Memorandum

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

Date: February 14, 2006

INLUC
Agenda Item No. 7(C)

To: Honorable Chairperson Natacha Seijas and Members, Infrastructure and Land Use Committee

From: George M. Burgess
County Manager

Subject: Land Use and Permitting Process Assessment: Conclusions and Implementation Plan

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I am pleased to provide you with my Land Use and Permitting Process Assessment conclusions and implementation plan with the goal of improving the County's permitting processes, from land use through construction. After discussing the draft report with key stakeholders, I am pleased with the final report's key recommendations and with the detailed implementation plan (both attached). As I have earlier advised you, we have already implemented several significant recommendations and others are underway. I am confident that measurable improvements in the land use and permitting process will quickly ensue.

Under your leadership, the Infrastructure and Land Use Committee identified permitting system improvements as a chief priority. With construction in Miami-Dade County at an all-time high, nearly triple that of just ten years ago, providing timely and effective permitting services is more important than ever to our community. Consequently, you held a series of meetings and staff/industry forums aimed at improving our permitting process. Considerable industry and department input on various issues was discussed before the Infrastructure and Land Use Committee in 2005, culminating in my December 13, 2005 report to you.

As well, at the request of the Mayor, I convened a working group of professionals from both the public and private sectors to also advise on system improvements. For this purpose, I directed the Office of Strategic Business Management's Performance Improvement Division (OSBM/PI) to work closely with the Development Process Advisory Committee (DPAC) Subcommittee on Permitting Improvements.

The County's permitting process is highly complex and fragmented, and we were fortunate to enlist the help of the DPAC Subcommittee. Their members played a substantive role in developing the proposed recommendations. I was pleased as well that several other industry groups and various departmental representatives participated in the study, and that OSBM/PI conducted nationwide best practice research and several customer surveys.

It is important to keep in mind that permitting is among the most complex of governmental services, crossing multiple disciplines, regulatory codes and implementing agencies. It is a near continuous state of evolution. Further exacerbating this environment, Miami-Dade County is home to an increasing number of municipalities that conduct their own varying land use and permitting functions.

With this in mind, OSBM/PI developed recommendations utilizing all available resources, including improvements discussed under the auspices of the Infrastructure and Land Use Committee, that attempt to better align a fragmented service delivery model, and which balance the need for faster permit issuance with the challenges of constructing safe buildings in a region prone to hurricanes. The recommendations fall into three specific areas: 1) establishing a more coherent and accountable organizational model; 2) increasing permitting process speed by promoting high quality plans

submittal and a new, innovative review process; and 3) providing an array of customer-focused Initiatives designed to demystify permitting and increase accessibility. Within the last several months, I have held numerous meetings in order to achieve consensus among members of DPAC and County regulatory departments. I am satisfied that both DPAC and County interests are represented in a fair and balanced manner and that it is now time to effectuate change in the process.

Increasing Accountability and Strengthening Coordination

Establishing a coherent organizational model is fundamental to ensuring accountability and efficiency in permitting services. Depending on the specific project under review, the land use and permitting process can entail a complex array of review entities, including County departments, municipalities, and Federal and State entities. Approximately 70 percent of permitting in Miami-Dade County occurs within municipalities with each municipality taking an individual approach to permitting.

To simplify this puzzle, on November 21, 2005, I assigned Bill Johnson as the sole Assistant County Manager to oversee County land use and permitting operations. All land use and permitting review functions across County government now report directly to Mr. Johnson. Additional OSBM/PI recommendations to help defragment service delivery include:

- **Interdepartmental committees**: create effective work groups for the Information Technology, Platting, and Permitting processes
- **Formal County partnerships with municipalities**: establish relationships to streamline submittal requirements
- **Delegated authority from State Agencies**: administer programs currently run by the Department of Health and the Department of Environmental Protection
- **Water and Sewer Department plan review staff**: review staffing and customer needs at the Permitting and Inspection Center (PIC)

Reducing Review Times and Issuing Permits Faster

The OSBM/PI assessment concluded that the County nearly always meets the state statutes and county code governing residential and commercial initial review times (30 and 45 days, respectively). The key to reducing the overall plan review timeframe, and the subsequent permit issuance, instead lies in lessening the extremely high initial rejection rates while also addressing poor quality plan submittal. To address this issue, we are proposing a new Plans Advancement System (PAS) designed to reward good quality plans through using 'approval as noted', coupled with a graduated penalty system to prevent poor quality plans from clogging the system. The DPAC Subcommittee on Permitting Improvements has expressed considerable support for both recommendations, and despite the inherent challenge of developing the details of the new systems, County review departments are also in agreement. Additional recommendations in this area include:

- **A-Team Expansion:** require all review departments to conduct twenty-four hour review for smaller plans
- **Electronic plans submittal:** continue to encourage participation in a pilot program (industry, to date, has expressed little interest)
- **Quality assurance methodology:** create an internal supervisory oversight program in each review department
- **Checklists:** require submittal of checklists with plans to increase quality
- **Performance measurement criteria:** strengthen measurement of all review departments

Enhancing Customer Service

I have instructed that a targeted customer service campaign be launched to develop a more cohesive and personal approach to customer outreach. On November 21, 2005, I created the 'Development Coordinator' position to enhance the County's relations with the development industry and to make certain that the customer perspective is appropriately represented within the County. I appointed Tom Marko to this position. I am also promoting a more customer friendly feel at the Permitting and Inspection Center (PIC) to benefit both regular and occasional customers. The campaign will be comprised of the following initiatives:

- **Greeters:** welcome customers to the PIC and assist them in locating the appropriate information and department needed for their specific project
- **Standardize payment:** conform methods of payment, in particular the acceptance of cash, throughout the land use and permitting process
- **Access to plan reviewers**: homogenize the days and times of Design Professional's Day, expand current workshops to all departments, information through a dedicated communications plan on behalf of all review departments (information would be transmitted in a uniform and comprehensive fashion through press releases, presence in industry publications, and additional media channels)
- **Customer feedback program:** establish an ongoing program to continually foster communication and improvement (this includes the Secret Shopper program and customer surveys targeted to the specific user groups)
- **'One Stop Shop' information website:** develop a user-friendly site to demystify the process and provide information and documents to customers. The website will contain descriptions of the processes and link to review departments, forms, codes, fee information and contact information. Goals include posting interactive forms online, offering online access of approved plan documents to customers by replacing microfilming of plans with scanning, and offering an e-mail listserve for departments to communicate new information to regular customers
- **"Permit Wizard:"** as a long term objective, implement an application to provide customers with specific information based on their respective development or construction projects

Areas for Further Study and Next Steps

Lastly, there are several issues which need further review to determine the most appropriate recommendation. While a complete listing is contained within the report, several key issues which require further exploration include: staff efficiency, shortage of structural engineers, platting and concurrent review opportunities.

Finally, I have attached a workplan that will help track implementation of key recommendations. The plan has been reviewed by DPAC and County departments, and reflects their priorities. I will use the plan to help ensure accountability. I will continue to keep the Infrastructure and Land Use Committee updated on our progress.

Attachments

Bill Johnson

Assistant County Manager

Office of Strategic Business Management

Performance Improvement Division

Land Use and Permitting in Miami-Dade County

December

2005

OSBM/PI

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2005, Miami-Dade County rides the crest of a remarkable four-year building wave. With over $4 billion in new construction coming on-line this calendar year – nearly triple that of ten years ago - and with the promise of unprecedented increases in housing units in our near future, Miami-Dade, like other growth communities, labors to provide timely and effective plan review and permitting services.

There are two common refrains that spring from the building community when it comes to permitting: *it takes too long to get one* (a permit), and *somebody should fix this problem once and for all.* At the request of the Mayor, the County Manager initiated a review in February 2005 of permitting services within the county, with the primary objectives of reducing the time it takes to obtain a permit and making the permitting process more customer friendly.

What has become apparent over the course of this review is that achieving large gains in permit processing speeds would require significant relaxation of local governments' compliance activities, either through the expansion of self-certification programs or by minimizing governmental regulatory review. To date, self-certification programs have had a negligible impact on permit processing statewide. Anecdotally, we have learned that many communities within Florida may enforce various building code regulations less rigorously resulting in shorter overall processing times; however, enormous statistical gaps exist that prevent verification of overall processing times.

This report contains two dozen recommendations compiled by the Office of Strategic Business Management, Performance Improvement Division (OSBM/PI) designed to increase organizational accountability, speed up processing times, and improve customer service. These changes are *evolutionary*, falling short of recommending a dramatic shift toward self-regulation, which is a stance favored by some industry professionals with whom we closely worked. A shift of this magnitude represents a policy issue more appropriately addressed by the State Legislature, Mayor and Board.

With this in mind, our recommendations revolve around establishing a more coherent and *accountable organizational model*; *increasing permitting process speed* by promoting high quality plans and introducing a modified permitting advancement system; and providing an array of customer-focused initiatives designed to *demystify permitting* and *increase accessibility*. Our principal proposals, which apply most broadly to the building permitting process, are these:

Organizational Change

- *Single Assistant County Manager:* Currently, four Assistant County Managers have oversight responsibility for the various

departments with land use and permitting review authority. We recommend aligning the primary review authority departments under a single Assistant County Manager and creating cross-functional teams involving all permitting departments that will report to the single Assistant County Manager.

- *Municipal Partnering:* Three dozen cities and several state and County entities provide permitting services. More formal coordination efforts to help standardize approaches would assist customers in navigating an inherently complex system, and the County and cities to better administer greatly overlapping areas of regulatory responsibilities. Inter-local coordination can be fostered through the Building Code Compliance Office (BCCO).

Process Streamlining

State statute and County code govern initial plan review times for residential and commercial building permitting services (30 and 45 days, respectively). As review departments nearly always meet these requirements, the key to reducing overall process times lies in decreasing the extremely high initial rejection rates (currently in the range of 80%) and, consequently, the number of "reworks." In addition to the following proposals, our recommendations include complementary strategies for increasing plans quality, including customer education initiatives and the progressive use of checklists.

- *Plans Advancement System:* This report recommends instituting a new *plans advancement system* that will allow plans that are in material compliance with the law to pass through the system much quicker.

- *Quality Plan Submittals Program:* In addition to instituting a new mechanism that will allow more plans to progress to the permitting stage, improvements to the quality of initial plans can greatly decrease average plan processing times. Several recommendations are included in this report that will help improve plan quality, including the use of checklists, increasing customer contact, and instituting a graduated penalty system for system abusers.

Other recommendations include a greater use of technology, including electronic plan submittals and expanding the use of Geographical Information System (GIS) access, and very necessary improvements to performance measurement data.

Customer Service Enhancements

- *Permitting Ambassador*: It has become apparent through the course of this review that a more cohesive, personal approach to

customer outreach could enhance the County's relations with the development industry and ensure that the customer perspective is appropriately represented within the County. We recommend the creation of a land use and permitting ambassador, potentially housed within the Building Code Compliance and reporting to the Assistant County Manager for land use and permitting, to liaise with industry and work with review departments to address customer concerns.

- *'One-Stop-Shop' Information Website: The permitting process (if* one could call it a *process*) is a sprawling compendium of codes and regulations administered by dozens of governmental entities. No single information source provides an overview of the entire land development and permitting web. Consequently, OSBM/PI recommends the creation of an easy-to-use, comprehensive *'One Stop Shop'* website. Initially, the web site would be comprised of general process information and links to departmental and municipal web sites; eventually, the site would include an interactive "permit wizard" to guide various customers through the maze.

- *Customer Access:* Various customers of the permitting process expressed the desire to have more access to plans reviewers. While unfettered individual access to reviewers would both slow the process and make it more vulnerable to undue influence, OSBM/PI does recommends expanding access by incorporating all reviewing departments into existing Design Professionals' Day and Supervisor's List concepts, and rolling out a coordinated public information campaign.

During the course of this project, we worked closely with representatives of multiple County departments, outside professional organizations, and, of particular importance, a select group appointed by the County Manager from the Development Process Advisory Committee (DPAC). This report contains the recommendations of OSBM/PI; where appropriate, it attempts to capture any substantive concerns of parties who participated in the study. It is important to note that the DPAC working group, while generally agreeing to these recommendations, believes in a much more dramatic shift toward limited total review times (as opposed to initial review times) and, ultimately, subordination of the governmental plans reviewer to the design professional. OSBM recommends that the County Manager consult directly with the DPAC working group concerning its final thoughts.

The remainder of this report consists of *Background, Methodology,* and *Snapshot* sections, which provide necessary context for the *Recommendation* section. Also included are a series of attachments providing greater levels of detail and reference sources.

BACKGROUND

The planning of land use and the enforcement of state and local building codes are among the integral regulatory functions of local government. Progressively administered, these functions help ensure the development of safe, sustainable and aesthetically pleasing communities; slowly administered, these functions can stifle economic growth and opportunity.

Local governments across the nation use similar tools, though to varying degrees, to guide land use and to promote safe building construction:

- *Regional master planning*, carried out in Florida through the Comprehensive Development Master Plan (CDMP) process;
- *Zoning,* or the determination of allowable property uses in a particular location;
- *Platting,* or the creation of individual parcels of land; and
- *Permitting*, or the review of plans and issuance of permits for, and final inspection of, specific construction projects.

The variety of regulatory approaches taken by local communities fall along a predictable continuum, from those who little interfere with a property owner's use of his land, to those who proactively guide land use and provide extensive plan review and permitting services. A community's location on the continuum will depend on its particular geography, history, and political environment. Hurricane-prone Miami-Dade County, having already witnessed the devastating consequences of lax building code enforcement in 1992's Hurricane Andrew, has opted to retain considerable control over construction within its borders.

Support for this general policy direction has not wavered significantly over the past ten years among elected officials and County management, although some customers within the development industry have expressed a desire for greater reliance on the expertise of private sector design professionals. In 2002, the Florida Legislature responded to these sentiments by enacting F.S. 553.791, allowing customers to use qualified private sector design professionals to obtain plans review and inspection services, provided notification is given to the local building official with the permit application. The local building department is also permitted under the law to conduct an independent plans review and/or inspection, although only an audit program is required.

In January 2004, a review conducted by the Florida Building Commission (FBC) found that statewide, use of the alternative review process has been very limited; fewer than nine percent of 206 local building officials surveyed reported its use on at least one project. Customer and private provider feedback obtained through interviews and surveys indicated that overall, customers utilized the private inspection option more than private plans review, citing the time savings resulting from inspections "on demand", while use of the alternate plans review option depended greatly on the time frame for permit issuance by the respective

building department and the impact of the alternate plans review on other required reviews such as fire, environmental reviews, etc. The FBC concluded that although the private provider system has the potential to improve the overall permitting process by relieving heavy building department workloads, particularly in high growth areas like Miami-Dade County, its successful implementation is highly dependent on the willingness of the local building official to embrace the program. In many Florida jurisdictions, enthusiasm has been muted, with some building departments auditing a full 100 percent of private provider plan reviews and inspections. The FBC report noted that building officials' primary concern is that F.S. 553.791 does not relieve them of the statutory obligation to determine Code compliance.

In Miami-Dade County, customer use of the private provider program has been limited. Preliminary review suggests that this is a result of a number of factors, including the County's requirement that customers opting for the program use private providers for both plans review and inspection services; lack of clear process time savings due to non-Building Department reviews and a conservative audit program[1]; and significant statutory insurance requirements[2] which have constrained the private provider market. Despite these issues, should policymakers wish to provide for greater reliance on the private sector in the permitting process, a refined alternate plans review program[3] could be a valuable tool for doing so.

