

Improvements to Rockville's Development and Permitting Processes

Faster, Accountable, Smarter and Transparent (FAST)

Project Charter

Introduction

Implementing improvements to the development and permitting process involves engagement and support from several dozen staff members within multiple City departments. This multi-department project will require an agreed-upon plan to unify staff in dedicating the time and working effectively together to review and modify existing process and develop and implement new processes and associated requirements. This Project Charter, a roadmap for completing this initiative, describes who, what, when, where, why, and how the City will complete this important project. The Mayor and Council reviewed and, with revisions, endorsed the Project Charter.

Project Charter

The first step to initiate this project is to establish a “plan to do the project” or a Project Charter. This document contains information on:

1. Reason and purpose, and outcomes for the project;
2. Organizational structure with roles, responsibilities, decision-making authority, and project assignments;
3. Description of the community outreach and engagement strategy;
4. Reasonable schedules for project components; and
5. An implementation and monitoring plan.

1. Reason and Purpose

Significant changes to development review and permitting processes are needed to improve efficiency and effectiveness and deliver of a high level of service to our customers. The Mayor and Council's 2016- 2019 priority initiatives is the delivery of efficient and effective services to our customers (both residents and the business community). Specifically, the Mayor and Council has directed that our processes to deliver services must be efficient, well documented, and administered equitably by a committed workforce of employees with a “can-do” attitude. Improvement to the development review and permitting process is one of the top five priorities for the Mayor and Council.

In addition, the Mayor and Council has charged staff to support economic development by encouraging new investment through an efficient development process that balances and respects private and community interests in the process.

Attachment A

Successfully developing and implementing significant improvements to Rockville's Development and Permitting Processes must be accomplished to meet the Mayor and Council's priority initiatives. There is a sense of urgency by the Mayor and Council, the City Manager, and our customers to successfully develop and follow-through with implementing improvements to these processes. Progress must be shown throughout the project including initial short-term accomplishments.

Outcomes

This project's proposed outcomes are grouped into three areas – **Faster**, **Accountable**, **Smarter** and **Transparent**. All three outcomes are equally important. We shouldn't just focus on faster because faster is not always the best outcome. Taking more time may be a smarter choice to gain the needed information to make the right decisions. In turn, we shouldn't analyze items to the extent that we unnecessarily slow down the process. Likewise, we need to establish processes that are understandable, fair, and provide information that is accessible to the public to create a truly transparent process.

Faster

The Mayor and Council's priority initiatives demand an efficient development and permitting process. At the end of this project, non-value-added steps and procedures need to be identified and eliminated, and others streamlined, to improve processes that yield *faster* turn-around times and decisions on most applications. Due to the complexity of some projects, it may be difficult to achieve a faster process and still take the time that is needed for the Mayor and Council to make good decisions. One opportunity to make the process faster will be providing reliable and predictable schedules for processing complete applications. These schedules must have clear expectations and deadlines for both staff and applicants.

Accountable

The City must have an extra focus on meeting a higher level of customer service. The City is accountable for delivering this higher level of customer service and the recommending actions from this effort needs to reflect and measure our progress toward this end. In these recommended actions, the applicants/customers also need to be accountable for the submission of complete/accurate applications and timely resubmissions.

Smarter

Improvements to the development and permitting process should result in gains in staff's efficiency and effectiveness. Staff within multiple departments need to work smarter by delivering seamless service through:

- Processes that are accessible and easily understood;
- Sound and timely decisions;
- Reasonable ordinances and regulations that are consistently applied;
- Solution-oriented approaches;
- Processes that balance and respect private and community interests; and
- Unified delivery of services (multiple departmental staff working as one for customers).

The use of technology will allow staff to work much *smarter* by accomplishing more with less. For example, new permitting software integrated with other systems through an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system and an electronic plan submission system will provide for easier submittals and reviews, as well as tracking applications and promptly identifying and addressing avoidable delays.

Transparent

The City must provide for a transparent process through openness, accountability, and honesty. Our customers should know what is expected and have access to the public information they need to develop within the city.

