferred roadway configuration for Section 4 (**Jackson/Pool Rd. to Heritage Ave.**)?

A) Two lanes with left-turn lanes where warranted	39.4%	139
B) Two lanes with continuous left-turn lane	22.9%	81
C) Two lanes with medians and left-turn lanes	37.7%	133



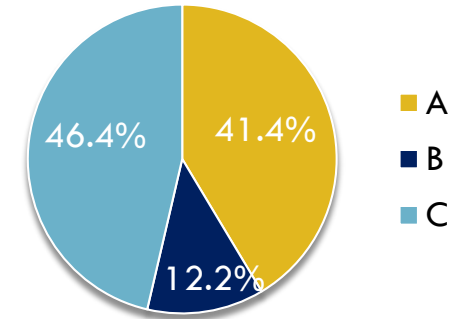
Section 4

Survey Results



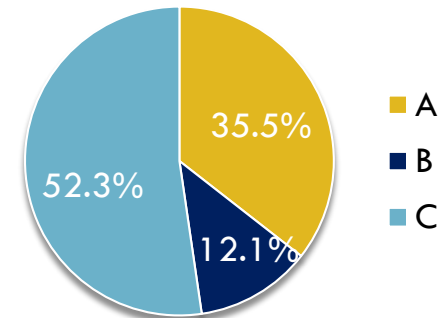
No. 11 - At the intersection of **Glade Road and Martin Parkway**, I would prefer to see:

A) A roundabout	41.4%	142
B) A traffic signal	12.2%	42
C) Stop sign controlled	46.4%	159



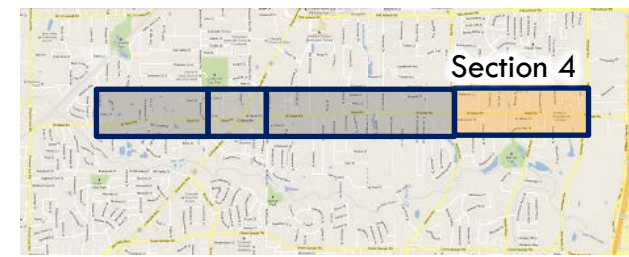
No. 12 - At the intersection of **Glade Road and Roberts Road / Prestwick Drive**, I would prefer to see:

A) A roundabout	35.5%	123
B) A traffic signal	12.1%	42
C) Stop sign controlled	52.3%	181



Section 4

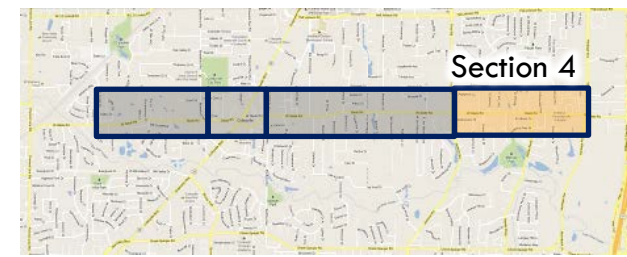
Recommendation



- **Two Lanes With Medians And Left Turn Lanes**
 - Provides capacity to handle existing traffic volumes.
 - Matches existing section of Glade Road just west of Heritage Avenue.
 - Median will be mountable with stamped colored concrete (no landscaping).
 - Approximately 16 trees to be removed.
 - Add additional lane from Heritage Avenue to Roberts Road
- **Martin Parkway Intersection – Stop Sign on Martin Parkway**
 - Traffic signal not warranted by federal guidelines.
 - Roundabout created significant impacts to adjacent property owners.
- **Roberts Road Intersection - Stop Sign on Roberts Road/Prestwick Parkway**
 - Traffic signal not warranted by federal guidelines.
 - Roundabout created significant impacts to adjacent property owners.
 - Add additional southbound lane right-turn lane on Roberts Road.

Section 4

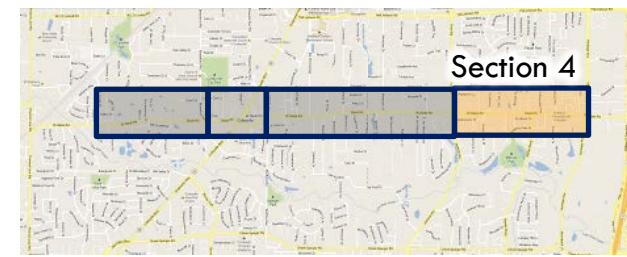
Recommendation



- **Right-of-way**
 - Number of parcels - 7 Time to acquire – 6-9 months
- **Franchise and City Utility Relocations**
 - Overhead electric, gas line and meters, communication lines and boxes
 - Water and sanitary sewer
- **Opinion of Probable Cost - \$3,694,500**
 - Construction Cost - \$3,205,000
 - Right-of-way Cost – \$195,000
 - Design Services - \$190,000
 - Right-of-way Services - \$9,500
 - Construction Services - \$95,000
- **Estimated Construction Time - 12-14 months**

Section 4

Recommendation



Discussion

- **Two Lanes With Medians And Left Turn Lanes**
 - Survey Results - Two Lanes With Left Turn Lanes Where Warranted (by narrow margin)
- **Martin Parkway Intersection – Stop Sign on Martin Parkway**
 - Recommendation matches Survey Results
- **Roberts Road Intersection - Stop Sign on Roberts Road/Prestwick Parkway**
 - Recommendation matches Survey Results



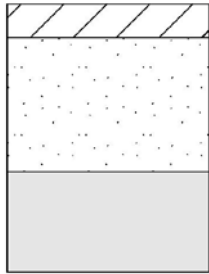
Corridor Features

Pavement Sections



Typical Engineered Pavement Section

Asphalt



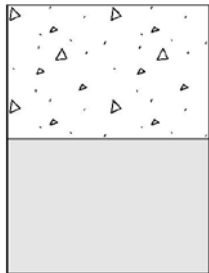
2" Asphalt Surface Course

6"-8" Asphalt Base Course

8"-12" Stabilized Subgrade

- 30 plus year design life
- Reduced road noise
- Faster construction
- Sustainable material
- Maintenance can be performed by City crews

Concrete



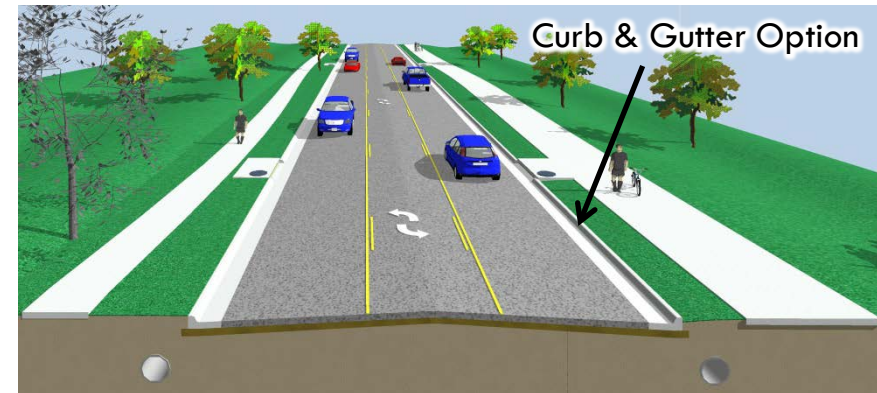
8"-10" Concrete

6"-8" Stabilized Subgrade

- 30 plus year design life
- Increased construction time due to required curing time
- Increased complexity in construction phasing
- Durable material
- Maintenance requires a contractor

Corridor Features

Roadway Drainage



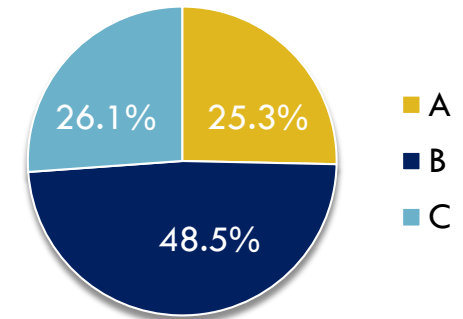
Corridor Features

Survey Results



No. 4 - Do you have a preference on which **pavement type** is used for Glade Road?

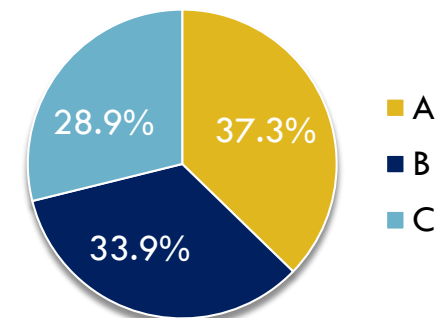
A) Yes, asphalt	25.3%	95
B) Yes, concrete	48.5%	182
C) No preference	26.1%	98



Note: After the first public meeting asphalt was the preferred pavement type.

No. 5 - Do you have a preference on whether **curb and gutter** or a **ribbon curb** is used for Glade Road?

A) Yes, curb and gutter with storm drain	37.3%	133
B) Yes, ribbon curb with engineered swales with storm drain	33.9%	121
C) No preference	28.9%	103



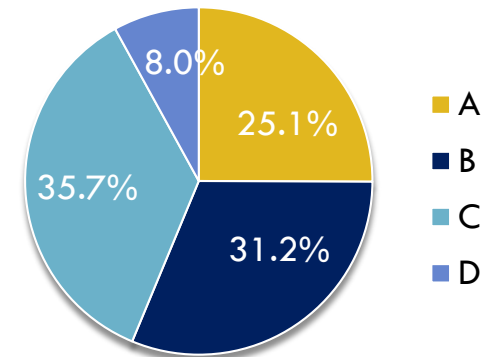
Corridor Features

Survey Results



No. 6 - Would you like to have sidewalks/trails along Glade Road?

A) Yes, 5' sidewalk on the south side and 10' trail on the north side of Glade Road	25.1%	94
B) Yes, 5' sidewalk on both sides of Glade Road	31.2%	117
C) Yes, 5' sidewalk only on one side of Glade Road	35.7%	134
D) No preference	8.0%	30



Corridor Features

Recommendation



- **Asphalt Pavement**

- Cost neutral when compared to concrete.
- Asphalt and concrete provide similar design life.
- Reduced road noise.
- Faster construction and reduced complexity in construction phasing.
- Utilize existing concrete where possible.
- Minor maintenance can be performed by City crews.

- **Curb and Gutter with Storm Drain**

- Requires less right-of-way.
- Provides a barrier between vehicular and pedestrian traffic.
- Sidewalk can be adjacent to the curb when needed.
 - To avoid conflicts with trees.
 - Minimize right-of-way.

Corridor Features

Recommendation



- **Sidewalks and/or Trails**

- City's master sidewalk plan suggests the desire to provide:
 - 10' trail on the north and a 5' sidewalk on the south
- Can impact the amount of right-of-way required.
- Can impact the number of trees to be removed.
- Mixed survey results.

- **Street Lighting**

- Continuous lighting.
- Safety lighting at intersections.
- No lighting.
- Impacts on adjacent property owners.
- Balance between safety and rural feel.
- The City leases street lights from Oncor.