Aside from these overall policy issues, communication with customers in the design and construction industry has indicated that, despite many major improvements and changes over the years, certain components of the land development and construction permitting process can be made more timely, efficient and customer-friendly. Consequently, at the direction of the County Manager, and in response to the Mayor's request, the Office of Strategic Business Management / Performance Improvement Division (OSBM/PI) conducted a comprehensive review of the County's land development and permitting processes. Our objective has been to develop sound recommendations for achieving an equilibrium between properly planned development and safe buildings with customer needs for more timely and effective government review.

Several important points should be made concerning permitting services in Miami-Dade County prior to a discussion of recommended changes. First,

(1) *Permitting services are delivered through a highly fragmented service delivery model* – With three dozen cities providing building permitting services, and multiple state and County agencies layered in, permitting is less a coherent governmental operation than a complicated maze. As

[1] Local legislation requires the Building Department to audit a minimum of 25% of private plan reviews and 50% of private inspections.
[2] F.S. 553.791 requires private providers to have a minimum of $1 million in professional and general comprehensive general liability with a five-year tail.
[3] The FBC report indicated it would work to develop consensus recommendations for amendments to F.S. 553.791 for presentation to the 2005 Florida Legislature.

Miami-Dade County's role in permitting quickly diminishes, permitting services county-wide are becoming more, not less, disjointed.

The table below summarizes the respective roles of these entities, including Miami-Dade's responsibilities Countywide, for the unincorporated municipal service area (UMSA), and the Fire Rescue District.

Table 1: Municipal, County and State Roles in the Land Development and Permitting Processes

Jurisdiction	Area of Authority			
	Regional Planning (CDMP)	***Zoning***	***Platting***	***Permitting/Inspections***
Municipalities	n/a	Each municipality creates and administers its own zoning regulations	Each municipality reviews plats	Municipalities with building dept. issue own permits, but several possibilities (see below) trigger County and/or state reviews
Miami-Dade County - Countywide	All amendments to the CDMP must be processed at County level	n/a	The County maintains official maps and must review all plat applications in the County	DERM - Reviews all projects requiring environmental review; PWD - Reviews all projects involving construction in County maintained right-of-way
Miami-Dade County - unincorporated area	n/a	The County zoning code only controls zoning in UMSA	The County reviews all plat applications in UMSA	MDC only issues building permits for constructions projects in UMSA (including recent incorporations that have yet to establish a Building Dept.)
Miami-Dade County - Fire District	n/a	Role varies by municipality	Role varies by municipality	MDFR reviews all Commercial projects for UMSA and all municipalities within the County Fire District.
State	Standard Amendments approved by BCC go to Florida Dept. of Community Affairs (DCA).	n/a	n/a	Reviews may be required by Florida Dept. of Health and Dept of Environmental Protection

Notably, the portion of new construction in the County occurring in the unincorporated area has declined over the past ten years from approximately 65 percent to only 30 percent in Fiscal Year 2003-04, as a result of shifting land development patterns and new incorporations. However, County workloads have not declined, as overall construction volume has increased steadily.

(2) *Permitting customers represent an extremely wide range of interests and needs* - MDC permitting agencies must interact on a daily basis with property owners, developers, surveyors, architects and engineers, designers, contractors, tradesmen, plans runners, and average citizens. Frequently, changes in the permitting process favored by one group are not favored by another. Where the many competing interests become uniform are in the common desire for simplifying the process, increasing its speed, and establishing more customer-focused service.

(3) *There is no such thing as "*the *land development and permitting process"* - The particular regulatory process for any given project varies considerably based on project type (residential v. commercial), size and complexity, in addition to geographic location.

METHODOLOGY

Given the large scope of the review and the extensive list of stakeholders to the process, OSBM/PI relied upon a wide range of information sources, including extensive industry and departmental involvement, comparative jurisdictional research and customer surveys. A summary of information sources is provided in *Attachment 1*.

Industry Involvement

Throughout the course of the review, OSBM/PI has consulted with industry leaders to identify major areas of concern, locate progressive jurisdictions for comparative research, and receive feedback on proposed solutions. Industry input has come from numerous meetings with the Development Process Advisory Committee (DPAC), the recently formed DPAC Subcommittee on Permitting Improvements, and several other professional associations including the South Florida Chapters of the American Institute of Architects, Associated General Contractors and the Young Constructors Forum, the Beacon Council, the Florida Engineering Society and the American Society of Civil Engineers, as well as a forum hosted by Commissioner Natacha Seijas.

Departmental Participation

OSBM/PI held multiple meetings with the Directors and key staff of all County review departments to gain an understanding of business processes and issues, and to provide an opportunity for feedback regarding our recommendations. Additionally, we visited various sites including the Permitting and Inspection Center (PIC) in West Dade to directly observe customer interactions, and navigated through review departments' web sites.

Comparative Research

OSBM/PI studied the land development and building permitting operations of numerous local governments to glean examples of successful practices nationally and in Florida, as well as to gain an understanding of the ways in which local municipal governments interact with the County. The large pool of possible in-depth interview candidates was divided into three types of jurisdictions, each of which offered different, but necessary pieces of information:

- the five municipalities within Miami-Dade County with the highest construction volume;
- six Florida counties that have large populations and significant construction activity; and
- five national jurisdictions with population size, workload volume and code requirements similar to Miami-Dade County.

A summary of identified best practices is included in *Attachment 2*.

Customer Surveys

To capture a wide range of customer suggestions and concerns, OSBM/PI created a web-based survey that gives permitting process users the chance to rate and comment on services currently provided by the County. Three unique surveys were generated to address the specific experiences of different customer types:

- Design Professionals Survey for architects, engineers, or surveyors;
- Applicants Survey for contractors, developers, plan expediters, or owner/builders; and
- Home or Business Owner Survey for property owners or lessees that need a permit and/or inspection.

Development Process Advisory Committee member associations, with combined memberships of approximately 3,700, were personally contacted to encourage maximum response volume. A summary of customer survey results is provided in *Attachment 3*.

SNAPSHOT OF THE LAND DEVELOPMENT AND PERMITTING PROCESS

Land development and permitting activities in Miami-Dade County encompass a wide range of discrete regulatory processes spanning several County departments, as well as municipal and state agencies in some cases. A particular customer's experience will depend on a number of factors including project size, geographic location, and dollar value.

Table 2 below identifies the various regulatory entities that may become involved during the major phases of the land development and permitting processes. Again, agency involvement will depend on the particulars of a given project, though a major, large-scale development project may require all of the reviews listed below.

Table 2: Regulatory Agency Involvement in Phases of the Land Use and Permitting Processes

LAND USE			*PERMITTING*		
CDMP	ZONING	PLATTING	PLANS REVIEW	PERMIT ISSUANCE	INSPECTIONS & FINAL CERTIFICATE
Planning& Zoning Planning Advisory Board County Agencies Community Council BCC Florida Department of Community Affairs	Planning& Zoning Aviation Team Metro Public Works MDFR MDPD School Board DERM Parks and Rec Transit County Attorneys Community Council BCC Alternate Processes: Development Impact Committee Administrative Adjustment	Public Works Planning& Zoning WASD DERM FDOT FDOH School Board MDFR Transit Solid Waste Tentative Plat Committee BCC Property Appraiser	Permitting& Inspection Center Planning& Zoning DERM WASD Building a Plumbing b Electrical c Structural d Mechanical e Handicap MDFR Public Works Impact Fees	Building	(CU): Planning& Zoning (COCC) Building Planning& Zoning Public Works MDFR

County departments are, by definition, specialists in their own processes; although departments have varying degrees of knowledge of external regulatory reviews, none is expert in all aspects of the land development and permitting processes. Similarly, while repeat customers may have extensive knowledge of certain regulatory processes, each project is unique and potentially involves a previously unfamiliar review or regulation. Unsurprisingly, the customer experience throughout the land use and permitting processes can be labyrinthine.

Following are brief descriptions of each of the four major processes: Comprehensive Development Master Plan amendments, zoning, platting and permitting (encompassing plans review, permit issuance and inspections). Summary flows of each process are provided in *Attachment 4*.

Comprehensive Development Master Plan (CDMP) Amendments
The CDMP, the County's regional planning tool required under state law, expresses the County's general objectives and policies regarding the development or conservation of land and natural resources to occur during the next ten to twenty years. The CDMP establishes broad parameters under which local governments carry out detailed planning and zoning activities as well as programming of infrastructure and services. The CDMP also establishes the Urban Development Boundary (UDB).

Amendments to the CDMP are required when a customer seeks to change the land use category for a particular parcel of land. All such amendment proposals must be submitted to Planning & Zoning (P&Z) in one of the two processing cycles that occur every April and October. The Department of Planning & Zoning, the local Community Council, and the Planning Advisory Board each meet separately to formulate their opinions on the proposal. These opinions are presented in a public hearing before the Board of County Commissioners (BCC), which ultimately decides whether or not the amendment is adopted, although the Florida Department of Community Affairs (DCA) must be consulted on larger cases.

Zoning
The zoning code specifies property uses permitted within the zones established by the CDMP and delineates acceptable development parameters, such as minimum lot size, maximum density and required setbacks from property lines, for a given zone. Miami-Dade County enforces the zoning of the unincorporated area in accordance with Chapter 33 of the County Code, while each municipality generates and oversees the regulation of its own code. A zoning action is required whenever a customer seeks to change the property use allowed on his parcel or to vary the development parameters in some way. In the unincorporated area, this action takes the form of a zoning hearing, for substantial variances in property use, or one of many administrative processes for minor parameter changes.

The Department of Planning and Zoning receives applications for zoning hearings during two three-day periods every month. P&Z distributes the application to the entities that are charged with reviewing all such requests, chief among them County departments including Aviation, Team Metro, Public Works (PWD), Miami-Dade Fire Rescue (MDFR), Miami-Dade Police (MDPD), the Department of Environmental Resource Management (DERM), Parks and Recreation and Miami Dade Transit, as well as Miami-Dade County Public Schools. Each of these review entities issues a recommendation on the petition, which are compiled and reviewed by P&Z. The P&Z Director then prepares her formal recommendation on the application. In the case of a parcel larger than 10 acres or including over 250 residential units, the County's Development Impact Committee (DIC), which is composed of representatives from six Departments (Water and Sewer, P&Z, Fire, PWD, DERM, and MDPD) and an Assistant County Manager, issues the formal recommendation.

A public hearing is scheduled and publicly noticed. The local Community Zoning Appeals Board decides local issues, while the Board of County Commissioners hears Countywide issues and some appeals. An appeals process can be undertaken in the case of disapproval.

Recent improvements to the zoning process implemented by the Planning and Zoning Department include web enabled zoning records and maps, an electronic plans review system, the creation of a flag system for zoning hearing applications for improvements to single family and duplex residences on a platted lot, reducing processing time by approximately one month, and increased information availability on the Department's web site.

Platting

Platting is the subdivision of land or the reorganization of previously divided lands. These divisions are recorded on the official map of the County and set the basis for property lines and, later, addresses. Customers seeking to plat a parcel of land must submit their proposal for review by the County to guarantee that the proposed division is in accordance with the planning, zoning and infrastructure guidelines set out in the CDMP. The Public Works Department administers the platting process for the County.

An applicant may submit either a tentative plat (proposed division plan) or a waiver of plat (for petitions involving the subdivision of a parcel into 6 or fewer pieces). All requests are reviewed by the Plat Committee, which includes representatives from County departments including P&Z, DERM, MDFR, Water and Sewer (WASD), Parks and Recreation, Property Appraiser and PWD, as well as Miami-Dade Public Schools, the Miami-Dade County Expressway Authority, and the Florida Departments of Health (DOH) and Transportation (FDOT). The committee conveys any required revisions to the customer, who is responsible for meeting these requirements within nine months. When all conditions required by the Plat Committee have been met, a final plat application is submitted to initiate the official recordation process. PWD prepares a Resolution for approval by the BCC and, if approved, records the plat in the official map of the County.

Recent improvements to the platting process implemented by the Public Works Department include timely posting of Plat Committee agendas and minutes to the Department's web site.

Permitting

The permitting function encompasses plans review, permit issuance and inspections for specific construction projects. The Permitting and Inspection (PIC) Center in West Dade is a "one-stop shop" for permit customers who reside in the unincorporated area. Once inside the PIC building, USMA customers can submit permit applications, consult with representatives of the various review departments, pay permit and impact fees, and receive final permits. Various services are also available for municipal customers at the PIC, including environmental reviews and, if applicable, reviews by MDFR, PWD and/or WASD. All municipal plans should also be submitted to Planning & Zoning's Impact Fees

Division because Road and School Impact Fees are collected countywide, even though other fees (Fire, Parks, etc.) may be collected by the municipality.

Building permit applications for USMA customers, which include a job description and project plans, are initially received and routed for review by the Building Department. A distinctive mix of review entities is required depending on the type of application submitted (such as new construction, addition, roof replacement, and so on). Plans might pass through one or all of the Building Department's trades (Structural, Mechanical, Electrical and Plumbing) as well as other County departments including P&Z, DERM, MDFR (commercial projects only), WASD, and/or PWD. Impact Fees are assessed by the County. Additionally, certain projects require approval from the Florida Departments of Health and Environmental Protection.

County legislation requires that residential plans receive an initial review by all County departments within 30 days, while commercial plans must be reviewed within 50 days. Each review department either approves the plans, or in the case of non-compliance, denies approval and notes the deficiencies. Corrected plans must be resubmitted to gain approval; as a result, the total time required to gain a final, approved permit frequently spans many months. This total time, however, includes both County review time and *the time during which plans are in possession of the customer.*

Once the permitted work has been completed, the customer must contact the Building Department to arrange an inspection before the structure can be legally occupied. Customers can schedule inspections online, by phone, or in person. The inspector provides the customer with a time window for when the inspection will be conducted, typically within 24 hours of scheduling. The inspector must be granted full access to the site for a complete inspection to be completed. When Code compliance has been established, the inspector reports her approval. This report is added to a number of other certificates from DERM, Fire, Zoning, PWD, etc. to prove that the structure is fit for occupancy. The Building Department receives these documents and, if in order, issues a Certificate of Occupancy.

Recent improvements to the permitting process implemented by the Building Department include the opening of the PIC Center; enhanced interactivity on the department's web site; introduction of the "cookie cutter" permit whereby customers can submit a model design for multiple homes; introduction of after-hours plans review for an additional fee; the designation of Monday as Design Professionals' Day, whereby design professionals can schedule appointments with plan reviewers to discuss questions on their projects; and the purchase of electronic plans review equipment to allow for customers to submit all pieces of their permit application in electronic format, including technical drawings. Additionally, DERM has incorporated extensive Geographic Information System (GIS) layers into its internal review process, and the Public Works Department has enhanced the information available on its departmental web site.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As stated earlier, *land use and permitting* can be thought of as a series of processes that sprawl across multiple layers of government and several customer categories. For the past decade, various Miami-Dade County processes, particularly those involving permitting, have been in a state of near continuous evolution. None of the changes has substantially shifted regulatory responsibility toward the industry itself, as has been suggested as a means of substantially reducing permit processing and inspection times.

The recommendations contained within this report are primarily evolutionary in nature. However, OSBM/PI's recommendation to institute a new building permitting *plans advancement system* does have the potential to shift some responsibility to permit applicants, reducing in number time consuming plan reworks. Overall, we believe our recommendations are sensitive to public safety needs, though we recognize the ongoing need for adequate due diligence prior to and during implementation. Our recommendations attempt to address customer priorities, with the understanding that these priorities are far from uniform among different customer segments.

