

2018-2019 BUDGET QUESTION
Response to Request for Information

DEPARTMENT: Development Services

REQUEST NO.: 55

REQUESTED BY: Troxclair

DATE REQUESTED: 8/16/18

DATE POSTED: 8/29/18

DATE REVISED: 9/6/18

REQUEST: How much has Development Services Department's budget increased since the delivery of the Zucker report? Please outline the improvements made since FY 2015.

RESPONSE:

Attached to the response is a table representing the year-to-year changes in the Development Services Department (DSD) budget since FY 2016.

On August 17, 2018, DSD provided Council the Blueprint of Change, which is a report on achievements made through implementation of the 2015 Action Plan. The report covers various aspects of improvement such as Culture of Customer Service, decreasing wait time, increasing the utilization of technology, and improving the overall level of customer service. On August 17, 2018, DSD also provided the results of the 2017 Customer Satisfaction Poll. A major finding by the firm administering the customer satisfaction poll is that there has been a significant increase in satisfaction with DSD services in 2017 compared to 2016.

Blueprint of Change link:

http://austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Development_Services/BlueprintForChange/AA-AA-DSD-FINAL-web.pdf

2017 Customer Satisfaction Poll link:

http://austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Development_Services/ETC_DSDCustomerSatisfaction_PollResults_2017.pdf

In September 2015, Success Metrics were outlined which would be used to determine DSD's level of success as it pertains to implementing the 2015 Action Plan. The qualitative measures of the Success Metrics are monitored annually through the customer satisfaction poll mentioned above. The quantitative measures of the Success Metrics are monitored monthly, and reported online at the following link: <http://www.austintexas.gov/department/success-metrics>

In 2018, DSD convened multiple meetings with industry stakeholders to develop win-win efficiency improvements. The result was 64 recommendations for improvements to be implemented that will create efficiencies for both DSD staff and applicants. Attached is the list of recommendations for improvements and the current status.

Development Service Department Budget Increase History by Fiscal Year (FY)

	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19
Prior FY Budget	\$ 28,554,263	\$ 32,902,297	\$ 37,523,998	\$ 53,342,001
Budget Change Description				
<i>GF capital costs transitioned to DSD*</i>	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 750,000	\$ 855,000
<i>CodeNEXT funding</i>	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,350,000	\$ -
<i>Transfer of 6 positions from PARD and Office of Sustainability</i>	\$ 837,391	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
<i>City wide cost drivers</i>	\$ 795,436	\$ 1,547,609	\$ 890,769	\$ 1,768,272
<i>Funding to partner with 3-1-1 to answer calls 24/7</i>	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 449,313	\$ -
<i>3rd party contracts for review and inspection services</i>	\$ -	\$ 215,000	\$ 250,000	\$ 200,000
<i>Contractuals, commodities, and one-time costs**</i>	\$ (3,000)	\$ (329,123)	\$ 1,262,482	\$ 191,370
<i>DSD FTEs and inter-departmental support</i>	\$ 1,948,601	\$ 2,385,126	\$ -	\$ 6,352,603
<i>Annualized personnel costs from prior fiscal years</i>	\$ -	\$ 578,089	\$ 1,629,938	\$ -
<i>Temporary staff and overtime</i>	\$ 75,000	\$ 225,000	\$ 1,604,946	\$ 746,454
<i>Reorganizations and reclassifications</i>	\$ 101,000	\$ -	\$ (74,511)	\$ 650,780
<i>Rental and office space reconfigurations</i>	\$ 350,000	\$ -	\$ 1,294,500	\$ -
<i>Training and education</i>	\$ 255,000	\$ -	\$ 112,556	\$ 3,250
Total change from new resources	\$ 4,359,428	\$ 4,621,701	\$ 9,519,993	\$ 10,767,729
<i>Changes in the Drainage Utility Fund transfer</i>	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 5,545,612	\$ (550,064)
<i>Changes in inter-departmental fund transfers***</i>	\$ (11,394)	\$ -	\$ 52,970	\$ -
<i>Telecom permitting costs</i>	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 699,428	\$ -
Total change from funding source adjustments****	\$ (11,394)	\$ -	\$ 6,298,010	\$ (550,064)
Adopted/Proposed FY Budget	\$ 32,902,297	\$ 37,523,998	\$ 53,342,001	\$ 63,559,666

*Cash funding for replacement vehicle purchases began in FY18. DSD's CIP fund will transfer to the new fund in FY19.

