

Development Review Service Analysis

Prosper, Texas

April 7, 2022



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1. Introduction and Executive Summary

The Matrix Consulting Group (Matrix) was retained by the Town of Prosper in the summer of 2021 to update their development services customer survey from 2017. The customer survey highlighted several changes related to the services provided by the Town. In December 2021, the Town contracted with the Matrix Consulting Group to conduct a deeper dive into their development review, permitting, and inspection operations. This subsequent study focused on the following areas:

- Review of the application review process.
- Auditing of prior application materials to understand the quality of application and staff's approach to providing feedback and reviews.
- Comparison of the Town's development review practices to industry best practices.
- Comparison of the Town's adopted performance metrics to other high performing communities.

Matrix conducted interviews with staff from Building Inspection, Engineering, Fire Marshal Office, Planning, and Parks. The intent of the interviews was to develop an understanding of current process, policies, and procedures. At the conclusion of interviews, staff provided a random sampling of application materials from 2021 for the project team to review. Upon review of the application materials, Matrix conducted a best management practices assessment and developed recommendations to improve the Town's development review processes, technology, and website.

This study includes a detailed evaluation of current development review and related operations and a roadmap to enhance services, including the identification of process and technology improvements.

1. Key Strengths of the Development Process

While many of this report's recommendations focus on improvement opportunities, it is important to highlight strengths of the organization's development review functions and processes, which include:

- Staff provides consistent review comments and adequate information for the applicant to correct their application.
- Processes are generally efficient although the lack of a robust permitting system impacts some operational efficiencies and collaboration between review teams.

- Adopted performance metrics align with or exceed many other North Texas communities.
- Development review departmental webpages provide very detailed development review information. This includes detailed submittal requirements and applicable checklists.
- Building Inspections may be scheduled until 7 a.m. the day of inspection.
- The Town has transitioned to digital application submittals and reviews. Applications are submitted via email.
- A new permitting software system will be implemented in 2022. The system will improve operational efficiency for staff. An online portal will help streamline the process for applicants.

4. Summary of Recommendations

Based on Matrix's assessment and analysis, there are several recommendations related to the process, technology, and the Town's website. All recommendations are summarized below by prioritization level and implementation time frame. Timelines for implementation include the following:

- Winter (December 21 – March 18)
- Spring (March 19 – June 19)
- Summer (June 20 – September 21)
- Fall (September 22 – December)

The following table summarizes the recommendations made in this report.

Rec.#	Recommendation	Priority	Implementation Season
2	An application should be checked for completeness before being accepted. Incomplete applications should be rejected and returned with notes indicating missing components.	High	Spring 2022
5	Applicant should submit a cover sheet with the resubmittal to outline any design changes made to plan not previously shown or commented on.	High	Spring 2022
7	A standardized and consistent approach to reviewing calculations should be provided by all reviewers. If calculations are deemed acceptable then they should not be included on any returned or approved application materials.	High	Spring 2022

Rec.#	Recommendation	Priority	Implementation Season
30	Development staff contact information should be provided in a consistent format on each departmental webpage. Information should include name, title, email address, and phone number.	Medium	Spring 2022
8	The reviewer contact information should be included on the returned plan set and other materials. The reviewer will serve as the point of contact for their department or function.	Low	Spring 2022
1	All applications should include a completed and signed checklist of required application materials. If checklist is missing the application will be deemed incomplete.	High	Summer 2022
9	A policy should be established that, after the third review, an applicant must meet with staff prior to resubmittal. An exception can be made in cases where only very minor modifications are needed.	High	Summer 2022
19	Create a development review authority matrix that includes applicable review departments and decision-making authority by application type.	High	Summer 2022
27	Appoint a Development and Infrastructure Services staff member to serve as the software administrator and internal reference for all permitting software issues.	High	Summer 2022
3	All review comments should be provided in the same color for consistency.	Low	Summer 2022
14	Create tiered performance metrics for high volume applicants.	High	Fall 2022
15	A single department should be responsible for zoning compliance review. Currently Building Inspections handle residential applications while sharing commercial applications with Planning.	High	Fall 2022
20	Develop a user guide and frequently asked questions brochure for the new software system.	High	Fall 2022
22	Develop a training program for the public on how to use the online capabilities of the system to submit applications, pay fees, check application status, review comments, and request inspections.	High	Fall 2022

Rec.#	Recommendation	Priority	Implementation Season
6	Review comments should be standardized and consistent in their format and approach. Specific standards/ordinance/code should be referenced in the comment, especially if the code is a locally adopted variation or deviates from industry norm.	Medium	Fall 2022
29	Establish a consistent approach to including application overview information - either within the application PDF or as a separate document.	Medium	Fall 2022
18	The Development Guide should be expanded to all include all development applications versus primarily focusing on Planning applications.	High	Winter 2022 / 2023
4	Comments made by reviewers should be consolidated into a checklist that is provided to the applicant for use during the resubmittal process. The checklist should be returned when the application is resubmitted.	High	Winter 2022 / 2023
21	Provide contact information in the user guide, brochure, and on the Town's website for individuals who can assist the public with using the online system.	High	Winter 2022 / 2023
23	Establish an internal training program for new hire software orientation.	High	Winter 2022 / 2023
24	Ensure that staff receive ongoing training for the software as new updates and features are implemented.	High	Winter 2022 / 2023
28	Create a more robust and centralized development review webpage.	High	Winter 2022 / 2023
33	Designate an individual staff member from each development review department to maintain their respective webpage.	High	Winter 2022 / 2023
32	Each department's webpage should provide an overview of the processes that it manages.	Medium	Winter 2022 / 2023
34	Establish a consistent approach to providing development information links on departmental webpages. Include a consistent depth of information on the primary information page and provide links to secondary sources.	Medium	Winter 2022 / 2023