Our recommendations are summarized below in three broad areas: *organizational change, process streamlining* and *customer service improvements.* Those in the areas of organizational change and customer service apply broadly across the land use and permitting processes, while the majority of our recommendations for process streamlining focus on the permitting function, where we identified the greatest opportunities for improvement. Process speed is also most critical for developers during the permitting stage, when financing arrangements are already in place and delays result in additional cost to the developer.

Land use, as we have discussed, consists of three major processes: CDMP amendments, zoning and platting. The CDMP and zoning processes are carried out in the manner prescribed by the state legislature and the BCC, respectively, and timelines are largely driven by legislative mandates regarding required reviews, community involvement and appeal rights, rather than administrative issues. With regard to the platting process, our review identified a number of areas in which process improvements could potentially be made, including package submittal requirements, Water and Sewer reviews, and final plat recording. We recommend that the County examine these areas in greater detail.

Where appropriate, we have also noted key stakeholder feedback, including the top priorities identified by the Development Process Advisory Committee Subcommittee on Permitting Improvements. A more comprehensive description of our recommendations is provided in *Attachment 5*.

Organizational Change

Single Assistant County Manager
Currently, review departments within the land development and permitting process report to four different Assistant County Managers. This organizational reporting structure does not promote clear lines of authority or process "ownership." OSBM/PI recommends that a single Assistant County Manager retain oversight responsibility for the Building Department, Planning and Zoning, and Building Code Compliance. Additionally, the same Assistant County Manager should have a "dotted-line" responsibility for the permitting functions contained within Water and Sewer, the Department of Environmental Resource Management, Public Works, and Miami-Dade Fire Rescue.

> *Stakeholder Comments: This recommendation is the top priority of the DPAC subcommittee. Review departments have indicated this recommendation would be an effective way to address land development and permitting issues, which often cross department boundaries.*

We recommend the creation of several cross-functional teams reporting to this Assistant County Manager for land use and permitting (sometimes referred to as the permitting "czar") for the zoning, platting and permitting processes to facilitate interdepartmental collaboration. Additionally, the cross-functional teams could include members, when desired, from other departments and agencies who participate in the permitting process to lesser degrees. Staff from Building Code Compliance could help coordinate activities of the cross functional teams.

Municipal Partnering
When it comes to land use and building permitting, Miami-Dade County exercises greatly overlapping regulatory responsibilities with dozens of cities within its borders. More formal coordination efforts to help standardize approaches would assist customers in navigating an inherently complex system. Inter-local coordination can be fostered through existing groups including the South Florida Building Officials Association and the Building Officers monthly meetings. The Building Code Compliance Office can help coordinate these activities.

Additional Recommendations
Other recommendations in this area include partnering with the state to obtain delegated authority for certain functions, reducing permitting timeframes for customers.

Process Streamlining

Plans Advancement System (includes "approval as noted")
Currently, all building permit applications receive a complete review, and plans are either approved or disapproved and returned for *reworks. Time associated with processing reworks is by far the largest opportunity area for improving*

permitting processing times. The importance of meeting initial review periods as mandated by statute and code has been marginalized, as the vast majority of plans are rejected. Initial review times account for a small fraction of the time plans are trapped within the initial review and rework loop.

The "pass/fail" system currently in place maximizes the County's ability to control plans code compliance, but there are a number of unintended consequences. Department workloads - and, by extension, review times - increase as plans with only minor flaws must be revised by the customer and reviewed a second time by the County. Similarly, plans reviewers must devote considerable time and effort to poor quality plans with egregious errors or Code violations, effectively "clogging" the permit system.[4]

To address this issue, OSBM/PI recommends the implementation of a new plans advancement system. Each review department could take one of four actions on a set of plans:

1. *Approved* - For excellent quality plans with complete code compliance. Plans proceed in the consecutive review path and are processed in accordance with existing mandated time frames.
2. *Approved "as noted"* – For good quality plans that are in material compliance with Code, with no life safety or other material violations. Approval is granted with the stipulations that the plans of record and actual construction fully comply with the "as noted" issues.[5] Plans proceed in the consecutive review path. A special approval stamp would require signature by the design professional accepting full responsibility for ensuring construction in accordance with the approved plans. This would be submitted to the approval department prior to permit issuance. "As noted" approvals would require, at least initially, supervisor review.
3. *Disapproved* – For plans with material flaws or public safety concerns that require corrections and another review by the respective Department. Customers will be required to provide a narrative description of changes with the resubmittal.
4. *Dismissed* - For plans of inferior quality, substantially lacking information necessary for proper review and comment. Dismissals would require supervisor approval.

Plans falling into the fourth category would be subjected to a graduated penalty system, to include financial penalties as permitted under Florida law (see *Attachment 5*), property owner notification, and professional association notification. Additionally, we recommend that customers be required to provide a narrative description of changes on all resubmittals (categories #3 and #4).

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[4] According to Building Department data, more than fifteen percent of permits issues in Fiscal Year 2003-04 required more than three plan reviews.

[5] According to Section 105.4.1 of the Florida Building Code, "issuance of a permit (shall not) prevent the building official from thereafter requiring a correction of errors in plans (or) construction…".

While none of the jurisdictions contacted by OSBM/PI has implemented such a system, the City of Jacksonville does utilize the "approved as noted" designation for plans with minor deficiencies. We recognize that defining "material" deficiencies will be a challenging, though not impossible, task. Section 202 of the Florida Building Code provides guidance, defining a material code violation as "a violation... which may reasonably result, or has resulted, in physical harm to a person or significant damage to the performance of a building or its systems." Although this language applies specifically to existing structures, the same logic could be applied to plans review. Sustained collaboration between County leadership, review departments, and industry, along with the input of the County Attorney, will be required to develop initial definitions and refine them over time, though ultimately, review departments must have the final say. Initially, "approval as noted" is likely to be employed conservatively, with its use expanding as the County and the development industry gain experience and confidence in its application.

> *Stakeholder Comments: The "approval as noted" designation is a priority of the DPAC subcommittee. County departments have expressed a number of concerns over the use of "approval as noted", including legal issues. Departments have generally expressed support for requiring narrative descriptions of reworks and a graduated penalty system for poor quality plans.*

Additional Recommendations
Other recommendations in this area include implementing an internal quality assurance program to ensure consistent Code interpretation; utilizing checklists (voluntary and/or mandatory) to encourage complete permit applications; utilizing electronic plans submittal technology to expand the expedited "A-Team" review and streamline the overall permitting process; utilizing the County's Geographic Information System (GIS) to enhance the plans review process; and improving the collection and tracking of review departments' performance data.

> *Stakeholder Comments: Priorities of the DPAC Subcommittee include the mandatory use of checklists, "A-Team" program expansion, and concurrent review initiatives. Several County review departments have expressed support for mandatory checklists, but indicate that voluntary checklists are underutilized.*

Customer Service Improvements

Permitting Ambassador
It has become apparent through the course of this review that a more cohesive, personal approach to customer outreach could enhance the County's relations with the development industry and ensure that the customer perspective is appropriately represented within the County. While all review departments have developed their own customer service procedures, there is presently no single entity in the County that assists customers with process wide issues or addresses

complaints that cut across departments. Consequently, OSBM/PI recommends the creation of a land use and permitting ambassador, potentially housed within the Building Code Compliance Office and reporting to the Assistant County Manager for land use and permitting. The ambassador would proactively reach out to the industry and work with review departments to address customer concerns, to include participating on the cross-functional teams discussed above under Organizational Change. [6]

'One-Stop Shop' Information Website

The Internet is rapidly becoming the information source of choice for many of the County's customers. A large amount of information is currently available through departmental websites, and a number of valuable interactive applications, including online scheduling of inspections and online permitting and inspection status, have been rolled out in recent years. However, departmental websites vary in the amount of information and interactivity provided, and no single source provides a complete overview of the entire land development and permitting process. Consequently, OSBM/PI recommends the creation of an easy-to-use, comprehensive "one-stop shop" website. Initially, the website would be comprised of general process information and links to departmental and municipal websites, with additional features such as interactive application forms and scanned plans posted online. Eventually, the site would include an interactive "permit wizard" to guide a customer through his or her particular project. By answering a series of questions, the user would be able to determine what types of reviews would be required, as well as the timeframe, fees, applicable codes, and contact information. A sample website design template is provided in *Attachment 6*.

Several jurisdictions contacted by OSBM/PI offer similar "one-stop shop" web sites on their portals, including the City of Jacksonville and Clark County, while the City of Chicago has also implemented an interactive online "permit wizard."

Plan Reviewer Accessibility

County review departments currently offer customers the opportunity to interact directly with review staff - most notably, through Design Professionals' Day[7] and the Supervisor's List[8] program - but hours and procedures vary considerably. Hence, customers desiring direct interaction with reviewers in multiple departments may need to make several different trips to the PIC center on different days. OSBM/PI recommends that the Design Professionals' Day and Supervisor's List concepts be expanded to all review departments, that scheduling be coordinated, and that a coordinated public information program, to include workshops, e-mail information dissemination and a media campaign,

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[6] The customer liaison would not, however, attend to customer grievances regarding the approval or disapproval of specific plans. The County already has a viable appeals process in place to address these issues.

[7] Under this program, design professionals can schedule appointments with plans reviewers during specific days and times.

[8] Under this program, walk-in customers can meet with an available plans reviewer on a first-come, first-served basis.

be rolled out to customers. Some customers have indicated that having greater, on-demand access to plans reviewers would be extremely beneficial; however, implementation of such access would be difficult in light of issues regarding process integrity and reviewer workloads.

> *Stakeholder Comments: Customer surveys indicate that many customers would like to have greater access to the plan reviewers. Priorities of the DPAC Subcommittee include expanding and coordinating the Design Professionals' Day and Supervisors' List programs and improving the overall quality of staff - customer interaction.*

Standardization of Payment Methods

Currently, each review department determines acceptable forms of payment. For the customer requiring services from multiple departments, this can lead to confusion and inconvenience. OSBM/PI recommends that review departments work together to standardize payment policies, in particular regarding the acceptance of cash.

Additional Recommendations

Other recommendations in this area include the hiring of "Wal-mart" style greeters at the PIC, establishment of an ongoing customer feedback program and implementation of an enhanced Secret Shopper program to gauge the quality of customer service throughout the process.

NEXT STEPS

A detailed implementation plan will be developed with the collaboration of the County Manager's Office and other stakeholders including review departments, the DPAC Subcommittee on Permitting Process Improvements and other customer groups.

Moving forward, refining the land use and permitting processes will continue to be a balancing act between the general public's need for adequate regulation and customers' need for timely, effective service. An essential component of this process will be continued communication between the County and its customers, notably the professional development community. Regardless of the form this communication takes, it must be sustained and substantial in order to be effective.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1	p.22	*Selected References and Information Sources*
Attachment 2	p.26	*Selected Best Practices*
Attachment 3	p.30	*Summary of Customer Survey Results*
Attachment 4	p.31	*Land Use and Permitting Process Summary Flow Charts*
Attachment 5	p.35	*Detailed Recommendations*
Attachment 6	p.62	*Florida Statute No.* 553.80 2(b) *(rework penalties)*
Attachment 7	p.63	*Sample "One-Stop Shop" Web Site Layout*

Supplemental Materials Available Upon Request:

CDMP Process Detailed Flow Chart
Zoning Process Detailed Flow Chart
Comparative Jurisdictional Interviews – Detailed Write-ups
Development and Permitting Process Assessment, presentation at the March 8, 2005 Infrastructure and Land Use Committee
Building Department White Paper and Data Analysis
Administrative Order 4-115 establishing timelines for permitting process
December 7, 2004 Memorandum from Mayor Carlos Alvarez to County Manager George Burgess
February 10, 2005 Response from County Manager George Burgess to Mayor Carlos Alvarez,
May 19, 2005 Memorandum establishing the Development Process Advisory Committee Subcommittee on Permitting Process Improvements
Commentary by the Builders' Association of South Florida submitted at June 8, 2005 Permitting Workshop hosted by Commissioner Natacha Seijas

ATTACHMENT 1: SELECTED REFERENCES

Comparative Jurisdictional Interviews

Municipalities within Miami-Dade County

- City of Aventura, FL - Mariano Fernandez, Building Official/Director, on April 15, 2005 and with Joanne Carr, Planning Director, on April 26, 2005.
- City of Hialeah, FL - Juan Gutierrez, Building Official/Director, on April 29, 2005.
- City of Miami, FL - Joe Ferras, Building Official on April 2, 2005.
- City of Miami Beach, FL - Jorge Fraga of the City's Strategic Management Division and Evelyn Heisley-Sanchez of the Building Department on April 22, 2005.

Municipalities Statewide

- City of Jacksonville, FL - Thomas H. Goldsbury, P.E. (Chief of Building Inspection Division), Mr. Googe (Building Administrative Assistant), Mr. Shock (Deputy Building Official), and Mr. Sands (IT Department) on March 29, 2005.
- City of Orlando, FL - Tim Johnson (Permitting Services Division Manager) on April 18, 2005.
- Broward County, FL - Patric Edmondson (Information Technology); Dave Danovitz (Development Management); Stan Morris (Building & Zoning); Martin Weigand (Environmental Regulation); and Al Simon (Development Management) on April 13, 2005.
- Hillsborough County, FL - Mike Allguire (Planning & Growth Management); Edna Santos (Planning & Growth Management) on April 18, 2005.
- Orange County, FL - H. Allen Morton (Deputy Building Official) on April 14, 2005.
- Palm Beach County, FL - Rebecca D. Caldwell (Building Division Supervisor) on April 14, 2005.

Municipalities Nationwide

- City of Atlanta, GA - Norman A. Koplon, P.E. (Bureau of Buildings Director) on April 25, 2005.
- City of Los Angeles, CA -Steve Ikkanda (Department of Building and Safety Code Engineer), Ken Gill (Structural Engineering Metro Counter), Nick Della Quadri (Engineering Bureau Chief), Dave Snicker (Systems) on April 18, 2005.
- City of Tucson, AZ - Jessie Sanders (Deputy Director of Development Services) on April 19, 2005 and again on April 21, 2005.
- Clark County, NV -Dean Friedli (Permit Application Division) on April 1, 2005.
- San Diego County, CA - Scott Gilmore (DPLU Building Division Permit Process Coordinator) on March 29, 2005 and Patricia Laybourne (DPLU Planning Manager) on April 1, 2005.