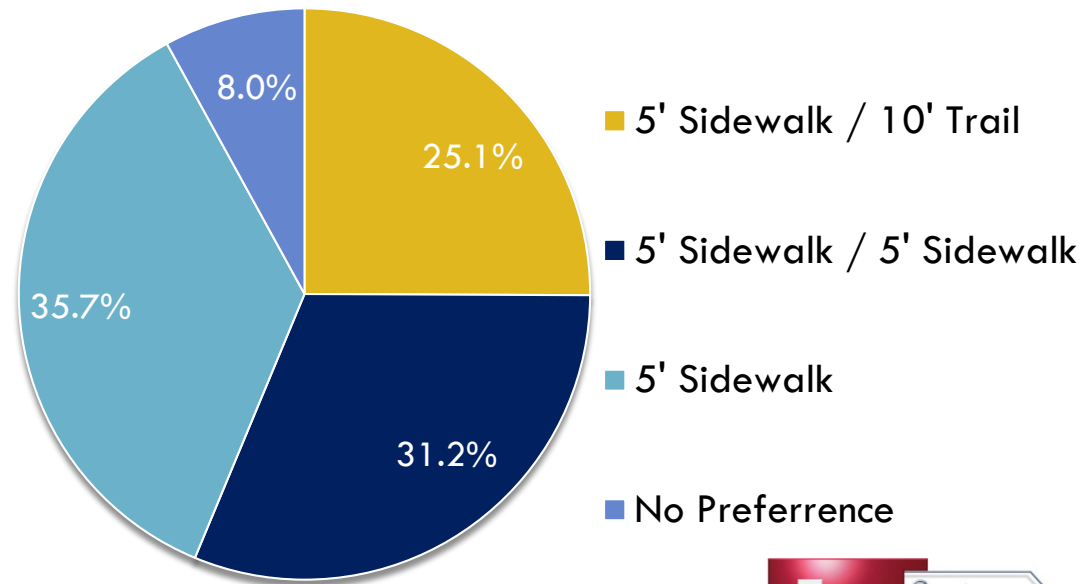
Corridor Features

Recommendation



Discussion

- **Asphalt Pavement**
 - Survey Results – Concrete pavement
- **Curb and Gutter with Storm Drain**
 - Recommendation matches Survey Results
- **Sidewalks and/or Trails**
 - Mixed survey results.
- **Street Lighting**



Project Phasing

Constraints

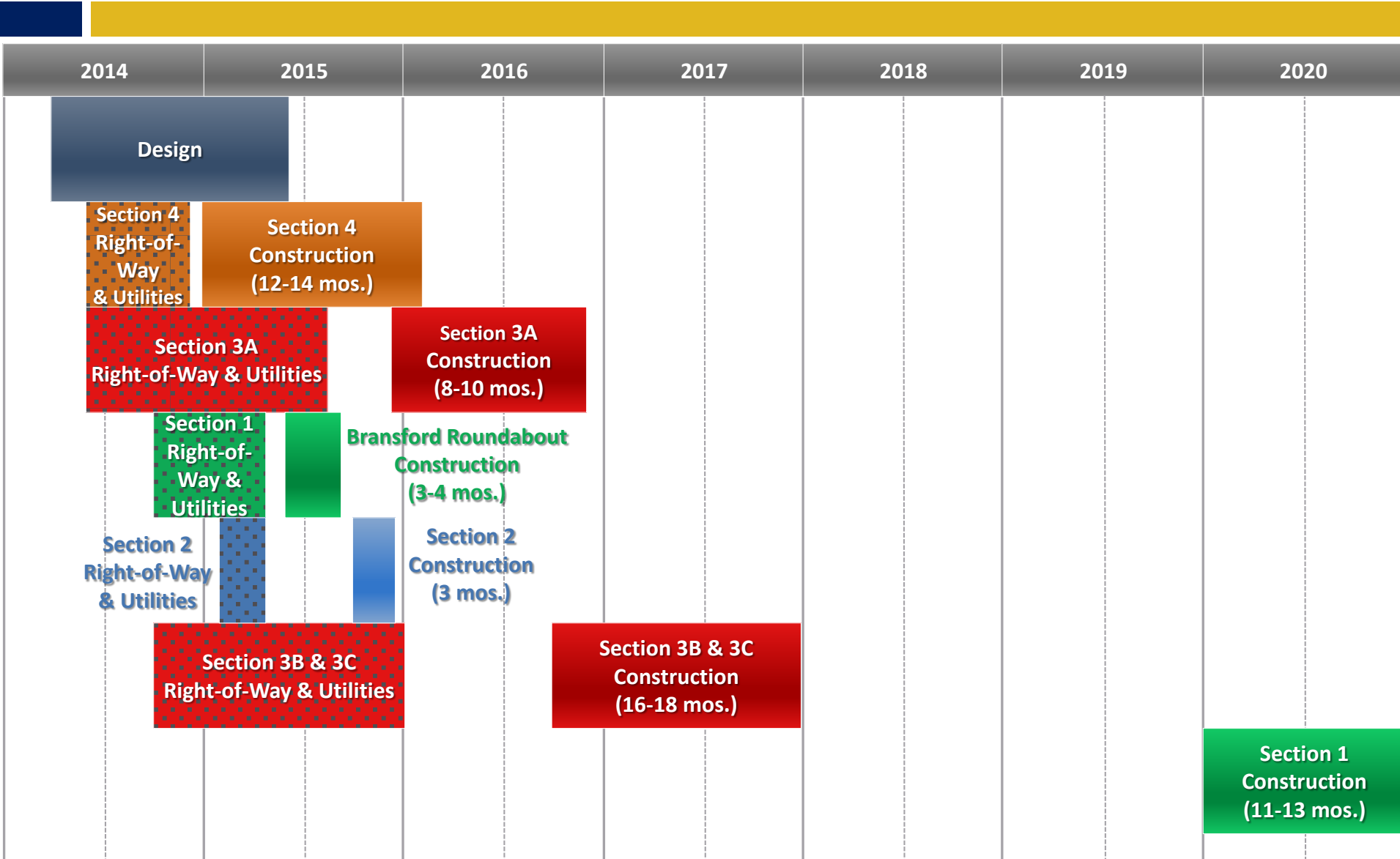


What Controls Project Phasing?

- **Right-of-way Acquisition (Number of Parcels, Difficult Acquisitions)**
- **Utility Coordination and Relocations (Franchise and City Utilities)**
- **Final Design and Bidding**
- **Bid Packages**
- **Bransford Elementary School**
- **SH 26 Construction**
- **Construction Time**
- **Budgeted Project Funding – Glade Road**
- **City Council Preference**

Project Phasing

Schedule



Project Phasing

Schedule



		Project Costs
2014	Design Services	\$ 430,000.00
	Right-of-way Services	\$ 45,000.00
	Section 1 Right-of-way	\$ 100,000.00
	Section 3 Right-of-way	\$ 625,000.00
	Section 4 Right-of-way	\$ 195,000.00
		<u>\$ 1,395,000.00</u>
2015	Design Services	\$ 430,000.00
	Construction Services	\$ 135,000.00
	Right-of-way Services	\$ 45,000.00
	Section 1 Right-of-way	\$ 170,000.00
	Section 2 Right-of-way	\$ 80,000.00
	Section 3 Right-of-way	\$ 625,000.00
	Section 4A (Jackson-Pool Road to Martin Pkwy)	\$ 2,970,000.00
	Section 4B (Martin Pkwy to Heritage Ave.)	\$ 235,000.00
	Bransford RAB	\$ 910,000.00
	Bedford Road	\$ 115,000.00
	Section 3A (Bedford Road to Manning Drive)	\$ 108,500.00
	Section 2 (Shadowood Trail to Bedford Rd)	\$ 210,000.00
		<u>\$ 6,033,500.00</u>

Project Phasing

Schedule



		Project Costs
2016	Construction Services	\$ 75,000.00
	Section 3A (Bedford Road to Manning Drive)	\$ 2,061,500.00
	Section 3B (Manning Drive to Monclair Street)	\$ 495,000.00
		<u>\$ 2,631,500.00</u>
2017	Construction Services	\$ 120,000.00
	Section 3B (Manning Drive to Monclair Street)	\$ 1,980,000.00
	Section 3C (Montclair Street to Jackson-Pool Rd.)	\$ 1,940,000.00
		<u>\$ 4,040,000.00</u>
2018	No Work	\$ -
		<u>\$ -</u>
2019	No Work	\$ -
		<u>\$ -</u>
2020	Construction Services	\$ 100,000.00
	Section 1A (River Bend Dr to Mill View Dr)	\$ 1,950,000.00
	Section 1B (Mill View Dr to Bransford Roundabout)	\$ 1,425,000.00
		<u>\$ 3,475,000.00</u>
Total		\$ 17,575,000.00

Opinion of Probable Cost

SECTION 1

Section 1A (River Bend Dr to Mill View Dr)	\$ 1,950,000.00
Section 1B (Mill View Dr to Bransford Roundabout)	\$ 1,425,000.00
Bransford RAB	\$ 910,000.00
Section 1 Total	\$ 4,285,000.00

SECTION 2

Section 2 (Shadowood Trail to Bedford Rd)	\$ 210,000.00
Section 2 Total	\$ 210,000.00

SECTION 3

Bedford Road	\$ 115,000.00
Section 3A (Bedford Road to Manning Drive)	\$ 2,170,000.00
Section 3B (Manning Drive to Monclair Street)	\$ 2,475,000.00
Section 3C (Montclair Street to Jackson-Pool Road)	\$ 1,940,000.00
Section 3 Total	\$ 6,700,000.00

SECTION 4

Section 4A (Jackson-Pool Road to Martin Parkway)	\$ 2,970,000.00
Section 4B (Martin Parkway to Heritage Avenue)	\$ 235,000.00
Section 4 Total	\$ 3,205,000.00

Construction Total \$ 14,400,000.00

RIGHT-OF-WAY

Section 1 Right-of-way	\$ 270,000.00
Section 2 Right-of-way	\$ 80,000.00
Section 3 Right-of-way	\$ 1,250,000.00
Section 4 Right-of-way	\$ 195,000.00
Right-of-way Total	\$ 1,795,000.00

SOFT COSTS

Design Services (6%)	\$ 860,000.00
Right-of-way Services (5%)	\$ 90,000.00
Construction Mgmt/Inspection (3%)	\$ 430,000.00
Soft Cost Total	\$ 1,380,000.00

Soft Cost Total	\$ 1,380,000.00
Right-of-way Total	\$ 1,795,000.00
Construction Total	\$ 14,400,000.00
Project Total	\$ 17,575,000.00

Next Steps

- **Public Meeting to Display Final Plan? Format?**
- **Prepare Preliminary Engineering Study Report.**
- **Design, Right-of-way and Utility Coordination.**



City of Colleyville Colleyville City Council Worksession Agenda Briefing

City Hall
100 Main Street
Colleyville, Texas 76034
www.colleyville.com

Agenda Number 2b	Agenda Date 04/16/2014	Number
Type Presentation and Discussion		
Department Community Development		

Title

Presentation and discussion of the development review process

Explanation

Last year, Mayor Pro Tem Mike Taylor requested a briefing on the City's development process. Since that time, staff performed a comprehensive review of the development process. A detailed report of the review, titled Development Process Review, is attached to this briefing.

The purpose of this item is to provide a presentation to the City Council that includes a brief overview of the overall development process, key development staff and their roles in the process, how the process works, as well as highlights of areas where staff has made or will make improvements that are identified in the report to ensure optimal facilitation of superior development in Colleyville.

This presentation will be provided in PREZI format. Given the unique qualities of the PREZI software, the presentation cannot effectively be attached to the briefing. However, the presentation may be viewed online at the following link:

http://prezi.com/1f56nxtcslm9/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy&rc=ex0share.

Lastly, a copy of a recent report published by the American Planning Association titled "Development Review as Economic Development" is attached to the briefing, given its highly pertinent content relative to the development process review.

Attachments

1. 2014 Development Process Review
2. Development Review as Economic Development

2014 Development Process Review



Development Process Review

**Submitted to
Jennifer Fadden, City Manager
February 26, 2014**

2014 Development Process Review

Table of Contents

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND	3
BEST PRACTICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	5
Practices for Improving Communication	5
BP1: Single Point of Contact	5
BP2: User's Guide for Development Review and Local Permitting	7
BP3: Pre-Application Meetings.....	8
BP4: Project Technical Review Team.....	9
BP5: Interdepartmental Meetings.....	12
BP6: Physical Proximity of Professional Staff	13
Practices for Standardizing Forms and Procedures.....	14
BP7: Clear Submittal Requirements	14
BP8: Permitting Flowcharts and Checklists	16
BP9: Predictable Fees	19
Practices Regarding Resources.....	20
BP10: Electronic Filing, Tracking and Commenting	20
BP11: Maximize the Municipal Website.....	22
Additional Conditions and Recommendations	24
Plan Review Processes, Resources and Responsibilities	24
Planning and Zoning Schedule	25
Tree Removal and Tree Preservation	26
Right of Way Permitting and Inspection	26
Drainage	26
TABLE OF RECOMMENDATIONS.....	28
CONCLUSION	30

2014 Development Process Review

Purpose and Background

Balancing developer-friendly processes while ensuring the best final product after the development is complete can be challenging. Beliefs as to how best reach that balance can be incongruent among leaders, developers and even among staff. Demands, expectations and philosophies tend to shift as time evolves. Additionally, changes in personnel and resources can often leave knowledge gaps, especially when processes and responsibilities have not always been clearly delineated and documented.