Rec.#	Recommendation	Priority	Implementation Season
35	All development webpages should have a link to take the user back to the centralized development webpage.	Medium	Winter 2022 / 2023
31	The fee schedule should be included on all development review departmental webpages.	Low	Winter 2022 / 2023
10	An additional review fee should be established for cases in which an application is submitted more than three times. The fee should be charged for every resubmittal that occurs after the third attempt.	High	Spring 2023
11	The fee schedule should be updated and reflect established cost recover goals for Building Inspection, Planning, Engineering, and Parks/Landscape.	High	Spring 2023
13	Separate processing times for residential new construction (single family) and single family remodel/renovation applications. Establish a processing timeline of 5 business days for single family remodel/renovation applications.	Medium	Spring 2023
16	Upon implementation of the new permitting software system, create workflow process diagrams for key applications including external and internal processes. Flowcharts should be incorporated into the Development Guide.	Medium	Spring 2023
12	Revise the residential accessory use permit application resubmittal to a five day review timeline versus the current three day turnaround.	Low	Spring 2023
17	Managers should be provided with weekly and monthly performance reports (all disciplines) regarding application review and current processing times.	Low	Spring 2023
25	Provide training for managers on how to utilize the software system and performance metric features.	Low	Spring 2023
26	Develop weekly & monthly reports that are created automatically and distributed to management that includes workload, processing timelines, and other relevant performance metrics.	Low	Spring 2023

2. Application Audit

Town staff highlighted a concern with the quality of application materials received. One of the challenges noted by staff was some applicant's inability to address reviewer comments and compliance with adopted design standards, codes, and ordinances. The quality of applications received impacts the workload associated with each application review (initial and resubmission), as well as operational efficiency. Impacting staff's ability from conducting reviews more quickly and other tasks.

The project team requested a random sampling of application materials to understand the quality of the (re)submittals and staff's approach to providing feedback and comments. The following points summarize the applications audited:

- Building Inspection – 12 Residential Applications
- Engineering – 11 Applications
- Fire Marshal – 5 Applications
- Planning – 7 Applications

Parks and Landscape was included in the audit. Their comments were incorporated into the Planning applications.

1. Building Inspection Application Audit

Building Inspections is responsible for reviewing building permit applications. The Town primarily focuses on residential applications and outsources commercial building applications for review to Bureau Veritas. The project team reviewed a combination of accessory and single-family new construction applications.

The quality of original application submittals varied greatly for both accessory structures and new single-family construction. High and low quality applications were reviewed for both application types. The following themes were noted:

- The new single-family applications were more comprehensive and included professional site plans for all applications.
- Accessory structure applications were more likely to be incomplete and several applications did not include the appropriate site plan / lot survey. This impeded the reviewer's ability to conduct a complete review.
- Accessory structure review comments generally focused on the lack of a complete application while new single family construction comments focused on code issues.

- Single family home applications often cited the applicable code section. Accessory applications referenced an adopted policy of the Town's Building Official.
- Applications were frequently approved based on conditions noted and final acceptance during field inspection. This facilitates an expeditious approach to issuing the permit versus requiring the applicant to resubmit for minor edits that can be just as easily confirmed and approved during inspections.

Many of the applications reviewed by the project team were submitted in an incomplete state. Several of the recommendations made in the Process Chapter will help address the issues of application completeness.

Building Inspection staff were consistent in their approach to providing review comments, noting minor changes on the plan set, and providing flexibility for the contractor to correct issues in the field versus resubmitting. Staff's approach to providing comments align with prevailing practices.

2. Engineering Application Audit

A combination of application types was reviewed for Engineering. Application types included engineering site plans, preliminary/final plats, stormwater, utility, and transportation plan sets. The designer/engineer of record included both local and national engineering companies.

The quality of the engineering plan sets reviewed were sporadic and this theme was consistent regardless of the plan review type. The following key themes were noted for the application quality and staff's approach to providing feedback:

- Application checklists were used periodically by the applicant and submitted as part of the application packet.
- The depth of the information provided on the plan sets varied depending on the design engineer. Some plan sheets had too much information while others did not provide basic/standard information.
- Review comments were generally specific and clearly indicated the issue. Comment depth was generally based on the severity of the issue.
- Review comments did not generally reference the exact code/ordinance/design standard but provided enough detail for correction.
- For resubmittals, review comments primarily focused on unresolved comments. There were several notes that indicated previously missed issues. However, these were often noted on plan sheets that were difficult to read.
- Some applicants consistently leave prior issues unaddressed in their resubmittals.

- A consistent approach and level of comment detail was provided on all applications. An exception was noted in cases where the application was of poor quality. These applications were subject to more scrutiny than others and thus their review comments were much more detailed.

The review of the engineering applications shows a wide variety of application quality and depth. Some applications require more time to review than others, regardless of the depth of the information provided. Recommendations made in the Process Chapter will help address the issues of application quality and thoroughness. Staff provided a consistent approach for their comments and sufficient depth/quality for the applicant to correct the issues.

3. Fire Marshal Application Audit

The project team was provided with five applications that included reviews for public safety site access, fire sprinkler, and suppression systems. The applications reviewed by the project team included one from a national firm and four from local firms. The following themes were noted in reviewing the fire applications:

- Review staff provided detailed review comments.
- Review comments referenced the adopted code/ordinance/standards directly in the redline sections or highlighted where the designer notes for Prosper's regulations were not met. Comments were clear.
- Significant markups were provided on returned plan sets, including the calculations or measurements that staff made to ensure compliance with adopted ordinances. This approach is different than other Town reviewers.
- Several application plan sheets included contradictory information that negatively impacted the quality of submittal and increased the workload for the reviewer.
- Lack of consistency in application depth and quality was noted between one firm that included multiple application samples.
- The depth of review comments was consistent for all applications including referencing the adopted code.
- Depth of staff's review comments when compared to other review disciplines, they were much more detailed. Examples include showing respective calculation detail (pass and fail), lengthy explanation of issues, and frequently included graphics.