Websites Consulted

Municipalities within Miami-Dade County

- http://www.miamibeachfl.gov/newcity/depts/building/bldgdept.asp
- http://www.coralgables.com/CGWeb/buildzoning.aspx
- http://www.ci.miami.fl.us/building/
- http://www.cityofaventura.com/commdev/building.htm
- http://www.ci.hialeah.fl.us/dept/planning/resp/

Municipalities Statewide

- http://www.coj.net/Departments/Public+Works/Building+Inspections/default.htm
- http://www.broward.org/building/welcome.htm
- http://www.broward.org/dmi00100.htm
- http://www.cityoforlando.net/permits/mission1.html
- http://www.hillsboroughcounty.org/pgm/landdevelopment/
- http://www.orangecountyfl.net/cms/DEPT/growth/building/default.htm

Municipalities Nationwide

- http://www.atlantaga.gov/government/planning/newpermit_070604.aspx
- http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/dplu/bldgforms/index.html
- http://www.ladbs.org/permits/permits.htm
- http://www.co.clark.nv.us/development_services/
- http://www.ci.tucson.az.us/dsd/

Others

- Permit Wizard - http://egov.cityofchicago.org:8080/epermit/pw/jsp/pw/pwHome.jsp
- Florida Department of Community Affairs Building Code Information System - http://www.floridabuilding.org/
- US Census Bureau Industry/ State/ County/ City Stats
  - http://www.census.gov/const/www/index.html
  - http://www.census.gov/const/www/permitsindex.html
  - http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/
- National Alliance for Building Regulatory Reform- movement to streamline building regulatory process - http://www.ncsbcs.org/newsite/national%20alliance/IT_main%20page.htm
- National Conference of States on Building Codes and Standards - http://www.ncsbcs.org/
- Additional jurisdictions researched -
  - http://www.phila.gov/li/faq/permits/index.html
  - http://www.sfgov.org/site/dbi_page.asp?id=18638

- http://www.denvergov.org/dephome.asp?depid=709
- http://www.pinellascounty.org/build/default.htm
- http://www.honoluludpp.org/PermitInfo/
- http://www.ci.eugene.or.us/PDD/BPS/pic/Available.htm
- http://www.cityofbellevue.org/page.asp?view=16523
- http://www.fultonecd.org/develop/dev-home.htm

Printed Sources

- Coral Gables Building and Zoning Department Review – JRD & Associates, 2004.
- A Building Permit Procedure Primer – City of Atlanta, 2005.
- The Florida Building Commission Special Report: Implementation of Section 553.791, F.S., Alternative Plans Review and Inspections – prepared by the Florida Department of Community Affairs, 2004.

Miami-Dade County Department Interviews

Building:

- Charles Danger – Director
- Juliana Salas – Deputy Director
- Donna Romito – Director, Information & Permit Support Division

Planning and Zoning:

- Diane O'Quinn Williams – Director
- Al Torres – Assistant Director
- Linda Itzkoff - Supervisor - Zoning Plans Processor 5
- Ronald Connally - Zoning Hearings Specialist
- James Byers - Chief, Zoning Permitting Division
- Lawrence Jensen – Manager, Impact Fees
- Ralph Gisbert – Supervisor, Zoning Inspection Section

Public Works

- Tony Toledo – Platting, Land Development
- Raul Pino – Chief, Land Development Division
- Jorge Ubieta – Land Development
- Mike Lugo - Permit Section Supervisor
- Donald Tock - Acting Special Taxing Districts Manager

Department of Environmental Resource Management:

- John Renfrow - Director
- Frank Aira - Environmental Resources Project Supervisor
- Vicente Arrebola - Chief, Office of Plan Review
- Enrique Cuellar - Chief, Office of Code Coordination & Public Hearing

Miami-Dade Fire Rescue:

- Tony Tola - Captain - Bureau OIC
- MC Mena - Division Chief
- Jacqueline De Diego - Planning Section Supervisor
- Peter McAloon - Captain

Water and Sewer Department:

- William Brant - Director
- Bonnie Wells - Assistant Director
- Phillip Torres - Manager, Plans Review Section

Finance Department, Occupational License Section:

- Fernando Casamayor - Assistant Tax Collector
- Cristina Mekin – Supervisor

Other Interviews

Florida Department of Health:

- Paul Andre, Professional Engineer II, On-Site Sewage Disposal and Treatment Systems

Habitat for Humanity:

- Ida Moralejo, Director of Construction Services

Industry Meetings Attended

- Development Process Advisory Committee
- Development Process Advisory Committee, Subcommittee on Permitting Improvements
- American Institute of Architects (4/6/05)
- Miami-Dade Architects and Engineers Society (4/18/05)
- Associated General Contractors (4/26/05)
- Beacon Council (4/28/05)
- Natacha Seijas Permitting Assessment Meeting (7/8/05)

ATTACHMENT 2: BEST PRACTICES IDENTIFIED IN RESEARCH BY JURISDICTION

Organizational Change

Employ multi-tiered contract system with incorporated municipalities for plan review services.	*Broward County*
Require platting to be complete and a folio number to be in place before Building Department will accept applications.	*Hillsborough County*
Require Zoning department approval for all necessary cases before plans reach Building.	*San Diego County*
Mandate that a Development Services group must handle any and all Planning/Zoning issues before Building Department even gets applications.	*Clark County, Broward County*
Limit number of outside agencies that need to be consulted for permits: Only Wastewater and Health and Environmental may need to be contacted, but Engineering/Zoning handles these reviews in-house, so only very complex cases need to be sent out.	*City of Orlando*

Process Streamlining

Scan & PDF permit documents and make them available online to the customer.	*City of Jacksonville, Clark County, City of Los Angeles*
Scan application documents and other single page pieces of application -i.e. energy calculations- at intake desk.	*Hillsborough County*
Use special software providing a central tracking mechanism and a link to land parcel information that flags problem areas while also functioning as workload organizer.	*San Diego County, Broward County, City of Orlando*
Utilize system-wide PCIS computer system across ALL city agencies involved in building permit process, allowing anyone to track each case while allowing the applicant to start the process, get approvals, check status, etc. at any department, not just Building.	*City of Los Angeles*

Link Geographic Information System (GIS) to parcel address/location so that flags come up for all issues related to that parcel that a reviewer may need to be aware of such as ash sites, historic district status, wind zones, etc.	*City of Jacksonville*
Accept plan submittals electronically.	*City of Tucson, Hillsborough County*
Implement "approved as noted" designation that allows permit issuance for projects with minor plan deficiencies that are to be fixed during construction.	*City of Jacksonville*
Provide extra training (and authority) to permit intake 'technicians' to review permit applications for completeness and subsequently reject them if necessary before they are passed on to review engineers.	*San Diego County, Clark County, Palm Beach County*
Require plans to be final versions, so that any plans marked "Not Released for Construction," "preliminary," and "permit only" by the design professional are not accepted for review.	*City of Atlanta*
Charge fines for plans that repeatedly fail reviews or fail to correct areas indicated by inspectors.	*Palm Beach County, City of Miami*
Require checklists for all submittals.	*Palm Beach County, Broward County, City of Atlanta, Hillsborough County - Mandatory by Code*
Employ a single reviewer for mechanical/plumbing/electrical permit applications who is certified in all of these trades.	*City of Jacksonville, San Diego County*
Utilize a lone reviewer for all trades on residential plan submittals.	*City of Tucson, City of Atlanta, Hillsborough County*
Adjust requirements so that plan reviewers must be journeymen, but not necessarily engineers.	*Palm Beach County, Broward County, Hillsborough County*
Require completion of Attachment 25 Checklist during zoning/platting civil (or horizontal) review process.	*City of Jacksonville*
Divide review workload into 1) Over the Counter quick permitting for no-review-needed projects; 2)Appointment Plan check for simple additions or single family homes; and 3)Submission of Plans for review of large, complicated projects.	*City of Los Angeles*

Dedicate Permit Intake Counter exclusively for use of walk-in customers doing interior alterations; applicant can then sit down with reviewers and sidestep normal process.	*City of Atlanta*
Have an 'Intake Engineer' review all plans at intake for sufficiency and quality before they are entered into computer system.	*City of Los Angeles*
Contact State Engineer Review Board after 3rd rework.	*Hillsborough County*
Track reworks by architect to chart who is taking the longest and who has submitted the most plans that require multiple reworks.	*City of Tucson*
Issue building permit without approval from outside agencies by pushing their approval back to holds on the Certificate of Occupancy (CO).	*Hillsborough County*
Guide all applicants to an *OK to Submit* Counter whose 4-person panel (Fire / Engineering / Zoning / Building) look at the plans to make sure they are of proper quality to be submitted. If not, missing items, or other information that needs to be added are indicated and the plan does not enter the system.	*City of Tucson*
Require narrative of changes to be submitted for all re-submittals.	*City of Orlando, City of Tucson*
Compress the tentative and final plat reviews into a single comprehensive process.	*Broward County*

Customer Service Enhancements

Link reviewer comments to reviewer's email to allow quick feedback on questions.	*City of Jacksonville*
Produce a project-specific 'Conditions of Approval' document that lists the forms that must be filled out and handed in, other agencies to be visited, fees to be paid, etc.	*San Diego County*
Offer Geographic Information System (GIS)-based interactive forum to look at real time status of permits for all construction occurring in City, searchable by Ward and then address.	*City of Tucson*
Provide interactive application forms on website.	*Clark County, City of Orlando*
Post application forms on permit website that can be filled out on the Internet, printed out and signed at permit center.	*Broward County*

Filter customers from one area to the next at permitting center according to number on ticket with the QueueNext ticket system.	*City of Miami Beach*
Calculated scheduled time for reworks based on algorithm giving values to number of reviews failed and the timeframes associated with them.	*City of Tucson*
Create a web-based listserve that sends out e-mail bulletins to all list members about new processes, code updates, changes in state requirements, etc.	*Clark County, City of Jacksonville*
Contact and consult with representatives from the building industry before making any process changes.	*San Diego County*
Provide a comprehensive website with 'how to' step by step forms for all processes, intuitive layouts, checklists, etc.	*Clark County, Palm Beach County*
Publish weekly queue list that details how many of each application type are waiting for review and how long the estimated wait is for each.	*Clark County*
Have customer surveys and idea/comment cards in lobby of permit center.	*City of Orlando*
List plats under consent agenda so commission will rule them on at a set time to the convenience of applicants.	*Broward County*
List of all steps involved in civil reviews and platting process as well as a "Do I need this?" explanatory page for each process on web page to properly guide customers.	*Clark County*
Require applicant to send a letter citing areas of disagreement with plat committee assessment before plat goes to commission hearing to help iron out problems.	*Broward County*
Task plan reviewers with reviewing plans in the morning and then conducting inspections in the afternoon on the same cases they've reviewed previously.	*City of Aventura*
Keep the permit center open until 8 p.m. one night a week, exclusively for use of homeowners (no contractors) for anything not requiring a site plan.	*City of Atlanta*

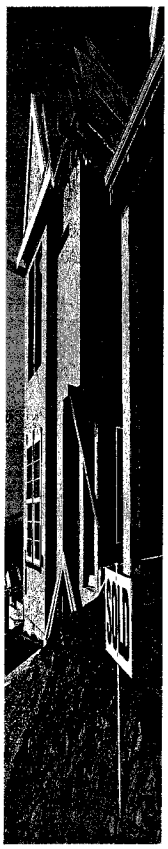
ATTACHMENT 3: SUMMARY OF CUSTOMER SURVEY RESULTS

Associations Contacted

Builders Association of South Florida	*Mr. Alan Krischer*
Latin Builders Association	*Mr. Gus Gil*
Dade County Bar Association	*Mr. Felix La Sarte*
Chamber South-South Miami	*Jeff Flanagan, Esq.*
Beacon Council	*Mr. Herb Council*
Associated Builders & Contractors, Inc.	*Mr. Peter Dyga*
Gold Coast Section of Florida Chapter of the American Planning Association	*Mr. Joseph M. Corradino, AICP*
American Institute of Architects	*Mr. David Wolfberg*
Industrial Association of Dade County	*Mr. Joe Witz*
Florida Engineering Society	*Mr. Jorge Maspons, P.E.*
Associated General Contractors	*Mr. Leonard Mills*
Miami-Dade Chapter of Florida Society of Professional Surveyors and Mappers	*Mr. Angel Lopez*
American Society of Civil Engineers	*Mr. Gary Elzweig*

Customer Survey Highlights

Around 2,000 to 3,000 surveys were sent out electronically through the different associations listed above. Surveys were customized for design professionals, property owners and permit applicants. In addition, a link to the survey was available through the Miami-Dade County Building, Planning and Zoning, and Public Works Department homepages. The overall survey response rate was very low; therefore, the results of the survey can only be considered anecdotal. However, survey results indicate some dissatisfaction with the construction plans review process, while generally reflecting satisfaction with the inspection process. Particularly noted were the ease of scheduling and rescheduling of inspections and the hours of operations for the Permitting & Inspection Center. No conclusions could be inferred from surveys regarding the zoning hearing or platting processes due to the minimal response rate.



Land Use and Permitting in Miami-Dade County
Attachment 4
CDMP AMENDMENTPROCESS

Notes	Time Frames	Obligatory Steps	Outside factors
If the application is for a 'small scale' amendment, it must be so noted on application to enter expedited process	1	Application submitted to P/Z by end of the month during April or October filing period	Full refund may be obtained if application is withdrawn within one week of end of submittal cycle
	11	All applications reviewed for sufficiency. Unclear/Incomplete applications to be resubmitted within 7 days of notification of insufficiency by P/Z.	
	25	P/Z publishes report of all finalized applications received during cycle	
	81	P/Z submits its initial recommendation to relevant Community Council and Planning Advisory Board	
	30	Local Community Council may, at its option, hold a public hearing to discuss the application and formulate a recommendation	
	30	Planning Advisory Board holds mandatory public hearing to formulate its recommendation for the BCC	
	30	BCC holds public hearing on all proposed amendments.	If 'small scale' the BCC opinion is adopted. There is a 31 day period for citizen challenges to be filed. If no challenge arises, after that period, the amendment becomes effective.
	30	Standard Amendments that are approved by BCC are transmitted to the Florida Dept. of Community Affairs (DCA) for review.	
	60	DCA returns its comments in a Objections, Recommendations and Comments report	P/Z also reviews any new information during this stage and may issue a Revised Recommendation based on new info presented
	30	Planning Advisory Board holds final public hearing on matter.	
	30	BCC takes final action on proposal in public hearing. It may adopt, adopt with change or deny the application.	
Total Time	358		

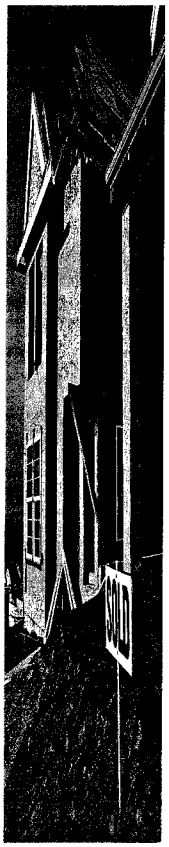
Land Use and Permitting in Miami-Dade County
Attachment 4

ZONING VARIANCES PROCESS (HEARINGS/NOTES ON OTHER SCENARIOS)

Notes	Time Frames	Obligatory Steps	Outside factors
		Submit proposal for rezoning on M-W of 1st/3rd week of month	
Zoning Hearing Departments 1. Aviation 2. Team Metro 3. PW Concurrency 4. PW Plan 5. Fire 6. Police 7. Drafting 8. School Board 9. DERM Concurrency 10. DERM Water & Sewer 11. DERM Trees 12. DERM Wetlands 13. DERM Water Control 14. DERM Wellfield 15. Parks 16. Inspectors 17. Scanning 18. MDT	7-10	Zoning specialist overseeing applicant's district routes copies to relevant agencies AND meets with Zoning Director for comments on proposal	Director's comments send to applicant
	30	Each Department develops a memo with comments on proposal	Initial notice send to neighbors
	8	ZACO gathers all memos into document then reviewed by Specialist and Director	
	23	Director's comments are put into formal opinion by Evaluator, Supervisor, Chief and Asst. Directors to form the PRE-KIT	
	6	PRE-KIT sent to all Depts AND to County Attorney for legal sufficiency review.	
	12	Changes are made according to legal input, objections and waivers are added to KIT, Chief and Asst. Director review and Director signs creating a locked FINAL KIT	Final notices sent out to neighbors and published in newspaper
	28	FINAL KIT distributed to depts, board members, court reps. Public notice time frame.	No changes can be made to the document at this point.
Applicant presents, objectors speak, rebuttal, CZAB questions and then vote		Hearing at appropriate Community Council & VOTE	
		Approval, move ahead on project to Building Dept.	Denial, appealed to Circuit Court
	128		
	Total Time		

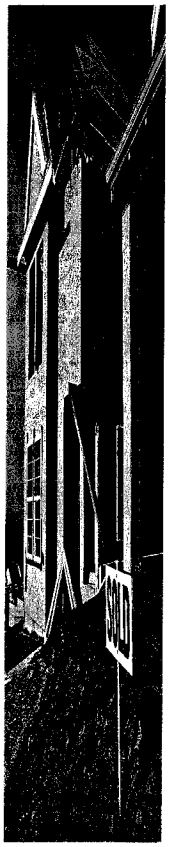
Alternative 1: Administrative Adjustments
Applications for this option are only accepted for single family, duplex or single townhouse units requesting a small variance in zoning regulations. Applications can be filed anytime, but they require the signatures of adjacent property owners to be accepted for review. 1-2 months are needed for P/Z staff and directors to review. P/Z Director makes final decision and then the results are made public. A 2-week appeal period follows before the variance is granted.

