



Office of the City Manager

WORKSESSION

October 9, 2018

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Dee Williams-Ridley, City Manager

Submitted by: Timothy Burroughs, Director, Planning and Development

Subject: Planning Department Service Improvements

INTRODUCTION

The Planning Department oversees the City's development review and permitting process, rental housing inspection and safety programs, seismic safety programs, and environmental sustainability and toxics management programs. These services are essential – they affect community safety, Berkeley's livability and quality of life, public health, the environment, and the local economy. Small business owners, homeowners, renters, design professionals, contractors, developers and others depend on these services and rightly expect them to be delivered effectively and efficiently.

Consistent with that expectation, providing excellent, timely, and easily-accessible service and information to community members is the Planning Department's highest priority. Over the past two years, the Department set in motion a series of actions designed to continuously improve our service to the community by making the permit process easier and more efficient, investing in staff training, and improving access to information. Actions that the Department is implementing include providing improved guidance and checklists that help community members apply for permits, developing strategic amendments to the Zoning Ordinance, launching Planning Department "open house" and "coffee with inspectors" events to invite community members to learn more about our services, launching new online tools, and much more.

There is still much work to accomplish, but progress is being made. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on actions the Department is taking, as well as to communicate important next steps.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS**PLANNING DEPARTMENT CUSTOMER SERVICE IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS AND NEXT STEPS**

The Planning Department established a customer service working group to guide identification and implementation of customer service improvements. The staff working group created a work plan with priorities for fiscal years 2017-18 (Year 1) and 2018-19

(Year 2). The Year 1 and 2 priorities are included as **Attachments 2 and 3** of this report.

The working group also organized the customer service priorities into the following themes: Clear and Consistent Communication, Staff Development, Clear Regulations, Technology, and Resource Management and Performance Standards. A summary of each theme and the associated Year 1 and Year 2 actions is included below.

### **Clear and Consistent Communication**

This customer service theme includes priorities that the Planning Department is advancing to continuously improve the clarity and consistency of our communication to community members as well as to staff within our department and in other departments. This is important for several reasons, including that people depend on the Department to communicate clearly and consistently in order to have a solid understanding of what is required to comply with various rules and regulations and what the expected timeline of the permit process will be.

To this end, in Year 1 of our customer service initiative, the Department:

- Updated submittal checklists and guides in order to better assist community members in completing permit applications. New submittal checklists and guides are available online as well as at the Permit Service Center. Two examples are linked below:
  - Building Permit Submittal Checklist - [https://www.cityofberkeley.info/uploadedFiles/Online\\_Service\\_Center/Planning/BP%20Submittal%20Docs-%20One%20or%20Two-Family%20Dwelling.pdf](https://www.cityofberkeley.info/uploadedFiles/Online_Service_Center/Planning/BP%20Submittal%20Docs-%20One%20or%20Two-Family%20Dwelling.pdf)
  - Zoning Information Guide #1: Residential Additions - [https://www.cityofberkeley.info/uploadedFiles/Planning\\_and\\_Development/Level\\_3\\_-\\_Land\\_Use\\_Division/Berkeley%20Residential%20Additions%20Zoning%20Guide.pdf](https://www.cityofberkeley.info/uploadedFiles/Planning_and_Development/Level_3_-_Land_Use_Division/Berkeley%20Residential%20Additions%20Zoning%20Guide.pdf)
- Ensured all clients know of expedited review options, at their expense, for Land Use and Building permit applications, freeing resources to improve speed of all application reviews
- Held an “open house” at the Permit Service Center to help increase understanding of permit processes and facilitate dialogue between staff and community members. The event was very well attended and feedback from attendees was positive. Moving forward, the Department will hold the Permit Service Center “open house” event semi-annually.
- Created a directory listing all staff roles, embedded into a new Organization Chart. This mainly facilitates internal communication within Planning and between City departments.

In Year 2 of the initiative we are:

- Establishing clear performance standards and timelines for the Administrative Use Permit and Use Permit processes
- Continuing to update information available for our physical and online permit documents and associated materials that guide community members through the permitting process
- Using Berkeley Considers, launching a new “customer service” survey that will be provided ongoing to all community members that utilize the Department’s permit services. The survey is designed to provide valuable and actionable information regarding the service provided to community members
- Keeping open lines of communication between staff and the public by ensuring all email and phone calls are responded to within 48-72 hours
- Continuing to host events that encourage community engagement and information sharing, such as the PSC “open house” that was held in November 2017 and the upcoming “coffee with inspectors” event we will host in November 2018
- Evaluating City enforcement procedures in place to help ensure that project development teams are informed of and adhere to all use permit conditions

### **Staff Development**

This customer service theme includes priorities designed to continuously improve our service by providing staff with the training and resources they need to be effective. Objectives of the actions within this theme include providing consistent information and interpretations to community members, regulatory compliance, increased efficiency, and ongoing improvement of staff morale and cohesiveness.

