

Department Name: Planning Services
Division Name: Economic Development

Mission Statement: "We work with the community to achieve its desired future."

Customer: Well informed Citizens that participate in an open process: 1.) applicants, developers, and project proponents who receive best-in-class customer service, 2.) elected officials, administration & related departments that we work with to achieve the community's desired future

Product/Service provided: A Better Spokane for All Citizens Through: 1.) improved economy (jobs), 2.) improved quality of life (natural environment, affordable housing, safe neighborhoods), 3.) improved social equity (providing public process access and community support for all members of our community).

SWOT:

Strengths: The City's Comprehensive Plan—supports economic development, is all about "Smart Growth" and enhancing Spokane's quality of life—it is a great tool that is available to be used; the City's updated development standards/codes/zoning designations are good—flexible, new, appropriate (mixed use, home occupations, smaller lot sizes, housing options, etc.); Planning staff—is knowledgeable, has expertise, and are collaborators—we work well with other staff members, the public, other customers and offer our expertise to them; Pl. Dept. has good outreach to community: website, newsletter, year-end report, "Spokane Building Blocks" series; new permit system.

Weaknesses: Follow-through on potential (see strengths) requires follow-through and commitment from Administration and other departments; need more commitment to Comp. Plan and follow-through on it. The potential is there, reality is falling short; City needs more incentives and support for infill development; Growth outside the city in the County's ever-expanding UGA. In other words, the effect of suburban growth: benefit of taxes from new development outside the city goes elsewhere while the City's capital facilities costs increase. Also, at the same time, developable land in the city shrinks and City infrastructure is negatively impacted; lack of Planning staff and other essential resources, such as for completing all work program items, marketing our successes, consultants, enhanced outreach/communication, etc.; lack of design staff to help with implementation.

Opportunities: Improve outreach to elected officials (especially new ones), community groups, other staff—educate them about City's growth strategy, available implementation tools, successes, etc.; educate our customers on how to navigate the development process; enhance collaborations with other local, state, and federal agencies and the private sector to better achieve City's desired future; continue to improve outreach outside City Hall—examples: meet with local media re: City's growth strategy and successes; market successful development in the city; increase online services; fast-track applications for "green buildings" and other projects that are most desirable for the city; refocus City's development efforts from new plats to brownfield development; we should continue to monitor existing City regulations and land use and zoning designations for needed improvements—and then improve them (to do so, need staff); with additional staffing, Planning staff could better participate in tools such as Tax Increment Financing, Community Renewal Act, master plans, planned actions.

Threats: Lack of staff and support resources for follow-through, including research and analysis; lack of support of the Comprehensive Plan, Planning Services staff, Planning Services Department; lack of understanding of Planning staff's role and professional responsibilities by the public, some elected officials, and some fellow City staff members; Spokane County—its growth focus is detrimental to the City; Idaho tax structure—attracting growth to Idaho; political climate—chaotic, competitive (Council v. Mayor); political maneuvering on a number of fronts is threatening to undermine the Comprehensive Plan.

Critical Success Factors: As Planning Services Department staff members: 1.) we are aware of Administration's objectives & policies, working with their goals to achieve our key product: A Better Spokane for All Citizens, 2.) we are focused and productive—we accomplish the department's specific work program items identified in the department's established yearly work program—all this with very thin resources, 3.) we are principled—we take our obligation to serve Spokane citizens seriously, and as professional planners follow our code of ethics, 4.) we are good communicators, facilitators, and creative problem-solvers—we take into

Con't Department Name: Planning Services
Division Name: Economic Development

consideration a wide range of issues and long-term consequences, and think "outside the box.", 5.) to be successful, we need up-to-date technology, resources and continuing education in order to be active with cutting edge planning professionalism.

Departmental Strategies

Goal 1: Achieve departmental efficiencies as recommended in the Report on the Organizational, Effectiveness, Efficiency and Turnaround Study. (ED 3, pg. 5-8, ED 4, pg. 5-9, ED 10, pg. 5-36, EES; Customer Service, Financial Stability, MP, Goal 3, PDG)

1. The Level of Staffing in Current Planning Affords Capacity for Additional Workload
 - a. Recommendation: The Planning Services Department should not change the number of positions for the Current planning section at this time. With the Current Planning Manager filling the vacant Planning Director position and a Planner I on maternity leave for 5 months, the Current Planning Section is understaffed. Existing Current Planning Staff have increased workload, Long Range staff has been assigned current planning applications, and project planners have been hired to help with the workload.
2. Eliminate the Urban Designer II position in Development Incentives and assign responsibility for processing design review applications to Current Planning in the Planning Services Department.
 - a. Recommendation: Eliminate the Urban Designer II assigned to urban design in the Development Incentive Department. The responsibility for design review applications has been moved to Planning Services. The Urban Designer II will not be eliminated, as there does not exist additional workload capacity in the Current Planning Section. In order to gain further efficiencies additional assignments have been directed to the Urban Designer II position. Those assignments include the Mayor's Urban Design Awards, Planning Department Liaison to the Downtown Plan Update, and Lead Staff on the Mayor's Green Building Initiative.
3. The fees charged by the Planning Services Department for processing of Current Planning Applications should be increased.
 - a. Recommendation: The financial policies developed by the Finance Director for the consideration of the Mayor and City Council should include a policy for recovery of the costs of processing current planning applications.
 - b. Recommendation: Upon approval by the City Council of this policy, the Planning Services Director should develop a proposed increase in fees for the consideration of the Mayor and City Council. Planning Services will pursue increasing Planning Application Fees to cover at least 60% of Current Planning salary costs. Planning Services is participating in the Comprehensive User Fee Study that is being facilitated by the Management and Budget Department.

Goal 2: Follow and complete Planning Department Work Program (Goal 1, PDG; all priorities, MP; quality of life, neighborhood planning, code implementation, CI, SWOT)

1. Planning Services has adopted a multi-faceted Work Program that addresses processing applications/permits, state mandates, Mayor Priorities and Council Initiatives: By April 2007

Goal 3: Realize City Growth Strategy through Urban Growth Area Designation, City/County Interlocal Joint Planning Agreements and Smart Annexations (SWOT; Growth, MP; PDG).

1. Work with the City Council representatives to the Spokane County Steering Committee of Elected Offices and the Mayor to identify key growth areas. Participate in the regional planning staff process to look at providing capital facilities to the Urban Growth Area: By December, 2007

Con't Department Name: Planning Services
Division Name: Economic Development

Goal 4: Complete four to six Center and Corridor Planning Process by December 31, 2007 (PDG; Growth, MP; Neighborhood Planning, CI; SWOT).

1. Planning Services has been working on the Garland Neighborhood Center, North Monroe Corridor and with the Lower South Hill group since December. The Lower South Hill process was completed in May with City Council adoption of the Land Use and Zoning changes. Meetings with the Indian Trail neighborhood have begun, and plans are being made to work with the Lincoln Heights District Center citizens in the next couple months: By December, 2007

Goal 5: Implement New Permit System (Goal 1, PDG; Customer Service, MP)

1. Planning Services is participating in the implementation of the new Permit System. Implementation of the system will improve customer service and increase application-processing times: By December 2007 +.