Alternative 2: Development Impact Committee (DIC)
Any property applying for a variance that is larger than 10 acres or includes 250 or more residential units submits a zoning hearing application as usual, but instead of having the P/Z director issue comments and recommendation, those functions are given over to the DIC, which convenes every 2 weeks and is composed of 7 Dept. heads (WASD, P/Z, Fire, PW, DERM, ACM, and MDPD).



Land Use and Permitting in Miami-Dade County
Attachment 4
PLATTING PROCES

Notes	Time Frames	Obligatory Steps	Outside factors
	?	Submit Special Taxing District Application to PW to receive memo that must accompany Tentative Plat application	Special Taxing District Application variance available for <21 lots
		Submit Tentative Plat Application (20 copies) to Public Works by Tuesday 12 noon.	
Plat Committee Members 1. Planning/Zoning 2. DERM Wetlands & Forest 3. DERM Water Control 4. DERM Water & Sewer 5. Fire 6. WASD 7. Parks 8. Property Appraisers 9. PW Paving & Drainage 10. PW Traffic 11. School Board 12. Florida DOH 13. Florida DOT 14. MDC Expressway 15. PW Special Taxing	10	Routed to Plat Committee Members for review and comments	Preparer contacted if problems-attempt resolution
		Plat Committee following Fri to decide on applications. Passage requires approval of ALL members.	Department that defers approval must inform PW that approval now granted so PW can put project back on agenda
	?	Tenative Plat granted to customer (valid 9 months) subject to conditions of each agency that must be met for final plat to be issued. Customer addresses comments according to own timeframe.	For those customers requesting Waiver of Plat (< 6 plots), PW now prepares submittal to BCC.
			BCC approves, but not recorded
*Once P/Z gives final approval. its Building Permit holds can be removed by sending a letter to PW asking for their offical removal	14	Once all conditions met by applicant, Final Plat Application submitted. PW processes it and sends to Zoning for final sign-off	
	30	PW prepares resolution and supporting documentation for the next BCC meeting scheduled.	
	10	BCC approves final plats. Mayor to sign.	
	21	Record Plat with Clerk of Court pending	
	27	Property appraiser - Assigns subdivision #s, creates folio #	
?			
Total Time			



Land Use and Permitting in Miami-Dade County
Attachment 4
BUILDING PERMIT PROCESS

Contingency	Time Frames: Commercial	Time Frames: Residential	Obligatory Steps	Possible Steps
	8	7	Building Intake (Routing)	
1. Zoning	3	2	Zoning & Planning/ Landscape	Hearing if changes
? 1. WASD ?	2	2		
	6	4	DERM	EQCB if wrong environmental classification for desired project
	16	13	Building (Plumb, Elec, Mech, Struct, Building Accessibility)	Florida DOH (if septic tank)
1. Zoning 2. Building	9	n/a	Fire [C]	
	?	?	Plans to Customer and reworks , if needed	
1. Zoning 2. DERM	4	2	Public Works Paving & Drainage review	
1. Zoning	2	1	Impact Fees	
1. Zoning 2. Impact Fees paid	4	2	Public Works Concurrency Review	
	52	33	Fee Paid Permit Issued	
	Total Time			

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2.4 **A-Team expansion:** Expand the use of the A-Team 24-hour review program to all review departments through electronic plans submittal. (A-Team 24-hour review projects include residential alterations or additions <1000 sq. ft. and commercial alterations valued < $100,000)	47			➖	
2.5 **Electronic Plans Submittal Pilot Program**: Continue the pilot program and assess the potential for process improvements through:	47		➖	➖	
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A. **Interdepartmental coordination:** Expand, and coordinate scheduling of, the Design Professionals Day and Supervisors List programs	53			➨	
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B. **Plans available online**: Replace microfilming of plans with scanning	**54**	➨	➨	➨	➨
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4.6 **Folio and address creation:** Continue improving coordination of this function in the Public Works Department, Department of Planning and Zoning and the Property Appraiser	**60**	➨	➨		
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ATTACHMENT 5: DETAILED RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Organizational Change

1.1 Single Assistant County Manager: Appoint the Assistant County Manager in charge of the Building Department to oversee the entire land development and permitting process

Currently, review departments within the land development and permitting process report to four different Assistant County Managers. OSBM/PI recommends that a single Assistant County Manager (sometimes referred to as the permitting "czar") retain oversight responsibility for the Building Department, Planning and Zoning, and Building Code Compliance. Additionally, the same Assistant County Manager should have a "dotted-line" responsibility for the permitting functions contained within Water and Sewer, the Department of Environmental Resource Management, Public Works, and Miami-Dade Fire Rescue.

By establishing clear lines of responsibility to the Assistant County Manager in charge of the Building Department, process-wide concerns and overlapping issues can be better addressed. These include such issues as review times, review quality, performance measurement, input from industry, fee collection, inter-departmental coordination, technology, basic information sharing, and coordinated communication planning.

1.1A Cross-functional teams: Establish interdepartmental committees that report to the Assistant County Manager for the zoning, platting, and permitting processes.

Regular meetings would foster interdepartmental coordination and provide a consistent forum in which to address issues such as performance, internal process issues, input from industry, and, potentially, issues arising from external review entities (i.e. the Florida Departments of Health and Environmental Protection). The Assistant County Manager charged with overseeing the land development and permitting process (discussed in Section 1.1) would have responsibility for the cross-functional committees. This function could be supported by the Building Code Compliance Office, and the permitting ambassador (see Section 3.1) could participate on the committees to provide an industry perspective.

1.2 Partnership with Municipalities: Work cooperatively to standardize and streamline development and permitting functions

Depending on the project location and type, platting and construction plan reviews may take place solely at the County level or at both the County and the municipal levels. It is recommended that a formal coordination effort to address interrelated issues be established; the South Florida Building Official Association or the League of Cities is a potential forum.

Miami-Dade County as a whole has seen tremendous growth in construction over the past ten years. However, data from the Miami-Dade County Property Appraiser indicates that construction is increasing at a higher rate in the municipalities than in unincorporated Miami-Dade County. Both the build-out of land in unincorporated areas, which has resulted in the infill of eastern municipalities, and the recent trend of new municipalities created by incorporations and annexations have contributed to an increasing rate of construction in municipalities.

The platting process, in particular, has significant ties with municipalities due to Florida Administrative Code (FAC) 177 and Chapter 28 of Miami-Dade County Code. FAC 177 establishes the minimum requirements for the process of subdividing land, intentionally leaving room for local government to supplement these with criteria specifically tailored to local needs. The County Code further augments those guidelines countywide, but does not preclude the municipalities from developing additional policies. Developing relationships, agreements, and information sharing with municipalities can help to facilitate correct and coordinated platting procedures and avoid current problems such as municipal building occurring in advance of County subdivision approval or incorrect waivers of plat.

For the construction permitting process, coordination with municipalities is essential to address the following issues affecting customers: streamlining submittal requirements, ensuring that proper Water and Sewer, Fire and Environmental reviews and inspections are conducted, collecting impact fees (including acceptable methods of payment), and addressing Code interpretations. Minor modifications to the Building Department's current bar-coding system could allow other review departments (Fire, DERM, and WASD) to independently track internal review times. This change would allow tracking of the plans as well as online viewing of plan reviewer comments on the Building Department's website, should the municipality chose. This information could also be shared with the Department of Planning and Zoning for the purpose of verifying whether impact fees owed to the County have been paid.

1.3 Partnership with State approval entities: Obtain delegated approval authority from the Department of Health and the Department of Environmental Protection to reduce review times and provide easier access for customers

In addition to approvals mandated at the County level, there are various state and federal reviews that may be required of a project prior to the issuance of a construction permit. Currently, various permits and approvals have been delegated to the Miami-Dade County Department of Environmental Resources Management (DERM). This is an advantage to the customer as DERM review time frames are significantly shorter, and the physical proximity to reviewers closer, than those of the delegating entities. Both increasing the scope of current delegations and obtaining new delegations would be an added benefit to customers. Industry feedback collected during the course of this review confirms these findings.

Specifically, approval from entities such as the Florida Department of Health and the Department of Environmental Protection may be required for certain projects and would be logical delegations due to considerable review and travel time savings. The exact impact and integration within DERM needs to be more fully explored; however, preliminary information indicates that implementation is technically feasible, as DERM currently completes construction plan reviews within the legislatively mandated review times of four days for residential and eight days for commercial (as established by Ordinance 99-140). Recommended delegations include:

- Increased scope of delegation for Environmental Resource Permits (ERPs) from the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).
- The septic tank review and inspection program currently conducted by the Florida State Department of Health (FDOH), which currently has a twenty-one day goal of plan review and approval issuance.
- DEP water main extension approval, now conducted by the FDOH, which currently aims to begin the review within thirty days of submittal and to complete the review within ninety days. Since DERM currently conducts the approval of sewer main extensions, this review expansion would be consistent with current internal capabilities.

Efforts to obtain additional delegated authority are currently underway by DERM.

2. Process Streamlining

2.1 Plans advancement system: Implement a new system to increase first time plan approval and decrease poor quality plans which will decrease workload and result in decreased review times

Currently, all building permit applications receive a complete review, and plans are either approved or disapproved and returned for reworks. While this "pass/fail" approach maximizes the County's ability to control plans Code compliance, a number of unintended consequences result. Department workloads—and, by extension, review times--increase as plans with only minor flaws must be revised by the customer and reviewed a second time by the County. Similarly, plans reviewers must devote considerable time and effort to poor quality plans with egregious errors or Code violations, effectively "clogging" the permit system. Analysis of available data from the Building Department shows that at least 15% of permits issued in fiscal year 2003/ 2004 required more than three plan reviews by that Department.

A plans advancement system can allow for efficient processing of both excellent and poor quality plans, while also addressing those that fall between the two extremes. While it is recommended that departments involved in the zoning and platting processes establish the most appropriate programs for each process, the following recommendation applies specifically to plans review in the construction permitting process.

2.1A "Approval as noted": Approve plans without life safety or other material flaws "as noted", with the stipulation that nonmaterial flaws will be corrected prior to construction and final inspection

Under the plans advancement system, each review department could take one of four actions on a set of plans:

1. *Plans approved.* For excellent quality plans with no Code violations. Plans proceed in the consecutive review path.
2. *Plans approved "as noted,"* with the stipulation that violations must be corrected during construction and confirmed to be so by the inspector. [1] For good quality plans with no life safety or other material Code violations. The plans would proceed in the consecutive review path. A special approval stamp would require signature by the design professional accepting full responsibility for ensuring construction in accordance with the approved plans. This would be submitted to the approved Department prior to permit issuance. Initially, supervisory approval of the "as noted" designation would be required.
3. *Plans disapproved;* corrections and another review required by the respective Department. For plans of acceptable quality but with Code violations deemed to be public safety and/ or material issues. Customers would be required to provide a narrative description of changes with the resubmittal.
4. *Plans dismissed* by reviewer (with supervisory approval) without a full review. For poor quality plans with multiple Code violations. Reworks (plans that are being re-submitted) could be dismissed if previous plan

[1] According to Section 105.4.1 of the Florida Building Code, "issuance of a permit (shall not) prevent the building official from thereafter requiring a correction of errors in plans (or) construction…".

reviewer comments were not addressed. Plans falling into this category for the fourth time would be charged the maximum Florida State rework penalty as per Florida Statute 553.80 2(b) which provides for penalties up to four times the permit fee (see Attachment 5).

We recognize that defining "material" deficiencies will be a challenging, though not impossible, task. Section 202 of the Florida Building Code provides guidance, defining a material code violation as "a violation... which may reasonably result, or has resulted, in physical harm to a person or significant damage to the performance of a building or its systems." Although this language applies specifically to existing structures, the same logic could be applied to plans review. Sustained collaboration between County leadership, review departments, and industry, along with the input of the County Attorney, will be required to develop initial definitions and refine them over time, though ultimately, review departments must have the final say.

2.1B Graduated penalty system: Implement a penalty system for poor quality plans using: rework fines, property owner notification, professional association notification

To address plans that are disapproved, it is recommended that a graduated penalty system based on the specific condition of the plan according to plan reviewer and supervisory judgment be utilized. The penalty system would consist of the plans quality grading system detailed in 2.1A and the following:

Advise the Property Owner of Plan Disapproval

After the third plan review disapproval, it is recommended that the particular disapproval entity advise the property owner in writing. Owners submitting their own plans represent a small fraction of customers (approximately 1%, according to Building Department data) and in many cases are unaware of repeated disapprovals and the resultant impact on permitting delays. Actively providing the property owners with this information may result in increased pressure upon hired design professionals to increase plan quality and/or completeness.

Rework Fines

To minimize poor quality construction plans, Florida Statute 553.80 2(b) allows the imposition of penalties of up to four times the portion of the permit fee related to plans review. These penalties can be imposed after three reviews (including the initial review and two additional reworks). It is recommended that the Building Department impose such fines and that additional review departments explore individual penalty provisions.

Professional Association Notification

Defining which customers are spending the most time within the system due to repeated reworks would enable the County to report these customers to their respective professional associations and post these reported names on the Building Department's website. The County Attorney will be consulted to ensure appropriate implementation.

2.2 Internal Quality Assurance Program: Institute an ongoing internal program of random, retrospective supervisory plans review oversight to improve consistency, clarity, and completeness of plan reviewer comments

Both industry feedback as well as survey data indicate that plan reviewer comments have room for improvement in terms of consistency, clarity, and completeness. Establishing a process-wide internal Quality Assurance Program would help to alleviate these concerns and address code interpretation problems. The development of programs across departments is recommended. Recently, the Building Department instituted a daily program wherein a certain number of reviewed plans are evaluated by the particular trade supervisor. Electronic review, in particular, would facilitate easier supervisory review of plans since paper plans would not need to be retained.

2.3 Voluntary checklists: Continue use while exploring mandatory use

When used, checklists of major required submittal elements can be a valuable tool for reducing the number of incomplete plans submitted at intake. Ideally, checklists should be sufficiently streamlined so as to minimize the burden on the design professional and allow intake personnel to quickly scan for completeness, while incorporating adequate detail to encourage the inclusion of required information. Although utilization of checklists that have been developed in the past in conjunction with industry representatives is low, it is recommended that current voluntary checklists remain available to customers who do wish to use them.

