I. CURRENT PLANNING & /CODENEXT

The Current Planning Division is comprised of five (5) functions, including Zoning Case Management, Code Amendment, Annexation, Historic Preservation and One Stop Shop Support (OSS).

Generally, the Zoning Case~~ode~~ Management function is responsible for processing zoning and the ~~comprehensive plan map amendments and the~~ Code Amendment function's role is to manage the Code Amendment Process. The Annexation Function is responsible for the preparation and maintenance of the City's 3-year Municipal Annexation Plan, and processing Annexation applications, resolving Extraterritorial Jurisdiction boundary issues (ETJ) and processing special district proposals (e.g., Municipal Utility District (MUD) and Public Improvement Districts (PID). In addition, this program monitors the Texas Legislature with regard to annexation related bills, which meets every other year, from ~~-~~January to June~~November to May~~, to identify, analyze, make recommendations on, and sometimes provide testimony at hearings on a dozen or so b~~B~~ills that are proposed. Legislative monitoring is an important activity for the City because changes in law can affect the way the City conducts business.

The Historic Preservation program staff foster and coordinate historic preservation efforts in the City, such as reviewing Demolition permits, processing Historic zoning cases, managing historic district applications and providing staff support for the Historic Landmark Commission. ~~permit processing.~~ Finally, the OSS function administers the file archiving process for the Division.

The Division is also responsible for interpreting zoning ordinances for community stakeholders through the Use Determination process.

A. PROFILE

Authority

The Current Planning Division derive its authority from various local regulations contained in the City of Austin Charter and Code of Ordinances, such as Article 1, §6 and 7, Title 2, Chapter 2-1, 2-5, etc., Title 25, Title 30 and various provisions contained in the Land Development Code. In addition, authority is gained from the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan and various Neighborhood Plans and other land use related codes and policies, as well from federal law and a multitude of land use laws contained in the constitution and laws of the State of Texas, such as Chapters 211, 212, 213.002, 216, 242 and 245, etc., of the Texas Local Government Code.

Comment [AG1]: General Comment: I just finished detailed comments on the LUR Section of the Report. Unlike the LUR section this section is generally well organized, covers all areas of the Division, is well written and does not confuse the reader.

Comment [AG2]: The Annexation program only monitors the Legislature for bills related to the city's annexation authority, MUD's, etc.

Comment [AG3]: This doesn't seem to be essential information for the reader.

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Organization

The Current Planning Division consists of 16~~15~~ permanent positions plus the Assistant Director as shown in Figure __ with staff listed in Table __.

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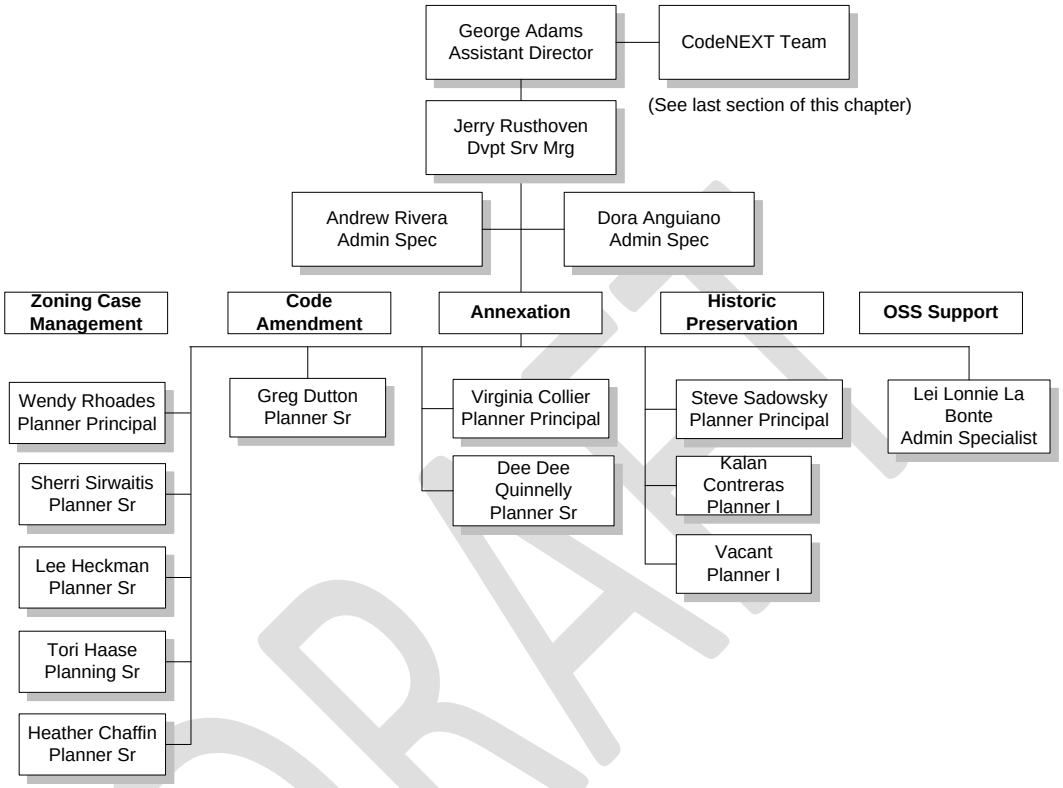
Figure 40
Current Planning Organizational Structure

