



**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Deschutes County Board of Commissioners  
Tom Anderson, County Administrator

**FROM:** Nick Lelack, AICP, Director  
Sherri Pinner, Sr. Management Analyst

**DATE:** August 11, 2021

**SUBJECT:** Community Development Building Safety and Environmental Soils Staffing Request

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**I. SUMMARY**

The purpose of this memorandum is to request the addition of two (2) FTEs and two (2) lead pay designations to meet significantly growing business demands. Community Development Department (CDD) acknowledges the increase of two new FTE's approved last March for the Building Safety & Electrical Division to meet business needs. However, continued growth (discussed below) and the adoption of SB 391 (rural ADU legislation) into law causes the need to further add to staff to meet business demands. During the FY 22 budget process, there was a brief discussion regarding the need for additional FTE in Environmental Soils with a final determination and request forthcoming.

Specifically, the Department proposes to:

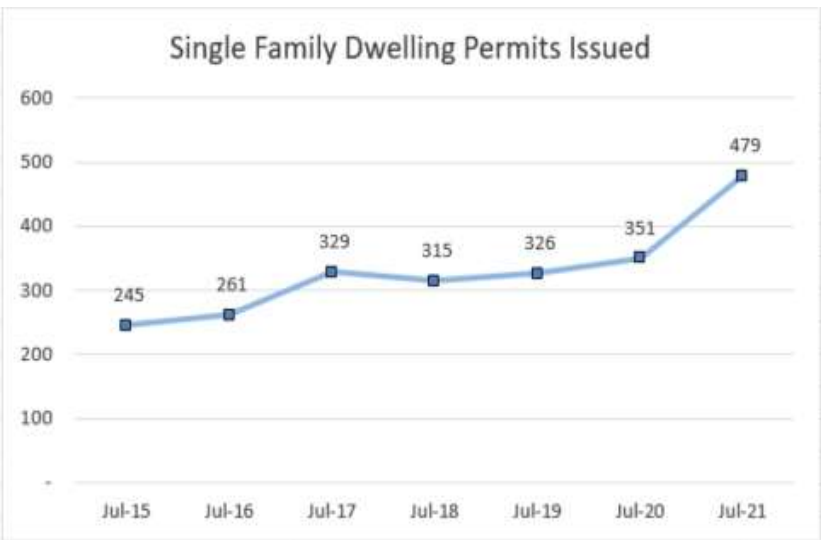
- **Building Safety Division.**
  - Add one (1) full time regular building safety inspector with lead pay (5%) to perform construction plan reviews to ensure compliance with state statutes, state building codes and national standards. The new FTE is critical to reducing the plan review turnaround time with both increasing volumes and increasingly complex plan reviews. Additionally, this position would assist management with staffing assignments, coordination and distribution of plan review assignment, code interpretations, respond to customers for plan review related issues, and attend pre-application meetings, as needed.
  - Add lead pay (5%) to an existing building safety field inspector to assist management with staffing assignments and coordination and distribution of daily inspections. Additional responsibilities include code interpretations, respond to customers for inspection related issues, perform special inspections, and attend pre-application meetings, as needed.

- **Environmental Soils Division.** Add one (1) full time regular environmental health specialist to perform inspection and regulate on-site septic systems to assure compliance with state rules and monitor environmental factors for public health and resource protection. One environmental health specialist 2 staff member reduced her work schedule to 80% time to meet personal needs. This additional staff will both cover that 20% and address the anticipated large number of site evaluation applications forthcoming prior to and during the implementation of SB 391.