In Year 1 of our customer service initiative, we:

- Better defined PSC staff roles and responsibilities, streamlining client intake and counter services, and improving client wait times. Performance benchmarks are being set and will be reported on using new software in 2019. Efficiency goals are discussed during staff meetings, trainings, and are included in all PSC staff evaluations.
- Launched training program tailored to each division within Planning, to develop staff communication and problem solving skills and continuously improve team building and customer service

In Year 2 of the initiative we are:

- Collaborating with the Human Resources Department to implement additional customer service training specific to the staff who interact most with community members

- Increasing staff capacity in the Land Use Planning Division to accelerate our “design review” function and short-term rental application review
- Promoting professional development by continuing to circulate a monthly internal training newsletter and weekly “Director’s Friday 5” current events update
- Providing staff timely performance evaluations and using these to identify training and staff development opportunities

### **Clear Regulations**

This customer service theme includes priorities to ensure that Berkeley’s development regulations are easy to understand, consistently interpreted and enforced by staff, and foster a clear and expeditious development review and approval process. This is critical for all community members that utilize Planning Department services.

In Year 1 of our customer service initiative, we:

- Incorporated Building Code interpretation training into building inspector staff meetings to help ensure consistent communication and enforcement
- Designated a single Zoning Administrator to serve as a consistent resource for staff when making zoning determinations
- Launched the Zoning Ordinance Revision Project (ZORP), which will result in a revised ordinance that is better organized and easier to review and interpret, as well as a series of amendments designed to address consistent customer “pain points” when applying for land use permits
- Standardized list of City staff attending pre-zoning application meetings with applicants, which provides applicants with consolidated comments and guidance early in the development review process

In Year 2 of the initiative we are:

- Collaborating with the Office of Economic Development to develop a series of amendments to the Zoning Ordinance designed to assist small businesses. These zoning amendments will be provided for Council review in December 2018
- Continuing to advance the ZORP, with the goal of providing Council with a revised Zoning Ordinance in summer 2019
- Creating internal procedures and guidance to help Land Use Planning staff to review use permit applications and interpret the Zoning Code in a consistent manner

### **Technology**

This customer service theme expresses the importance of technology as a primary framework with which we provide daily service. Our goal is to create more streamlined processes and improve access to information and services by improving the tools available to both staff and community members.

In Year 1 of our customer service initiative, we:

- Improved our ability to function as a multi-department team by enabling Accela access (permit review software) to Fire Prevention Bureau and Public Works staff
- Launched BuildingEye – an online tool that enables community members to review the permit history of any parcel, address, or neighborhood
- Posted new and improved permit checklists on the City website

In Year 2 of the initiative we are:

- Evaluating next steps for improving the City's online permitting system
- Providing "how to" training for online permit applications. An example: [https://www.cityofberkeley.info/uploadedFiles/Planning\\_and\\_Development/Level\\_3\\_-\\_Building\\_and\\_Safety/OnlineBuildingPermitsGuide.pdf](https://www.cityofberkeley.info/uploadedFiles/Planning_and_Development/Level_3_-_Building_and_Safety/OnlineBuildingPermitsGuide.pdf)
- Launching a new tool/software program – NemoQ – in the Permit Service Center to help staff direct in-person visits and accurately monitor, report, and reduce customer wait times
- Continuing to collaborate with the Information Technology and Finance Departments to improve Business License application review

### **Resource Management and Performance Standards**

This customer service theme speaks to the work the Planning Department is doing to evaluate and improve how staff and consultant resources are allocated, including by establishing and tracking clear performance metrics to enable accountability for the progress staff is working to achieve. Staff will use established performance metrics to gauge progress over time and to help identify opportunities for continuous improvement.

In Year 1 of our customer service initiative, we:

- Made several staffing changes to improve efficiency, including hiring a permanent Land Use Planning Manager and adding a staff person to the Design Review function and short-term rental application review function
- Expanded use of outside consultants for certain plan checks and other reviews to create more prompt turnaround times
- Created an annual department workplan including timelines for major initiatives and processes for responding to Council referrals
- Completed more than 90% of Zoning Certificates for business licenses in one day or less

In Year 2 of the initiative we are:

- Completing an analysis of department staffing to ensure greatest areas of need are addressed

- Updating the Department's list of outside planning consultants that can enable project review expediting as requested by applicants
- Establishing a set of performance metrics to help the Planning Department monitor and report on progress toward its customer service goals. Performance metrics that the Department will monitor and report include:
  - Turnaround time for each major step needed to complete staff review of Land Use and Building Permit applications
  - Community member responses to Permit Service Center "customer service" survey to be conducted regularly
  - Permit Service Center wait time
  - Planning Department email and phone call response time

### BACKGROUND

In summer 2017, the Planning Department began to develop and implement a customer service work plan that was informed in part by a self-initiated review performed by Zucker Systems of San Diego, which was retained to analyze core Planning Department operations through a customer service lens. Zucker Systems offered 152 recommendations for improvements in its final report, which were discussed with the City Council in a Work Session on June 27, 2017. The Planning Department's report for that Work Session, included here as **Attachment 1**, prioritized 32 Year 1 recommendations as those most immediately important, practical, and achievable within existing department resources.

In 2018, the Planning Department customer service work group reviewed the status of the Year 1 priority recommendations and identified additional actions (again, informed in part by the Zucker Report) to be prioritized in Year 2. The previously adopted timeline for Year 1 priorities is included in this report as **Attachment 2**. The proposed timeline for Year 2 recommendations over the next 12 months is included in this report as **Attachment 3**.