Comment [MM[4]]: Use the disclaimer. Please add 1 box under Historic Preservation. Planner Senior – Vacant.



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Staffing

The Current Planning Division consists of 16~~5~~ FTE's as shown in Table __ below. The Division is almost entirely funded by the City's General fund, with some minor additional funding provided by the Expense Refund Fund and Grants. The span of control of the Division Manager appears appropriate given that the majority of professional line staff are managed by Principal level Planners.

Table
Current Planning Division Staffing

Position Title	Number of Positions	Responsibilities	Reports To

Assistant Director	1	Manages Current Planning, CodeNEXT, Land Use Review and Development Assistance Center	Director
Current Planning			
Development Services Manager	1	Manages the Current Planning Division. Directs operation of projects and programs and develops policies and procedures; Prepares financial summary/reports for management review. Develops and establish goals and priorities for departmental programs;, etc.	Assistant Director
Admin Spec	3	Provides administrative support on highly technical and/or specialized projects. Facilitates the handling of time sensitive requests as well as other confidential documents. Verifies accuracy and completeness of critical documents, requests, records, correspondence, regulations, etc.	Development Services Manager
Principal Planner	3	Manages planning activities for the City in regional, urban and transportation planning areas and the full range of supervisory activities including selection, training, evaluation, counseling and recommendation for dismissal.	Development Services Manager
Planner Sr	7 (1 Vacant - Historic)	Under limited direction carries out very complex urban planning duties for the City. Coordinates division/section activities with other division/sections. Assists in developing operating procedures. Assists in developing division/section budget. Assists in developing and evaluating plans, criteria, etc. Performs as Lead Case Manager.	Principal Planner
Planner I	2~~1~~ (historic)	Under direct supervision, responsible for assisting in planning tasks, such as researching preliminary data, and developing charts and graphs to accompany urban development plans or zoning changes	Principal Planner
TOTAL CURRENT PLANNING	**16~~5~~**		

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Activity

The Current Planning activity levels for the last five (5) years are shown in Table __ below.