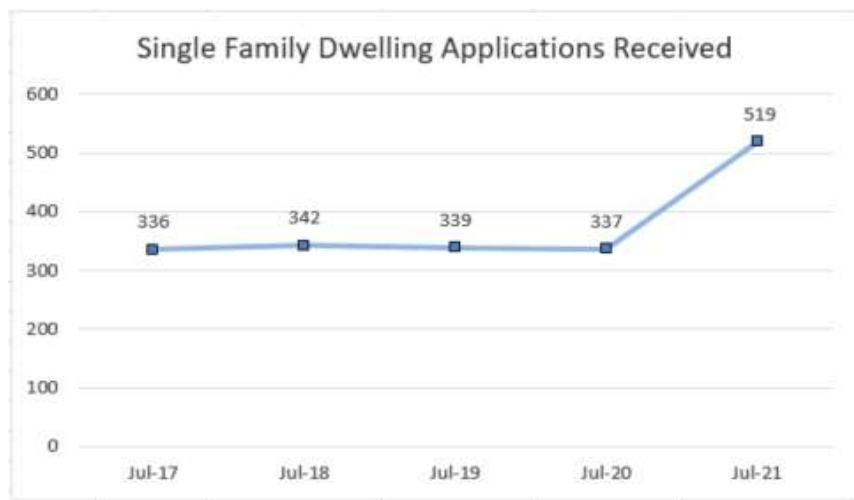
**II. BUILDING SAFETY PERMIT VOLUMES AND CUSTOMER INTERACTIONS**

CDD continues to experience an increase in building permit issuance and applications. Since January 2021, CDD has issued 36.5% more single family dwelling (SFD) permits and received 54% more SFD applications when compared to the same period in 2020. Within the next 3 to 5 years, development in Newberry Neighborhood and Sisters Forest Service property will generate an estimated 500+ new structures, including commercial/industrial, rural ADU legislation will be implemented in 2022, Caldera II will develop an estimated 500+ new structures and Thornburg Resort continues to make progress with development approval(s).

The graph below highlights SFD permits issued between January and July for the past seven (7) calendar years.



The graph below represents SFD applications received between January and July for the past five (5) calendar years.



**Challenges:**

- Division is operating beyond capacity with staff unable to meet plan review performance measures. There are approximately 190 submitted plans pending review. Turnaround times are not close to meeting performance measures, causing widespread challenges for scheduling construction projects.
- No seasonal fluctuations over the past few years and increased business volume in the cities of Sisters and La Pine.
- Building Safety involvement and participation in a record number of code enforcement cases and highly complex violations.

**CDD Building Safety & Electrical Division requests:**

- A) The addition of one (1) full time regular building safety inspector with lead pay to achieve the following results:
  - Perform construction plan reviews to ensure compliance with state statutes, state building codes and national standards.
  - Provide additional lead support to the Building Official and Assistant Building Official.
  - Reduce plan review turnaround times.
- B) The addition of lead pay to one (1) existing full time regular building safety field inspector to achieve the following results:
  - Perform consultation and inspections to ensure compliance with state statutes, state building codes and national standards.
  - Provide additional lead support to the Building Official and Assistant Building Official.

### III. ENVIRONMENTAL SOILS PERMIT VOLUMES AND CUSTOMER INTERACTIONS

CDD continues to experience an increase in environmental soils applications. Since January 2021, Environmental Soils has experienced an overall increase of 22% in applications received with site evaluations increasing 38.5% when compared to the same period in 2020. Site evaluations are a leading indicator of future development and it's worth noting several site evaluation applications pertain to siting future accessory dwelling units have been received. Another factor to consider is the criteria for meeting state certification requirements for environmental health specialist certification. These positions require specialized educational requirements. It has been CDD's experience that it is difficult to find applicants that meet all certification requirements, therefore, it is likely the next candidate will be hired as a "trainee" while certification requirements can be met.

#### Challenges

- Division is operating at capacity with staff unable to regularly take time away from the office.
- Sites are more technical in nature requiring multiple site visits with more denials presented to the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) for variance.
- No seasonal fluctuations over the past few years and increased business volume in the rural county and City of La Pine.
- Environmental soils involvement and participation in a record number of code enforcement cases and highly complex violations.
- Projects such as the Terrebonne Feasibility Study and Groundwater Protection require a significant amount of time and focus.
- Staff is anticipating a large number of site evaluations prior to and during the implementation of SB 391.

The graph below highlights site evaluation applications received between January and July for the past seven (7) calendar years.



CDD Environmental Soils Division requests:

- A) The addition of one (1) full time regular environmental health specialist to achieve the following results:
- Perform septic evaluation and inspection(s) and regulate on-site septic systems to assure compliance with state rules and monitor environmental factors for public health and resource protection.

#### **IV. FINANCIAL IMPACT**

The total cost of the new building safety plans examiner position plus lead pay designation(s) is estimated at \$121,000 to cover the fully loaded annual rate, lead pay(s) and equipment. Building fees will fully fund the position and lead pay.

The total cost of the new environmental health specialist is estimated at \$88,500 to cover the fully loaded annual rate and equipment. Environmental Soils fees will fully fund this position.

#### **V. BOARD DIRECTION**

1. Approve/deny the addition of one (1) building safety inspector plus lead pay for plan review.
2. Approve/deny the addition of lead pay designation for one (1) building safety field inspector for consultation and inspection.
3. Approve/deny the addition of one (1) environmental health specialist to perform inspections and regulate septic systems.