Other reports and referrals that have informed the Planning Department's customer service efforts include:

- City Auditor's report from March 25, 2014, entitled "Construction Permits – Monitor Performance and Fee Assessments to Ensure Excellent and Equitable Customer Service," available at [http://www.cityofberkeley.info/Clerk/City\\_Council/2014/03\\_Mar/Documents/2014-03-25\\_Item\\_27\\_Audit\\_Construction\\_Permits.aspx](http://www.cityofberkeley.info/Clerk/City_Council/2014/03_Mar/Documents/2014-03-25_Item_27_Audit_Construction_Permits.aspx)
- Planning staff report from January 26, 2016 recommending a process to change the Zoning Ordinance for clarity, consistency and improved customer service, available at [http://www.cityofberkeley.info/Clerk/City\\_Council/2014/03\\_Mar/Documents/2014-03-25\\_Item\\_27\\_Audit\\_Construction\\_Permits.aspx](http://www.cityofberkeley.info/Clerk/City_Council/2014/03_Mar/Documents/2014-03-25_Item_27_Audit_Construction_Permits.aspx)

- Referral from the City Council on July 19, 2016, authored by then-Councilmember Arreguin, recommending additional customer service enhancements to operations of the Permit Service Center, available at <http://records.cityofberkeley.info/Agenda/Meetings/ViewMeeting?id=193&doctype=1#>

#### ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

There are no specifically identifiable environmental effects from the initiatives discussed in this Worksession report.

#### POSSIBLE FUTURE ACTION

As is described in this report, the Planning Department will continue to advance a range of customer service initiatives and will report progress to the City Council and community on an annual basis. Some of the actions identified in this report, such as changes to the Zoning Ordinance, will also require Planning Commission review.

#### FISCAL IMPACTS OF POSSIBLE FUTURE ACTION

The actions identified in this report are funded through a combination of permit fee revenue and General Fund dollars. The General Fund dollars are allocated to the Planning Department by City Council to increase staff capacity in specific areas, such as review of short-term rental applications.

#### CONTACT PERSONS

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Attachment 1: Final Customer Service Assessment from Zucker Systems

Attachment 2: Timeline for First Year Recommendations

Attachment 3: Timeline for Second Year Recommendations



Office of the City Manager

**ATTACHMENT 1,  
2017 Worksession report**

WORKSESSION  
June 27, 2017

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council  
From: Dee Williams-Ridley, City Manager  
Submitted by: Timothy Burroughs, Interim Director, Planning and Development  
Subject: Improving Planning Department Customer Service

SUMMARY

Providing excellent, timely, and easily-accessible service and information to community members is a key priority of the Planning Department. In Fall 2016, in response to a variety of customer comments, City Council referrals, and issues identified by the City Auditor, the Planning Department contracted with Zucker Systems of San Diego to analyze its core operations through a customer service lens. Following extensive site visits and interviews, Zucker Systems presented a draft report, which included assessments of Planning Department services from customers and internal City stakeholders, and offered 152 recommendations for improvements. After a review and discussion phase, which overlapped with the department's recent leadership transition, Zucker Systems issued its final report to Planning in May 2017. That report is included here as **Attachment 1**.

This Worksession report and presentation provides an overview of recommendations for improving the Planning Department customer service experience. A proposed timeline for implementing the Phase I priority recommendations over a twelve month period is included as **Attachment 2** to this report.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

**ZUCKER SYSTEMS REPORT**

The Planning Department hired Zucker Systems in order to improve customer service to the Berkeley community. The Zucker Systems organization has provided consulting and training services to municipal Planning and Building departments for 35 years. Berkeley chose Zucker Systems on recommendations from other Bay Area jurisdictions, in particular on the strength of Zucker's consultant team, each of whom has many years of direct experience managing city planning and building functions.



Zucker Systems employs a methodology it has honed over its years of experience evaluating planning and building functions, designed to identify issues in department practice and customer perception through a broad range of surveying and observation techniques. For its review of Berkeley's systems, Zucker analyzed existing electronic permit records (both the legacy FUND\$ system and the newly launched Accela system), interviewed City staff at all levels in multiple departments, conducted detailed written surveys of clients, and convened a focus group of clients who have experienced Berkeley's development and permitting processes on multiple occasions. Zucker Systems also interviewed the chairs of the Zoning Adjustments Board (ZAB) and Design Review Committee (DRC), the Deputy City Manager, and made extensive direct observations of the functions of the Permit Service Center (PSC) during its work in Berkeley.

Zucker's analysis extended to all parts of the Building Permits and Development Application processes (i.e. the Building + Safety and Land Use Planning divisions), but did not assess the work of the department's Toxics Management and Energy + Sustainable Development functions.

This Worksession report focuses on those issues and recommendations which are identified as first tier priorities, and proposes a phase one implementation timeline of 12 months. The recommendations which were selected for the first phase are those which staff deemed within the capacity of the department to implement and which respect Berkeley's values. After the phase one implementation, Planning proposes to assess the progress and begin work on implementing the remaining recommendations in subsequent phases.