Table__
Current Planning Activity Levels for Last ___ Years

Function	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	5-yr Average
Annexations							
Annexation Cases Processed	8	17	3	18	9	8	**11**
% Change	**-**	**+113%**	**-82%**	**+500%**	**-50%**	**-11%**	**-**
Code Amendment							
Code Amendments Processed	19	22	12	12	27	23	18
% Change	**-**	**+16%**	**-45%**	**0**	**+125%**	**-15%**	**-**
Historic Preservation							
Certificate of Appropriateness Processed	Not Avail	Not Avail	Not Avail	Not Avail	Not Avail	Not Avail	Not Av
Historic Zoning Processed	Not Avail	Not Avail	Not Avail	Not Avail	Not Avail	Not Avail	No Av
Other Historic Permits/Reviews[1]	Not Avail	Not Avail	Not Avail	Not Avail	Not Avail	Not Avail	Not Avail
Total	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	Not Avail	**N/A**
% Change	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	Not Avail	**N/A**
Zoning Case Management							
Zoning (rezoning) Applications Processed[2]	93	151	137	136	140	189	**131**
Zoning Amendments Processed	17	7	21	17	20	15	**16**
Use Determinations	0	0	0	0	0	3	**0**
Development Assessment & Alternative Equivalent Compliance Application (Zoning)	1	1	1	8	0	14	**2**
Total	**111**	**159**	**159**	**161**	**160**	**221**	**150**
% Change	**-**	**+43%**	**0**	**+1%**	**-0.6%**	**+38%**	**-**

[1] Historic Demolition permits (commercial/residential), relocation permits, National Register Historic Districts (NRHD) permits/reviews, sign reviews.
[2] Includes PUD's, etc.

Comment [AG5]: This information is available and will be provided by Melissa Martinez

The data in the above table indicates that activity levels for the Annexation Program increased significantly in 2010 and again in 2012. However, in 2011 activity levels sharply decreased by 82%. Activity also dropped off by 50% in 2013. The 2013 activity of 9 was slightly below the five year average of 11 cases. Code Amendment activity

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levels saw similar spikes over the 5-year period, including a 45% reduction in activity in 2011, no increase in activity in 2012 and a 125% increase in 2013. The spikes in activity is these functions are likely the result of market fluctuations in the region.

Zoning Case Management Program experienced a significant spike in activity in 2010, but has remained relatively stable since 2010. The 2013 number of 160 was only 10 cases above the 5 year average. YTD data for 2014 indicates that activity levels for Annexation and Code Amendments are down slightly, while Zoning Case Management levels are up by 38% from 2013. ~~We requested activity data from the Historic Preservation Program, however it was not available.~~

Comment [AG6]: Data to be provided.

Comment [MB7]: Will change this if we get data.

B. POSITIVE FINDINGS

The following are positive findings for the Current Planning Division:

- The Division Manager has worked for the City for over two decades, is AICP certified and is well respected by staff;
- Zoning Case Management applications are stored and partially managed through an electronic permit tracking system (AMANDA), and the City is actively transitioning to electronic submittal and payment, which is a best practice;
- All of the staff are tenured employees, with several having over a decade of experience in the Division. As such, staff is competent, knowledgeable and well versed with the City's regulatory scheme; and
- Division staff have worked to streamline the Annexation Process.

C. ORGANIZATION ISSUES

Administration

There are currently 3.0 FTE Administrative Specialists that provide support for Division activities. One Administrative Specialist provides direct support to the Division Manager by scheduling meetings, acting as the clearinghouse for all agenda activities. This position also provides general support to professional staff on case management activities. Another Administrative Specialist acts as the liaison for the Planning Commission and Zoning and Platting Commission, including agenda and packet preparation, and distribution, minute-taking, etc., and provides support for professional staff.

The remaining Administrative Specialist is shown as staff for the OSS Program (One Stop Shop) on the Division's organization chart. We were confused about the role of this position since the OSS is identified as a function within other Divisions of the PDRD as well. We discussed this position's role with the Management team and found that the position and the OSS Program within the Division is relatively new. They were created

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about 2 years ago in response to a records management and archiving gap in the Division record keeping system.

This position is unique to other Administrative Specialist positions in the Division because the work tasks associated with the position are not time sensitive, the position does not have customer contact, and it does not provide direct administrative support for professional staff in the Division. Rather, the position enters data, from completed files, into the AMANDA system to ensure files are closed out properly and an accurate record is created in the AMANDA system. This position also archives files in accordance with records retention policies.