Transparency is an obligation by the City to share information with citizens on the development and permitting process and how decisions are made based on adopted ordinances, plans, and requirements. This outcome is important to maintain trust with the citizens and customers we serve and holds staff and other public officials accountable for our actions.

Project Name:

Since these outcomes are critical to the success of this project and their prominence is important, the name of the project is **FAST** (Faster, Accountable, Smarter, and Transparent). This name will keep our expected results always in the forefront among staff and stakeholders and will be a constant measurement for our progress and success.

2. Organizational Structure

The organizational structure is composed of:

- **Mayor and Council (M&C)** – The Mayor and Council has provided the priority initiatives and overall purpose of this project. M&C must be kept informed of our efforts and progress. They also need to approve code changes that will be required to implement certain process improvements. The Mayor and Council must ultimately decide the balance needed to respect both public and private interest when considering code and process changes. The Mayor and Council provides guidance and direction on policy and process changes.
- **City Manager (Rob DiSpirito)** – The City Manager helps develop and ultimately approves the Project Charter and provides overall direction to the Executive Team and Project Manager at key points throughout the project.
- **Executive Team** – This team is composed of the Directors of Public Works, Recreation and Parks, and Planning and Development Services. Craig Simoneau, Tim Chesnutt and Ricky Barker are responsible for the development and execution of the Project Charter, making executive decisions for the Project Team when appropriate, providing overall communication to staff within their departments, providing resources, encouragement, and support for staff working on the project. The Executive Team, in conjunction with the City Manager, will have final say over the recommendations, actions, and implementation schedule. This Team will also play a critical role in establishing an effective process for making key decisions among competing objectives. The Executive Team will need to coordinate closely with the City Attorney's Office on changes to codes and processes. The Team, with the City Attorney, will need to determine how best to accomplish this (e.g., representation on a team or teams). This Team will also provide quarterly progress reports to the Mayor and Council.
- **Project Manager (PM)** – The project manager is the Director of Planning and Development Services, Ricky Barker. Ricky is accountable to the Executive Team and the City Manager to

ensure that the Project Charter is implemented, progress reports are provided, and recommendations are acted upon. Ricky will promote engagement, collaboration, and accountability among the Project Team and Technical Work Teams. He is also accessible and available to each Team and Team Leaders for support, guidance, and direction.

- **Project Teams** –There are three project teams: Single Family Home Permitting; Development Review Improvements - Short Term; and Development Review Improvements – Long Term. Each Project Team will have a team leader and be composed of team members from the Departments of PW, RP, and PDS. The Team Leaders are responsible for leading the team to complete its work program and generating the reports required. The Leaders will also provide status reports to the Executive Team or Ricky on a regular basis.

Team Leaders:

Susan Straus - Single Family Home Permitting

Jim Wasilak - Development Review Improvement, Short Term

Ricky Barker - Development Review Improvement, Long Term

The Team Leader must:

1. Develop and establish effective ground rules and efficient processes to make recommendations/decisions in a timely manner. These ground rules need to include ensuring that opinions and views are heard, and each member remains professional and respectful at all times.
2. Work with the team to develop and submit a work program for completing the required report to the Executive Team.
3. Strive toward consensus on decisions/recommendations; however, he/she should take actions to not significantly delay progress or not delay meeting the agreed-upon schedule. For decisions/recommendations that are not consensus, minority opinions should be noted in the report.

Each Project Team is assigned certain key components of the project (as described below). Each team has the ability to seek help from focus groups or subcommittees (internal/external representatives) to produce recommendations to the project teams. The project teams generate the specific recommended improvements, develop, and in cooperation with the EPM, implement the agreed-upon changes. All key staff who are significantly involved with the development and permitting process will either be on project teams or have the opportunity to provide input to the FAST project. Teams should benchmark with other jurisdictions to adapt what may work in Rockville. Staff from the City Attorney's Office involvement and guidance will be critical to the project's success. Through coordination with the City Attorney, Debra Daniels, and/or her staff's, each Team Leader will need to determine when and how this involvement should occur.