The review of the fire related applications shows a wide variety of application quality and consistency. There were even quality and consistency issues between applications from the same firm. However, the Town provided a consistent approach to their review

comments and referencing of the applicable ordinance/code. The Fire Marshal Office comments were generally more in depth than other Town reviewers.

4. Planning Application Audit

Planning applications included a wide variety of application types and included review comments from multiple disciplines, including Parks. Application samples were provided from both local and national firms. The following key themes were noted:

- Planning staff provided the reviewer contact information, while other departments generally did not.
- The quality of the application materials varied between applications, even between similar application types by the same firm.
- Review comments from Planning were consistent in their depth and sufficient in identifying the issue and a potential resolution.
- Review comments generally did not include references to adopted codes/ordinances. However, there were several instances where the reviewer attached adopted design standards to the marked-up application.
- Parks provided consistent depth in their review comments. Comments were adequate enough to guide the applicant in correcting the design. Parks and Landscape used green text and was the only reviewer to use a color other than red.
- Planning applications are unique in that they generally involve non-planning reviewers. The depth of review comments was inconsistent between review disciplines, but many of the planning applications may have been previously reviewed or permitted (e.g. final plat) or will have independent and more detailed review as part of a separate application in the future (e.g. infrastructure).

5. Summary of Key Themes

Upon auditing multiple applications for Building Inspections, Engineering, Fire Marshal, and Planning there were several consistent themes as outlined below:

- Application quality and the depth of information provided was inconsistent, even between similar application types by the same firm. This was the case with both national and local design professionals.
- Local design professionals had more instances where the same comment was repeated on multiple reviews.
- Town staff varied in their approach to providing comments. Reviewers were inconsistent in noting the code/ordinance/design standards in their comments.
- Staff review comments were generally specific enough for the applicant to correct the issue.

- Staff were inconsistent in their approach to providing a review of applicable calculations. Some reviewers noted calculations (pass and fail) directly on the returned plan sheets, while others simply noted compliance or inaccuracy.
- Reviewers generally focused on their specific discipline but would periodically note potential conflicts with other review areas of expertise. This was especially prominent in cases where modification may impact multiple departments.
- Parks reviewers were the only team to mark up the plans in a color other than red.
- Planning provided contact information for the reviewer, other departments did not provide this information directly on the plan sheets.
- Each review discipline provided their comments on individual sheets.

The key findings and challenges noted above will be analyzed in greater detail in the subsequent chapters.

3. Process Evaluation

This chapter analyzes the Town's development review, permitting, and inspection processes and provide recommendations to improve internal and external customer services. This chapter includes a best management practice assessment followed by analysis and recommendations.

1. Process Related Best Practice Assessment

The section evaluates the Town's development review process practices in the context of industry best and prevailing practices. The assessment is presented in a checklist format. The checklist identifies whether current practices do or do not meet the target. Descriptions for improvement opportunities are included in the last column of the table.

Best Practice / Operational Target	Meets Target (Yes/No)	Comments and Notes
Permit technicians are certified by the International Code Council (ICC).	Partial	Building Inspection Permit Technician Manager and Commercial Plans Coordinator are certified.
Permit technicians review applications for completeness at time of submittal.	Partial	Planning Tech reviews for completeness at submittal for Planning applications. Engineering site plans are not fully reviewed for completeness by Planning staff. Building Inspection conduct a completeness review at time of submittal.
Incomplete applications are rejected.	Partial	Building Inspections has recently started reviewing some applications prior to acceptance and rejecting incomplete applications.
Plans are routed only to departments for whom the project is relevant.	Yes	Applications are uploaded to a shared folder and an email notification is sent to review staff.

Best Practice / Operational Target	Meets Target (Yes/No)	Comments and Notes
Staff uses a case management approach for larger projects.	Partial	<p>Planning applications have an assigned planner that serves as application manager, but reviewers frequently communicate directly with applicant.</p> <p>Building Inspection plans examiners serve as the application manager, except for the applications that go to Bureau Veritas. The Plans Coordinator serves as the application manager for commercial applications.</p>
Applications provide sufficient evidence / documentation for staff (or the relevant approval authority) to successfully review the submittal and make a decision.	Partial	<p>Application completeness and quality vary by applicant.</p> <p>Consider conducting application completeness checks prior to acceptance and rejecting incomplete applications.</p>
Preapplication meetings are held for major projects.	Yes	
The Town provides clear and comprehensive checklists identifying all items required to be submitted for each application type.	Yes	Checklists exist but do not necessarily accompany the application submittal.
Review timelines are posted on the Town's website.	Yes	Adopted review timelines are noted. Current processing time could be provided in the future.
The Town provides application deadlines for applications that require a public meeting or hearing.	Yes	Planning has a Zoning and Development schedule calendar posted on their website.