We believe the One Stop Shop Program/function shown on the Division Org. chart is confusing and should be eliminated. If the Division's objective is to distinguish this particular administrative function from other administrative functions in the Division, revise the Job Description accordingly, and if necessary modify the title, to reflect the independent nature of this administrative function, and place the position under the Division Manager on the organizational chart, along with the other Administrative positions.

Comment [AG8]: Please spell out

1. ***Recommendation:*** **Eliminate the One Stop Shop Program from the Division Organization Chart and replace it with a position as outlined above.**

Interviews with staff indicated that Administrative support staff are able to complete their work within designated work hours and that no work backlogs exist, which is good. However, it was reported that the Administrative Specialist staff are underutilized with respect to providing coverage during vacations and absences. For example, our interviews indicated that Administrative Specialist staff do not provide backup to one another for meeting minutes, during absences. Rather, professional staff is asked to provide the coverage (e.g., attend meetings and take minutes), which is not an appropriate use of professional staff's time. It was also widely reported that
Professional staff often handle file set up, hearing scheduling and report set up, rather than designated administrative staff, which is inefficient and a misuse of professional staff's time.

2. ***Recommendation:*** **Ensure that Administrative Specialist Staff have designated coverage from within the Administrative Specialist staffing resource pool to provide coverage for Board and Commission meetings, lunches, breaks, etc., to eliminate the current practice of professional staff resource coverage for these activities.**

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3. ***Recommendation:*** **Ensure that Administrative Specialist Staff consistently fulfill all assigned work flow tasks, such as scheduling, file and report set-up, rather than shifting tasks to non-administrative staff.**

Applications, Guides, Handouts

The Division has created applications for its various zoning-related processes, which are available in the office and posted online, which is good. However some applications need to be updated to remove incorrect code references, processing timeframes and filing deadlines. For example, the Development Code indicates that the Board of~~O~~Adjustment appeal time frame is 14 days, while the application form says 20 days. In addition, some of the electronic links that have been setup within the applications are no longer functional, such as the fee link. In addition, not all of the online applications and forms are fillable, including various checklist forms and the Board of Adjustment Appeal application.

Staff indicated that the applications created by the staff in the Zoning Case Management and Historic Preservation Program serve as "How To" guides for users. However, the packets do not fully explain the steps in the process, so it is difficult to gauge the time required to complete the various application processes. Moreover, with the exception of the Code Amendment process, flow charts have not been created or posted online to help explain the various application processes in the Division. We believe these tools are especially important, given the complexity of the existing development code.

Finally, we did not locate any materials that were translated into Spanish, which is likely necessary given the demographic profile of the City.

4. ***Recommendation:*** **Application forms and packets should be up-to-date at all times and provide flow charts to help users better under the timing and cost of processes.**

5. ***Recommendation:*** **Computer fillable applications and forms for all Division application processes should be created.**

6. ***Recommendation:*** **Application forms should be translated into Spanish and posting them online.**

Data Collection/Reporting

In conducting our review of the Current Planning Division, some of the activity data we requested was not readily available and had to be generated by staff from each Program within the Division. ~~In addition, we requested, but did not receive activity data for the~~

Comment [MM[9]: These sentences seem to be a general statement about the department as a whole. Not relevant for the Current Planning Chapter.

Comment [MM[10]: This information is not relevant for this chapter. Should be placed in the DAC chapter.

Comment [MB11]: Will change if we get data

Comment [AG12]: Historic Data to be provided

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~~Historic Preservation function.~~ Activity data for each Program in the Division should be readily available and reported on routinely to assist management in evaluating staffing and other needs for the Division.

In addition, data corresponding to the length and number of staff reviews for all application types, applicant revision periods, and overall approval timeframes (e.g., time from submittal to hearing date and decision), was not readily available and had to be generated. This type of data is an important tool, which can help management better monitor, track and evaluate application-processing systems and respond to processing complaints.

See our recommendation under the Performance Standards heading of this section regarding establishing performance standards for staff reviews for up to three review cycles.