- **Single Family Home Permitting – (Short term and Long Term)** This team will make recommendations to improve the single-family home permitting process (e.g., storm water requirements – two steps to one step, demolition, decks, accessory structures, small construction, and landscaping and forestry requirements). The recommended improvements will include short term (1 year or less) and long term (greater than a year) actions.
- **Development Review Improvement Short Term (Six Months to 1 Year) –** This team involves “quick-fixes” that might require code amendments and some process changes

(e.g., one point of entry for applications, change of use requirements, electronic plan review, fee study).

- **Development Review Improvement Long Term (Longer than 1 Year)** This team will develop recommendations on substantial improvements to processes, and changes that require significant code amendments. This team will not officially start until significant progress has been made with the Short-Term Team since the same staff will be assigned to each team. These recommended improvements also include items that are more complicated and involve much coordination and collaboration with staff from various departments and the City Attorney's Office. This team will also address various technology-related recommendations.

Each Team is charged with developing reports and recommendations to the Executive Team.

These reports must include:

- Purpose
- Challenges/Opportunities
- Identification and Evaluation of Options for Improvements
- Outreach Efforts and Results
- Recommendations
 - Elimination of Non-Value-Added Steps/Work
 - Specific steps/actions, assignments and specific time-frames for completion
 - Changes in procedures and processes

A number of resources will be made available to assist each team (e.g. previous studies, reports, and recent results of customer forums). However, it is important for each team to take a fresh and creative look at the current situation and achieve the best recommendations that will result in Faster, Smarter, and more Transparent processes. These creative recommendations are not limited and should include organizational changes and/or redistribution/reallocation of work and responsibilities of current staff.

3. Community Outreach and Engagement Strategy

In 2017 and 2018, staff held forums to seek information from our external customers on improvements to the development and permitting process. This feedback has been and will continue to be used for formulating recommended improvements.

During the FAST project, information on the project charter, proposed focus areas, and proposed recommendations will be provided/accessible to the public including but not limited to, stakeholders groups, civic and homeowner associations, developers, businesses, and other interested parties. Although customer feedback may be received during the process, public feedback sessions will be scheduled in May 2019 on the development review and permitting process to gain additional insights, feedback, and reactions to staff's recommended changes. Specific/detailed input will be used to ensure the recommended process and code changes address identified problems. The project teams will use this feedback to finalize recommendations prior to reporting the Mayor and Council for their direction.

Attachment A

This proposed charter should be shared with the Planning Commission, other relevant Boards/Commissions, and stakeholder groups.

Staff will develop a communication plan to announce opportunities for engagement and to receive feedback on recommended changes to processes and the City Code. Team Leaders will need to engage staff from the Office of Communication and Engagement during the process to assist in this effort.

4. FAST Schedule

A detailed and realistic schedule will need to be developed to coordinate staff, manage expectations, and be accountable for results. The work of the Single-Family Review and Development Review Short Term Teams will have their recommendations finalized within during the first phase of the FAST project. The Development Review Long Term Team will start following the completion of the work of these two teams. Once the FAST Charter is completed and finalized, each Team will produce a work program and schedule. Overall FAST schedule should be updated after the Mayor and Council have endorsed the recommended process changes of the initial two project teams. Schedules should include milestones for implementing the recommended process and procedure changes.

5. Implementation and Monitoring Plan

The long-term success of this project depends upon the effectiveness of the solutions that are implemented. It will be important to include ways to measure our success to achieve our outcomes (Faster and Smarter), and to determine if additional changes are needed. This evaluation should be based on internal/external evaluations by our customers. Time-periods will be established by the Executive Team for evaluating results and making adjustments as needed.

6. Initial Changes

At its October 29, 2018 work session, the Mayor and Council endorsed initial changes for the project which are described below. The Executive Team and each Project Team will need to develop recommended actions to implement improvements with these areas.