Because of this environment, and always wanting to ensure a quality end-product, we were charged in providing:

...assurance that we have clear policies and procedures from the earliest possible point in the development process to the final inspection/issuance of CO's and beyond that make certain once the project is complete, the City has done everything in our ability to ensure the highest quality development that lacks the kind of mistakes, errors or omissions that cause us or the property owner problems in the future.

(Excerpt from Jennifer Fadden e-mail, October 24, 2013)

From November 2013 to January 2014, several staff members of the Community Development, Economic Development, Fire and Public Works Departments met and reviewed the various steps and procedures of the development process. A total of ten meetings were held. During these meetings, many of the existing processes were discussed and reviewed in order to document what is actually happening. This allowed us to identify areas where there is ambiguity, or where opportunities for improvement exist.

Outside of these team meetings, we also researched best practices for development processes. By using the gaps and findings from the mapping exercises, and then reviewing these best practices, we developed several recommendations that can potentially:

- ✓ Enhance and streamline processes;
- ✓ Reduce potential errors and oversights;
- ✓ Improve communication with staff and customers;
- ✓ Clearly delineate authority and responsibility; and
- ✓ Standardize processes to provide clarity for all involved.

In reviewing the mission statements of the Community Development and Public Works departments, some key phrases were noted:

2014 Development Process Review

- ✓ Protect the unique beauty and quality of life of the community
- ✓ Guide quality, sustainable growth and redevelopment
- ✓ Provide exceptional customer service
- ✓ Enhance the quality of life
- ✓ Promote economic development
- ✓ Provide public infrastructure to the highest possible standards

These are worthy standards, and we kept in mind that any recommendations developed during this project must adhere to these standards.

Lastly, because the project approach was to identify areas for improvement, focus on the “gaps” may color the report as being critical of the existing practices and environment. It shouldn’t. Instead, it should be noted that some excellent procedures are already in place, and we have many dedicated staff members who manage these processes.

In fact, special recognition should be given to the team who participated in this project:

Bill Elliott
Mary Elliott
Les Folse
Dan Hartman

Jeremy Hutt
Craig Knight
Bob Lowry
Robert
McKeown

Kelly Minor
Ron Ruthven
Marty Wieder
Taci Wrisley

Without their time, participation, honesty and dedication, and especially their patience, these efforts would not have been possible.

We submit this report and hope it will facilitate superior development for Colleyville, now and into the future.

Respectfully submitted,

James Hubbard
Management Analyst, Public Works

Beth Wimpy
Assistant to the Director, Public Works

2014 Development Process Review

Best Practices and Recommendations

In researching best practices for development review (*A Best Practices Model for Streamlined Local Permitting*, November 30, 2007, and *Best Practices for Development Review and Permitting*, March, 2012), practices are generally associated with the following common goals:

- ✓ **Fostering better communication** among boards, staff and applicants
- ✓ **Standardizing forms and procedures** to provide efficiency and predictability
- ✓ Providing sufficient **resources** to allow for quick and competent review

Practices that are applicable to Colleyville are detailed below, along with how those practices are handled in Colleyville and any related recommendations for improvement.

Practices for Improving Communication

With so many parties and procedures involved in the review, permitting and inspection processes, active collaboration and communication is vital for efficiency. The following practices may be considered to improve communication during these processes.

A single point of contact can provide applicants with all of the information they need and guide them through the development, subdivision and permitting processes.

BP1: Single Point of Contact

If staffing levels allow, municipalities should designate one person or department within a municipality as a single-point of contact to work with applicants regarding land development and/or subdivision submittals. Similarly, each project should have a single point of contact throughout the review and approval process. Further consideration should be given to making the department that accepts development applications the “one stop shop” for all other municipal approvals with regard to development (i.e., zoning permits, driveway permits, etc.). The duties of such a position within the department would generally include:

- ✓ Responsibility for intake of applications, including a review to determine if the submission is complete.
- ✓ Coordinating the review of the land

2014 Development Process Review

development/subdivision application among the different reviewers.

- ✓ Tracking the project through the review process, including clearly communicating to the applicant which meetings they are scheduled for and what the applicant needs to provide for such meetings.

BENEFITS

- ✓ A single point of contact improves clarity, consistency and productivity for both the applicant and the City, and guides the applicant toward appropriate actions.
- ✓ A municipality experiences efficient permitting when this person is charged with important administrative tasks, such as reviewing applications for completeness when they are received and tracking applications through the process.

CHALLENGES

- ✓ Staffing shortages and budgetary limitations.
- ✓ Time constraints.
- ✓ Overcoming resistance to procedural change.

COLLEYVILLE'S STATUS

Colleyville has somewhat followed this best practice for larger projects. When a developer proposes a project, the Economic Development Director, Community Development Director, or Planning and Development Coordinator, depending upon the project's complexity, has typically been the first point of contact. He/she then coordinates pre-application meetings when appropriate, and generally guides the applicant to the next step. Although this practice is not formally standardized, it appears to be working well. However, developers are sometimes referred to the "Engineering Department" when drainage, grading or civil plans are involved.

When permit applications are submitted, dependent upon personnel and time available when the application is received, there is sometimes only a cursory or limited review to determine if the application is complete. Incomplete applications cause additional work for staff and needless delays for the developer.

RECOMMENDATIONS

BP1A: Assign a project manager for major projects. This might be the Community Development Director, Building Official, Planning and Development Coordinator, or Plans Examiner, depending upon the project type and scope. The project manager would not only be the official point person for the developer, but also coordinate in-house reviews, communications and administrative tasks such as project reporting and ensuring CRW entry integrity. Project responsibility would be clear, and this may help in distributing workload.

2014 Development Process Review

BP1B: After the Plans Examiner position is filled, appoint a primary and secondary receiver of applications to ensure an on-the-spot application review is completed for projects not assigned a project manager. This review should check all checklist requirements are met (see Best Practice 8 regarding checklists) as well as project feasibility. A schedule should be set to ensure 100% coverage.

BP2: User's Guide for Development Review and Local Permitting

It is recommended that municipalities create a brief reference guide to help applicants navigate through the land development/subdivision plan review/permitting process. The document should contain all applicable information with regard to the process, including who reviews the application with contact information, and which boards and commissions make decisions and/or recommendations. The guidebook should include step-by-step directions for the application review process, as well as any applicable forms and fees.

A User's Guide to Local Permitting can help communicate clearly and efficiently with the permit applicant. It can also ensure that developers, residents, and permit granting authorities all have the same information about the permitting process from the beginning.

BENEFITS

- ✓ Clearly explains what activities require permits and lists the permits issued by each municipal permit granting authority.
- ✓ Describes each municipal department, board, commission, and committee involved in permitting.
- ✓ Gives contact information for each permitting authority.
- ✓ Lists meeting schedules and timeframes so permit applicants can plan ahead.
- ✓ Presents the information in different formats (narrative, matrix, and flowchart) to meet the needs of a variety of potential users.

CHALLENGES

- ✓ Review the User's Guide for updates at least once a year. Most importantly, a specific individual should be vested with the responsibility of making sure the update happens.

COLLEYVILLE'S STATUS

Because the permit and development types are numerous, there are a variety of checklists, guides and applications, including:

- ✓ Permit and Inspection Requirements for Single Family Residential Construction
- ✓ Permitting and Inspection Requirements for Commercial Construction
- ✓ Subdivision Application Packet
- ✓ Zoning Application Packet

2014 Development Process Review

However, there is no single “introductory” guide to guide the applicant where to turn for appropriate forms, timing of processes, people involved, checklists, etc. Often, one type of application may spawn the necessity of a second type of action (e.g., when is a TDLR registration required). Although staff will typically guide the applicant as to what forms are required depending upon the submission type, this information is not documented and available. (See discussion under Best Practice 8 – Permitting Flowcharts and Checklists.)

RECOMMENDATION

BP2A: Create a “User’s Guide for Development Review and Permitting.” Assign responsibility to a staff member to coordinate creation of this guide. Due to resources available, this project may require an extended time to complete. Links to forms should be provided in the guide. Additionally, the guide and associated forms should be checked no less than annually to ensure accuracy of the information. Consider inclusion of:

- ✓ **Timeframe for action:** This provides all parties with a schedule and deadlines for action.
- ✓ **Process for proposed project review:** This outlines how the board or commission conducts its reviews, including required public meetings or hearings.
- ✓ **Guidelines for development:** This aids a developer in planning a project for a level of impacts.
- ✓ **Design standards:** Provides clear, enforceable standards for such design elements as landscaping, architecture, parking, pedestrian amenities, vehicular access, and building layout.
- ✓ **Process for modification after approval:** This outlines the steps necessary for amendments to an approved plan. Many times situations arise that require adjustments to a plan after approval.

BP2B: After completion of new forms and User’s Guide, hold a developer information session to acquaint them of new “one stop” processes.

BP3: Pre-Application Meetings

The purpose of pre-application meetings is for municipal staff, property owners, developers and their consultants to meet prior to the submittal of a formal application to discuss the development concept, potential issues and concerns. These consultation meetings promote better communication without determining any substantive issues. The meetings are an opportunity to explain the permit process, requirements, timetables (the sequence of board approvals) and to discuss additional information, reports, and/or studies that may be required for project review.

2014 Development Process Review

BENEFITS

- ✓ Allows for an informal review of a development in concept design stage.
- ✓ Permits identification of potential issues, both for the municipality and the developer.
- ✓ Establishes relationships early in the process.
- ✓ Alerts developer to potential need to meet with affected community.
- ✓ Reviews all permits and permissions required.
- ✓ Reviews time schedules for permitting.
- ✓ Allows a community to coordinate its response to a development proposal.

A key benefit to having a pre-application meeting is that it provides a forum for informal review to discuss a proposal and the associated requirements well in advance of the submission of an application for formal consideration by the governing body.

CHALLENGES

- ✓ May be difficult to coordinate schedules.
- ✓ Participants must avoid tendency to make comments that may be construed to legally bind the community.
- ✓ Community perception of permissions granted without benefit of public hearings.

COLLEYVILLE'S STATUS

The Community Development staff, and sometimes the Economic Development staff, already hold these meetings when the project scope warrants them.

RECOMMENDATION

BP3A: Continue this practice as an optional step. Document the pre-application meeting in the Best Practice 2 regarding creation of a “User’s Guide.”

BP4: Project Technical Review Team

Upon the submission of a completed application, the municipality may choose to conduct a coordinated review of the application during a technical review meeting. This process differs from the pre-application meeting in that, at this stage, an application has been formally submitted for consideration of approval.

A project technical review team should consist of municipal staff assigned responsibility in the review process. Typically, the applicant should not be present during the technical review. In addition to providing a forum for a coordinated review, the comments, suggestions, and questions that arise from each of the

2014 Development Process Review

reviewing parties can be consolidated into a single review letter/report to be provided to the applicant.

A technical plan review will typically consist of at least some of the following, and may include other topics:

- | | |
|---|--|
| ✓ Water and sewer services | ✓ Fire protection |
| ✓ Traffic and access permitting | ✓ Code requirements |
| ✓ Traffic signalization | ✓ Area, bulk, and density requirements |
| ✓ NPDES approvals | ✓ Landscaping, lighting, open space |
| ✓ Environmental issues: wetlands | ✓ Parking |
| ✓ Transit, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities | ✓ Trash and recycling requirements |
| ✓ Erosion and sedimentation control | |

A meeting, if needed, should be held with the applicant to review the comments in the coordinated review report.