Our interviews with Staff indicated that the AMANDA system is not currently configured properly to effectively manage various workflow tasks of the Zoning Case Management process (e.g., scheduling, staff reports, etc.), nor is AMANDA ~~not~~ utilized by the Annexation or Code Amendment Programs to help manage their case processing work flows. Zoning Case Management Staff has identified these issues and requested modifications to the system through CTM Department, which we discuss under the "Technology" heading of this section.

The AMANDA system should be utilized to collect and report on performance standard and other processing data so that management can more effectively monitor electronic development review workflow, in order improve accuracy and efficiency.

7. ***Recommendation:*** **The Development Services Manager for the Current Planning Division should ensure that the AMANDA system can collect data as needed to manage the Division.**

Equipment/Supplies

Current Planning staff reported that they generally have adequate equipment to conduct assigned work, in that computers, telephones, printers and other equipment are newer and replaced as needed; however, a couple of staff indicated a desire for Adobe InDesign desktop publishing software as well as Photoshop software, which do not appear to be essential tools for the majority of the work tasks completed by the Division, so it is unclear if these should be purchased at this time. However, this software is likely needed for the entire Department.

See recommendation in other parts of this report for Adobe software for the entire department.

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Filing/Records Retention Policies

Interviewees reported that the Current Planning Division generates and stores both paper and electronic files, which are stored in various locations, such as the AMANDA system, shared drives, individual computers and filing cabinets that located throughout the Division's office space, and we were able to confirm these reports through our observations. Staff further indicated that they are not clear about protocols that may be established for setting up, maintaining and storing electronic files. Staff indicated that electronic files are currently stored and maintained within individual computers, as well as a shared drives and the AMANDA system. Interviewees also reported that some critical file data is stored within the City's GIS system and that they are not able to obtain a complete case file history on any property through GIS because of address errors, incomplete cross-referencing and incomplete case number data within the GIS system. For example, staff indicated that at least one full year of case number data is missing within the GIS database. As such, staff often has to conduct an exhaustive file search to obtain a complete file history for new projects.

We also observed that significant office space is consumed by large filing systems that hold paper files, some of which are not conveniently located near the staff needing regular access to the files. For example, MUD and ETJ files are located in hallways that are a fair distance from the staff that regularly use the files.

Staff indicated that the Division has a file retention and archiving system for paper files that calls for paper files to be retained in the office until they their retention period expires, at which time they are packed up and sent to an off-site archive storage location, which is good. In addition, older paper files are slowly being scanned and digitized into electronic files, which is also good.

However, the existence of paper files and various electronic filing systems has resulted in a filing system that takes extraordinary effort to maintain, navigate and research for both staff and the public desiring information.

The 2014 Business Plan for PDRD acknowledges that the Department as a whole has experienced problems "supporting, managing and implementing the PDRD's Records Management Program, which our interviews confirm. In addition, according to the Business Plan, PDRD has not successfully completed the "10-Step Records Management Program" mandated by City Code.

See our recommendations under the "Policies and Procedures" heading of this section about outlining the PDRD's formal file management policies for the Division.

8. ***Recommendation:*** **The Current Planning Division should re-establish an out-card system for paper files.**

Comment [MM[13]: We didn't see reference to the loss of card files in paragraph above.

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9. ***Recommendation:*** **The Current Planning Division should ~~D~~develop filing protocols for the set-up, storage and maintenance of electronic files to ensure that they are on a shared drive accessible to all staff, saved in a searchable format. Paper files should continue to be scanned and converted to an electronic format according to priority to eliminate the need for paper office files.**

10. ***Recommendation:*** **The Current Planning Division should work with the CTM (IT) Division to create a complete file record within the GIS system based on both tax assessor parcel numbers and address numbers.**

Comment [MM[14]: These two GIS layers exist. What is the purpose of this recommendation?