1. **Development Services Center** – The PDS Department is proposing to re-organize staff to create a Development Services Center. This Center will be led by the Planning and Development Services Manager. This position will lead permit clerks, a planning technician, and other professional staff focused on internal and external customer service. This new Customer Service Center is proposed to be a “one stop shop” for Development Review and Permitting Processes (accepts and coordinates all development-related applications). This position will also play a major role in the implementation of Electronic Plan Review and Submittals.
2. **Reliable Schedules for Development-Related Applications** – A consistent theme heard from our November 2017 forum was the length of the review processes, and the uncertainty of processing time. Developing published typical schedules for most all Development-Related Applications will help with the uncertainty of the processes and provide some deadlines for both the staff and applicant.

Attachment A

3. **Development Review Committee (DRC) Improvements** – With staff from different departments involved with DRC, a need to resolve differences and provide clear direction and guidance to our customers is important. An agreed-upon process will be developed and implemented. In addition, procedures for DRC that outline roles and responsibilities will be developed and implemented. These procedures will include defined roles and responsibilities and how decisions are made between competing interest of Departments.
4. **Electronic Plan Review** – Funding has been provided and Staff will develop a work plan and schedule for implementation. This action will save time and costs for the City and the customer.
5. **Notification Requirements** – Staff believes that changes to the current notice requirements should be considered. With the use of electronic notification and social media, staff believes that we may be more effective at notifying the public (beyond state-mandated requirements) through these means rather than mailings.
6. **Clarify When a Site Plan is Required** – Staff recommends that certain “changes of use” may not require a site plan. Notifications to departments about these changes of use could be done through the Building Permit/Occupancy Permit process. This action would significantly reduce the requirements for certain changes of use that do not produce the need for improvements on the site.
7. **Modify Single Family Home Requirements** – Staff recommends going from a two-step application process for stormwater review to a one step application process to shorten the review process. In addition, staff recommends aligning significant tree replacement in the Forestry and Tree Preservation Ordinance with the tree planting requirement for single-family homes in the Zoning Ordinance which requires one tree in the front yard and two trees in the rear yard instead of a more complicated tree planting requirement.
8. **Create an exemption from submitting a Natural Resources Inventory/Forest Stand Delineation (NRI/FSD)** - The current code requires that any Site Plan Amendment requires an approved NRI/FSD plan. Staff proposes to adopt an exemption from submitting an NRI/FSD when the site plan amendment proposes little to no land disturbance or impacts to existing trees.
9. **Exemption from afforestation for parking lot resurfacing projects** - Staff proposes to adopt an exemption from afforestation when there are no changes to the foot print of the parking lot. This would remove the potential disincentive for owners that want to repave their parking lot.

In summary, initial focus on the above items will make a positive impact and provide an improved level of service for our customers.