Conceptual support of mandatory checklists is strong among both County review departments and industry; however, little consensus has emerged around implementation details (notably penalty provisions). The implementation of mandatory checklists would likely require legislative action, and provisions would need to be designed to legitimize their use and effectiveness such as requiring the checklist to be signed and sealed by the design professional. Consequently, we recommend that departments develop a phased strategy for migrating to mandatory checklists.

2.4 A-Team expansion: Expand the use of the A-Team 24-hour review program to all review departments through electronic plans submittal

The A-Team is an existing twenty-four hour expedited construction plans review program designed for customers with small-scale projects. Eligible projects include residential repairs, alterations and additions of less than 1000 sq. feet, and commercial alterations or repairs valued less than $100,000. Expanding the program could achieve estimated time reduction savings of seven days for residential projects and twenty-four days for commercial projects.

Time savings would be achieved in two ways. First, all review departments would be required to take part in the current program. Currently, A-Team review is only offered by the Departments of Planning and Zoning, Building, and Environmental Resources Management (which conducts A-Team review for residential projects only). Both Planning and Zoning and Building review the plans within twenty-four hours of submittal. The plans are then transmitted within approximately one day to Environmental Resources Management, which then conducts a review of residential projects within twenty-four hours. The project is then reviewed in consecutive fashion by the Fire Department, which reviews commercial projects only within nine days or less and the Public Works Department which reviews residential projects in 2 days and commercial projects within 4 days. These maximum review times are established by County Ordinance 99-140.

Second, concurrent electronic distribution, rather than a paper-based review, would be utilized to eliminate transmittal lag time between departments. The expanded A-Team would scan plans at intake or accept the plans in CD ROM format, as specified by the Building Department's Concurrent Plans Processing Initiative. The plans would then be distributed to each review department concurrently rather than consecutively. The electronic format of these plans is critical to allow the review departments to concurrently distribute the plans within their internal review sections.

2.5 Electronic Plans Submittal Pilot Program: Continue the pilot program and assess the potential for process improvements

Electronic submittal of permit applications comprised of documents and plans in lieu of the paper versions is presently being pursued by the Building Department. The Department has invested in the software to facilitate receipt of such electronic files and in the hardware required for reviewers to fulfill their functions electronically. The software lays out clear requirements for the electronic formatting of these submittals. Moreover, State-approved methods of signing and sealing professional documents exist and would guide that portion of the submittal. The Department has sought industry participation in a pilot program via the Development Process Advisory Committee and additional industry associations; however, no interest has been received to date. The A-Team expansion (recommendation 2.4) incorporates electronic plans submittal

in attempt to encourage industry participation while providing considerable review time reduction.

Benefits of electronic plans submittal are:

- Plans could be immediately distributed to all review departments without distribution lag times. It is important to note that this lag time is in effect due to the current consecutive review system. This lag time is also a 'staging' time taken advantage of by the review departments to manage workload. This distribution time is accounted for in County Ordinance 99-140, which requires that residential reviews be conducted within thirty days and that commercial reviews be conducted within fifty days.
- Plans could be archived electronically, replacing microfilm as the current method of plans storage. This would make the plans retrieval quick and easy for review staff as well as customers.
- Plans could be easily reproduced, crucial if any of the documents are lost or destroyed.
- The format increases the ability of reviewers and designers to confer by phone and make modifications to plans as formatting requirements provide ease of reference.
- Similarly, electronic files facilitate concurrent review/E-appointments (described below).
- Reduced need for customers to visit West Dade PIC office, as approved plans and additional documents could be made available online.

The scanning of plans is an alternative for customers who may be submitting simpler applications or who do not desire to conform to electronic submittal. Exploring the use of in-house scanning or a vendor are both ways to conduct scanning. However, scanning has a number of disadvantages:

- Creates a TIFF file type. A conversion process to make this PDF is required to ensure view ability of plans over the Internet. TIFF is less efficient due to the file sizes (files being larger than compressed PDF).
- TIFF files lose the ability for electronic calibration. Therefore, the ability to measure based on the plan scale is lost.
- Loss of the original paper size.
- Possible loss of resolution at job copy (paper re-printing) production time.

*Also worthy of mention is that the Public Works Department presently receives plans for many permits involving utilities like FPL and BellSouth in a similar manner.

2.5A Electronic simultaneous distribution: Distribute electronic plans to all review entities to allow for simultaneous review

The use of electronic construction plans submittal (see Recommendation 2.5) affords the ability to concurrently electronically distribute plans to all review departments. It also provides the potential to achieve review time savings due to

a reduction in distribution time and the potential for concurrent review by the departments and their internal review sections. Further study of concurrent electronic review is discussed in Section 4.2B. Another method could retain the current time frames for each department designated by Ordinance 99-140. Removing the distribution time while maintaining the same workload makes it difficult to determine whether the departments could meet these goals and what type of time reduction could be achieved.

2.5B Sequential electronic distribution: Continue to review plans using a consecutive system, but eliminate routing delays through electronic distribution and a smart queuing system.

The current fashion of reviewing plans in a consecutive manner could also be accomplished via electronic plans submittal in the form of sequential electronic review. Time savings could be achieved through instituting a 'smart queuing' system whereby plans would be electronically routed according to the expected review time (determined by plan complexity) and workload. Further research and selection of appropriate software would be necessary to determine actual time reduction.

2.5C E-mail comments: Link plan reviewer e-mail to plan review comments

The implementation of electronic plans processing would allow the mechanism of linking plan reviewer comments to a specific plan area of interest. These comments would then be connected to the reviewer's e-mail. This would allow for specific communication between the reviewer and the applicant. While this policy requires a certain time be set aside each day for reviewers to respond it may reduce the number of appointments and provide a simple forum to address an issue.

2.6 Geographic Information Systems: Integrate current GIS layers and expand capabilities to link the land development and permitting processes for use by all departments. Offer fee-based availability to customers

It is recommended that a Geographic Information System be implemented and shared across all departments and processes to link all site and project specific information to one parcel of property. Information regarding land development (zoning maps and platting infrastructure) could be readily accessible along with information related to construction permits and inspections and business licensing. Both review departments and customers would be able to access quick and concise property and project information and approvals granted.

GIS is a graphic interface used to analyze, view and present information relative to geography. It is typically used to represent maps as data layers that can be studied and analyzed. Currently available layers include demographic statistics, land use, local contamination sources, and distances from important geographic

features. Custom map displays can be created through user-defined areas of interests, including economic development and incentive areas.

Currently, the Department of Environmental Resources Management is successfully using GIS for its internal plan review process. The Department of Planning and Zoning is using GIS for viewing zoning maps, platted property information and zoning hearing records. Presently, the Fire Rescue Department is working in conjunction with the Water and Sewer, Public Works and Enterprise Technology Services Departments to create geocodes (a process to mark & identify locations) for each fire hydrant.

To ease implementation costs of GIS, the information could be made available to customers as a fee-based subscription. The DPAC Subcommittee on the Permitting Process indicated that a paid subscription would likely be utilized by industry.

2.7 Performance measurement reporting system: Improve existing systems across review departments and expand measurement criteria

Performance measurement throughout the entire land development and permitting process is essential to target improvement areas, respond to workload trends, properly allocate resources, and establish challenging yet attainable performance levels. Performance measures are reported in departmental Business Plans and linked to the Countywide Strategic Plan.

Currently, review departments utilize a variety of performance measures and measurement tools. Particularly notable is the Building Department's bar-coding system, which is used to track plans as they are processed through the consecutive plan review process. Miami-Dade County is currently in the process of implementing a Countywide performance measurement system, Active Strategy, which could be tailored to monitor the land development and permitting process through its dashboard creation capabilities.

Regardless of the particular measurement tools used, it is recommended that the following information be captured in the performance measurement system:

Performance:

- Breakdown of project type: size, type, commercial/ residential
- Countywide vs. municipalities
- Outside review entities (DOH, SFWMD, etc.)
- Total time under County review
- Total time plan with customer
- Total plan review time per department
- Time taken to issue permit from application to issuance
- Initial review timeframe
- Rework review timeframe
- Revision review timeframe

- Rejection rates
- Customer satisfaction (% satisfied with process or similar measure)

Workload:

- Amount of plan reviews conducted, analyzed by:
  - Project type: size, type, commercial/ residential
  - Initial reviews
  - Reworks
  - Revisions
  - Commercial vs. residential
  - Countywide vs. municipalities

- Number of inspections conducted
- Number of permits and types issued

2.7A Total process time reporting: Report on overall permit processing times, including time spent with review departments and with the applicant

It is also recommended that upon permit issuance, a report be issued to each customer illustrating the amount of review time spent within each specific process.

2.7B Rework review times: Measure the review times of reworks; once adequate data is available, establish and, potentially, codify performance targets

Currently, Ordinance 99-140 mandates the maximum review times for initial plan reviews only. It is recommended that the review times of reworks (plans submitted for a second review or more) be measured. Once adequate data is available and assessed, performance levels can potentially be codified. This would be addressed in the enhancement of the performance measurement reporting system (recommendation 2.9).

3. Customer Service Enhancements

3.1 Permitting Ambassador

It has become apparent through the course of this review that a more cohesive, personal approach to customer outreach could enhance the County's relations with the development industry and ensure that the customer perspective is appropriately represented within the County. While all review departments have developed their own customer service procedures, there is presently no single entity in the County that assists customers with process wide issues or addresses complaints that cut across departments. Consequently, OSBM/PI recommends the creation of a land use and permitting ambassador, potentially housed within

the Building Code Compliance Office and reporting to the Assistant County Manager for land use and permitting. The ambassador would proactively reach out to the industry and work with review departments to address customer concerns, to include participating on the cross-functional teams discussed under recommendation 1.1a.[2]

3.2 Standardization of payment methods

Currently, each review department determines acceptable forms of payment. Preliminary research and industry input has shown that while fee collection has been consolidated somewhat for construction plans permitting, Miami-Dade County still does not have a unified approach encompassing all review departments throughout the land use and permitting processes.

For the customer requiring services from multiple departments, this can lead to confusion and inconvenience. OSBM/PI recommends that review departments work together to standardize payment policies, in particular regarding the acceptance of cash. (Municipal payment methods are addressed under section 1.2.)

3.3 "Wal-Mart" Style Greeter

For new customers, and especially for homeowners, visiting the large PIC center can be an intimidating experience. Although there is an information desk, employees staffing this counter function more as information sources than customer service agents. Consequently, OSBM/PI recommends that greeters be employed to welcome customers as they enter the facility, identify those in need of assistance, and walk them to the correct counter.

3.4 Plan Reviewer Accessibility

Customer surveys indicate that many customers would like to have greater access to the plan reviewers. Currently, there are a number of means by which customers can access plans reviewers and/ or supervisors, including designated days and times for meetings and workshops; OSBM/PI recommends that review departments expand and improve coordination of these offerings. Review departments must, however, continue to take into account the impact of direct customer – reviewer interactions on reviewers' ability to complete their work in a timely manner, as well as on the integrity of the review process.

[2] The customer liaison would not, however, attend to customer grievances regarding the approval or disapproval of specific plans. The County already has a viable appeals process in place to address these issues.

3.4A Interdepartmental coordination: Expand, and coordinate scheduling of, the Design Professionals Day and Supervisors List programs

Each Department within the permitting process has differing hours of availability for the public. Currently, the Building Department reserves each Monday for the Design Professional of Record to meet with plans examiners through appointments. Supervisors or plans reviewers from the Building Department trades and the Department of Planning and Zoning are also available, if requested, to meet with customers daily from the hours of 7:30am until 12:00pm (longer if needed). The Fire Department is available to meet with Design Professionals on Mondays and Thursdays. The Department of Environmental Resources Management participates in Design Professionals Day on Monday and offers limited daily appointments with plan reviewers. The Public Works Department recently ended their full-day walkthrough availability because of the drains on review times caused by constant customer interaction. It has proposed joining Design Professional's Day and having appointment times available every afternoon from 2-4pm.

Departments have stated that the currently available times are sufficient; however, better coordinating and communicating this information to customers may improve public perception of availability. It is recommended that departmental availability be coordinated to create optimum availability for customers.

3.4B Customer Workshops: Expand workshops for customers, to include additional departments and coordination of topics

The Building Department and Fire Department currently offer workshops to customers. The workshops have been well attended and should be expanded to include additional departments. Interdepartmental coordination of workshop topics is recommended to identify opportunities for presenting overlapping areas of interest. One coordination entity, potentially the Building Code Compliance Office, should be designated to facilitate the scheduling of the workshops. In addition, the possibility of offering professional continuing education units for attendance should be explored.

3.5 "One-Stop Shop" Information Website: Develop an easy to use, comprehensive informational web site to demystify the land development and permitting processes to provide all information about the entire process to customers

Information about the land development and permitting process is currently located in various formats within separate review departments. It is recommended that a comprehensive "one-stop shop" website be created that would provide all information about development and permitting. It would encompass both an education component (short term) and an interactive project-

specific component (long term). The website would contain the following information:

- Easy to read descriptions of all processes and links to the review departments within the zoning, platting, and construction plan review and inspection processes
- Forms, codes, fee information, and specific contact information
- Links to municipal web sites and municipal contact information. Coordination with municipalities is essential to ensure that basic information is available to customers.
- In the long term, a "Permit Wizard" could be created to guide a customer through his or her particular project. By answering a series of questions, the user would be able to determine what types of reviews would be required, the timeframe, fees, applicable codes, and contact information.

3.5A Application forms online: Post forms online and in an interactive format

It is recommended that application forms be made available online in an interactive format with the use of drop down boxes. This would assist both infrequent and recurrent customers in preparing forms in advance of submittal and also assist intake staff with legibility and correct information.

3.5B Plans available online: Replace microfilming of plans with scanning

In the permitting process, electronic imaging of final approved plans and other selected documents would be advantageous to reviewers and customers alike. Documents could be made available online for customers, who would no longer need to obtain certified approved plans from microfilming for revisions. In addition the Building Department already has the infrastructure to transition from microfilming. This would also be a benefit to Departments to address long-term storage issues. The Department of Planning and Zoning has already begun scanning Zoning Hearing applications for distribution to review departments and online public access. It is recommended that scanning be expanded to the platting process also. Scanning is consistent with electronic plans submittal discussed in recommendation 2.5.

3.5C E-mail Listserve: Offer as a simple way for Departments to communicate new information to customers

An e-mail listserve would provide a simple means for review departments to communicate process updates, new information, forms, workshop information, etc. to customers. Both industry and departments alike have indicated that this would be a useful new form of communication.

3.6 Communications Plan

It is recommended that a communications plan be administered by the Communications Department on behalf of all review departments. Establishing one forum for communication would allow the transmittal of information in a uniform and comprehensive fashion in the form of press releases, industry publications, and additional media channels as needed. Both review departments and industry have stated that this would be a useful communication tool.

3.7 Customer Feedback Program: Establish an ongoing program to encourage customer input and involvement

It is recommended that an ongoing customer feedback program be created to continually foster communication and improvement within the land development and permitting process.