BENEFITS

- ✓ Provides a clear understanding of the issues concerning each of the reviewing parties. Can remove confusion between departments and avoid the loss of time and money associated with conflicts.
- ✓ Can reduce overall review time for the applicant by establishing a regular, consistent process for the distribution of comments by the various parties.
- ✓ Such teams allow a community to coordinate a response to projects, including timing of separate reviews.
- ✓ Teams decrease “turf issues.”
- ✓ Staff time and energy is saved.
- ✓ Identifies critical issues and/or problems early in the application process.

CHALLENGES

- ✓ Various timelines may exist throughout the different agencies with regard to certain approvals relevant to a project. When multiple timelines exist, it could be difficult to achieve a consistent review schedule without significant administrative and/or procedural changes in the agencies involved in the process. Municipalities can include review schedules on permitting checklists and flowcharts to allow applicants to better understand when to expect reviews to be completed .
- ✓ It is sometimes impractical to attempt to have all relevant parties involved in the review process attend all meetings on a consistent schedule.
- ✓ There could be significant logistical challenges to getting the same personnel to attend a regularly scheduled meeting. Many agencies have a single individual designated to conduct plan reviews or related approval reviews. When a representative with approval authority cannot be present, there could be issues or questions that remain unanswered.

2014 Development Process Review

COLLEYVILLE'S STATUS

Currently the Development Review Committee (DRC) acts as an internal staff advisory body for the review of cases that will be considered by the Planning and Zoning Commission, the Zoning Board of Adjustment and/or City Council as well as staff reviews of administrative site plan applications. Representatives include:

- ✓ Building Official
- ✓ Community Development Director
- ✓ Planning and Development Coordinator
- ✓ City Engineer
- ✓ Public Works Field Operations Manager (Previously Utility Supervisor)
- ✓ Fire Marshal
- ✓ Police Lieutenant
- ✓ Economic Development Director
- ✓ Representative from the City Manager's Office
- ✓ Representative from G.I.S.
- ✓ Representative from Parks

When an application is received, the Planning and Zoning Assistant distributes package information via the City network and notifies DRC members of the upcoming meeting. Until recently, the case information was put into the CRW system intermittently. There are approximately six (6) working days prior to the meeting; during this time, members make comments via email or the CRW system (only two members currently utilize CRW at this point).

It was noted that attendance at these meetings is not consistent. Representatives may have schedule conflicts, or feel their participation may not be necessary due to the project type.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Planning and Development Coordinator prepares a "DRC Memo" that is sent to the developer with a timetable for the requisite legislative meeting(s).

For building permit applications that do not involve new commercial construction, and do not require approval from the Planning and Zoning Commission, there is no DRC meeting. When commercial permits are submitted, the Permit Clerk emails reviewing parties that plans are available for review in the plans room. The Building Official then follows up with reviewers if comments are not made on a timely basis.

In addition to providing a forum for coordinated review, the comments, suggestions and questions that arise from each of the reviewing parties can be consolidated into a single review letter to be provided to the applicant.

2014 Development Process Review

RECOMMENDATIONS

BP4A: In addition to Planning and Zoning cases, the Development Review Committee should meet and review all new commercial applications.

BP4B: Utilize Outlook to schedule Development Review Committee meetings, as it was noted that DRC meetings are oftentimes hard to make since members sometimes overschedule their calendars due to other commitments.

BP4C: Review what representatives should be required at Development Review Committee meetings, and require attendance by all members or their representatives unless a waiver is granted by the Community Development Director.

Interdepartmental meetings can lead to better organization and coordination between or within departments regarding the plan and permit review processes, timelines, and reporting.

BP5: Interdepartmental Meetings

Interdepartmental meetings provide the opportunity for the sharing of information and updates between departments within a municipality. All municipal departments may have input in the planning process, and a regularly scheduled meeting would help each department understand the processes specific to the other departments. This meeting is not intended for specific plan review, but is intended to provide updates on current practices and any anticipated changes in those practices.

Issues to be discussed during these meetings might include:

- ✓ New regulations
- ✓ Changes in policy or procedure
- ✓ New development projects
- ✓ Permit fees, review fees

BENEFITS

- ✓ Provides a forum for regular updates concerning each of the departments or agencies present.
- ✓ Can lead to better organization and coordination between or within departments and agencies regarding plan and permit review processes, timelines, and reporting.
- ✓ Allows for direct communication between the individuals responsible for their respective review and/or approval processes.

2014 Development Process Review

CHALLENGES

There could be significant logistical challenges to getting the same personnel to attend a regularly scheduled meeting. Many agencies have a single individual designated to conduct plan reviews or related approval reviews. It requires significant effort on behalf of the individual/agency/department coordinating the meetings.

COLLEVILLE'S STATUS

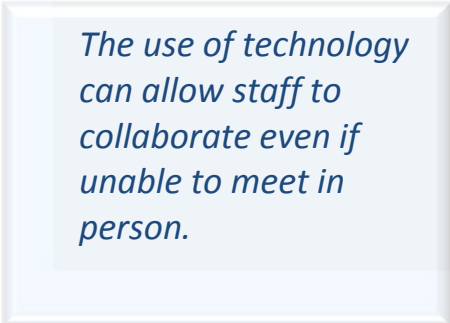
Other than the Development Review Committee meetings, there are no regular interdepartmental meetings to improve processes. The meetings that took place in the production of this report are a prime example of the type of positive results that can be obtained by having them. It was found that communication breakdowns, assumptions and absence of accountability can all be positively addressed given the proper forum.

RECOMMENDATION

BP5A: Hold quarterly, internal roundtable meetings with development review staff to hold “after action” reviews of closed and/or ongoing projects/permits to determine where processes could be tweaked and improved, improve communications and foster innovation. Assign an “owner” to these meetings and utilize Outlook to ensure they are scheduled on a regular and ongoing basis.

BP6: Physical Proximity of Professional Staff

Physical proximity of municipal staff is not always possible due to the geographic locations of individual buildings. At the municipal level, most staff is located in close physical proximity; however, there are also municipal engineers on contract, project inspectors, and others involved in the review process that may have offices in other locations, making them less available for in-person joint reviews and discussions. While a lack of physical proximity can inhibit the ability to conduct simultaneous reviews of plans, technology can be used to bridge this gap and allow for easier interaction among staff. The use of internet resources, including but not limited to email, shared document editing, and multi-user document viewing, as well as teleconferencing, would allow for simultaneous review of plans and better interdepartmental cooperation.



The use of technology can allow staff to collaborate even if unable to meet in person.

BENEFITS

- ✓ Encourages informal staff discussion.
- ✓ Creates opportunities for staff of different departments to communicate.

2014 Development Process Review

- ✓ Allows developers and the public to have easier access to staff for meetings, questions, etc.
- ✓ Allows for quicker resolution of issues that are jointly shared by different agencies.

CHALLENGES

- ✓ Physical proximity of all reviewing entities is not possible.
- ✓ While internet communication could help further cooperation, the developer would still need to contact multiple individuals to obtain answers to questions unless a single point of contact was assigned the responsibility of communicating with the applicant.

COLLEYVILLE'S STATUS

The placement of Public Works' development engineer in the Community Development Office is a clear indicator of following the philosophy of this practice. Fortunately, Community Development, Building Inspections and Engineering are all located in City Hall. The Fire Marshal and Public Works Operations Manager must go to City Hall for plan review, but this does not appear to be an inconvenience or problem. The Fire Marshall utilizes the CRW system for review and comments.

RECOMMENDATION

BP6A: As noted in Best Practice 10 recommendations, all involved staff should be utilizing CRW so that each other's comments are readily available to all and documented.

Practices for Standarizing Forms and Procedures

Predictability and consistency of the permitting process within a municipality advances the goal of more efficient development review and permitting. Permit applicants should know what to expect from the municipal boards, commission and staff they interact with through the process. This includes submittal requirements, plan documents, public meeting schedules, and review timeframes.

BP7: Clear Submittal Requirements

Well-drafted permit submittal requirements help to encourage uniformity in the review process. Such requirements let project proponents know exactly what they must submit, when, and to whom, and make it easier for the permit granting authority to evaluate the completeness and correctness of the application.

Clear submittal requirements should include a comprehensive list of items an applicant must submit in order for the application to be considered complete, including format, number of copies, filing fees, notice procedures, and whether

2014 Development Process Review

digital copies of submittals are allowed or required. The following are useful materials to accompany submittal requirements:

BENEFITS

- ✓ Allows for uniformity of materials to be analyzed during the project review process.
- ✓ Minimizes conflicts and delays in application review due to misunderstanding about what materials and information must be provided.
- ✓ The applicant may better plan for the expected length of time for project review and action by the reviewing board on the application.
- ✓ Plan submittals are likely to be more complete upon application submittal, minimizing delays during review caused by requesting and waiting for additional information.
- ✓ Neighbors and community leaders as well as the permit granting authority have a clear sense of what developers must provide, and what is not required.

CHALLENGES

- ✓ Creating and adopting clear submittal requirements, and amending them as needed, require staff commitment and time.
- ✓ Formalizing submission requirements may require revisions to relevant bylaws, which can involve a lengthy process and may take several months to accomplish.

COLLEYVILLE'S STATUS

Although most of the information described in this practice is available in application packages, it is not necessarily obvious. As an example, a residential building permit application requires a paper and electronic submission; however, this requirement is not listed in the “checklist” but rather in the text of the document.

Incomplete applications are sometimes accepted because 1) resources aren't available to check upon receipt (see Best Practice 1 recommendation); or 2) staff wants to help the developer move the project along. This then puts strain on staff to complete the review process “on time” when all materials were not originally submitted.

RECOMMENDATIONS

BP7A: Ensure submittal requirements concerning formats, number of copies, fees and notice requirements are clearly outlined with the checklists described in Best Practice 8. Include fee information in checklist.

BP7B: Require complete and on-time submittals by permit applicants. Submitting partial information causes delays, and makes it more difficult for an “on-time” plan review. If partial information is accepted as an exception, the official review time count should not begin until full submittal requirements are met.

2014 Development Process Review

BP8: Permitting Flowcharts and Checklists

Flowcharts and checklists to guide applicants through the permitting process are valuable resources. A flowchart illustrates the steps of the permit process. A checklist describes the mandatory steps and can be an integral part of the permit process itself, giving clear guidance to both the applicant and the permitting agency.

Flowcharts should begin with the submittal of a plan or application, proceed through review by all necessary boards and agencies, outline public participation requirements, and describe the decision process. The lengths of time provided for each step of the process should also be shown.

BENEFITS

- ✓ Checklists and flowcharts make the process transparent and demonstrate its uniformity.
- ✓ They are a valuable primer for applicants, new employees, and new board or commission members with a limited knowledge of the permitting procedures and processes.

CHALLENGES

- ✓ Flowcharts are merely illustrative of the process. Legally, they are not definitive, and a disclaimer is appropriate.
- ✓ Permit granting authorities have opportunities to exercise discretion at times, including waivers of requirements. This may be difficult to include in a flowchart.
- ✓ Flowcharts are limited in their ability to describe the complexity of a multiple-permit approval process.

COLLEYVILLE'S STATUS

There are no flowcharts available for the developer. Building Inspections has internal flowcharts for permit applications, but they are specific to each permit type, and do not give an overview of departmental systems.

There are a variety of forms and checklists on the internet, accessed via the Building Inspections Department page. Although most applications include necessary attachments, most do not have an up-front checklist of requirements by application type. Requirements are often buried in the text of the document. As an example, on the Residential Permit Application, there is a "Permit Application Checklist" that contains various items, including "Construction Plans." However, further in the document, there are additional required submittals under the "Construction Plans" narrative.