Best Practice / Operational Target	Meets Target (Yes/No)	Comments and Notes
Expedited building plan review services are provided.	No	Expedited service is not provided. Current processing times (10 days for residential and 20 days for commercial) are robust performance metrics. Examples of expedited plan review would be 5 days for residential and 7 days for commercial applications. Research indicated few jurisdictions provide expedited service in North Texas.
Resubmittal review turnaround times are quicker than new applications.	Yes	The Town has adopted shorter turnaround times for select application types.
Adopted review timelines are met consistently.	Partial	Staff reported that they generally meet the deadlines, but due to recent workload volumes and staff vacancies there are instances where adopted timeliness were not met.
A formal internal Development Review Committee is responsible for ensuring that plans address all City requirements.	Yes	DRC is primarily used for Planning applications and meets the day before comments are due.
All review comments are incorporated into a single comment letter and distributed to applicant by project manager.	No	Prosper's approach is to mark up the plan sheets individually. The majority of review comments are provided in a single email response to the applicant. This approach works well and may continue with modifications noted in this report.
Review comments are consistent in their approach, format, and information provided.	Partial	Each department is consistent in their review comments. The depth and format of comments varies greatly between departments.

Best Practice / Operational Target	Meets Target (Yes/No)	Comments and Notes
Project review / comment letters provide reference to checklist and / or code reference.	Partial	Review staff provide comments directly on the plan sheets versus a consolidated review comment letter. Some reviewers provided reference to applicable codes, while others indicate the required changes directly.
Plans are reviewed concurrently to avoid delays.	Yes	
For re-submitted plans, reviewers focus on ensuring that comments have been addressed, not issues that should have been brought up in initial review.	Yes	The application audit found two instances where a resubmittal comment was not mentioned in the initial review. However, these plan sheets were overly complex and detailed, presenting challenges for the reviewer(s).
The Town has adopted a fee for excessive application reviews to promote compliance with adopted codes/ordinances.	No	After the 3 rd review, considering requiring the applicant to meet with staff to resolve significant issues. Excessive reviews generally occur with the 4 th and subsequent reviews.
Approval authorities for planning and zoning applications/permits are clearly stated. Simple permits are approved administratively.	Yes	Planning applications include the decision-making authority and summarize the review process.
Applicants can track their permit application on-line.	No	This feature will be included in the Town's new permitting software system.
Staff reports to the Planning & Zoning Commission and Town Council are thorough and include staff/PC recommendation.	Yes	Staff reports are a short summary of the application, staff provided options, and include comprehensive application materials and supporting documentation.

Best Practice / Operational Target	Meets Target (Yes/No)	Comments and Notes
Simple permits (e.g., basic electrical, mechanical, and plumbing permits and minor building alterations) can be issued on the spot or online with no review, subject to inspection.	Yes	When new software system is implemented, this may include automatic issuance of permit once applicable fees are paid.
Customers are given an approximate time to expect their inspector.	No	May provide an estimated time for inspection. Explore software solutions that may notify the contractor that their inspector is enroute.
Applicants can request inspections up to 5 pm on the day before. Next day inspections are available for 100% of requests.	Yes	Applicants may request an inspection until 7 a.m. on the day of inspection.
An online inspection request system is utilized to receive inspections with linkage to the permit information system.	Yes	Building inspections are requested through eTRAKiT.
Combination reviewers/ inspectors are used to reduce the need for duplicate inspections at a single project.	Yes	
Building Inspectors conduct between 15 and 18 inspections or 8 to 10 stops per day.	Yes	Staff indicated they conduct on average between 15 and 20 inspections most days.
The town charges a re-inspection fee to encourage builders to ensure work is complete and ready to inspect at time of inspection.	Yes	The option exists for re-inspection fee and inspectors have the authority to charge as needed.

Best Practice / Operational Target	Meets Target (Yes/No)	Comments and Notes
For Certificate of Occupancy Inspection all applicable inspectors complete the inspection at the same time.	No	Final inspections are scheduled and completed within two business days. Most inspections occur same day. This approach is acceptable as most jurisdictions perform them within 48 hours of request.

2. Assessment of Proposed Processing Times

The project team was asked by Town staff to analyze current plan review performance standards and compare them to other jurisdictions. The following table summarizes the current plan review performance standards for the Town of Prosper.

Plan Review Performance Standards (Business Days)

Permit Type	1 st Review	Subsequent Reviews
BUILDING INSPECTIONS		
Minor Permits: Swimming Pools, Patio Covers, Arbors, Signs, Fences, Fire Pits, Outdoor Grilling Stations, Storm Shelters, etc.	5	5
Single Family Permits: Consist of New Homes, Residential Remodels, Guest Homes, Pool Cabanas/House, Screening Walls and Retaining Walls that Require Engineering or Planning Review, etc.	10	5
Commercial Permits: Standalone Buildings, Shell Buildings, Remodels, Tenant Finish Outs, Additions, etc.	20	10
ENGINEERING		
Development: Preliminary Site Plan, Site Plan, Plats (Final/Replat/Preliminary/Amending/Conveyance)	8	4
Zoning: Rezoning, Planned Development, Specific Use Permit (SUP)	8	4
Construction Plans: All civil plans associated with residential or non-residential development	10	10
Infrastructure Plans: Offsite improvements usually proceeding development or in conjunction with development	10	10
Development Agreement Plans: Infrastructure identified on Town's Master CIP Plans being constructed by private development	10	10
Land Disturbance Permits: Individual lot grading, early grading for development, floodplain reclamation separate from development, mass tree removal, etc.	10	10
Retaining Walls Permits: Engineer support review of all retaining wall permits	5	5