** Includes significant cost drivers such as: credit card processing fees, concrete testing, and postage.

***Includes transfer between Austin Energy, Urban Forest Replenishment Fund, and Urban Heat Island Fund.

****Includes any budget adjustments from change in funding source, not due to new department resources.

Status Update

City of Austin Development Services Department (DSD) held focus groups in January 2018 with some of our key industry stakeholders, including the Austin Board of Realtors, Home Builders Association of Greater Austin, Barron Custom Design, Turner Residential Realtors, and the Real Estate Council of Austin. Listed below are various recommendations focused on improved service delivery.

Rec No.	Recommendation	Update	Start Date	Anticipated End Date
GENERAL OVERALL DEPARTMENT: Rodney Gonzales, Director				
1	Develop a customer service policy that includes (1) An "appeals process" to resolve conflicts at a lower level and for escalations in plan review and inspections (2) Honor previous reviewer's agreements for clearing comments (3) Better manage the communication between the customer and inspector	A committee of employees has been formed to create a purpose statement and put forth recommendation to improve customer service. Their suggestions will be reviewed next quarter with the ultimate goal of modifying performance reviews to include customer service criteria.	In Progress	Sep 2018
COMMERCIAL and RESIDENTIAL PLAN REVIEW: Denise Lucas, Deputy Director				
2	Develop a "red-lining" checklist and/or guideline	Creating an approved list of around 20 items for each discipline with acceptable issues that can be red-lined. Combined with training, this should foster more use of red-lining in lieu of rejection.	In Progress	Oct 2018
3	Make Industrial Waste and Health reviews concurrent with other reviews	DSD will confer and propose concurrent reviews with the relevant partner departments, Austin Water Utility and Austin Public Health.	Aug 2018	TBD
4	Develop prompts in AMANDA dialogue boxes (this is from applicant perspective); Stakeholders to help identify boxes that need prompts	The creation of applications has begun and some are in testing. We will launch and then follow up with stakeholders to gauge success and determine what additional changes are needed.	In Progress	Jul 2019
5	Develop an Improved Reviewer Comments Policy	Working to complete a canned comment library and will develop an SOP instructing staff in its use.	In Progress	Jan 2019
6	Provide data on the number of cycles projects go through plus type of comments	Working on tracking mechanism for this under Land Use Review. Data has been collected for Commercial Plan Review and we are compiling the results to provide a list of the most common comments found on projects that went through at least 5 cycles. This analysis will not be replicated for Residential Plan Review at this time as over 90% of projects are approved by the second review cycle.	In Progress	Commercial Plan Review data will be available by November 2018, LUR data is TBD
7	Implement pre-review calls in advance of submittal for Building Plan Review and after submittal for site plan review	Investigating the resources required (IT, staffing, etc.) with the intention of launching a pilot version of this service free of cost. If successful we will calculate costs and include this in our menu of services for a fee.	In Progress	Sep 2019
8	Create Code Interpretation Online Database	In the process of cataloguing historical interpretations. If enacted, CodeNext will alter city Code and may make some of these interpretations obsolete. This is tabled until after final adoption of CodeNext. At that time we will link interpretations to current or revised code on a searchable database for public use.	In Progress	TBD
9	Pursue and pilot new program to replace Certificate of Compliance Program (AKA Gold Card Program)	In the planning stages of program creation.	In Progress	TBD
10	Publish an online kit for garage conversions	Hard copies of the kit are available at OTC. Staff typically like to have a conversation with the customer in addition to providing the document, but we will review content to ensure comprehensiveness so that it can be made available online.	In Progress	Nov 2018
11	Create additional resources and assistance for small projects and publish online along with handouts	Some resources for small projects are posted on the Permitting ATX website, others are available as hard copies. We are investigating the resources needed to provide all documents online and will model these documents from the currently developing online garage conversion kit.	In Progress	Feb 2019
12	Create intake hours M-F and run through Development Assistance Center	A review of customer service hours is being conducted across all divisions, with the goal of creating more consistency department wide to improve the customer experience. This recommendation will be included in that evaluation.	In Progress	TBD