2014 Development Process Review

No forms are form-fillable. Some are outdated and different “styles” are used in the various forms.

Internal forms used by individuals performing plan/permit review are not shared or uniform. This can be a barrier for employees when change in responsibilities or personnel occur.

RECOMMENDATIONS

BP8A: Create flowcharts to illustrate how the various processes occur, from a developer’s perspective and add to the User’s Guide discussed in Best Practice 2.

BP8B: Redesign applications to be up-to-date, consistent in look, and form-fillable. Check annually to ensure information is current. Eliminate “universal” application (zoning/SUP/PUD/plats, etc.) and design individual applications based on type.

BP8C: Include a checklist at the beginning of every application that outlines what attachments are required under what circumstances, including any additional permit applications. All submission requirements should be on one checklist and, in the cases where electronic submissions are required, a matrix could be provided to clarify what is required in what format. Processing times should be included. Avoid “universal applications” since the submission requirements vary depending upon permit type.

As an example, the residential permit checklist would include the following information:

A checklist should include, but not be limited to, a timeline for the review and approval process, clear submittal requirements, information on fees, and information pertaining to other agencies from which approvals may be required.

2014 Development Process Review

Residential Building Application Requirements			
Item	Paper Copies Required	Electronic Copy Required	
☐ Application Form	1	Yes	
☐ Plot Plan	1	Yes	
☐ Erosion Control Plan	1	Yes	
☐ Energy Compliance Certification	1	Yes	
☐ Construction Plans ☐ Floor plan of all structures ☐ Window and door sizes ☐ Elevation drawings showing exterior wall construction ☐ Foundation drawings stamped by a professional engineer licensed by the State of Texas ☐ Original letter from same engineer that sealed the foundation plans stating that the foundation was designed for the soil conditions on that particular lot; the letter must also state that the foundation design criteria comply with the minimum standards required by the 2003 International Residential Code.	1 11 x 17 1 Full Size	Yes	
☐ Site Specific Grading Plan (If Subdivision Grading Plan is Not Available)	1	Yes	
Separate Permits That <u>May</u> Be Required ☐ Fence ☐ Irrigation Systems ☐ Retaining Walls ☐ Swimming Pools ☐ Accessory Building ☐ Tree Permits	See individual application requirements	See individual application requirements	
Residential Permits are Reviewed and Processed Generally Within 10 Working Days Upon Submission of All Required Components			
Fees (collected after plan review) ☐ Water installation fee ☐ Service charge ☐ Water deposit ☐ Sewer tap fee ☐ Roadway impact fee ☐ Water impact fee ☐ Sewer impact fee ☐ Building permit fee ☐ Plan review fee ☐ Lot drainage inspection fee ☐ Contractor registration fee ☐ Other	VALUE	VALUE	VALUE
	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$

2014 Development Process Review

BP8D: Create checklists assigning responsibility for various review items; include this in CRW (as in Best Practice Recommendation BP10D).

BP9: Predictable Fees

In order to aid applicants/developers in determining the cost of compliance with local permitting and land use regulations, fees for reviews and permits should be clear and easy to understand. Adopting fees by resolution allows for changes to be made with less procedural requirement than fees codified directly into municipal regulations. To the extent possible, all known fees should be detailed in a fee schedule. Where possible, municipalities can provide multiple options of consultants/firms that can conduct inspections, along with their fees. The fee schedule should be placed on the municipal website for quick access and printing.

BENEFITS

- ✓ A fee schedule provides clear information to inform and aid applicants regarding the required costs and total potential costs associated with a proposed project.
- ✓ Information regarding other agencies and their fees will help reduce confusion and any surprise factor associated with external fees.
- ✓ A clear and understandable fee schedule increases the transparency of government functions.

CHALLENGES

- ✓ Developing a fee schedule requires research into the various processes associated with plan and permit reviews in order to determine fees that are not arbitrary.
- ✓ Staff should be able to explain the purpose of any fees to interested parties.

In order to aid applicants in determining the cost of compliance with local permitting and land use regulations, fees for reviews and permits should be clear and easy to understand.

COLLEYVILLE'S STATUS

A "Development Application Fees" schedule is included on the website

(http://www.colleyville.com/images/content/files/communitydevelopment/Development_Fees_9_18_13.pdf) and in the various Community Development application packets, including zoning, subdivision, landscape, etc.

2014 Development Process Review

There is a schedule of “Miscellaneous Permit Fees” on the Building Inspection webpage:

http://www.colleyville.com/images/content/files/buildinginspection/Misc._fees_9-18-2013.pdf

However, the following permit fees are not listed, but calculated upon permit submission:

- ✓ Water installation fee
- ✓ Service charge
- ✓ Water deposit
- ✓ Sewer tap fee
- ✓ Roadway Impact fee
- ✓ Water Impact fee
- ✓ Sewer Impact fee
- ✓ Building permit fee
- ✓ Plan review fee
- ✓ Lot drainage inspection fee
- ✓ Contractor Registration fee

When plans are submitted multiple times, only one plan review fee is charged.

RECOMMENDATIONS

BP9A: Create a “fees” webpage that includes all fees and a fee calculator per the schedule in the Table of Recommendations at the end of this document.

BP9B: Add fee information to the checklists on Best Practice 8 per the schedule in the Table of Recommendations at the end of this document.

BP9D: When all fees are reviewed during the annual review, consider whether resubmittal fees should be charged.

Electronic permit tracking systems can greatly improve the efficiency the permitting process and help reduce overhead cost over the long-term.

Practices Regarding Resources

Adequate staffing and resources are integral to efficient planning and permitting. Advancements in technology available today are neither too expensive nor too sophisticated to be useful in municipal offices. Quick and competent review depends upon both of these.

BP10: Electronic Filing, Tracking and Commenting

Electronic permit tracking systems have the potential to streamline the permitting process from application through project completion. An effective tracking system will allow for better management of the overall permitting process, from providing ongoing

2014 Development Process Review

status reports to identifying potential problems early in the permitting process. In addition to filing and tracking, municipalities can utilize electronic commenting in order to quickly and easily communicate with applicants regarding the status and potential concerns with submitted plans. Electronically submitted comments can be simultaneously viewed by other reviewers and sent to applicants, engineers, and project managers when completed. Electronic filing, tracking, and commenting can be done using existing office software; however, multiple programs may be needed to perform all functions. Software packages are available that are specifically designed to allow municipalities to administer their permit processes and conduct these functions.

BENEFITS

- ✓ Reduces staff time spent on administrative functions such as copying and filing.
- ✓ Cuts back on waste and administrative overhead costs long-term.
- ✓ Can provide more transparency and accuracy to the permitting process.
- ✓ Allows less room for administrative error given automatic fields and assigned numerical values.
- ✓ Allows simultaneous dissemination of electronic files to multiple parties, including other permit granting authorities, and provides remote access.
- ✓ Could provide automatically-generated reports showing statistical information for recent permits.

CHALLENGES

- ✓ Commercially produced filing software is often expensive and cost prohibitive for smaller communities.
- ✓ Electronic permit systems must be continually managed, including continual updates and uniform usage from staff.
- ✓ Backup systems to store data must be utilized, as all software is susceptible to corruption and failure.
- ✓ Locally developed systems, such as those through Office Suite software, have more limited applicability and may not be as efficient as commercial programs.

COLLEYVILLE'S STATUS

The City's CRW software is used consistently for all permits. The Building Official does a good job in ensuring permit and plan information is uploaded into the system as well as keeping insuring system updates are installed. However, only two users use the system consistently for plan review comments and documentation. For those that don't utilize the system for plan review comments and documentation, the Building Official attaches emails or other correspondence to verify others' reviews.

Projects (zoning, variances, etc.) are sometimes entered into CRW, but not consistently.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2014 Development Process Review

BP10A: Provide training and require that all parties involved in the plan review process use CRW per the schedule in the Table of Recommendations at the end of this document.

BP10B: Use CRW as the central repository for all development projects involved with a property per the schedule in the Table of Recommendations at the end of this document. This would include all Planning and Zoning cases.

Communities use their websites as “one-stop” permitting and development centers in an effort to direct and streamline the permitting process.

BP10C: Work with ISM/vendor to determine why the automatic emailing feature is not working. Instead of the Building Official or Permit Clerk having to create separate emails, this feature should be turned “on” to full functionality.

BP10D: Using the checklists designed in Best Practice Recommendation 8D, configure CRW to require check off on those items by the responsible reviewer.

BP11: Maximize the Municipal Website

The use of the internet is increasingly becoming the preferred mode of communication for towns and cities. Municipalities are using the internet to conduct business and to communicate with residents, owners/applicants and non-profits via a “virtual town hall” website. While limited resources and inertia have slowed adoption of municipal web based regulatory education, administrative forms, information, and even filings, commentators agree that more universal web information would help regulators, administrators, owners, professionals, and applicants.

BENEFITS

- ✓ Hosting a municipal website is an extension of town/city hall operations that can either be static (listing office hours and department contacts) or interactive (downloadable forms and documents, email alerts, bylaws, regulations, etc).
- ✓ Websites provide access to town/city hall information outside regular business hours and reduces staff time devoted to interacting with “walk ins” during business hours.
- ✓ A website may act as a “one-stop shop” where a user may gain access to a multitude of documents and forms from many departments without having to physically walk from one department to another.
- ✓ Municipal staff may use the website as a tool to post agendas, announcements, and decisions, as well as to direct users to guides, regulations, forms or documents for instant access. Often documents and forms are downloadable at no cost to the user.

2014 Development Process Review

- ✓ Information on a website can act as a guide in and of itself to explain the permitting process and allow the user to conduct research prior to engaging planning staff and initiating a permit process.

CHALLENGES

- ✓ Municipalities may have insufficient access to technical assistance to create, update, and post information on the internet. Regular updating can be particularly challenging when staffing is limited.
- ✓ Some municipalities have not yet chosen to have internet access. A few are unable to gain access.
- ✓ Forms and procedures are frequently not in a digital format to upload to the internet. Many communities are using forms and procedures created decades ago which are only in a paper format, and images of applications are all that can currently be posted.

COLLEYVILLE'S STATUS

Colleyville has been successfully utilizing the municipal website by incorporating the CRW system into the Building Inspections page. There are several features very helpful on the website, e.g., the “Current Development Activity” map is helpful and informative to businesses and citizens alike.

However, development processes and forms are separated by departmental pages, as follows:

	Building Inspections	Community Development	Public Works
Accessory Building Information	X		
Asbestos Removal Requirements	X		
Backflow Prevention			X
Commercial Building Permit Application	X		
Development Fee Schedule		X	
Easement Abandonment			X
Easement Encroachment/Abandonment Application		X	
Easement Joint Use and Encroachment Agreement		X	
Energy Code Procedures	X		
Erosion Control Procedures	X		
Fence Encroachment Agreement	X		
Fire Protection System Permit Application	X		
Grading Permits			X
Irrigation System Procedures	X		
Lot Drainage Survey Procedures	X		X
Miscellaneous Construction Building Permit Application	X		
Package Store Application Packet		X	
Planning and Zoning Information and Packets		X	
Reroof Decking Requirements for Clay/Concrete	X		
Residential Building Permit Application	X		
Row Access and Permits			X
Sign Permit Application Forms	X		
Sign Regulations	X		
Site Plan and Landscape Plan Application Packet		X	

2014 Development Process Review

Special Event Permit Application	X		
Subdivision (Plat) Application Packet		X	
Swimming Pool/Hot Tub Permit Application	X		
TDLR Requirements	X		
Temporary Use Permit Application	X		
Tent Permit	X		
Tree Protection Procedures	X		
Tree Removal Permit Application	X		
Water Well Drilling Permit Application	X		
Zoning Board of Adjustments and Packets		X	

RECOMMENDATIONS

PB11A: Create a “development center” page with all information and links originating from this one page. Due to resources available, this project may require some time to complete or non-departmental resources. Consider what additional information would be helpful, such as a Zoning Map.