Permit Type	1 st Review	Subsequent Reviews
Building Permits w/ Adjacent Floodplain and/or Drainage Easements: Engineer support review to ensure improvements in or near floodplain meet Town requirements	5	5
Miscellaneous Building Permit Review: Engineer support review of atypical circular driveways, culvert sizing, etc.	5	5
ROW Permits	5	3
Engineering Studies: Flood Studies, Traffic Analyses, Environmental, etc.	10	10
TxDOT Permits: Staff review prior to sending to TxDOT or returning to applicant with comments	10	10
FIRE		
Development: Conducted in conjunction with Engineering and Planning Reviews	8	4
Outsourced to BV: Fire Suppression, Fire Alarm, Kitchen Hoods, Special Systems, Controlled Access, Underground Supplies, Residential Fire Suppression, etc.	10	10
PARKS		
Development: Preliminary Site Plan, Site Plan, Plats (Final/Replat/Preliminary/Amending/Conveyance)	8	4
Zoning: Planned Development, Specific Use Permit (SUP)	8	4
Construction Plans: Trail, Grading/ Berming, Erosion Control, Landscape and Irrigation Plans, Tree Survey	10	10
Grading Plans: Tree Survey	7	4
Individual Tree Survey Review	7	4
PLANNING		
Development: Preliminary Site Plan, Site Plan, Plats (Final/Replat/Preliminary/Amending/Conveyance)	8	4
Zoning: Rezoning, Planned Development, Specific Use Permit (SUP)	8	4
Miscellaneous: Sign Waivers, Variances, Network Nodes, ROW Abandonment	8	4
Administrative: TSO Alcohol Permits and Zoning Verification Letters	10	N/A

Prosper's processing timelines align with many other North Texas communities and exceed many of their regional peers. Examples of robust processing times includes many of the Engineering reviews which are conducted between 8 and 10 days. Several communities take between 15 and 30 days to review these applications. Also, the Town's

approach to a shorter processing time for resubmittals aligns with industry best practices.

The following table summarizes the performance goals for other jurisdictions.

Development Review Performance Goals (In Days)

Jurisdiction	Residential Building	Commercial Building	Development / Zoning
Allen	5-10	7-21	10
Celina	10	10	10
Dallas	15	21	30
Flower Mound	5	10	15
Frisco	7-14	10-20	10
McKinney	Unknown	15-30	15-25
The Colony	10-15	10-15	Unknown
Prosper	10	20	8

Also, the residential remodel permit timeline of 10 is the same time frame for a new single family construction. Frequently, other communities will have different timelines for residential remodels when compared to new residential construction. Remodels are generally half the processing time than for new construction, especially in communities that have review timeframes for new residential construction that is 15 days or greater. Prosper should separate processing times for residential new construction (single family) and single family remodel/renovation applications.

Prosper's development application processing times align with or exceed other North Texas jurisdictions and provides exceptional service. The one exception is to Flower Mound which has robust processing times that exceed the goals in Prosper for initial residential and commercial building applications. The Town should maintain their current performance metrics as they provide robust and predictable service to applicants.

3. Process Related Analysis Recommendations

The development review processes deployed by Prosper are efficient and provide a high level of service to both internal and external customers. Several of the process challenges are related to the lack of a robust permitting system that provides automation of the process and enhanced collaboration between reviewers. However, the lack of a software solution does not hamper the ability of staff to provide a comprehensive review of development applications.

The following points outline recommendations that focus on process improvements to provide a more consistent development review and permitting process for all functional areas. Note that none of these recommendations are substantial changes to the current processes.

- (1) All applications should include a completed and signed checklist of required application materials.
- (2) An application should be checked for completeness before being accepted. Incomplete applications should be rejected and returned with notes indicating missing components. Note: for hard copy applications completeness check should be conducted when application is being dropped off. For electronic submittals this shall occur within one business day of submittal.
- (3) All review comments should be provided in the same color for consistency.
- (4) Comments made by reviewers should be consolidated into a checklist that is provided to the applicant for use during the resubmittal process. The checklist should be returned when the application is resubmitted. Alternatively for digitally reviewed plans and for markups directly on the plan set, the applicant should initial all comments to ensure they have been addressed.
- (5) Applicant should submit a cover sheet with the resubmittal to outline any design changes made to plan not previously shown or commented on.
- (6) Review comments should be standardized and consistent in their format and approach. When referencing a specific standards/ordinance/code it should be referenced in the comment, especially if the code is a locally adopted variation or deviates from industry norm. Example: Reference Chapter 4, Section 4.2.B of the municipal code.
- (7) A standardized and consistent approach to reviewing calculations should be provided by all reviewers. If calculations are deemed acceptable then they should not be included on any returned or approved application materials.
- (8) The reviewer contact information should be included on the returned plan set and other materials. The reviewer will serve as the point of contact for their department or function. This reviewer may also serve as the case manager for the application when reviewed by only one department.

- (9) A policy should be established that, after the third review, an applicant must meet with staff prior to resubmittal. An exception can be made in cases where only very minor modifications are needed.
- (10) An additional review fee should be established for cases in which an application is submitted more than three times. The fee should be charged for every resubmittal that occurs after the third attempt. This may be a flat fee or an hourly rate that is intended to recoup staff cost associated with additional reviews.
- (11) The fee schedule should be updated and reflect established cost recover goals for Building Inspection, Planning, Engineering, and Parks/Landscape. (Planning's fee schedule indicated being last updated in 2016, Building Inspection's schedule did not include a date).
- (12) Revise the residential accessory use permit application resubmittal to a five day review timeline versus the current three day turnaround.
- (13) Separate processing times for residential new construction (single family) and single family remodel/renovation applications. Establish a processing timeline of 5 business days for single family remodel/renovation applications.
- (14) Create tiered performance metrics for high volume applicants. (e.g. national homebuilder that submits all applicants for Phase 1 of a newly plated subdivision) For example, up to 10 new single family building applications will be processed within the adopted timeline (10 business days), if 10 to 20 applications are submitted in a week, the processing time will be up to 15 business days, 20 to 40 applications will be processed in 20 days, and more than 40 applications will be reviewed within 30 days.
- (15) A single department should be responsible for zoning compliance review. Currently Building Inspections handle residential applications while sharing commercial applications with Planning.
- (16) Upon implementation of the new permitting software system, create workflow process diagrams for key applications including external and internal processes. Flowcharts should be incorporated into the Development Guide.
- (17) Managers should be provided with weekly and monthly performance reports (all disciplines) regarding application review and current processing times. They should be used to adjust resources.