FAST Phase I Work Plan

	Action Items	Items Completed	Coming Next	Targeted Completion
1. Customer Service Center	1. Development Services Manager (new position) will coordinate development review and Chair the Development Review Committee – SMARTER & TRANSPARENT	Complete - Development Services Manager started on July 1		Completed
	2. Create a one-stop shop for all development-related applications, including new single-family home permits – SMARTER, ACCOUNTABLE & TRANSPARENT	Relocated Forestry staff Reorganized intake staff Created project plan and timeline	Work toward a single point of application acceptance (MGO)	12 months
	3. Receive payments at one-stop shop – FASTER & SMARTER	Created project plan and tasks Acceptance of credit cards	Acceptance of checks	Completed - improving with MGO
	4. Explore establishing a "Customer Bill of Rights" including the right to a second opinion – ACCOUNTABLE & TRANSPARENT	Conference call with model city - San Diego Internal team established Bill of Rights drafted		Completed
	5. Conduct "post-process" surveys and interviews with applicants to evaluate level of service – TRANSPARENT	Surveys focused on problem identification Customer Satisfaction Survey Survey on service during shutdown	Take feedback on impact of FAST initiatives	12 months (ongoing)
	6. Provide regular outreach and educational sessions with customer groups and stakeholders – TRANSPARENT	FAST Communication Plan Open House and Survey	Upcoming stakeholders' session	Completed (Ongoing)
2. Reliable Schedules for Development-Related Applications	1. Establish an application timeline tied to hearing dates – FASTER & TRANSPARENT	Timeline created for site plans	Implement site plan timeline. Expand timeline for other application types following code amendments for streamlined/concurrent processes	6 months (Complete soon after reopening)
	2. Create an intake screening process – SMARTER			12 months or more
	3. Implement DRC coordination meetings to resolve competing priorities – SMARTER	Two new meetings created - DRC Coordination across various departments' staff and DRC Resolution process for direction from Directors on major issues.		Completed
3. Development Review Committee Improvements	1. Update and modify Development Review Processes and Procedures Manual – ACCOUNTABLE & SMARTER	Developed an interdepartmental team to draft and publish formal DRC Guidelines, Roles and Responsibilities	Publish DRC Guidelines, Roles and Responsibilities Update manual to reflect all proposed improvements	12 months or more
	2. Clarify scope of review to ensure the appropriate level of detail for specific types of applications (Project Plan, Special Exception, Site Plan and Amendments, etc.) – ACCOUNTABLE & TRANSPARENT		Develop and present code amendments Include internal review standards in manual for staff	12 months or more
	3. Allow concurrent reviews for certain application types (e.g., Project Plan with Site Plan or Site Plan with Special Exceptions) – FASTER	Options for concurrent reviews identified	Develop and present code amendments	12 months or more
	4. Standardize DRC comment protocol – ACCOUNTABLE & TRANSPARENT	Comment template drafted and in use Routing process streamlined and standardized		Completed

FAST Phase I Work Plan

	Action Items	Items Completed	Coming Next	Targeted Completion
4. Electronic Plan Review	1. Accept electronic plan submissions for applications using an interim solution until the more robust, fully-integrated tools are available through ERP – FASTER & SMARTER	Purchasing larger monitors for all plan reviewers Purchasing Bluebeam licenses and implementing electronic markups - utilize AdobePro immediately Interim digital process for all permits and development projects	Full implementation of MGO	Completed - improving with MGO
	2. Return review comments and drawing mark-ups to applicants electronically – FASTER & SMARTER	Electronic Reviews conducted on all Development Review submissions and returned to applicants electronically. Interim digital process for all permits and development projects	Full implementation of MGO	Completed - improving with MGO
5. Notification Requirements	1. Continue to provide the initial packet of information for public notice on applications while providing clearer information for the post-application area meeting (limiting subsequent mailings to postcards) – SMARTER & TRANSPARENT		Develop and present code amendments	12 months
	2. Allow the applicant to combine several different meetings / hearings into a single notice – SMARTER	All hearing dates that are known at the time of mailing are included		Completed
	3. Advocate and facilitate a more public-focused process by having staff attend all pre-application meetings and having the City host the post-application area meetings, rather than applicants – SMARTER & TRANSPARENT	Staff now attends pre-applications meetings	Revise code to state that staff will host the post-application meetings instead of the applicant	12 months
	4. Utilize social media and the City's website to supplement notice requirements – SMARTER & TRANSPARENT	Developed concepts internally		Completed
6. Clarify When a Site Plan is Required	1. Establish thresholds in determining when a site plan, site plan amendment, and/or certain building permits require formal review – FASTER & SMARTER	Chapter 24 was replaced on July 8, 2019 and Water and Sewer Adequacy Standards were developed	CTR Amendments proposed Work with small group on this and next AI	12 months
	A. Parking (> 5% net increase) B. Traffic Trip Generation (> 10 net vehicle trips) C. Water and Sewer Demand (> 10,000 gpd net increase in average wastewater flow)			
	2. Create a Minor Alterations application type to minimize Site Plan Amendments for changes of use or minimal site improvements such as dumpsters, generators, minor building additions and changes of use that do not trigger other minimal development thresholds – FASTER & SMARTER	Site Plan Amendment application form drafted	Develop and present code amendments	12 months or more
	3. Establish clear criteria for the thresholds of Level 1 and Level 2 Site Plans and Project Plan reviews to streamline processing certain Site Plan and Project Plan submittals – FASTER & SMARTER	Preliminary thresholds identified.	Develop and present code amendments	12 months or more