The final Zucker report (***Attachment 1***) extends for more than 250 pages, with multiple appendices, and makes 152 separate recommendations. The following are excerpts from the report's summary and background sections, highlighting the department's key strengths and areas for improvement:

### **Department Strengths:**

The Zucker report found much to admire about Berkeley's Building and Land Use divisions, including:

- All building permit plans are received electronically;
- Impressive educational background of many of the staff;
- A sophisticated Enterprise Fund;
- New office space and permit center;

- A centralized Permit Service Center to receive applications for a variety of permits including Planning, Building, and Public Works;
- Appointments can be made for all services by telephone or at the Department's "Welcome Desk;" and
- Plan review is done with digital plans to allow for simultaneous review by all required departments/divisions.

### Areas to Improve:

- Permit Timelines: Berkeley's are significantly longer than most other jurisdictions, and timeline expectations are not well communicated to clients.
- Processes: Multiple boards and commissions add cost and lengthen time for the review and approval of applications. Clarifying and simplifying criteria for Administrative Use permits (AUPs), and revisions to the Zoning Ordinance could improve this dynamic.
- Technology: The Accela permitting software system needs to be better configured, staff require more and continuous training, and other City departments and divisions should more fully adopt the new protocols.
- Finances: Well-managed Enterprise Funds should aspire to maintaining a fund balance equivalent to one year of expenditures, to manage the regular fluctuations of building cycles. The current projected fund balance at the end of FY17 equates to 30% of the last year's expenditures. The projected balance for the end of FY 18 would equate to 24%.
- Strategy: Implementing recommendations to positively impact the customer service experience of Berkeley clients will require a comprehensive operational strategy.
- Management: Policies, procedures, and local code interpretations should be captured in manuals and publications, to help achieve consistency in the information provided by staff and the expectations created among customers.

The Zucker systems report also observed that Berkeley's processes are in many ways reflective of the values the city has chosen to prioritize, including transparency and public review during the application process, and achieving sustainability and community benefits goals at a project's completion. While lauding the demonstrated commitment to such values, Zucker also points out that such processes will by their nature tend to make project approval timelines lengthier than those in most other cities.

**FIRST TIER RECOMMENDATIONS OVER NEXT 12 MONTHS**

The Planning Department convened an internal working group to review the draft Zucker recommendations and to develop a proposed work plan for implementation. The work plan includes recommendations which were deemed most immediately important, were practical and achievable, and which were within the capacity of Planning to implement within its resources (and without significant resources from other City departments). The working group honed the original 152 recommendations from Zucker Systems down to a set of 32 first tier recommendations, with rough implementation timelines and estimates of staff time required (expressed in FTEs/month which would need to be reassigned from other duties). The outline of this proposed implementation workplan is included as **Attachment 2** to this report.

Taken in total, these recommendations are meant to help provide Berkeley customers with a clear understanding of the approval processes and expected timelines, and to better position staff to deliver on those timelines. Revisions will be made to the Zoning Ordinance to add clarity for customers and staff, written materials will be revamped for ease of understanding and relevance, and manuals and training on City policies, procedures, and code interpretations will be prioritized to achieve consistency of practice at all staff levels. Improvements to configuration and training on the Accela permitting software will be prioritized to ensure the technology is being used to its highest abilities.

In short, successful implementation of the first tier recommendations will provide customers with a much clearer path to understanding the project approval process and timeline, and will better position staff to meet those expectations.

The following are the 32 recommendations Planning proposes to implement over the next 12 months, grouped into topic areas:

Job Descriptions and Roles:

- Staff Directory: Create a directory listing all staff roles, embedded into a new Organization Chart. *Facilitates internal communication within Planning and between City departments.*
- PSC Management: Have PSC Coordinator focus on management tasks and not take on direct PSC counter duties. *Addresses staffing challenges with more analysis and long-term solutions, rather than only immediate stop-gap responses.*
- Zoning Interpretation: Designate a single Zoning Administrator. *Will make Zoning interpretations consistent for all customers regardless of which Planner answers their questions.*

- Land Use Management: Assign two Principle Planners to management tasks rather than specific projects. *Focus on developing staff skills and consistency of practice to improve overall Land Use functioning for customers.*
- Assess Staff Resources: Conduct detailed analysis to assess available resources. *Prerequisite to allow new baseline expectations of application processing times to be established.*

#### Establish and Report on Performance Standards:

- Performance Standards: Set performance standards for every staff position; use in frequent one-on-one check-ins. *Meaningful and regular performance criteria help create shared management and staff expectations for work quality and quantity.*
- Plan Check Times: Provide accurate plan check time estimates, and prominently post them for all clients. *Provide customers with reliable application review time expectations and promote accountability of staff to those timelines.*
- PSC Performance: Establish PSC-wide performance standards. *Set goals for each customer service increment—counter visits, phone calls, plan intake and review, etc.—and evaluate PSC performance by those standards.*
- Customer Time Spent: Use Nemo-Q (or alternate) to reliably measure customer time spent on every PSC visit. *Measure time customer spent on each PSC visit, so adequate staff resources can be assessed and directed to minimize customer wait times.*
- Land Use Performance: Set performance standards for all LUP reviews. *Set and monitor timelines for functions in staff's control, decreasing the time during which applicants must wait for staff responses.*