- (18) The Development Guide should be expanded to all include all development applications versus primarily focusing on Planning applications.
- (19) Create a development review authority matrix that includes applicable review departments and decision-making authority by application type. The matrix would include rather the final decision is made by staff or elected/appointed body.

Implementation of these recommendations will provide a more consistent approach to development services, improve application quality, and enhance operational efficiency.

4. Technology and Website Evaluation

This chapter analyzes the Town's technology use and the availability of development information on the Town's website.

1. Technology and Website Best Practice Assessment

This section evaluates the Town's technology features and website information in comparison to best practices. The following best practices are used to evaluate the Town's current technology use and website. It should be noted that the Town is transitioning to a new permitting software system (EnerGov) in the second half of 2022 and the new system will incorporate many of the technological features identified as best practices.

Best Practice / Operational Target	Meets Target (Yes/No)	Comments and Notes
Technology		
Applicants can apply, pay for, and receive permits (sometimes instantly) using an online portal.	No	Applications are currently submitted via email. This element should be included in the new system.
The permit software system can calculate the appropriate plan check and permitting fees.	No	Will be included in the new system.
Applicants can look up status of a permit, including comments from reviewers online or using the software.	No	Will be included in the new system.
Staff can look up the status of a permit, including comments from reviewers, online or using the software.	No	Will be included in the new system.
Permit tracking software is used to manage the permit intake, review, and issuance process as well as related inspections.	No	Will be included in the new system.

Best Practice / Operational Target	Meets Target (Yes/No)	Comments and Notes
All plan review comments are entered into the permitting system and are made available to other reviewers, permit techs, and applicants (via the front end).	No	Staff have access to all review comments in the application folder on a shared network drive. The new system should include this feature.
The permitting system electronically routes applications to all reviewers, who can also electronically approve, disapprove, and provide comments.	No	Applications are currently placed in a shared folder and reviewers are emailed when a new application is received or ready for review. Will be included in the new system.
The Town has transitioned to a paperless system for all stages of permitting and development review.	Yes	
The permitting system generates clear, user friendly reports on permitting activity which can be posted to the internet.	No	Will be included in the new system.
Development staff has access to applicable GIS layers.	Yes	
The general public can look up zoning information, flood zones, and other pertinent information using Web GIS.	Yes	Interactive map includes multiple development related layers. Also, the Planning webpage includes links to adopted long range plans and maps.
The permitting software system is utilized as a database for all development related information for the parcel/address.	No	The new system should include this feature.
One software system is utilized for all permitting, inspection, and code enforcement functions in the Town.	No	Will be included in the new system.

Best Practice / Operational Target	Meets Target (Yes/No)	Comments and Notes
Permitting software users are provided with new user training upon being hired by the City.	No	A training program should be created for all users when the new software system is implemented. Continuous training should be provided as new features and updates are implemented.
Website		
The Town provides easy-to-understand and attractive guides to the planning, building permit, and inspections process.	Yes	Each departmental website includes links to application materials, standards, and ordinances. Planning has a comprehensive development guide for all planning applications and submittal requirements. The Development Guide is updated twice annually.
The Development Guide is comprehensive and provides insight to all applicable development processes, applications, and permits.	No	The Development Guide is specific to planning applications and their requirements. It is inclusive of all applicable requirements for other departments, as long as the review is initiated by Planning.
The Town web site includes a virtual "one stop shop" that provides a links to, and an overview of, all permitting requirements by department or division.	No	Each development review entity has an autonomous webpage. Planning's website includes information for other review functions that are part of planning applications.
Fee schedule is published and regularly updated.	Partial	Fee schedules were accessible on Building Inspection and Planning webpages. Planning's fee schedule was last updated in 2016.
A fee estimator is provided on respective departmental webpages.	Partial	An impact fee calculator is provided on Planning's webpage.
The Town's policies/website clearly identify what applications can be approved administratively versus approval by the Planning and Zoning Commission or Town Council.	No	This information is provided by individual application types. No summary matrix exists.

Best Practice / Operational Target	Meets Target (Yes/No)	Comments and Notes
Application forms are available on-line and can be filled out electronically.	Yes	
The Town's long-term plans and land development code are available on-line.	Yes	Planning's webpage provides links.
The Town's adopted ordinance, regulations, and design standards are available and up-to-date online.	Yes	
The Town has a dedicated webpage that identifies major on-going development projects.	Partial	Engineering has a current capital project webpage. Other departments/divisions include a monthly report of permits issued in PDF format.
Informational brochures for small development projects - particularly ones that are relevant to homeowners - are provided in English and Spanish.	No	The current development guide is only published in English.

2. Proposed Elements of a New Permitting Software System

The Town is in the process of implementing a new permitting software system (EnerGov). The new permitting software system will have many features that will provide enhanced process efficiency for both the applicant and staff.

The project team has not reviewed the specifications of the new permitting software solution but wanted to outline the features that should be included in the new system. These are listed below:

- Provides a robust online system for the public. Online features should include:
 - Submittal of all development application types.
 - Applicant online portal including access to review comments, status updates, and ability to request inspections.