Rec No.	Recommendation	Update	Start Date	Anticipated End Date
13	Consider scheduling appointments and consultations as well as consistent department hours	Investigating the feasibility of adjusting the office hours of all divisions to create more consistent alignment across the department and will provide a recommendation to executive management.	In Progress	Nov 2018
14	(1) Create a guideline for review of third party certifications (2) Provide training for staff on third party certifications	Published guideline of what is reviewed on completeness checks of engineer sealed plans. This can be found on the DSD website. The division will provide continuing training to ensure consistency.	Complete	
15	Publish Completeness Check and Technical Review Checklist online	The Completeness Check Guidelines is published on the website. The Technical Review Checklist is complete and will be published.	In Progress	Aug 2018

SITE AND SUBDIVISION/ENVIRONMENTAL INSPECTIONS: Denise Lucas, Deputy Director

16	Integrate all inspections (and any other outliers) in AMANDA	Utility cuts and driveway/sidewalk inspections have been integrated into AMANDA. We are currently evaluating the feasibility of including Taps inspections and other areas where partner departments are involved. We will not be integrating heavy civil projects as it would be inefficient due to the way they are processed.	Utility cuts and D/S complete. Will begin Taps evaluation in November 2018	Jan 2019
17	Tie inspection processes together	Regular discussions with partner departments are ongoing, including quarterly meetings with executive management. Will propose grouping similar disciplines together across departments.	In Progress	TBD
18	Develop a process that allows for expedited as-builts modifications in field	Scheduled to meet with 4 partner departments (AWU, PW, WPD, and ATD) that are related to this issue. DSD engineers would need approval to make field modifications without partner departments checking field conditions. If approved, this will not be applicable for all projects but should decrease customer wait times for inspections.	Sep 2018	TBD
19	Make document enhancements to final cost and quantities and final construction summary docs to reduce errors; Eliminate initial submittal of project valuation; Consider different intake process	Eliminating initial submittal of project valuation is not possible under the current fee structure as valuation is required to set the fees. This also prohibits a change in the intake process as it would require a change to the fee structure.	No Change Planned	
20	Review commercial pre-construction meetings (Written into the Criteria Manual currently)	DSD will propose the requirement that meetings take place on site be changed so that they can be held at any location based on staff discretion. There will still be some projects where an on site meeting is necessary due to the nature of the project/site. The 1800 series rule that dictates these meetings governs activities of the Public Works department, so interdepartmental cooperation will be required to make this change.	In Progress	TBD
21	Look at process for residential pre-construction meetings	Programming in AMANDA has been completed and these can be scheduled using the IVR or AB+C. Stakeholder communication is being planned and we will launch after receiving feedback.	In Progress	Sep 2018
22	Develop Standard Operating Procedure to outline fiscal release process	The SOP has been written and delivered to staff.	Complete	
23	Integrate fiscal surety into AMANDA	A consultant has been hired to complete the project. We are finalizing the scope of work and will integrate into AMANDA.	In Progress	Sep 2018
24	Develop top 10 reasons why a meter isn't released from AWU	This list has been compiled, we are allowing time for AWU to review and concur, and will publish on website.	In Progress	Oct 2018
25	Develop a Standard Operating Procedure to outline final acceptance of subdivision in the Extra Territorial Jurisdiction	The SOP has been written and delivered to staff.	Complete	

BUILDING INSPECTIONS: Denise Lucas, Deputy Director

26	(1) Implement a new inspections process (2) Develop mechanism to track successful performance (3) Create cross training opportunities and improved consistency of inspections	Exploring partnerships to utilize technology to more efficiently schedule, track, and evaluate the inspection process department wide. We anticipate recommendations for operational changes that will increase department performance and customer service.	In Progress	TBD
27	Develop Top 10 list of repeat issues	This list has been created and published.	Complete	
28	Develop Top 10 list of Building Criteria Manual interpretations for customer education	In the process of cataloguing historical interpretations. If enacted, CodeNext will alter city Code and may make obsolete some of these interpretations. This is tabled until after action is taken on CodeNext. At that time we can create a list of the top 10 interpretations for customers.	In Progress	TBD