#### Practices:

- Customer Feedback: Inform staff of results from all customer survey results, good and bad. *Sharing all customer feedback avoids tendency to focus only on negatives or immediate crises, and promotes staff improvement.*
- Timely Communication: Return all phone calls and emails within 24/48 hours. *Customers perceive promptness in responses as a key indicator of service quality.*
- Plan Check Backlog: Work to reduce plan check backlog, then set reliable baselines. *A concerted effort to catch up on lagging plan checks allows new performance timeline expectations to be set, monitored, and achieved for customers.*
- Minor Plan Reviews: Assign to PSC Plans Examiner. *Provides faster review for clients with simple projects, and assigns more complicated reviews to the best qualified staff.*
- 30-day Review compliance: Complete routine 30-day reviews earlier than very end of allowable timeline. *Demonstrates to customers that department is*

*committed to responses as quickly as feasible rather than merely within statutory requirements.*

- AUP timelines: Reduce AUP process timelines significantly; meet new goals 90% of the time. *Using Accela and internal process mapping, adapts existing Planning resources to completing AUPs more quickly, and monitors and reports performance for customers to see positive results.*
- Sign/Awning Reviews: Reduce sign/awning reviews by 10 working days. *Provide tangible improvement to customer concerns about lengthy process.*
- Staff-level Design Review: Reduce staff design reviews by 15 working days. *Provide tangible improvement to customer concerns about lengthy process.*

#### Submittals:

- Minimum Application Submittals: Update minimum submittal checklist for Building + Safety applications. *Provide customers with clear understanding of what applications must include, so they can submit without undue time spent or unnecessary visits.*
- Minimum Application Submittals: Update minimum submittal checklist for Land Use applications. *Provide customers with clear understanding of what applications must include, so they can submit without undue time spent or unnecessary visits.*
- Require Complete Applications: Accept only complete applications (per updated submittal checklist) for Building + Safety. *Once expectations are clearly set, allows staff resources to focus on customers who have submitted complete applications rather than those who have not.*
- Require Complete Applications: Accept only complete applications (per updated submittal checklist) for Land Use. *Once expectations are clearly set, allows staff resources to focus on customers who have submitted complete applications rather than those who have not.*

#### Written Materials:

- Customer Handouts: Revise/update all PSC handouts to be more clear and germane, and make them easily available. *Provide customers with clear and accessible resources to learn about specific building permit application requirements for themselves.*
- Customer Handouts: Revise/update all Land Use handouts to be more clear and germane, and make them easily available. *Provide customers with clear and accessible resources to learn about specific Land Use application requirements for themselves.*
- Building Code interpretations: Improve training on Building Code interpretations for all inspectors and PSC staff, to ensure consistency of application. *Standardizes local building code interpretation practices so that all customers get the same answers from every plans examiner and inspector.*

- Land Use Manuals: Create manual of policies, procedures, and interpretations for all Land Use staff. *Makes clearer to both staff and customers how each step of an application review process should occur, and promotes consistency of practices among all Planners.*

#### Zoning Ordinance:

- Consultant: Guide consultant on priorities for simplification of the Zoning Ordinance. *Unwinds layers of complexity in ZO from numerous changes over time, to resolve conflicting standards and to provide clear guidelines for customers.*
- AUPs: Clarify criteria for granting AUPs for consistency. *Making criteria more specific and clear helps address current lack of consistency experienced by customers in AUP decision-making.*

#### Other:

- Implementation Plan: Agree with City Manager on Customer Service implementation plan. *Ensures top-level City commitment to customer service priorities, including improved timelines and proper resource allocation.*
- Land Use Workplan: Create Annual Land Use Division workplan, including resources needed for customer service improvements and Council referral responses. *Allows Division to strategically plan how to best use existing resources for highest priorities.*
- Accela training: Formalize Accela user training program and make it ongoing. *Accela's potential for tracking and improving the customer experience will only be fully realized once regular training is prioritized.*
- Accela for Land Use: Require use of Accela by Land Use/Projects staff for coordination and record keeping. *Eliminating use of redundant legacy systems will free up staff resources for customer priorities, and allow centralized customer application histories to be tracked for improved performance.*

The implementation phasing shown in **Attachment 2** was crafted to balance the staff resources required over time. Generally speaking, the work plan assumes that most of one staff person's time in the Director's Office will be dedicated to coordinating implementation of the customer service improvements. The work plan will also require time from division-level staff to assess the requirements for each recommendation, then the work to implement them, including time needed for training groups of staff in new procedures and expectations.

Some of the recommendations have already been implemented, and others have begun, in the interest of creating momentum for this department-wide effort. Notably, some of the key assignments of management staff time called for by Zucker have been put into place.

Over the long term, both Planning staff and the Zucker Systems consultants believe that the efficiencies achieved through the customer service improvements will more than compensate for the staff time resources allocated to reach that point. However, since Planning does not propose to add any new staff to directly implement these recommendations, over the short term there will remain competition for the finite staff resources available.