- Integrated feature for the general public to search application and development activity status (e.g., status of an application, view approved site plans for new commercial development, etc.).
- Integrates the Town's development process and workflow so that progress can be tracked by staff from application submittal to certificate of occupancy.
- Calculates application and permitting fees and accepts payment through the software and/or online portal. This may be accomplished through integration with the Town's finance software or through the permitting system itself.
- Ability to calculate development impact fees in the software system and ability for applicant to pay through the software system.
- Allows review staff to receive notifications regarding new tasks, deadlines, and status updates by application.
- Allows for the uploading of review comments and monitors the status of individual reviewers (e.g., pending Planning comments, Building Inspection has approved, Engineering submitted comments, etc.). All users should have the ability to see other reviewer's comments and markups.
- Feature that allows the Town development review staff to notify the applicant if delays in the review with an updated completion time.
- Utilizes templates to prepopulate standardized information for review comment checklist, staff reports, permits, etc., including checklists, ability to link to ordinances, codes, and design standards, automate public notices, etc.
- Has a searchable database by address or other approved identifier such as parcel number.
- Contains approved and constructed plan sets that are linked to the permit file.
- The mobile version of the software program allows field staff to remotely access the system to consult approved plan sets, inspection results, and determine open permits and violations.
- Ability to upload photos via mobile version and link to the permit file.
- A web-based access portal for staff to access the system remotely.

- Is capable of capturing staff's time for project review. This should be through a manual input of total time spent on each application (e.g. review, meetings, staff report, Planning Commission and Council presentations, etc.)
- Allows for the integration of the City's GIS system and links to the permit file by identifier.
- Allows for managers to run performance/workload reports from the system. Ideally, the system could link to a performance dashboard on the Town's website.
- Has a code enforcement module that tracks open code violations and is integrated into the permitting portal.

Incorporating these elements into the new permitting software system will provide the applicant with an easy to use online application portal. The online application portal should be comprehensive and serve as a one stop shop for applicants. Similarly, the new permitting software system will serve as a centralized program for all development activity and functions for the Town. The use of a new system will result in enhanced operational efficiency and increased collaboration and accountability for all development review staff.

In addition to the prescribed functional capabilities of the permitting software system, the following recommendations are made regarding the implementation of the permitting software system:

- (20) Develop a user guide and frequently asked questions brochure for the new software system.
- (21) Provide contact information in the user guide, brochure, and on the Town's website for individuals who can assist the public with using the online system.
- (22) Develop a training program for the public on how to use the online capabilities of the system to submit applications, pay fees, check application status, review comments, and request inspections. Training should be provided to users prior to going live with the new software system.
- (23) Establish an internal training program for new hire software orientation.
- (24) Ensure that staff receive ongoing training for the software as new updates and features are implemented.

- (25) Provide training for managers on how to utilize the software system and performance metric features.
- (26) Develop weekly and monthly reports that are created automatically and distributed to management that includes workload, processing timelines, and other relevant performance metrics.
- (27) Appoint a Development and Infrastructure Services staff member to serve as the software administrator and internal reference for all permitting software issues.

3. Analysis of the Town's Website

This section focuses on the analysis of the development review, permitting, and inspection information on the Town's website.

Each of the development review departments have a separate webpage on the Town's website. Departmental webpages provide a tremendous amount of development review information, and the respective pages are primarily focused on providing resources specific to that process. The webpages reviewed by the project team include Building Inspection, Fire Marshal, Engineering, and Planning.

Key findings include:

- Each of the respective webpages include detailed information regarding the development process.
- Links are present for adopted codes, standards, forms, guidelines, and general information regarding the development process.
- Monthly development report links are found on all webpages. Reports provide a general overview of the number of permits issued, value, etc.
- Information regarding master plans, long range planning documents, maps, etc. are easily accessible on Engineering, Fire Marshal, and Planning pages.
- A staff directory for each department is provided. Planning does not provide direct phone numbers for staff. Building Inspections require an additional click from their primary webpage.
- All webpages provide direct links to their respective applications and include detailed information, either embedded in the permit application file or as a separate PDF.
- Engineering has a link to current City capital construction projects.
- Development Services and Engineering have links to monthly activity reports in PDF format.

- Building Inspection and Planning provide links to their fee schedule. Planning provides an Impact Fee Calculator.
- Parks/Landscape development information is generally provided under Planning application information.
- A centralized development webpage was not found on the Town's website, but staff provided a link to one. The "Developing in Prosper" webpage provides links to Building Inspections, Engineering, and Planning divisional webpages. Users then must go to respective departmental webpages to find development information.
- There is limited connectivity between departmental development webpages. This requires the applicant to go to respective webpages versus clicking on links between departments.

A wealth of development information is provided on respective departmental webpages, but there is limited information sharing between departments. Furthermore, the centralized development webpage does not provide an overview of the entire development process, but links to three of the five development departments/divisions involved in the development process. Fire and Parks/Landscaping are not accessible from this webpage. This webpage should serve as a starting point when researching development practices in the Town.

The following recommendations are made regarding the Town's development related webpages:

- (28) Create a more robust and inclusive centralized development review webpage. Elements included on this webpage include:
- An overview of the entire development review process.
 - Link for the comprehensive development guide.
 - Narrative for responsibilities of the respective departments/divisions involved in the development review process.
 - Link to the online application portal when the new permitting software system is implemented. Including a link to the "How To" guide for application submittal.
 - Inspection request link.
 - Links to individual departmental development webpages.
 - Link to the Town's GIS system and other pertinent maps.
 - Webpage link to the Town's adopted ordinances/design standards/regulations.
 - Fee estimator/calculator for all development fees (including impact fees).