3.7A Secret Shopper program: Implement enhanced program to assess services

The County's Secret Shopper program is designed to obtain feedback on the overall quality of customer service in the County. To obtain targeted feedback on the variety of customer experiences throughout the permitting process, program staff has developed a three-pronged approach, with the following focus areas:

- *Overall permit process.* Customers participating as Secret Shoppers throughout the entire building permit process will be recruited through the Building Department's website. A program description and contact information will appear as an advertisement on the website page leading to downloading a permit application. These participants will complete a Secret Shopper evaluation form each time they interact with the County, providing detailed customer service evaluation feedback as they proceed through the process.
- *Miami-Dade Permitting and Inspection Center (MDPIC).* Secret Shopper customer service evaluation forms will be available at each counter in the Miami-Dade Permitting and Inspection Center to solicit feedback from customers that go in person. Completed forms can be deposited in a drop box that will be set-up in the Permitting and Inspection Center lobby.
- *Building Department website.* In order to capture customer feedback from those using the Building Department's website, a specialized customer evaluation form will be available online. This form specifically evaluates various aspects of the website including ease of locating information, follow-up on existing requests and ability to download required forms.

Customer evaluation forms request Secret Shoppers to identify the specific department and section they are dealing with and ask them to evaluate service using several criteria.

3.7B Customer surveys: Continue the use of surveys to evaluate customer satisfaction and collect feedback

The use of surveys is an essential customer feedback tool to gauge customer satisfaction and collect valuable input. Findings of the customer surveys used in this assessment are presented in Attachment 4. It is recommended that departments involved with the land development/building permitting process continue to track overall customer ratings for the zoning, platting, building permit and inspection processes on a consistent and periodic basis. These efforts should provide a comprehensive assessment of the overall processes, and provide feedback regarding specific areas of success and improvement.

OSBM recommends that County departments obtain ratings of the following land development services from the following customer groups:

- *Consumers/End Users* - ratings of a specific MDC building permitting and inspections process that affected their property
- *Design Professionals* (for example, architect) - ratings of the MDC plans reviews for zoning, platting and building permit processes
- *Industry Applicants* (for example, general contractors) - ratings of MDC zoning hearing, platting, building permit, and inspections processes

This breakdown of customer groups allows for the questionnaires to be tailored to the respective audiences. This is important for two reasons. First, feedback information is most accurate when it is most relevant to the respondent; tailoring the questionnaires ensures that the appropriate customers are rating the appropriate services. Second, in a process as complex as the building permitting and land development process, breaking down the process into smaller pieces (for example, zoning versus platting ratings), allows for specific, usable information to be captured without burdening any single respondent with an excessively long questionnaire.

Additionally, it is recommended that the County assess the satisfaction of the community at large with the County's land development and permitting processes, potentially through the County's overall resident satisfaction survey.

4. Areas for Further Study

4.1 Personnel Efficiencies: Explore options for improving skill levels and addressing staff shortages

4.1A Structural Engineer Development Program: Develop training program to address staffing shortage

The Building Department's structural plan review represents the longest review time for that Department and also results in the highest percentage of disapprovals. Structural engineers are difficult to hire and retain due to stringent skills, education, and experience requirements combined with high

industry demand for this position. To remedy this situation, a Structural Engineer Development Program could be enacted. The program would provide training incentives to current County review staff to allow them to obtain the qualifications needed to become structural engineers.

The structural review, required solely in Miami-Dade County, was enacted based on recommendation by the Grand Jury and the Hurricane Andrew Task Force under the now repealed South Florida Building Code (SFBC), Section 201. It remains in effect under Miami-Dade Ordinance 1-225, which adopted Section 201 when the statewide Florida Building Code (FBC) replaced the SFBC in 1997.

4.1B Alternative Structural Review Program: Offer customers the ability to submit an affidavit in lieu of Building Department engineers solely for structural plans review

This recommendation would provide an alternative for customers wishing to bypass the structural review component of the Building Department. The Department would accept a peer review prepared by a licensed structural engineer in accordance with American Society for Civil Engineers guidelines and an affidavit as established under Section 104.3.2 of the Florida Building Code in lieu of the structural plan review.

4.1C Trades consolidation: Reduce Building Department review times by training staff to conduct reviews in all trades

The Building Department should consider combining the mechanical, plumbing, and electrical reviews for residential and/or commercial plans under a single plans reviewer to reduce overall review times. The difficulty of training reviewers with the requisite qualifications would need to be explored; however, best practice research has shown that this can be highly effective in reducing review times.

4.2 Concurrent plans review: Examine potential for simultaneous review by multiple trades and/or departments

A concurrent review involves gathering representatives from all review departments together to discuss one submitted plan as a group. With a plan reviewer from each department present (via teleconferencing), the group could analyze and issue comments on a plan in a single session, reducing review times. Coordination also allows all reviewers to be privy to the changes required by each reviewer, thus avoiding multiple reviews simply because one reviewer comment may prompt a change in another's. Conducting such a review, however, requires coordinated scheduling of dedicated personnel who can review as needed. Concurrent review can function differently depending on the format of the plan under consideration:

4.2A Paper-based plan submittal

If plans are paper based, each reviewer requires a physical copy of the plan to work off of. This introduces the difficulty of harmonizing the comments made on different plans sets.

4.2B Electronic plan submittal

As discussed in recommendation 2.5, electronically submitted plans allow each member to make comments on the interactive section of the submitted application, thus avoiding printing/harmonizing of comments problems, while adding clarity for the customer regarding necessary reworks. One method would consist of review departments coordinating a time to discuss a submitted plan as a group via teleconferencing, analyzing and issuing comments on a plan in a single session. Conducting such a review, however, would require coordinated scheduling of dedicated personnel who could meet and conduct this review as needed. The ability to coordinate this type of a review is challenged by the considerable workload and various project types, which necessitate a variety of plan reviews.

4.2C Scanning of paper plans

If plans are scanned electronic files, each reviewer could access the same document via network connection or email. As stated in Section 2.5, plan reviewer comments would likely be displayed online, as is the current practice.

4.3 Platting Improvements: Streamline the platting process

4.3A Complete package submittal: Require that final plat approvals be submitted as a single, complete package

In the current platting process, once the tentative plat is approved, the Public Works Department (PWD) maintains subsequent approval information submitted by the customer to fulfill the requirements of the final plat. PWD personnel then keep track of and advise the customer of pending items. It is recommended that instead of the PWD performing this function, the customer submit the final plat complete with all required approvals to the PWD for review and placement on the next Board of County Commissions for approval as is customary. This would eliminate an unnecessary internal function for PWD personnel and allow more time to be spent on substantive reviews.

4.3B Waivers of plat: Assess the impact of waivers

OSBM recommends a study be performed to determine the best way of harmonizing waiver of plat files with the remainder of the county's archives. In this study, the effect of eliminating the exception to recordation upon customers and departmental processes should be considered.

MDC Code Section 28-4 states that whenever land is subdivided the plat must be recorded, except if the land is subdivided into fewer than 6 parcels and one of three conditions exists: (a) unusual conditions created by ownership or development of adjacent lands, or (b) the isolation or remoteness of the land concerned in relation to other platted or improved lands, or (c) improvements and dedications existing on the land substantially in accordance with the requirements of this chapter. If one such condition is met, the PWD is authorized to waive the plat recordation requirement, which decreases the time of the process and the volume of supporting material that must be included with the application.

The original intent of this exception, which was initially granted by a departmental authorization but was subsequently altered to require commission approval, was to facilitate agricultural subdivisions in isolated areas by removing the need to comply with the infrastructure compliance requirements that only make sense in the urbanized areas of the county. However, the number of waiver of plat applications have risen rapidly in recent years. With that increase has come a spike in the number of land divisions that are not recorded on the official section sheets of the County map, presenting a possible record-keeping problem for the future.

The only way to know if plats receiving waivers have actually come into legal existence is for the customer to have specific knowledge of the waiver action and to submit a records request to PWD. These records are kept in physical form. Any damage to the records would signify the erasure of public knowledge of all land division actions taken upon the affected lands. An effort has been undertaken by PWD to begin scanning the waiver files, but future problems to retrieving this information could still arise if a countywide Geographic Information System (GIS) were to be put in place, as the GIS map is based on the official section sheet info. Waiver information potentially could be located on a parcel in the form of a point called geocode. See Section 2.6 for further information on GIS.

4.3C Plat recording: Explore alternatives to decrease the time needed to record a plat

When a plat is ready for submittal to the Board of County Commissioners (BCC), it is placed on the next agenda. After approval by the BCC, it must be approved by the Office of the Mayor and then recorded by the Clerk of the Board. Alternatives should be pursued to decrease this time fame, such as reevaluating the approval entities or bypassing standard agenda wait times.

4.4 Water and Sewer Department: Assist the department in obtaining a consultant to streamline new business and plan review processes and reduce plans review times

The Water and Sewer Department's role in land development and permitting is distinct from other County departments in that it does not perform regulatory

functions but rather serves as a utility. OSBM/PI supports the current initiative to hire a consultant to clearly define the WASD service agreement and plan review processes from both a customer and an internal user point of view. In addition, determinations of how long each step in the process should reasonably take given current staffing levels need to be made to bring some standardization to the process. Such data is currently lacking because no part of the WASD system is tracked or quantified, other than on a case-by-case basis.

4.5 Fire Rescue Department: Further study into review timeframes (both unincorporated and municipal reviews) and inspection procedures is necessary to address customer dissatisfaction

The Miami-Dade Fire & Rescue Department's role in the land development and permitting process concentrates on its enforcement of life safety issues – as defined by a combination of local, State and Federal regulations – through plan review and inspections for commercial projects. Yet, preliminary survey results indicate customer dissatisfaction with processing times for its plan reviews and the customer service component of inspections. MDFR is presently incorporated into the Building barcode tracking system for plans coming from the unincorporated area of the county, and almost always meets its initial review deadlines. However, a large percentage of the plans it tracks come from municipalities. As discussed in recommendations 1.2 and 2.7B respectively, it is therefore recommended that MDFR track initial plan reviews from municipalities and reworks for all reviews to generate data on all its review timeframes so that customer complaints about the lengthy plans processing times may be properly addressed.

With regard to inspections, MDFR inspectors currently enter results and comments multiple times because of system compatibility issues. Eliminating the multiple entry of data could enable inspectors to complete more inspections on a daily basis. MDFR projects that the integration of the two problem systems (Building/Fire), which is currently underway, will take 1-2 years. Priority should be given to this endeavor. In the meantime, further study of the volume of inspection requests and the distribution of appointments to customers is needed to determine how best to remedy customer concerns.

4.6 Folio and address creation: Continue improving coordination of this function in the Public Works Department, Department of Planning and Zoning and the Property Appraiser

There is a currently a committee to combine the now separate creation of new folios, currently conducted by the Property Appraiser, and addresses, performed by the Department of Planning and Zoning. It is recommended that this committee continue to address this issue to achieve time savings for the customer; additionally, the role of the Public Works Department in assigning new street names should be considered.

4.7 Extended hours: Continue to monitor customer demand for expanded hours at the permitting center

Customer survey findings, including those from a 2001 study conducted by OSBM/PI (then the Office of Performance Improvement) and surveys conducted in conjunction with this review, do not support extending permit center or inspection hours. However, customer demand for extended hours should continue be monitored.

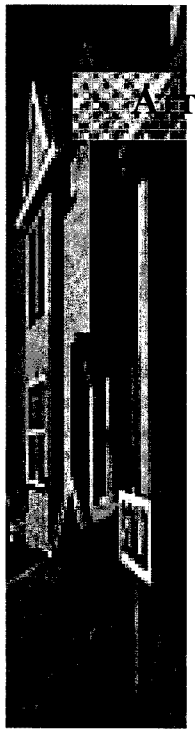
ATTACHMENT 6: Florida Statutes, Sec. 553.80 2(b)

Florida statute on reworks – Web citation

http://www.flsenate.gov/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=Ch0553/Sec80.HTM

Florida statute on reworks – Language of statute

"b) With respect to evaluation of design professionals' documents, if a local government finds it necessary, in order to enforce compliance with the Florida Building Code and issue a permit, to reject design documents required by the code three or more times for failure to correct a code violation specifically and continuously noted in each rejection, including, but not limited to, egress, fire protection, structural stability, energy, accessibility, lighting, ventilation, electrical, mechanical, plumbing, and gas systems, or other requirements identified by rule of the Florida Building Commission adopted pursuant to chapter 120, the local government shall impose, each time after the third such review the plans are rejected for that code violation, a fee of four times the amount of the proportion of the permit fee attributed to plans review."



ATTACHMENT 7: SAMPLE "ONE-STOP SHOP" WEB SITE LAYOUT

Welcome to the MDC Land Development and Permitting Services Centralized Webpage.

This page serves as a portal for all users of Miami-Dade County's Land Development and Permitting Services, from the most experienced professional to the first time user.

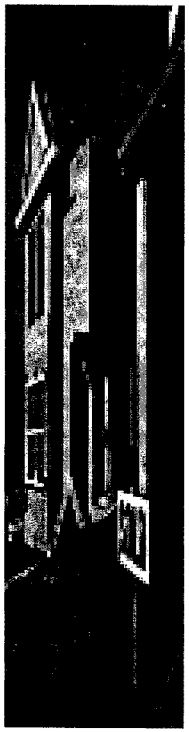
Below are six boxes that represent the six areas of county authority in the land development and permit process. Depending on the size, geographical location, and type of project you aim to do, you may need to pass through only one or possibly all of them. The boxes are placed in chronological order, from the possible beginning of a project at the CDMP level to the final stages of inspection once all construction has been completed.

If you are an experienced user and know which box your project corresponds to, click on it now to go directly to that area.

If you are new to the process, or have doubts about where your project belongs, click *here* to begin a short question and answer section that will guide you to the Department(s) you will need to consult.

NOTE: County residents who live in one of the Municipalities should click *here* first to ensure they are directed to the correct authorities in the quickest and easiest manner possible.

CDMP Amendment	Zoning	Platting	Permit Application & Plans Review	Permit Issuance	Inspections



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Zoning - Introductory Page

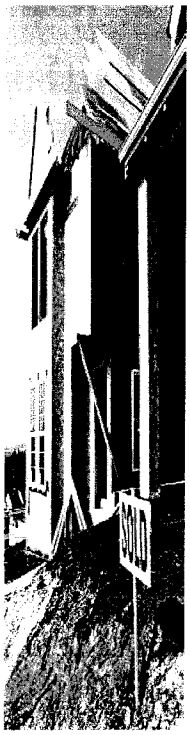
Page Instructions
Click on the box at right to view a flowchart that explains the process and describes the timeframes you can expect your project to be processed in. Also, each flowchart provides links to downable application forms, fee information, and Department contact information.

ZONING
If your building plan includes something that does not comply with the present zoning regulations governing the area your property is located in, you can either: 1. alter your plans to comply; or 2. propose an exception for your case. If you change your plans as instructed, you can proceed immediately with the Building Permit process. If you do not want to alter your project, you can ask for an exception/variance from the County's Planning/Zoning officials. Depending on the size/scope of your project and the change requested you will be subject to one of the three processes at the right of this page.

Alternative 1: Administrative Adjustments
Applications for this option are only accepted for single family, duplex or single townhouse units requesting a small variance in zoning regulations. Applications can be filed anytime, but they require the signatures of adjacent property owners to be accepted for review. 1-2 months are needed for P/Z staff and directors to review. P/Z Director makes final decision and then the results are made public. A 2-week appeal period follows before the variance is formally granted.

Alternative 2: Zoning Hearing
Zoning Hearings are the most common action in this area of the building permit process. Hearings are required for plans that are not limited enough to qualify for an Adminsitrative Adjustment but not so large as to warrant DIC overview. These applications are reviewed by all pertinent County Depts. who write memos regarding your request which the P/Z compiles and uses as a guide for her recommendation. This recommendation is sent to your local Community Council for a public hearing, whose vote decides the outcome of your request.