Planning also endorses the other recommendations made by Zucker Systems. The prioritization the 32 first tier recommendations shown above is not meant to diminish the value of the other 120, which Planning would propose to implement in the second phase, starting in the latter half of 2018. Many of those recommendations go beyond the work of Planning staff only, and would require additional coordination and resource allocation from other City departments like Human Resources, Information Technology, Finance, Public Works, and Fire. Planning would work with the City Manager to convene managers in all relevant departments to strategize ways to secure the needed resources without overly burdening the core functions of those entities.

#### **PLANNING DEPARTMENT RESOURCES**

The Planning and Development Department comprises 88.54 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) staff positions across five divisions, most of which are funded through fees for permit and development services collected in Permit Service Center Enterprise Fund #833. Per state law, fee revenues may only be used for the costs of the services provided, and any excess revenues received may only be used for the same purposes for which the fees were levied.

Planning fiscal staff estimate that Fund 833 will end FY 2017 with a positive cumulative fund balance of roughly \$5.5 million, down significantly from the \$11.5 million balance at the end of FY 2016, in large part from expenses related to the build-out of 1947 Center Street for Planning's office relocation. Substantial year-to-year fluctuations in building and development fee revenues are characteristic of municipal planning and development funds, as they reflect the cyclical nature of the construction industry. For comparison, the annual Fund 833 balance has been negative (expenses exceeding revenues) in 14 of the 21 years the City of Berkeley has maintained that Fund.

#### **BACKGROUND**

Previous reports and referrals which helped the Planning department craft the scope of the Zucker Systems review included:

- City Auditor's report from March 25, 2014, entitled "Construction Permits – Monitor Performance and Fee Assessments to Ensure Excellent and Equitable Customer Service," available at

[http://www.cityofberkeley.info/Clerk/City\\_Council/2014/03\\_Mar/Documents/2014-03-25\\_Item\\_27\\_Audit\\_Construction\\_Permits.aspx](http://www.cityofberkeley.info/Clerk/City_Council/2014/03_Mar/Documents/2014-03-25_Item_27_Audit_Construction_Permits.aspx)

- Planning staff report from January 26, 2016 recommending a process to change the Zoning Ordinance for clarity, consistency and improved customer service, available at [http://www.cityofberkeley.info/Clerk/City\\_Council/2014/03\\_Mar/Documents/2014-03-25\\_Item\\_27\\_Audit\\_Construction\\_Permits.aspx](http://www.cityofberkeley.info/Clerk/City_Council/2014/03_Mar/Documents/2014-03-25_Item_27_Audit_Construction_Permits.aspx)
- Referral from the City Council on July 19, 2016, authored by then-Councilmember Arreguin, recommending additional customer service enhancements to operations of the Permit Service Center, available at [http://records.cityofberkeley.info/Agenda/Documents/ViewDocument/7\\_19\\_2016%3B%20CLK%20-%20Report%20\(Public\)%3B%20DISTRICT%204%3B%20%3B%20REGULAR%3B%20PERMIT%20SERVIC.pdf?meetingId=193&documentType=Agenda&itemId=2548&publishId=7261&isSection=false](http://records.cityofberkeley.info/Agenda/Documents/ViewDocument/7_19_2016%3B%20CLK%20-%20Report%20(Public)%3B%20DISTRICT%204%3B%20%3B%20REGULAR%3B%20PERMIT%20SERVIC.pdf?meetingId=193&documentType=Agenda&itemId=2548&publishId=7261&isSection=false)

#### ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

There are no direct impacts to Environmental Sustainability which have been identified in this Worksession report. Indirectly, improved efficiency in the building permit and land use application processes, including greater migration to all-electronic plan reviews by multiple City departments, will make a positive contribution to achieving Berkeley's sustainability goals.

#### POSSIBLE FUTURE ACTION

- A number of the process changes recommended by Zucker Systems, including clarified criteria for AUPs and a range of recommended Zoning Ordinance revisions, would require consideration by the Planning Commission and approval from the City Council.
- A comprehensive fee study to recalibrate all Planning and Development Department fees, as recommended by Zucker Systems and previously discussed at Council, would require a consultant contract allocation.
- Steps to create a stable reserve balance in the PSC Enterprise Fund #833, possibly including reimbursement for costs incurred by the 1947 Center Street improvements and General Fund investment in Land Use Policy development, would also require future City Council action.

#### FISCAL IMPACTS OF POSSIBLE FUTURE ACTION

Revisions to the Zoning Ordinance would have minimal financial impact beyond staff time and previously allocated consultant costs. A comprehensive Planning fee study



would require consultant expenditures of several hundred thousand dollars. Changes to Fund #833 as briefly summarized above would have a potentially significant fiscal impacts, depending on the targeted reserve level and any new General Fund allocations.