Additional Conditions and Recommendations

In addition to the recommendations associated with best practices, it was found during the process mapping exercises that several gap areas exist. Recommendations concerning these gaps follow.

Plan Review Processes, Resources and Responsibilities

Residential Review

At some point, residential plan review responsibilities were divided amongst Public Works and Building Inspections, presumably due to staffing capacity, or lack thereof. Some of the items reviewed are duplicated (e.g., setbacks).

OR1: When the Plans Examiner position is filled, residential permit review should be the responsibility of the Plans Examiner. Public Works staff should work with the Plans Examiner and Building Official to create a checklist for review items, as well as parameters as to when a Public Works engineer should be consulted for variances in erosion control, drainage, flood plain and grading situations.

Resources for Review

During discussions, it was noted that plan review turnaround times may be unrealistic. Performance measures from FY 2013 indicate plan reviews consistently took more time than the targets.

2014 Development Process Review

Measure	2013 Target	2013 Actual
Percentage of residential plan reviews completed in five days or less	>75%	21%
Percentage of commercial plan reviews completed in ten days or less	>75%	44%

It was also noted that there is some varying opinion on whether fast turnarounds or quality reviews are the most important factor in completing the reviews. ***An understanding of quality being the primary factor needs to be institutionalized.***

OR2: After the Plans Examiner position is filled, perform a study on the activities of the Community Development and Planning Department to determine if more resources are needed or if review times should be altered.

Second Reviews

Current processes for Planning and Zoning Cases (reviewed by Development Review Committee), and Commercial, Subdivision and Residential applications do not have a timeframe built-in for “re-review” of plans. If plans need substantial changes, this review time is necessary. Additionally, developers have not been required to resubmit architectural plans in the case of substantial changes. Instead, written notes on the original submission are considered sufficient.

OR3: Create a deadline for resubmittals, and build into the schedule a time for staff re-review. *(On January 28, Community Development Director issued an email that adds a week to the Planning and Zoning calendar for additional review time.)*

OR4: Document that architectural plans may need to be completely resubmitted when changes warrant.

Planning and Zoning Schedule

While reviewing the Development Review Committee and the associated time tables, the frequency of Planning and Zoning meetings and the resultant tight schedule under which the Development Review Committee must operate was discussed, including the inability to include time for a secondary review as discussed in Other Recommendation 3. Many meetings are cancelled due to the current level of zoning cases.

OR5: Consider reducing the schedule of Planning and Zoning meetings to once every four weeks, with every other week being a “tentative” date for postponed or “rush” cases. Should development activity increase, this scheduled can be reconsidered.

2014 Development Process Review

Tree Removal and Tree Preservation

Trees identified for removal from construction sites are required to be flagged. Trees designated to remain should have protective fencing. Compliance with these requirements is currently outsourced.

Tree survey reviews are also outsourced.

The tree consultant is not always available to ensure construction sites are in compliance with plans.

OR6: Review the administration of tree requirements and determine if this could be better provided by an internal, full-time arborist.

Right of Way Permitting and Inspection

Currently, the Right-of-Way/Backflow Technician in the Public Works Department is responsible for issuing right-of-way permits for contractors excavating in public rights-of-way. The permit triggers the technician to perform water and sewer line locates. No inspection of activity occurs. As-built drawings are not received.

OR7: Review the right-of-way permitting process and adjust to ensure inspection of activities and appropriate techniques are performed by the contractor.

Drainage

Until recently, nothing was in place to verify subdivision drainage plans were followed. "Final Grading Letters" are now required to ensure they do. However, older drainage plans are not necessarily beneficial in neighborhoods where previously-constructed lots did not have this requirement, as the integrity of the plan may or may not have been compromised. In these cases, individual lot grading plans may be required.

City staff performs onsite inspections of residential developments to identify any areas of concern that need to be addressed prior to issuing initial acceptance of the public improvements. Historically these inspections have identified deficiencies in public infrastructure; however the scope of these inspections can be broadened to include the certification of lot bench elevations.

To receive approval for construction, developers are required to submit grading plans for the land being permitted for development. Grading plans vary in the level of detail to which they delineate finished pad or finished floor elevations for lots in the subdivision. When individual site grading plans are required, there is no checklist as

2014 Development Process Review

to what needs to be included; it is generally left up to the city engineer to make that decision.

OR8: Verify that lots are properly benched before the development is accepted and home construction begins. This will promote that homes are built in conformance to the grading plan for the development. This recommendation has already been implemented.

OR9: Charge Public Works with creating standards for neighborhood grading plans as well as individual site plans. Standardizing the requirements for grading plans to specify the finished pad, finished floor or both elevations is another way to increase the efficiency and accuracy of the review process. Requiring the grading plan to provide detailed information about each lot undergoing development will further enable the City to hold developers and builders accountable for maintaining a high standard of construction. This will be implemented per the schedule in the Table of Recommendations at the end of this document.

2014 Development Process Review

Table of Recommendations

	Recommendation	Target Date	Comp. Date
BP 1A	Assign a project manager for major projects.	03/2014	
BP 1B	Appoint a primary and secondary receiver of applications to ensure an on-the-spot application review is completed upon receipt.	04/2014	
BP 2A	Create a "User's Guide for Development Review and Permitting."	12/2014	
BP 2B	Hold a developer information session to acquaint them of new "one stop" processes after creation of User's Guide.	01/2015	
BP 3A	Document the pre-application meetings in the User's Guide.	12/2014	
BP 4A	In addition to Planning and Zoning cases, the Development Review Committee should meet to review all new commercial applications.	02/2014	
BP 4B	Utilize Outlook to schedule Development Review Committee meetings.	03/2014	
BP 4C	Review what representatives should be required at Development Review Committee meetings, and require attendance by all members or their representatives.	05/2014	
BP 5A	Hold quarterly internal round table meetings with development review staff.	06/2014	
BP 6A	All involved staff should be utilizing CRW so that each other's comments are readily available to all and documented.	05/2014	
BP 7A	Ensure clear submittal requirements are outlined.	06/2014	
BP 7B	Require complete and on-time submittals.	03/2014	
BP 8A	Create flowcharts for major processes.	09/2014	
BP 8B	Redesign applications to be up-to-date, consistent in look, and form-fillable. Eliminate "universal" application and design individual applications based on type.	08/2014	
BP 8C	Include complete checklists at the beginning of every application/permit type.	08/2014	
BP 8D	Create checklists assigning responsibility for various review items; include this in CRW (as in Best Practice Recommendation BP10D).	08/2014	
BP 9A	Create a fees webpage.	10/2014	
BP 9B	Add fee information to the checklists on BP8.	06/2014	

2014 Development Process Review

BP 9D	When all fees are reviewed during the annual review, consider whether resubmittal fees should be charged.	08/2014	
BP 10A	Provide training and require all parties involved in plan review use CRW.	05/2014	
BP 10B	Use CRW as the central repository for all development projects.	05/2014	
BP 10C	Fix automatic email feature in CRW.	05/2014	
BP 10D	Using the checklists designed in Best Practice Recommendation 8D, configure CRW to require check off on those items by the responsible reviewer	07/2014	
BP 11A	Create a "development center" page with all information and links originating from this one page.	12/2014	
OR1	Residential permit review should be the responsibility of the Plans Examiner.	02/2014	
OR2	Perform a study on the activities of the Community Development and Planning Department to determine if more resources are needed or if review times should be altered.	04/2014	
OR3	Create a deadline for resubmittals, and build into the schedule a time for staff re-review.	06/2014	
OR4	Document that architectural plans may need to be completely resubmitted when changes warrant.	06/2014	
OR5	Consider reducing the schedule of Planning and Zoning meetings to once every four weeks.	05/2014	
OR6	Review the administration of tree requirements and determine if this could be better provided by an internal, full-time arborist.	03/2014	
OR7	Review the right-of-way permitting process and adjust to ensure inspection of activities and appropriate techniques are performed by the contractor.	06/2014	
OR8	Verify that lots are properly benched before the development is accepted and home construction begins.	03/2014	
OR9	Charge Public Works personnel with creating standards for neighborhood grading plans as well as individual site plans.	03/2014	

Conclusion

While there are many good systems already in place, opportunities to refine these systems are present. Revising and documenting practices and processes is crucial to ensure both execution and continuity. A development review process that is transparent and streamlined enables both the City and the developer to be clear about expectations, regulations, and costs.

Although initial implementation of any approved recommendations will take away from already-scarce resources, a system to create accountability for execution of those recommendations is paramount in ensuring improvements. If leaders determine resources are lacking to implement recommendations, outsourcing could be considered for some actions.

During this exercise, it was evident that City staff members are committed to having a developer-friendly system while protecting and preserving the City's infrastructure and development. It is hoped that providing enhanced tools to support their commitment will facilitate an environment where developers and the City can partner to maintain and develop Colleyville to the highest possible standards.

Development Review as Economic Development

ZONING PRACTICE

FEBRUARY 2014



AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION

➡ **ISSUE NUMBER 2**

PRACTICE DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

A large, bold, black number '2' is centered in the lower half of the cover. Behind it is a light green, semi-transparent illustration of several interlocking gears of different sizes, creating a mechanical or industrial theme.

2

Development Review as Economic Development

By Michael Blue, FAICP

Development review is more than just a series of perfunctory steps to run a project through prior to approval.

Done well, it is an economic development tool for a community to attract and secure desirable development, implement plans, and add to the local tax base. Conversely, an unpredictable development approval process can discourage development that the community wants. It can lead to difficulty in implementing plans and create the impression that the community is not a good place to do business.

We've all been to a meeting like this: The planning and zoning commission is on its third review meeting of a major retail develop-

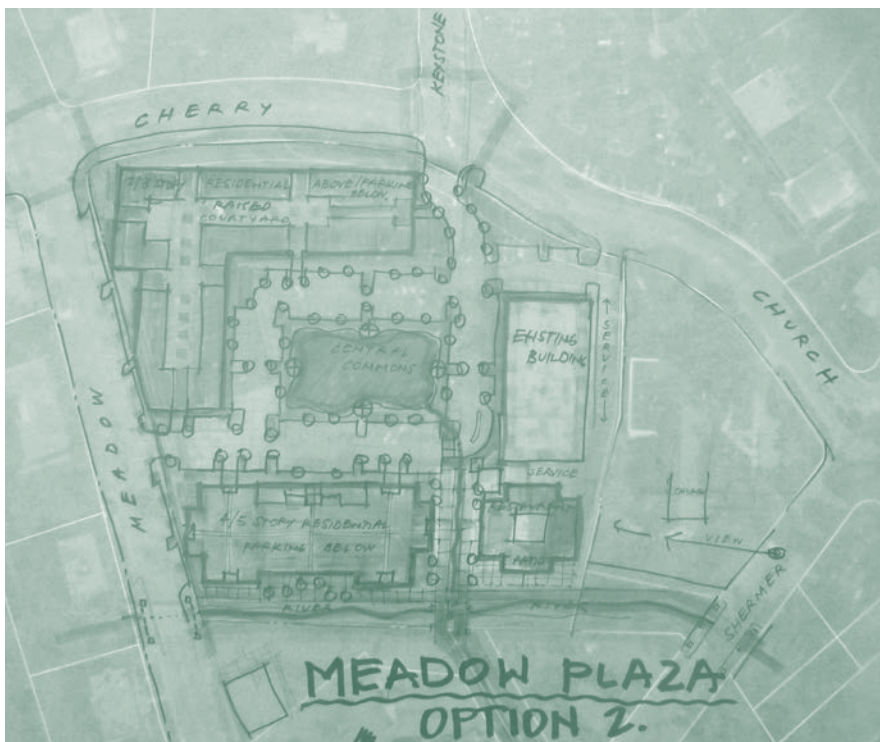
ment on the main commercial corridor in town. The staff has worked with the developer to understand city codes and expectations, and the proposal has begun to reflect those needs. In keeping with the outline of the staff report, the commission has dutifully considered land use, zoning, site plan and circulation, traffic, landscaping, signage, lighting, light fixtures, and now, building materials. The discussion has gone as expected so far, with the commission requesting "just a couple more" details on types of plant materials and a bit of discussion

over which of the light fixture styles was most appropriate.