Rec No.	Recommendation	Update	Start Date	Anticipated End Date
29	Develop messaging: more time spent on inspections means more quality information to get to "pass" status	DSD is asking for additional inspectors in our budget proposal to allow each inspector to have more time on each project. In addition, training is underway for staff to encourage greater detail on deficiency lists and we are investigating IT improvements to allow for automatic and more consistent detailing.	In progress	TBD
30	AMANDA enhancements: (1) Provide appropriate contact information for inspections (2) Add field images in AMANDA (3) Tying inspections processes together in AMANDA	An IT ticket has been submitted to add inspection details that are viewable by the customer and a 'customer field contact' to the portal/AMANDA. We are investigating the feasibility of adding field images and tying more processes together.	In Progress	TBD
31	Automate Certificate of Occupancies and deficiencies list for email distribution to avoid trips to One TX Center	COs/TCOs/TCO-Stockings have been automated. Working with IT to automate emails for deficiencies list.	In Progress	Oct 2018
32	Perform review to determine if we are inspecting items that don't need to be inspected	The Law Department has provided input on what we are allowed to inspect and a "Right of Entry" training has been created for staff.	Complete	
33	Allow trade inspectors to conduct combo inspections and find opportunities to use third parties	Received approval from Electrical Board to update electrical inspector qualifications with the goal of increasing potential inspectors. Now beginning process of updating Building Criteria Manual through stakeholder engagement and rule posting. Using third party inspectors would require a code amendment as it requires inspections to be completed by a City of Austin employee.	In Progress	Dec 2018
SERVICE CENTER: Denise Lucas, Deputy Director				
34	Eliminate hand written receipts--all should available be in AMANDA	All service center hand receipts have been catalogued and submitted to IT so that they can be processed online.	In Progress	Sep 2018
35	Develop Top 10 reasons for refunds	Compiling list and submitting to the PIO division to publish.	In Progress	Sep 2018
LAND USE REVIEW: Andrew Linseisen, Assistant Director				
36	Implement project consultant system concept	Advocate/ombudsperson positions are not currently funded by council, we estimate 4 FTEs for this concept. Exploring how these positions could improve the existing multi-departmental framework where DSD cannot control processes in other departments.	Contingent on FY 19-20 budget approval.	
37	Coordinate and convene meetings with AWU, AE, ATD and Fire	Quarterly partner department meetings are taking place to discuss the city-wide development process. Interdepartmental process mapping and outreach is taking place to identify choke points and improve efficiencies city-wide. Findings will be presented to City Council for their consideration.	In progress	TBD
38	Implement mandatory, collaborative meetings to discuss outstanding issues (after submittal)	A pilot program has been outlined and will be implemented in August.	Aug 2018	Will evaluate in November 2018
39	Proactive communication: contact agent if items missing in plans instead of listing in comment report	A directive from management has been sent out to supervisors to train staff to have proactive communication with customers and implement monitoring for quality assurance.	Complete	Quality assurance will be ongoing
40	Implement reliable fee computation	DSD will request funds for resources to make fee computation possible through the web portal for all the department's divisions.	Sep 2019	Contingent on funding approval
41	Identify delays and a process to streamline mylars to permit in hand	The training manual for the Planner 1 position has been updated to outline that the process be completed within 48 hours.	Complete	
42	Reduce timeframe of mylars to permit in hand	The training manual for the Planner 1 position has been updated to outline that the process be completed within 48 hours.	Complete	
43	Make a clear distinction between the City and County's roles and responsibilities (street improvements in Extra Territorial Jurisdiction)	Andrew Linseisen is working with Travis County to review Title 30 requirements and identify an escalation process. We are awaiting the appointment of a new County Executive to resume talks.	In Progress	TBD
COMMUNITY TREES: Andrew Linseisen, Assistant Director				
44	Include tree protection information with permits	Checklists have been created and are being provided to customers with permits	Complete	
45	Allow contingent approvals for arborist certification	Creating a guideline listing what we accept along with an internal policy stating this is a permissible action.	In Progress	Sep 2018
46	Develop guideline on how comments are written; Identify conditional comments vs those that aren't	A standard comment document was developed in collaboration with homebuilders and distributed to the Home Builders Association. Creating an internal process and documentation to standardize comments shared among all tree review staff.	In Progress	Nov 2018