CONTACT PERSONS

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Attachment 1: Final Customer Service Assessment from Zucker Systems

Attachment 2: Timeline for First Priority Recommendations

Zucker Rec #	Recommendation	Division	Effort	MONTH														
				0	July '17	Aug '17	Sept '17	Oct '17	Nov '17	Dec '17	Jan '18	Feb '18	Mar '18	Apr '18	May '18	Jun '18	Jul-Dec '18	
<u>Job Descriptions and Roles</u>																		
2	Directory of roles (including Org Chart)	Mgmt	C															
39	PSC Coordinator focus on Management	BSD	E	DONE														
80	Designate Zoning Administrator	Mgmt	E	DONE														
83	2 Principal Planners focus on Management	LUP	C															
94	Detailed staff analysis to assess resources	Mgmt	C															
<u>Performance Standards</u>																		
12, 13	Set performance standards for all positions; use in frequent check-ins	All	D															
29	Provide accurate plan check time estimates; post for all clients	BSD	A															
43	Establish PSC-wide performance standards	BSD	C															
44	Use Nemo-Q (or alternate) to reliably measure customer time spent	BSD	A															
93	Set performance standards for all LUP reviews	LUP	D	DONE														
<u>Practices</u>																		
10	Provide feedback to staff on customer survey results	All	E															
26	Return all phone calls and emails within 24/48 hours	All	B															
49	Work to reduce plan check backlog, then set reliable baselines	BSD	B															
50	Assign minor plan reviews to PSC Plans Examiner	BSD	D	DONE														
95	Complete routine 30-day reviews earlier	LUP	C															
103	Reduce AUP process timelines significantly; meet new goals 90% of the time	LUP	A															
110	Reduce sign/awning reviews by 10 working days	LUP	C															
111	Reduce staff design reviews by 15 working days (currently 30-90 days)		C															
<u>Submittals</u>																		
65a	Update minimum submittal checklist--BSD	BSD	C															
65b	Update minimum submittal checklist--LUP	LUP	C	BEGUN														
66	Accept only complete applications--BSD	BSD	C															
85	Accept only complete applications--LUP	LUP	D															
<u>Written Documents</u>																		
3a	Revise/update all PSC handouts (and make more available)	BSD	A	BEGUN														
3b	Revise/update all LUP handouts (and make more available)	LUP	A															
46	Improve training on Building Code interpretations to ensure consistency	BSD	B															
84, 90	Create Land Use manual of policies, procedures, interpretations	LUP	A															
<u>Zoning Ordinance revisions</u>																		
78	Work with consultant to simplify Zoning Ordinance	LUP	A	BEGUN														
100	Clarify criteria for granting AUPS	LUP	B	BEGUN														
<u>Other</u>																		
1	Agree with City Manager on Customer Service implementation plan	Mgmt	C															
77	Create Annual LUP Workplan	LUP	A															
126	Formalize Accela user training program	All	A															
138	Use Accela by LUP/Projects staff; eliminate duplicative spreadsheets	LUP	A															

Level of Effort Code:

A

B

C

D

E

High: Staff time intensive AND lengthy implementation time frame

Moderate: Either staff time intensive, OR lengthy implementation time frame

Low: Shorter, more simple tasks

Zucker # Recommendation		Level of Effort	Timeline, in months							
					Previous	July-Sep '18	Oct-Dec '18	Jan-Mar '19	Apr-Jun '19	Jul-Dec '19
1.	Agree on an implementation plan	DONE			DONE					
<b>Communication</b>										
2.	Create a staff directory of roles	DONE			DONE					
3.	Revise the handouts	C	3				C			
4.	Create Internal newsletter	DONE			DONE					
5.	IT to provide periodic up-dates on Accela improvements	B	12+			B	B	B	B	B
6.	Repeat customer survey bi-annually	C	6				C	C		
7.	Revise customer survey forms	C	6		C	C				
8.	Survey forms available at all counters	C	6				C	C		
9.	Send survey forms after project completion	C	6					C	C	
10.	Provide feedback to staff on survey results	E	3		E			E		E
11.	Achieve an 85% positive on survey forms	B	12+			B	B	B	B	B
26.	Return all phone calls and emails within 48-72 hours	B	6		B	B		B		
27.	Make certain website information is accurate at all times	C	6					C	C	
32.	Explain to customers any delay in service	DONE			DONE					
33.	Staff to perform other tasks while computers are loading data	DONE			DONE					
34.	Audit work of outside plan review consultants	DONE			DONE					
65.	Update minimum submittal checklist	DONE			DONE					
66.	Accept only complete plans	DONE			DONE					
73.	Move link for 2015 Housing Element to General Plan web page	DONE			DONE					
85.	Require complete applications	DONE			DONE					
89.	Provide Expedited processes for al Land Use Processes	DONE			DONE					
92.	Use project manager/case manager system	A	12+			A	A	A	A	A
98.	Convert Zoning Project Submittal handouts to several handouts	C	3				C			

Zucker #	Recommendation	Level of Effort	Timeline, in months							
					Previous	July-Sep '18	Oct-Dec '18	Jan-Mar '19	Apr-Jun '19	Jul-Dec '19