Then the commission turns its attention to the awnings. The signage on the awnings for the project's anchor tenant was within code and the color was the company's usual red. One of the commission members suggested that while the awning was the company's standard and was in context with the overall building, perhaps a different shade of red would be more attractive, maybe even a maroon. A second commission member chimes in that maroon is much too dark, and that something more vibrant, perhaps leaning toward orange, would be better. The debate on which shade of red was best for the awning rages on for 45 minutes. To resolve the matter, the chair suggests that the applicant return to the next meeting with three samples of shades of red they would like to propose for the commission to evaluate and then adds that it is now too late to make any formal decisions.

The aftermath of the meeting is predictable. The applicant is frustrated because there is a corporate deadline to start construction that this "hurdle" will delay. He will tell the planner how the whole project is now in jeopardy and that all those people who warned him not to build in this town were right! A call from the mayor or city administrator wanting to know what happened is also likely since this is a project the community wants.

Development review is an essential element of municipal operations, and when done well, it provides an opportunity for planners to bring a great value to the communities they serve. The process should always improve marginal developments and reject those that are inappropriate, but it should not be the stumbling block that inhibits desirable outcomes.



➡ Development review processes should add value to the community by evaluating proposed developments in light of topics important to the community.

Development Review as Economic Development

ASK THE AUTHOR JOIN US ONLINE!

Go online during the month of February to participate in our “Ask the Author” forum, an interactive feature of Zoning Practice. Michael Blue, FAICP, will be available to answer questions about this article. Go to the APA website at www.planning.org and follow the links to the Ask the Author section. From there, just submit your questions about the article using the e-mail link. The author will reply, and Zoning Practice will post the answers cumulatively on the website for the benefit of all subscribers. This feature will be available for selected issues of Zoning Practice at announced times. After each online discussion is closed, the answers will be saved in an online archive available through the APA Zoning Practice web pages.

About the Author

Michael Blue, FAICP, is a principal with Teska Associates of Evanston, Illinois, a firm providing public- and private-sector clients with services related to planning, landscape architecture, site design, economic development, and community engagement. He worked in the public sector for 15 years as a community development manager for Mount Prospect, Illinois, and Highland Park, Illinois, focusing in both locales on development review and approval, long-range planning, and policy related projects. As a consultant, Blue has prepared numerous long-range plans, development impact studies, and public participation efforts. For much of his career, he has been active in the American Planning Association at the local, state, and national levels, and he is currently the Planning Officials Development Officer for APA Illinois.

THE WARNING

Elected and appointed officials, planners, and other development process participants can become comfortable with their communities' zoning approval processes. However, we must realize that just because a process worked in the “old” economy, prior to the mid-2000s, it will not necessarily function well today. Well-capitalized builders and developers who feel they can put a project in the ground on spec and then attract tenants are rare, if they exist anywhere. Communities are faced with a new range of development and financial challenges. For these reasons, it is time to revisit approval processes and find the next set of best practices to ensure that development review tasks and requirements add value to our communities.

THE CHARGE

A development review processes should incorporate three essential themes:

- The process must be predictable to the applicant, elected and appointed officials, other departments, and the public in order to assure the best outcomes.
- Each step in the development approval process must add value to the process, the development, and the community.
- The process must ensure open and continuous communication to the applicant, elected and appointed officials, other departments, and the public.

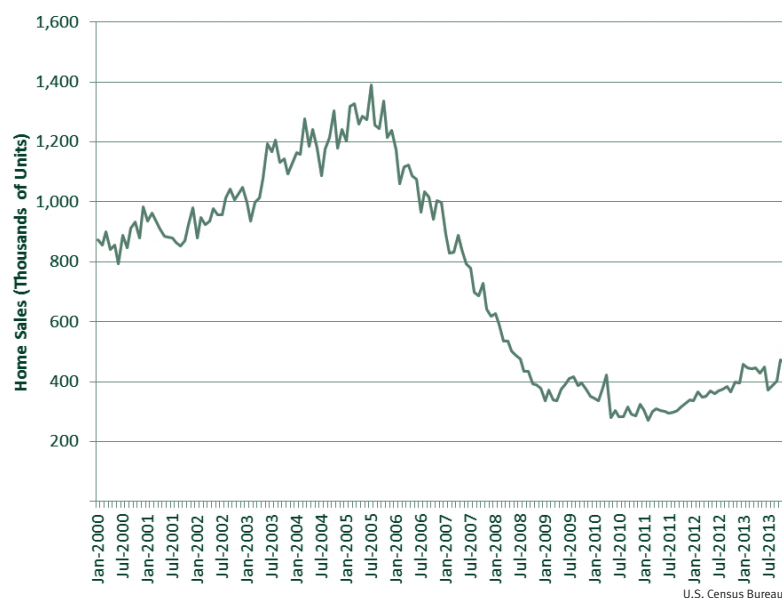
Communities should audit their processes in light of these three themes. But remember, the purpose is not just to do “more with less” or to streamline a process. Yes, efficiency and timely review are important, but we must be

careful that streamlining is not just doing the same work in less time. A faster development review isn't necessarily a better review. Rather, the question should be to look at the aspects of the review and determine if they advance the community vision. Did the commission need to review awning colors (or, for that matter, landscape and lighting, which could be defined in a code and approved administratively)? If the answer for the community is yes, these are important elements that must be considered by a formal body, and the community should continue to do so. However, if items of limited significance are being reviewed or approval

through a commission process isn't essential to enhancing development, they should be eliminated, made administrative, or set to meet clearly defined code standards. This is the type of process streamlining that will save time and money for the community by focusing effort on the issues that matter most and making it a more attractive place to pursue development.

THE CAVEAT

Is this about tossing out the way communities have conducted development review and starting over? Absolutely not. The steps in development review that reflect the unique values and



➡ Figure 1. Single-family housing sales, January 2000–November 2013.

U.S. Census Bureau

Development Review as Economic Development

needs of the community should continue. And while it should go without saying, the purpose is not about accepting development the community neither wants nor needs, nor is it about assuring large profits to an applicant. The objective is to strike a balance in approval processes so as to smoothly facilitate quality development outcomes for the community and its residents.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT NOW?

To state the obvious, the world of development, and therefore development approval, has changed over the last several years from what it was prior to the Great Recession. Figures 1 and 2 for new home sales and building permits reflect the very familiar trend line of peaking in the middle part of the last decade, falling sharply, and now returning (slowly) to an upward trend. But even as the economy begins to gain traction, it is important to ask: Will it ever be 2005 again in the development world? Can communities expect or count on that pace of development returning? Communities cannot rely on securing tax-base support from desired development at the pace they did 10 years ago. That economy is past. The way in which development is done has changed, and development approval practice must reflect that reality. It must be thought of as part of the community's economic development toolbox.

The Development Business Has Changed

Figure 3 (showing the familiar pattern and an uncertain 2013) indicates annual rates of private construction in the U.S. Anecdotal stories heard at building counters reflect that while developers are out there looking to take on projects, capital is hard to find and is impacting the number of projects being initiated. Not only will developers be limited by access to capital, but they will be more likely to seek public financial participation. More to the point of this discussion, developers will be more risk averse and less likely to pursue development where the approval process is unpredictable.

Development Approval and Economic Development Have Changed

The capacity of municipalities to regulate and support development has been threatened and impacted by state referenda on property rights and Supreme Court cases such as *Nollan*, *Dolan*, and *Kelo*. These challenges have not gutted the role of municipalities in developing their communities, but they do give communi-

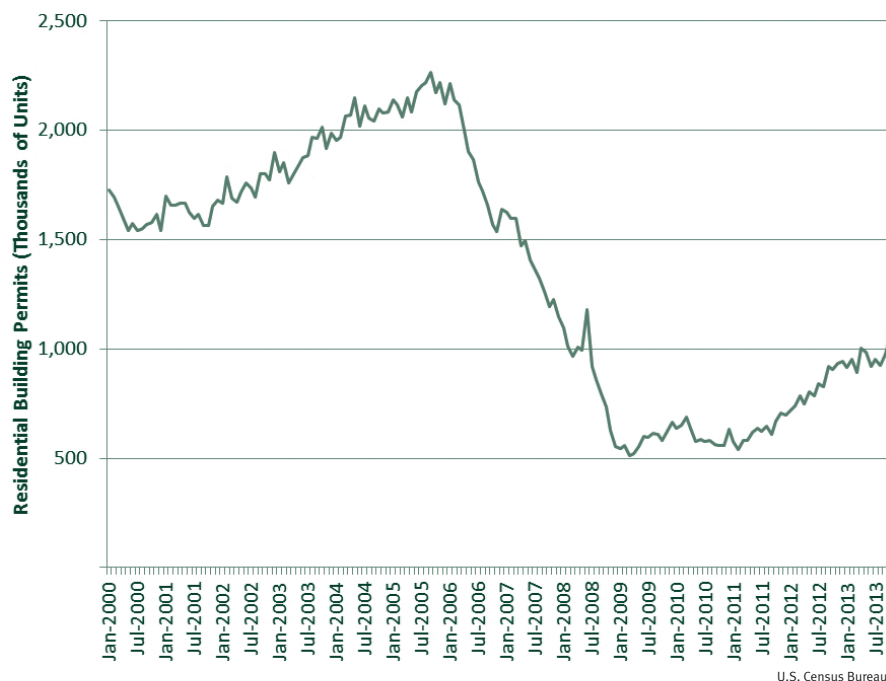


Figure 2. Residential building permits, January 2000–November 2013.

ties reason to be cautious. In this environment, a sound and predictable development approval process becomes an even more valuable economic development tool.

Public Finance Has Changed

Established revenue sources to communities have been reduced. In addition, local govern-

ments all over the country are dealing with having lost, or the risk of losing, funds from state and federal sources. Further, municipalities are facing challenges imposed by funding pension responsibilities; the table below shows the increasing trend of these payments. As those obligations grow, so will the pressure to find new revenue sources to support them. Again,

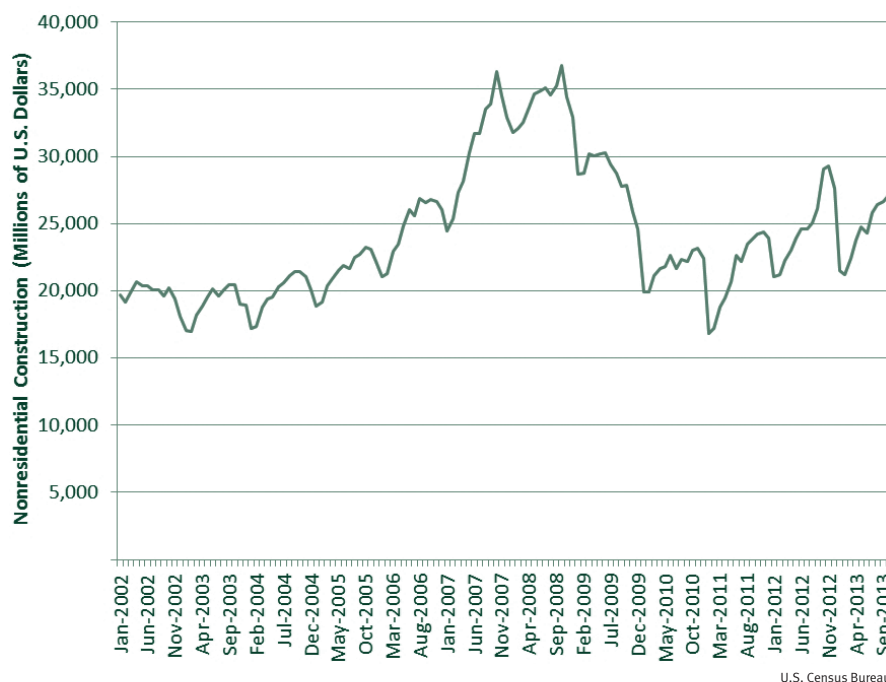


Figure 3. Private nonresidential construction spending, January 2002–November 2013.