- The current application/permitted webpage link should be accessible from the centralized webpage.
 - Performance reports link.
 - Frequently asked question PDF.
 - Provide the development review authority matrix.
- (29) Establish a consistent approach to including application overview information - either within the application PDF or as a separate document. E.g. flowchart, narrative, or other graphic representation.
- (30) Development staff contact information should be provided in a consistent format on each departmental webpage. Information should include name, title, email address, and phone number.
- (31) The fee schedules should be included on all development review departmental webpages.
- (32) Each department's webpage should provide an overview of the processes that it manages.
- (33) Designate an individual staff member from each development review department to maintain their respective webpage.
- (34) Establish a consistent approach to providing development information links on departmental webpages. Include a consistent depth of information on the primary information page and provide links to secondary sources. E.g. Fire should consolidate the links to topic areas and include more detail on the next page.
- (35) All development webpages should have a link to take the user back to the centralized development webpage.

Appendix A: Recommendation in Order

This Appendix presents the recommendations the order they are presented in the report.

Rec. #	Recommendation	Priority	Implementation Season
Process			
1	All applications should include a completed and signed checklist of required application materials. If checklist is missing the application will be deemed incomplete.	High	Summer 2022
2	An application should be checked for completeness before being accepted. Incomplete applications should be rejected and returned with notes indicating missing components.	High	Spring 2022
3	All review comments should be provided in the same color for consistency.	Low	Summer 2022
4	Comments made by reviewers should be consolidated into a checklist that is provided to the applicant for use during the resubmittal process. The checklist should be returned when the application is resubmitted.	High	Winter 2022 / 2023
5	Applicant should submit a cover sheet with the resubmittal to outline any design changes made to plan not previously shown or commented on.	High	Spring 2022
6	Review comments should be standardized and consistent in their format and approach. Specific standards/ordinance/code should be referenced in the comment, especially if the code is a locally adopted variation or deviates from industry norm.	Medium	Fall 2022
7	A standardized and consistent approach to reviewing calculations should be provided by all reviewers. If calculations are deemed acceptable then they should not be included on any returned or approved application materials.	High	Spring 2022
8	The reviewer contact information should be included on the returned plan set and other materials. The reviewer will serve as the point of contact for their department or function.	Low	Spring 2022
9	A policy should be established that, after the third review, an applicant must meet with staff prior to resubmittal. An exception can be made in cases where only very minor modifications are needed.	High	Summer 2022

Rec. #	Recommendation	Priority	Implementation Season
10	An additional review fee should be established for cases in which an application is submitted more than three times. The fee should be charged for every resubmittal that occurs after the third attempt.	High	Spring 2023
11	The fee schedule should be updated and reflect established cost recover goals for Building Inspection, Planning, Engineering, and Parks/Landscape.	High	Spring 2023
12	Revise the residential accessory use permit application resubmittal to a five day review timeline versus the current three day turnaround.	Low	Spring 2023
13	Separate processing times for residential new construction (single family) and single family remodel/renovation applications. Establish a processing timeline of 5 business days for single family remodel/renovation applications.	Medium	Spring 2023
14	Create tiered performance metrics for high volume applicants.	High	Fall 2022
15	A single department should be responsible for zoning compliance review. Currently Building Inspections handle residential applications while sharing commercial applications with Planning.	High	Fall 2022
16	Upon implementation of the new permitting software system, create workflow process diagrams for key applications including external and internal processes. Flowcharts should be incorporated into the Development Guide.	Medium	Spring 2023
17	Managers should be provided with weekly and monthly performance reports (all disciplines) regarding application review and current processing times.	Low	Spring 2023
18	The Development Guide should be expanded to all include all development applications versus primarily focusing on Planning applications.	High	Winter 2022 / 2023
19	Create a development review authority matrix that includes applicable review departments and decision-making authority by application type.	High	Summer 2022
Technology			
20	Develop a user guide and frequently asked questions brochure for the new software system.	High	Fall 2022

Rec. #	Recommendation	Priority	Implementation Season
21	Provide contact information in the user guide, brochure, and on the Town's website for individuals who can assist the public with using the online system.	High	Winter 2022 / 2023
22	Develop a training program for the public on how to use the online capabilities of the system to submit applications, pay fees, check application status, review comments, and request inspections.	High	Fall 2022
23	Establish an internal training program for new hire software orientation.	High	Winter 2022 / 2023
24	Ensure that staff receive ongoing training for the software as new updates and features are implemented.	High	Winter 2022 / 2023
25	Provide training for managers on how to utilize the software system and performance metric features.	Low	Spring 2023
26	Develop weekly & monthly reports that are created automatically and distributed to management that includes workload, processing timelines, and other relevant performance metrics.	Low	Spring 2023
27	Appoint a Development and Infrastructure Services staff member to serve as the software administrator and internal reference for all permitting software issues.	High	Summer 2022
Website			
28	Create a more robust and centralized development review webpage.	High	Winter 2022 / 2023
29	Establish a consistent approach to including application overview information - either within the application PDF or as a separate document.	Medium	Fall 2022
30	Development staff contact information should be provided in a consistent format on each departmental webpage. Information should include name, title, email address, and phone number.	Medium	Spring 2022
31	The fee schedule should be included on all development review departmental webpages.	Low	Winter 2022 / 2023
32	Each department's webpage should provide an overview of the processes that it manages.	Medium	Winter 2022 / 2023

Rec. #	Recommendation	Priority	Implementation Season
33	Designate an individual staff member from each development review department to maintain their respective webpage.	High	Winter 2022 / 2023
34	Establish a consistent approach to providing development information links on departmental webpages. Include a consistent depth of information on the primary information page and provide links to secondary sources.	Medium	Winter 2022 / 2023
35	All development webpages should have a link to take the user back to the centralized development webpage.	Medium	Winter 2022 / 2023