**Staff Development**

12.	Establish performance standards for all staff positions (Annual)	A	12+		A	A	A	A	A	A
13.	Employee evaluations to be timely and useful (Aggregate all evals)	B	12+		B	B	B	B	B	B
14.	Provide periodic evaluation of staff performance	A	12+		A	A	A	A	A	A
15.	Use employee evaluation results for training sessions (Aggregate all evals)	B	12+		B	B	B	B	B	B
29.	Provide accurate estimates of plan check times	DONE			DONE					
31.	Monitor front counter staff	DONE			DONE					
35.	Complete review of Building Division job descriptions	DONE			DONE					
36.	Use Certified Permit Technicians for front counter	DONE			DONE					
37.	Assign more supervisor duties to Senior Building Plans Examiner	DONE			DONE					
39.	Permit Services Center Coordinator to focus on management issues	DONE			DONE					
43.	Adopt new Permit Services Center Performance Standards	DONE			DONE					
44.	Use NEMO-Q tracking system	A	6					A	A	
49.	Eliminate current plan check backlog	DONE			DONE					
55.	Track required certificates for staff	DONE			DONE					
58.	Monitor attendance at weekly training sessions	DONE			DONE					
59.	Periodically attend meetings of regional Building Officials	DONE			DONE					
76.	Brief staff on state legislative changes	DONE			DONE					
118.	Have one staff member with extensive expertise in historic preservation	DONE			DONE					
152.	Hold group meeting to discuss Engineering issues	DONE			DONE					
153.	Land Use Planning staff to discuss issues	DONE			DONE					
154.	Close communication gaps	DONE			DONE					

**Clarity of Regulatory Framework**

46.	Develop interpretations manual	DONE			DONE					
78.	Work with zoning consultant to simplify code	A	12+		A	A	A	A	A	A
80.	Designate Zoning Administrator position	DONE			DONE					

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**Year 2 Implementation Timeline**

Attachment 3

Zucker #	Recommendation	Level of Effort	Timeline, in months		Previous	July-Sep '18	Oct-Dec '18	Jan-Mar '19	Apr-Jun '19	Jul-Dec '19
84.	Create policy and procedures manual	A	12+		A	A	A	A	A	A
90.	Create interpretation manual	A	12+		A	A	A	A	A	A
100.	Clarify criteria for granting Administrative Use Permits	A	12+		A	A	A	A	A	A
101.	Create list of Ordinance changes for Zoning Ordinance consultant	DONE			DONE					
105.	Formalize attendance list for the Pre-Application meetings	DONE			DONE					

**Resource Management and Performance Standards**

16.	Update Land Use fee study	B	12			B	B	B	B	
50.	Assign minor plan reviews to the PSC Plans Examiner	DONE			DONE					
51.	Expand use of outside consultants	DONE			DONE					
67.	Add charges for numerous resubmittals	DONE			DONE					
68.	Clarify Public Works reporting arrangements for colocated staff	DONE			DONE					
72.	Reevaluate need to retype General Plan	DONE			DONE					
74.	Set procedures to respond to City Council and Planning Commission mandates	DONE			DONE					
75.	Track time spend on City Council mandates	C	6				C	C		
77.	Create Annual Work Plan	DONE			DONE					
79.	Establish calendar for zoning ordinance updates	DONE			DONE					
81.	Hire staff to organize land use files.	A	12+		A	A	A	A	A	A
82.	Appoint a non-rotating Acting Land Use Planning Manager	DONE			DONE					
83.	Two Principal Planners to focus on management needs and not directly manager any projects	A	12			A	A	A	A	
93.	Improve specific performance results for all Land Use reviews	A	6					A	A	
94.	Complete detailed staffing analysis	B	9					B	B	B
95.	Complete 30-day reviews early in the process	C	9		C	C	C			
96.	Complete 90% of Zoning Certificates for business licenses in one day	DONE			DONE					
102.	Change Administrative Use Permit process as outlined	A	12+		A	A	A	A	A	A

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**Year 2 Implementation Timeline**

Attachment 3

Zucker #	Recommendation	Level of Effort	Timeline, in months		Previous	July-Sep '18	Oct-Dec '18	Jan-Mar '19	Apr-Jun '19	Jul-Dec '19
103.	Improve performance times for Land Use AUP applications	A	12+		A	A	A	A	A	A
108.	Add staff for the Design Review Process	DONE			DONE					
110.	Complete sign/awning design reviews in 10 working days	A	12		A	A	A			
111.	Complete staff design reviews within 15 days	A	12		A	A	A			
117.	Take pro-active action on Potential Initiations list	DONE			DONE					
119.	All planners working on Landmark issues to report to the same Principal Planner	DONE			DONE					

**Technology**

60.	Improve Business License program	B	6				B	B		
61.	Investigate digital plan review program	DONE			DONE					
63.	Grant Fire Prevention Bureau Accela access	DONE			DONE					
64.	Fire Marshal to use Accela to track and report	C	6					C	C	
69.	Public Works to be integrated into Accela system	C	6					C	C	
70.	Public Works to use Accela to track and report	C	6					C	C	
127.	Maintain collaborative working relations between IT and P&D	C	12		C	C	C	C	C	C
128.	Formalize Accela user training program	A	12		A	A	A	A	A	
129.	Train applicants on use of online applications	C	6		C	C	C			
138.	Mandatory Accela training for all relevant new staff members	A	12		A	A	A	A	A	A
139.	Find permanent solution to electronic plan checking	DONE			DONE					
141.	Large format monitor	DONE			DONE					
149.	Assign high performance workstations to power users	DONE			DONE					

A	High: Staff time intensive AND lengthy implementation time frame
B	
C	Moderate: Either staff time intensive, OR lengthy implementation time frame
D	
E	Low: Shorter, more simple tasks