Meetings/Communication/Team Work

There are various reoccurring and regularly scheduled meetings, which are intended to advance communication and coordination within the Current Planning Division and PDRD, including the following meetings:

- A monthly meeting between the Director, Assistant Directors, Chief Administrative Officer and Division Managers to provide updates on the status of the budget, personnel and matters of department and city-wide importance;
- A weekly Monday morning meeting between the Current Planning Division Manager, Zoning Case Management~~, Annexation~~ and Code Amendment staff and Administrative Specialist Staff designated Law Department staff to discuss program level issues, update staff on matters of division and department-wide importance and round table discussion;
- A weekly one-on-one Monday afternoon meeting between the Division manager and the Code Amendment Planner, Annexation and Historic Preservation staff; and
- A weekly Wednesday morning meeting between the Zoning Case Management function, designated Law Dept. staff, the Code Amendment Planner and Division Manager's Administrative Specialist to review and make staff recommendations on cases. This meeting is occasionally attended by the Division Manager occasionally.

Although there are a number of meetings scheduled that are designed to inform and coordinate staff within and across development-related functions, we still received feedback that communication and coordination issues exist within the Division. For example, staff indicated that meetings with managers are unproductive and largely used to air complaints rather than disseminate important city and Department-wide issues and discuss and resolve project issues. Moreover the Division Manager frequently does not attend weekly staff meetings, which is a critical forum for discussing and resolving project level issues. Staff also reported that they rarely receive important budget and staffing information from management.

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In addition, staff reported that there are processing inconsistencies among planners within the Division, which causes frustration among staff and customers.
Also see our recommendations under the Policy and Procedures Manual (PPM) and Training headings.

It was also reported, and confirmed through our observations, that communication silos between the Current Planning Division and Comprehensive Planning, Land Use Review and CodeNEXT teams. Some of the Planners in the Current Planning Division expressed a particular concern about not being included in the CodeNEXT effort, even though they will be administering the Code once completed.

Comment [AG15]: It should be noted that work on drafting the new code has not begun and the current planning division, like all other divisions within PDRD, have a staff person assigned to the CodeNext Technical Advisory Group. This staff person is responsible for communicating information regarding CodeNext to their division.

Interviewees also indicated that overall morale is low and that there is a need for strong, assertive leadership at all management levels to steer internal meetings, ensure adherence to policies and procedures and create and foster cooperative inner-divisional working relationships to help bridge communication and coordination gaps.

The majority of staff interviewed indicated that they are no longer clear about the Division or the Department's mission, vision or strategy for service delivery, which causes frustration.

Finally, staff indicated that management does not function as a cohesive, dependable management team. Decision-making is reportedly inconsistent, slow and non-existent in some cases. For example, it was widely reported that staff is often unable to obtain timely management direction on critical issues, which delays problem-solving or forces staff to take decision-making risks, which can lead to errors.

We were not able to observe a Current Planning Division meeting, due to time constraints. However, based on staff feedback, it is clear that meetings need to be more structured to ensure that they are efficient and effective and that all scheduled participants attend regularly and accomplish the intended objectives.

Best Practice Communities create meetings that are effective and efficient and have a clear purpose and objective. Meetings are interactive and structured, providing agendas, action items and summary notes that are distributed electronically prior to and following meetings, so that all actions and decisions coming out of meetings are formally documented to ensure that all participants are equally informed.

11. ***Recommendation:*** **The Development Services Manager for the Current Planning Division should revise all reoccurring meetings using the directions outlined above.**

12. ***Recommendation:*** **Weekly staff meetings should include a scheduled time in each meeting to discuss the mission and direction of the Department. Additionally, a**

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minimum of 15 minutes of each agenda should be devoted to case processing related training to improve processing consistency and expertise among staff. One meeting per month an agenda item should be included for a team-building exercise to strengthen trust and rapport among supervisors and staff and help improve morale.

Comment [AG16]: This seems like a fairly prescriptive recommendation.

13. ***Recommendation:*** **The Code Amendment Planner should attend bi-monthly team meetings with CodeNEXT function so that the Code Amendment Planner to ensure that position charged with administering the code amendments fully understands new, amended code language and intent.**

Comment [MM[17]: Font and type are different than prior recommendation. Please check this chapter for consistent format.