Development Review as Economic Development

the need for attracting desirable development to support fiscal needs becomes an important element of municipal finance.

Government Operations Have Changed

The mantras heard at budget hearings everywhere are the echoes of very real fiscal constraints: “do more with less,” “consolidate,” “share services,” “outsource,” “think like a business,” etc. These concepts have merit, but at some point (and many places are already there) budget reductions are cutting bone, not fat. A number of communities set staffing levels based on average, or typical, operations. In areas that do not have a year-round construction season, maintaining staff needed during a busier summer season allows for “catching up” or project work during the winter. Communities unable to carry staff in this way may move to third-party services for peak times. No matter how communities address the budget and staffing challenge, it is important to maintain the emphasis on quality development review. Too often the concern in light of budget constraints is how to do development review faster, but the question should be how to do it better.

THE WARNING SIGNS

So how do you know when the process isn’t functioning optimally and you need to look at serious change? Keep your eyes open for some warning signs:

A Lack of Understanding or Respect for the Process

The approval process is not always going to be smooth. It is inherently a negotiation and

may well be contentious. But it does not need to be mean spirited or belligerent; it doesn’t have to be cops and robbers. If there is a lack of trust, communication, or respect at meetings between staffs and applicants, realize that this is not normal and acceptable. It is time to find and eliminate the cause of a caustic working relationship.

In addition, some applicants will go through the motions of the approval process with little regard for staff review or commission evaluation. This approach may be a political calculation by the applicant in the hope that a desire for their project by the community negates the need for in-depth vetting through a public process. This is not the case and should be a warning sign. A deliberative process that seeks and applies concerns brought up by the staff, commissioners, and public input creates a thoughtful deliberation and brings a well-reasoned recommendation to the elected officials. Further discussion at that stage isn’t a problem, but officials should be working from a foundation established in the process.

Development by Litigation

In some cases an approval process will result in litigation. While always possible, the keys to avoiding this outcome are a well-crafted comprehensive plan and set of development policies, practices, and regulations that reflect that plan. In addition, a predictable approval process will lessen the chances of a community being sued by an applicant. Working from the notion that the applicant will most likely proceed if there is a reasonable chance for

success, it is the denial that seems unexpected to them or comes from a late shift in the position of the community that inspires litigation. A predictable process, well communicated and well executed, can help diminish the potential for litigation.

Amending Unnecessary or Inappropriate Requirements

It is essential to know and be able to explain why code requirements exist. Dismissive answers such as “because the code says so” or “because we’ve always done it that way” do not communicate properly to applicants or the community the value of development (and building permit) review. Also, there is efficiency to be found in making sure that every step has a purpose—benefiting both the community and applicants. The question is whether the review requirement adds value to the development and the community. If it does, keep it; if not, look to amend the code.

That said, change for the sake of change (or to give the appearance of progress) has no value. Likewise, a knee-jerk code or policy change in response to a single undesirable outcome (like an unusual sign or odd-sized porch) is not always necessary. But if patterns appear in approvals that are contrary to community desires or a “loophole” is identified that creates unwelcome development forms, communities should be willing to amend local codes to support desired outcomes. The same is true should the need arise to consider updates to the approval process. In making changes, communities should take note that seeking out different perspectives and being open to the changes they propose (even small ones) can improve the process and are appreciated by applicants.

A Reliance on Last-Minute Negotiation

As stated earlier, development includes negotiations. When that negotiation happens is important, and the earlier in the process the better. The ability to be flexible diminishes, for both municipality and applicant, as the process moves forward. A last-minute demand will either be a genuine issue or create a perception of unreasonableness (from either party) and may upend a desired outcome.

A Lack of Internal Communication

In most communities the team that conducts development review is multidisciplinary and from different departments. Communication



➡ Continual and open communication regarding procedures, community expectations, and code requirements are essential to a successful development approval process.

Development Review as Economic Development

among these groups is essential. A lack of communication will limit desirable outcomes and send the message that the community is not ready to do business.

A Lack of Positive Development Outcomes

Securing desired developments that advance the community's plans, vision, and quality of life is the ultimate aim of an effective development approval process. To ensure this is working, always go back and see how the development turned out. See what the local commissioners, residents, and elected officials think. Not everyone will like every development, but finding that the community is consistently not pleased with outcomes is reason to reconsider how projects are approved.

HOW TO IMPROVE THE DEVELOPMENT APPROVAL PROCESS

If you notice any of the warning signs above,

it's time to start an internal discussion. Identify a point person to talk with staff, commissions, and elected officials to understand what the community needs and wants from the process. Talk to the customers (developers) about their take on the process. Review your development approval steps to see that they add value. You should ask: Why do we do this? Who does it help? Is the cost for review greater than the benefit? Evaluate the system in light of the themes, truisms, and best practices outlined below.

Predictability

The best development approval process will have a defined structure understood by all involved. To facilitate such an outcome, communities should be cognizant of the numerous perspectives in the process and work to create a common understanding of how the process functions.

Certainty versus flexibility. Communities want to know precisely what will be built, who will occupy it, when it will be finished, and what it will look like. Developers want to make many of these determinations later (to be sure the construction material is in stock, negotiate leases over time, change the appearance depending on tenants plans, etc.). There is no way to completely bridge the certainty versus flexibility gap, but the answer is to provide predictability. Approval ordinances, codes, or development agreements should spell out what can change after approval, including what can be signed off on administratively and what will require a new hearing.

Different game for the little guys. Large developers or businesses may have a team of attorneys, architects, traffic engineers, landscape architects, and other professionals to assist with review processes. Smaller applicants will not. They may have never been through an approval before. The process will be full of jargon and intimidating meetings. They will need assistance (and time) from staff to make it through the process. Many communities note a desire to emphasize locally owned businesses as part of their economic development program, and having an approval process they can navigate is a great place to start.

Conduct commissioner training. The community members sitting on various development-related boards and commissions more often than not have no technical training or professional expertise in development review or code preparation. Even the best staff reports cannot make them experts in the field, and many will be unwilling to ask questions they feel are too simple. They are on the commissions because of their interest in and commitment to their community. Further, as residents they will certainly have a keen understanding of the town's quality of life, expectations of community members, local history, etc. While volunteer board members will bring these insights to the commission deliberations, staff can help enhance the efficacy of these boards and commissions by finding the time and opportunity to provide training in commission operations and development review practice.

Communicate the process and expectations. Developers should know early in the process what information, studies, meetings, and approvals will be required. This need not be sugarcoated; it should be realistic. Part of this communication is also to understand the applicant's position (with an open mind). Be



Teska Associates

➡ Desirable developments that implement community plans are the most direct indicator that a development approval process is succeeding.

Development Review as Economic Development

aware of that position and take time to understand it. However, it doesn't change the need for high-quality development standards to be met. Further, the community planner must maintain a position as supporter of the vision, goals, and processes of the community, but these objectives can be accomplished in a way that keeps the community's process from being an impediment to economic development.

Incorporate community plans. The community's comprehensive and subarea plans must be incorporated into the approval process from the outset of discussions with potential applicants. This establishes community needs and desires as the benchmark for consideration and helps the developer understand expectations. A clearly defined vision will help an applicant focus on that outcome; most applicants will avoid an uphill climb with limited chance of success. When a developer or property owner walks into the planning department and asks what type of development project the municipality wants in a specific location, having a sound, thoughtful answer will encourage appropriate development proposals and discourage projects that are inconsistent with the community's vision.

Establish and communicate meeting protocol. Most residents don't spend a lot of time in public meetings (though they may watch on local cable). An essential element of development approval is to make it a public process. It should make the community comfortable that the review process is not a mere formality. Take a few minutes and explain to the public how the review process works at the beginning of the meeting, or create a simple brochure that explains the process and meeting protocol.

Value Added

Each step in the development review process and each of the codes the process applies must have a specific purpose for advancing the community's vision, comprehensive plan, and quality of life. They need not be limited, easy to address, or common in other towns, but they should have a purpose that can be reasonably explained to applicants, commissioners, elected officials, and residents.

Review steps must add value. As suggested above, program enhancement is about understanding and explaining the purpose of a review task. To be beneficial to the community a task must add value to the process and help make the development proposal better.

Dealing with limited staff resources.

Frequent applicant communications, in-depth technical analysis, and being available to elected and appointed officials can be difficult for planners in communities with limited resources. However, this does not diminish their importance. A review of the approval process should certainly consider how to meet local objectives with limited staff resources.

Little efforts can make a big difference.

Revisiting a development approval process does not require wholesale change, especially just for the sake of change. It may be that an updated explanation or diagram of the process, or consolidating steps, serves the community and applicants well. In addition, involving the development and business community in the evaluation provides value by showing that the community is committed to reviewing proposed development in the most effective manner available.

Communication

Open and continuous communication with applicants, community officials, other staff, residents, and other stakeholders is foundational to all of the concepts described in this article. This point is often forgotten, either because it is so basic or because in some situations it is inconvenient, but no approval process can succeed without this key ingredient.

No surprises. The city manager, public commissions, and elected officials should be well informed (early on) of issues or questions that are likely to be controversial. Likewise, a developer should be made aware of what they may expect in the process; again, it should be realistic and reflect an understanding of previous project approvals.

Communicate early and often in the process. A clear and comfortable path for communication is essential. This must exist between the staff and the applicant and between staff and appointed and elected officials. This can be formal or informal, but it must be present. If you haven't already, consider establishing single points of contact for such communications.

Communicate internally. Organizational "silos" are problematic in many instances. This is certainly the case for effective development review; the process must include discussion among all work groups on a regular basis (this cannot be stressed enough). The process may be led by a planning or community development department, but must involve public works, fire, police, parks and recreation,

corporation counsel, and other internal stakeholders. These groups should meet regularly to assure consistency and be available to the applicant to clarify matters early in the review process.

CONCLUSION

It is not the place of any municipality to swing open the doors and allow development at all costs or to tilt the process in favor of anyone's profit motive. That is not the intent of the concepts raised here. The point is that to conduct development review as if it were 2005—or to use the same process that was in place in 2005—is detrimental to the community. Creating an environment that facilitates a good development process leads to desired outcomes that benefit the entire community; it is a role for which planners are uniquely qualified and should be leading in their municipalities.

Cover image by Micha? Po?om/
iStock/Thinkstock

VOL. 31, NO. 2

Zoning Practice is a monthly publication of the American Planning Association. Subscriptions are available for \$95 (U.S.) and \$120 (foreign). W. Paul Farmer, FAICP, Chief Executive Officer; David Rouse, AICP, Managing Director of Research and Advisory Services.

Zoning Practice (ISSN 1548-0135) is produced at APA. Jim Schwab, AICP, and David Morley, AICP, Editors; Julie Von Bergen, Assistant Editor; Lisa Barton, Design and Production.

Missing and damaged print issues: Contact Customer Service, American Planning Association, 205 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 1200, Chicago, IL 60601 (312-431-9100 or customerservice@planning.org) within 90 days of the publication date. Include the name of the publication, year, volume and issue number or month, and your name, mailing address, and membership number if applicable.

Copyright ©2014 by the American Planning Association, 205 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 1200, Chicago, IL 60601-5927. The American Planning Association also has offices at 1030 15th St., NW, Suite 750 West, Washington, DC 20005-1503; www.planning.org.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the American Planning Association.

Printed on recycled paper, including 50-70% recycled fiber and 10% postconsumer waste.

ZONING PRACTICE
AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION

205 N. Michigan Ave.
Suite 1200
Chicago, IL 60601-5927

1030 15th Street, NW
Suite 750 West
Washington, DC 20005-1503



HOW DOES YOUR DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PROCESS AFFECT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT?

2