FAST Phase I Work Plan

	Action Items	Items Completed	Coming Next	Targeted Completion
7. Modify Single-Family Home Requirements	1. Conduct the entire stormwater management review in one step at the construction plan phase – FASTER	Chapter 19 amended on May 13, 2019 to eliminate SWM Concept		Completed
	2. Continue to encourage the protection of trees on lots and replace the Natural Resource Inventory and Forest Stand Delineation requirements with simplified Single-Family Home Tree Survey if confirmed as needed by city staff – FASTER & SMARTER		Develop and present code amendments	12 months or more
	3. While encouraging the retention of existing trees, require a minimum of three trees per lot for all new detached single-family homes, both on vacant lots and teardown/rebuilds – FASTER & SMARTER		Develop and present code amendments	12 months or more
	4. Develop and publish guidance documents – FASTER, ACCOUNTABLE, SMARTER & TRANSPARENT	Compile existing documents	Update existing documents Draft new documents	12 months
	5. Create consistent review timeframes for approvals (HDC, SWM, etc.) – ACCOUNTABLE & FASTER	Timeframes identified	Implement and track reviews (MGO) Update based on process changes	6 months (on-going)
	6. Streamline and simplify the review process for demolition permits (When specific permits go to the Historic District Commission) – SMARTER		Develop and present code amendments	12 months
	7. Simplify bond/ as-built release process – FASTER & SMARTER	Prepared draft Chapter 19 Code Amendment		Completed
	8. Require applicants to post notification sign on property upon application for a single-family home – TRANSPARENT	Developed Sign Requirement for the sign adopted by Chapter 5 - 9/9/19		Completed
8. Create an Exemption from Submitting a Natural Resources Inventory / Forest Stand Delineation	1. For minor alterations, an NRI/FSD shall not be required – FASTER & SMARTER		Develop and present code amendments	12 months or more
	2. For Site Plans and Site Plan Amendments, establish independent requirements for when an NRI/FSD is required – FASTER & SMARTER		Develop and present code amendments	12 months or more
9. Exemption from Afforestation for Parking Lot Resurfacing	1. Provide exemption from afforestation for parking lot resurfacing projects while protecting trees – FASTER & SMARTER	Developed interdepartmental recommendation for an exemption of parking lot maintenance from stormwater management and afforestation requirements.	Ordinance to amend Chapters 10.5 and 19 to create exemptions and simplify process.	12 months

FAST Phase I Work Plan

Action Items		Items Completed	Coming Next	Targeted Completion
10. (Additional Items) Revisions to Comprehensive Transportation Review (CTR)	1. Revise requirements of the CTR to define the scope of review based on the increase of net vehicle trips – FASTER & SMARTER			
	A. No transportation review for uses that generate less than 10 peak-hour vehicle trips unless there is an alteration for site access or on-site circulation			
	B. Uses that generate 10 to 49 peak-hour vehicle trips: A lesser Transportation Report required that contains introduction and proposed transportation features on site		Amend CTR to reflect recommendations	6 months (on-going)
	C. Uses that generate 50 or more peak-hour trips: Complete Transportation Report per CTR requirements			
11. (Additional Items) Forest and Tree Preservation Ordinance (FTPO) Clarifications	1. Deduct the area of right-of-way dedicated to the city from the total tract area to adjust Minimum Tree Cover requirements – SMARTER		Develop and present code amendments	12 months
	2. Develop FTPO guidelines to expand fee-in-lieu option and to count trees within appropriately sized planter boxes located on top of structures with the goal of aligning the FTPO with development standards in mixed-use and industrial zones – SMARTER & TRANSPARENT		Develop and present code amendments	12 months
	3. Explore a reduction in the number of trees required per residential lot in the subdivision process based on the viability of trees with urban-type townhome units – SMARTER	Drafted Text Amendment	In process	12 months