Alternative 3: Development Impact Committee (DIC)
Any variance application for a property that is larger than 10 acres or includes 250 or more residential units submits a zoning hearing application as usual, but instead of having the P/Z director issue comments and a recommendation, those functions are given over to the DIC, which convenes every 2 weeks and is composed of 7 Dept. heads (WASD, P/Z, Fire, PW, DERM, ACM, and MDPD).



Zoning Hearing Process Flow and Timeframes

Click for Application Requirements

Click for Fee Schedule

This process follows Chapter 33 of the Miami-Dade County Code. Click to read the code

Zoning Hearing Departments

1. Aviation
2. Team Metro
3. PW Concurrency
4. PW Plan
5. Fire
6. Police
7. Drafting
8. School Board
9. DERM Concurrency
10. DERM Water & Sewer
11. DERM Trees
12. DERM Wetlands
13. DERM Water Control
14. DERM Wellfield
15. Parks
16. Inspectors
17. Scanning
18. MDT

(Click on the name to go to that Department's website)

	Timeframe	
Submit proposal for rezoning on M-W of 1st/3rd week of month	1	
Zoning specialist overseeing applicant's district routes copies to relevant agencies AND meets with Zoning Director for comments on proposal	10	Director's comments send to applicant
Each Department develops a memo with comments on proposal	30	Initial notice send to neighbors
ZACO gathers all memos into document then reviewed by Specialist and Director	8	
Director's comments are put into formal opinion by Evaluator, Supervisor, Chief and Asst. Directors to form the PRE-KIT	23	
PRE-KIT sent to all Depts AND to County Attorney for legal sufficiency review.	6	
Changes are made according to legal input, objections and waivers are added to KIT, Chief and Asst. Director review and Director signs creating a locked FINAL KIT	12	Final notices sent out to neighbors and published in newspaper
FINAL KIT distributed to depts, board members, court reps. Public notice time frame.	28	No changes can be made to the document at this point.
Applicant presents, objectors speak, rebuttal, CZAB questions and then vote / Hearing at appropriate Community Council & VOTE	128	
	Total Time	

Approval, move ahead on project to Building Dept.

Denial, appealed to Circuit Court

Zoning Hearing - Fee Schedule

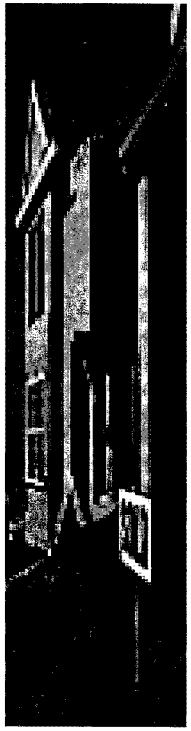
All application fees shall be paid in total, at the time of filing of the application, and no total fee shall be credited or refunded except when adjustment is warranted or deemed necessary due to departmental error. A refund of fifty percent (50%) of an original application fee may be refunded upon the withdrawal of an application when the written request for withdrawal is received within 60 days of the date of application. In no event, however, shall an appellant of a Community Zoning Appeals Board decision be entitled to a refund of the appeal fee.

Z999 In addition to the zoning fees set forth below, the following items shall be assessed a fee of 0.57 cents per notice for each additional notice mailed beyond a 500' radius. These fees shall be assessed for every occasion on which notices are mailed.

Z100 A. PUBLIC HEARING, ADMINISTRATIVE MODIFICATIONS AND REFORMATION FEES

Z101 Except as otherwise provided in B. through F. below, for every application for a zoning change, or other zoning application, where a public hearing is required to be held and for every application where notices and advertisement are required there shall be paid to the Department of Planning and Zoning for the processing of each and every application, a minimum fee of $855.00 or $1,710.00 if the application is the result of a violation. The exact amount of each and every public hearing application fee is established by the addition of the following fees:

		Fee	
Z104	Zone Change to AU/GU/RU1/RU2/RUIZ/EU/RU-1M(a)/RU-IM(b)	$1,140.00	
Z114	Zone Change to RUTH/MULTI-FAM/PAD	$1,710.00	
Z124	Zone Change to RU-5/RU-5A/OPD	$2,280.00	
Z134	Zone Change to BU	$3,420.00	
Z144	Zone Change to IU	$2,850.00	
Z115	Use Variance-AU/GU/RU-1/RU-2/RUIZ/EU	$1,710.00	
Z125	Use Variance-RUTH/MULTI-FAM/PAD	$2,850.00	
Z135	Use Variance-RU-5/RU5A-OPD	$3,990.00	
Z145	Use Variance-BU	$3,990.00	
Z155	Use Variance-IU	$3,420.00	
Z972	Non-Use Variance or Administrative Site Development Option (Residential)		$570.00
Z973	Non-Use Variance or administrative site development option- (Commercial, industrial, office)		$1,140.00
Z974	Special Exception	$2,280.00	
Z975	Modify/Delete	$1,140.00	
Z976	Unusual Use	$2,280.00	
	(1) Residential:	$1,140.00	
Z977	Site Plan Review		
Z978	Size of Property:	$570.00 per 10 acres or portion thereof	
Z979	Number of Units:	$285.00 per 15 units or portion thereof	
	(2) Commercial:	$1,710.00	
Z980	Site Plan Review Size of Property:	$684.00 per 10 acres or portion thereof	
Z981			
Z982	Size of Building:	$228.00 per 5,000 sq. ft. or portion thereof	



Zoning Hearing - Application Requirements

The following items must be submitted in duplicate:

1. Letter of Intent, listing what is being requested, why, and reasons why applicant feels the request should be approved, detailing variances, zoning requests, explaining zoning hardship, etc. (Applicant will receive details during the pre-filing appointment with the Zoning Hearing Specialist).
2. Application completely filled out and properly executed. (Folio numbers are mandatory).
3. Ownership affidavit(s).
4. Disclosure of Interest, if the owner, applicant or contract purchaser is a corporation, partnership, trustee.
5. Copy of executed lease for one year or more, if applicant is a lessee.
6. Owner's Sworn-to-Consent form signed by the owner-of-record of the property, giving lessee permission to filer for the hearing if applicant is a lessee.
7. Photographs of the property, including structures that may be the subject of the hearing.
8. 6 standard sets of plans (see below) folded and 1 set measuring 8½" X 11" (7 TOTAL)

Title Block: Plans must contain a Title Block identifying the project, name, title and address of person who prepared the plan, date prepared, and scale used.
Zoning Legend: All plans must contain a complete zoning data legend. Ask the Zoning Hearings Section for a copy of the standard legend for the type of development.

Plans should be reviewed with a Hearings Specialist, the Evaluation Sections, DERM and Public Works prior to filing, to eliminate need to revise plans once the application has been accepted. However, if you decide to revise your hearing plans, they must be submitted to the specialist and must contain 6 complete sets plus 1 complete set reduced to 8½" x 11". Additionally the plans must include the complete legend and a revised letter of intent incorporating and explaining any changes on the plans. Plans submitted after the advertisement for the hearing has been sent to the newspaper must be within the scope of the advertisement and accompanied by a fee. All revisions submitted more than 30 days before the hearing require a fee except for the 1st revision. Plans will not be reviewed unless accompanied by the required fees and the 8½" X 11" size set. See fee schedule for plan revision fees.

Plan types (some only required if pertinent to application)

a. Site Plans (must show entire property, all dimensions measured to centerline of the streets, size and uses of existing and proposed buildings, spacing, setback distances, typical parking spaces, driveways, etc. A complete zoning legend, showing data calculations for the site, must also be shown on the plan).
b. Floor Plans (must identify all rooms and indicate dimensions of each).
c. Building Elevations (drawing must show number of stories and height of top of roof).
d. Landscape Plans (including Landscape Legend and Certificate acknowledging compliance with the Landscape Ordinance).
e. Boundary Survey (required with every application, no older than 1 year. Must show all structures, rights-of-way, etc and any municipality boundary, if any).
f. Liquor Survey.
g. Special Purpose Survey:
h. Engineer's certification and/or compliance letter for existing structures.
i. Architectural approval letter required from the homeowners' or condominium association.
j. Signage Plans: Show sign detail including sign dimensions, height and setback distance.
k. Legal description [must be accurate; and if lengthy, to be submitted in Microsoft Word format on diskette or compact disc (CD), in addition to printed (hard) copy. Whether CD or diskette, ensure data is write-protected].
l. Lake Excavation Plans (prepared & sealed by a Florida surveyor or engineer, showing perimeter dimensions, deep cut line, cross sections and slope descriptions).
m. School Checklist (required for all day care centers and private schools)
n. Covenant or Declaration of Restrictions may be required.
o. Certain types of business uses require Environmental Quality Control Board (EQCB) approval before a public hearing can be scheduled. Contact DERM for additional information.
p. Hearing fees and additional radius fees - the fees paid at time of filing may not be the total cost of the hearing. Additional radius fees for mailing notices to property owners within a certain radius of the subject property may be assessed, depending on the type of hearing request. The number of actual property owners is determined by computer and you will received a bill for the additional radius fees approximately one month after filing. Fee schedule and instructions are attached. Hearing fees will be calculated by the Zoning Hearing Specialist at the pre-filing appointment.

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Implementation Plan
Land Use and Permitting Process Improvement in Miami-Dade County

Timeline: Oct Nov Dec 2005 (4th Qtr.) · Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun July Aug Sept Oct Nov Dec 2006

Organizational Change: *Increase Accountability and Strengthen Coordination*

#	Action	Responsibility / Timeline	Completed	OSBM/ PI Report Reference
1	***Designate one Assistant County Manager** to be responsible for the land use and permitting process	CMO — COMPLETED 11/21/05	✓	1, 15, 41
2	**Establish Interdepartmental Committees** for Platting, Permitting, and Information Technology to address overlapping problems	ACM 1/31/06	☐	15, 41
3	**Standardize and streamline municipal information and processes** through the South Florida Building Officials Association, websites, and a comprehensive database	ACM/ BCCO PHASED EFFORT: BEGIN 2/28/06	☐	2, 15, 42
4	**Obtain Delegated Authority from State Agencies** (DOH and DEP) to reduce review times and streamline approval processes	DERM 6/30/06	☐	15, 43

Process Streamlining: *Reduce Review Times and Issue Permits Faster*

	#	Action	Responsibility / Timeline	Completed	OSBM/ PI Report Reference
SPEED	5	***Institute a Plans Advancement System (PAS)** using 'approval as noted' to reward good quality plans and reduce unnecessary reworks. Establish a new timeframe goal for permit issuance	PERMITTING COMMITTEE/ DPAC PHASED EFFORT: BEGIN 1/31/06 — ONGOING	☐	2, 15, 16, 43
SPEED	6	***Establish a Graduated Penalty System** to prevent poor quality plans from clogging the system through levying fines, reporting to professional societies, and notifying the property owner	PERMITTING COMMITTEE/ DPAC PHASED EFFORT: BEGIN 2/28/06	☐	2, 16, 45
SPEED	7	***Expand A-Team,** the 24-hour plan review program for simpler plans, to include all departments through electronic review	PERMITTING COMMITTEE PHASED EFFORT: BEGIN 1/31/06	☐	47
QUALITY	8	***Simplify checklists and migrate from voluntary to mandatory use** to improve plan quality	PERMITTING COMM. 5/26/06	☐	46
QUALITY	9	**Continue to promote Electronic Plans Submittal Program** through increasing test groups and exploring wider-scale utilization	UNDERWAY — PERMITTING COMMITTEE COMPLETE TEST PHASE: 9/1/06	☐	47
QUALITY	10	**Create an internal supervisory oversight program** for plan reviews using quality assurance methodology	UNDERWAY — ACM 5/26/06	☐	16, 46
QUALITY	11	**Explore the use of Geographic Information System (GIS)** as the centralized development database for the County and consider fee-based use for private industry	INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE PHASED EFFORT: BEGIN 4/1/06	☐	2, 16, 49
QUALITY	12	**Strengthen performance measurement reporting** by including relevant criteria, all review departments, rework and municipal plan tracking, and using by Active Strategy Performance Measurement System	ACM/ OSBM 5/26/06	☐	2, 16, 50

* *Identified as consensus priority items by the County Manager's Office*

RED — CMO, ACM or Permitting Ambassador responsibility
BLUE — Committee responsibility (Established by Recommendation #2.)
GREEN — Department responsibility

Implementation Plan
Land Use and Permitting Process Improvement in Miami-Dade County

Customer Service Enhancements: *Optimize Communication and Information Delivery*

	13	***Appoint a Permitting Ambassador,** as an industry advocate, to continually address system improvements	ACM — COMPLETED 11/21/05	✓	2, 17, 18, 51
	14	***Institute a 'Wal-Mart' style greeter** at the PIC to welcome, assist and direct customers	BUILDING DEPT — COMPLETED 1/3/06	✓	19, 52
	15	***Allow easier access to Plan Reviewers** through better departmental coordination and expanding workshops. Partner with BCCO to offer State education credits for workshops	PERMITTING COMM. 2/26/06		2, 3, 18, 52
	16	***Begin a Communications Plan** to improve the transmittal of important information to customers	ACM/ COMMUNICATIONS DEPT BEGIN 2/17/06 — ONGOING		55
	17	***Continue the Customer Feedback Program** to ecourage customer and industry input and involvement. Hold quarterly meetings with the DPAC Subcommittee on Permitting Improvements	OSBM BEGAN June '05 — IMPLEMENTED AND ONGOING	✓	9, 19, 55
INFORMATION	18	**Develop a 'One Stop Shop' Information Website** to combine all Land Use and Permitting information and functions	INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY COMM. PHASED EFFORT: BEGIN 2/28/06 — ONGOING		3, 18, 53
	19	**Assign a WASD New Business Supervisor and BCCO staff to the PIC** to improve information delivery	ACM/ Depts 2/26/06		
	20	**Standardize fee collection and payment locations**	ACM 2/26/06		19, 52
	21	**Make plans available online** for customers and discontinue microfilming	BUILDING DEPT./ PERMITTING COMM. 5/27/06		54

Areas for Further Study

STAFF	22	***Explore pilot programs for employee motivation** to reward excellent customer service	PERMITTING COMM. 3/31/06		
	23	**Explore methods to increase staff efficiency** through consolidating Mechanical, Electrical, and Plumbing (MEP) reviews and addressing structural engineer shortages through alternative affadavit program	BUILDING DEPT. 3/31/06		56
	24	**Optimize queuing potential and/or concurrent plans review** by multiple trades and/or departments (compare submittal and review methods)	BUILDING DEPT./ PERMITTING COMM. 12/1/06		57
	25	**Evaluate ways to improve the platting process,** such as: requiring complete package submittal; assessing the impact of waivers; and reducing post-BCC plat recording timeframes	PLATTING COMMITTEE 4/28/06		58
	26	**Improve Water and Sewer Department new business and plan review processes and timeframes** using external assistance	WASD PHASED EFFORT: BEGIN 3/1/06		59
	27	**Address customer dissatisfaction with the Fire Rescue Department** through better tracking of timeframes and devising new inspection procedures	FIRE RESCUE PHASED EFFORT: BEGIN 1/31/06		60
	28	**Continue to streamline the coordination of Folio and Address creation** to reduce the current timeframe	PLATTING COMMITTEE UNDERWAY, COMPLETE BY 4/28/06		60
	29	**Continue to monitor customer demand for expanded hours** at the Permitting and Inspection Center	OSBM — IMPLEMENTED AND ONGOING	✓	61

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* *Identified as consensus priority items by the County Manager's Office*

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