Rec No.	Recommendation	Update	Start Date	Anticipated End Date
47	Consolidate all tree reviews for site plan	Resources have been identified and planning implementation.	In Progress	Oct 2018
48	Identify who is responsible for releasing fiscal for relocation	Staff member has been identified.	Complete	
49	Develop on-site safety protocols	Internal memo has been distributed to staff.	Complete	
DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE CENTER (DAC): Andrew Linseisen, Assistant Director				
50	Implement digital conversion project for archived plans and those in storage	Staff and resources have been allocated for this project and it is ongoing. Due to the volume of conversions needed it will take a few years, but considerable progress has already been made.	In Progress	4+ Years
51	Review walk-in hours in all areas	A review of customer service hours is being conducted across all divisions, with the goal of creating more consistency department wide to improve the customer experience. This recommendation will be included in that evaluation.	In Progress	TBD
52	Automate sidewalk fees	This project has been added to IT's work queue.	In Progress	Dec 2018
53	Site Plan enhancements: (1) Track and streamline site plan corrections; Solution needed for missing corrections in bucket (2) Implementation of site plan exemptions through Electronic Plan Review	A temporary employee has been assigned to enter all corrections and exemptions and to update the AMANDA status in a more timely manner with the goal of creating visibility to the case sooner. The planned full transition to electronic plan review will solve this permanently.	In Progress	Will evaluate customer service impact at the end of August 2018
54	Look at opportunities for efficiencies similar to site plan exemption for ponds	Researching process improvements modeled after the pond exemption framework. May need additional stakeholder clarification.	In Progress	TBD
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE (PIO): Melissa Martinez, Assistant Director				
55	Establish communications protocols for how often and when to send communications out to stakeholders and communicate process improvements in progress or completed	The PIO division currently utilizes press releases, the website and quarterly newsletters to communicate process improvements and other news. For time sensitive process changes or council directives press releases are used.	Complete	
56	Consider QLess app enhancements (1) Promote QLess app and website (2) Review QLess and its prompts and list survey link at end of QLess check-in, not just beginning (3) Add business hours to QLess app	(1) QLess is promoted on the DSD website and on AB+C handouts, and we are exploring the idea of creating permanent signage at One Texas Center. (2) There are known issues with the app failing that are outside the control of DSD. We are continuing to report instances to the vendor and hold them accountable for the failure in service. (3) Due to the proprietary nature of the app, it is not possible to add business hours.	Complete	
57	Develop guideline/policy regarding advance notice of Departmental and Program Changes	Exploring the creation of regular meetings between the operations teams and PIO division, may assign administrative staff to be responsible for updating PIO staff about changes, and use monthly activity reports to ensure we are capturing and publicizing all department program changes.	In Progress	Nov 2018
58	Develop educational materials on development processes that include partner departments	In the process of developing handouts that include Austin Water and Austin Energy related development processes steps. Any documents will need to be reviewed by those departments before publication.	In Progress	TBD
59	Follow the customer journey to understand their experience	Staff has been identified to evaluate the customer journey in conjunction with the department's customer service hours. This will involve walk throughs with interested stakeholders. We anticipate a list of recommendations for executive level consideration.	In Progress	TBD
60	Use Google Docs to capture stakeholder feedback and provide follow-up	At this time DSD is not considering Google Docs, but we are evaluating appropriate tools to capture stakeholder feedback. Additional information and updates will be posted on the data portal, similar to how we published information regarding the Zucker Report.	In Progress	TBD
61	Survey enhancements: (1) Route survey results to centralized person rather than just division leads (2) Communicate next steps after survey is submitted and provide acknowledgment of survey received	Working to codify responsibilities for collecting, distributing and acknowledging survey results.	In Progress	Nov 2018
62	Change content on digital boards to communicate program changes	The PIO division currently determines what is placed on the digital boards, including updates about program changes.	Complete	
63	Develop development curriculum for public (quarterly)	Some operational divisions of DSD hold quarterly stakeholder meetings. We are seeking additional input on what additional curriculum stakeholders would like to see.	In Progress	TBD
64	Develop a policy that tells us how to discontinue old documents	Exploring the creation of a department policy to alert PIO staff to remove old obsolete documents. All documents available at One Texas Center and online are current, though we often receive old versions that customers have saved and continue to use.	In Progress	TBD