Policy and Procedures Manual (PPM)

Staff in the various functions in the Current Planning Division have drafted processing procedures to help train new staff and guide processing activities in their Program, which is good. For example, Zoning Case Management staff have drafted procedures for processing standard zoning cases and staff in the Annexation and Historic Preservation Programs have created a procedures for case processing.

However, interviewees indicated that formal written policies do not exist for returning emails and phone calls, and that customer service level of service expectations have not been formally established. Additionally, measurable Performance Standards have not been established for the Division.

It was also reported that the Division does not have an equitable policy with regarding to working at home (e.g., telecommuting) and flex time. For example, some staff have been permitted to work from home and/or use flex time for various reasons, while others have not. As such, staff is unclear the Division's telecommuting policies, such as the circumstances when it is permitted and corresponding production and accountability expectations.

We believe PPM's are a necessary tool to help administrators manage programs more effectively. They also help train new employees and provide existing staff with a consistent procedural decision-making framework and mutual understanding of customer service expectations.

We recommend that Division create a PPM for the Division that included existing case processing procedures; file management protocols; notary protocols; training requirements; performance standards; AMANDA utilization; telecommuting; project management protocols for each application type; staff report and presentation formats and practices; communication and customer service standards and expectations, including return email and telephone policies; field inspection protocols; electronic file and record keeping requirements; and other practices to ensure that staff have a clear and consistent understanding of work practices and performance expectations including work quality, accountability, professional demeanor, etc.

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14. ***Recommendation*: A Policies and Procedures Manual for the Division should be created and include the items outlined above.**

Project Managers/Case Managers

We received feedback that the Zoning Case Management function in the Current Planning Division, do not currently have a true Project Manager system in place to manage various Zoning Case Management applications.

Staff indicated that the Zoning Case Management function formerly utilized a Project Management Team approach for managing zoning cases over a decade ago. The City was divided into geographic regions and teams were assigned to each region. Teams were comprised of interdepartmental staff from the subdivision, site planning, zoning, environmental, engineering and planning functions to manage zoning cases in their assigned regions. The Project Manager was a generalist housed at ~~-~~One Texas Center~~City Hall~~, who was responsible for project oversight, communication and coordination of team players.

Staff indicated that the Team approach was abandoned in 2002 because the generalist Project Manager position did not have the depth of understanding required to manage a professional, multidisciplinary team, In addition, the Project Manager office at City Hall and was physically separated from other team members, which created chronic communication and coordination issues. Finally, development activity varied across geographic territories, which caused Teams to battle over uneven workloads and territories.

Currently, the Zoning Case Management function utilizes a Case Manager system to manage zoning cases. According to staff, Planners generally act as the lead on assigned zoning applications to ensure that projects are reviewed by relevant staff from various disciplines across the PDRD.

However, our interviews suggest that they have not been given full authority and/or are not recognized by other development-related functions as "true Planning Project Managers" with regard to zoning applications. For example, planners have difficulty, at times, obtaining timely interdepartmental reviews.

True Project Management systems are those where the planner acts as the lead to drive project approvals. We have referred to this system in some of our other studies as a "Cradle-to-Grave," system.

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We advocate this system because it promotes processing consistency and efficiency and facilitates coordination and communication throughout the development review and permitting processes, when structured properly. Planners have also told us that they find this system more fulfilling because it elevates planning staff from processors and regulators to managers and problem-solvers.

Also see our recommendations under the "Performance Standards" heading about establishing performance standards for up to three review cycles and tracking and monitoring standards to ensure they are met 90% of the time.

True Project Management Systems are those where Planners perform *all* of the following functions.

- Lead and/or coordinate pre-application meeting discussions that provide formal written feedback to applicants from all development-related functions;
- Conduct qualitative reviews of new planning applications to determine whether they are complete prior to processing;
- Process applications consistently across the function;
- Drive, coordinate and track plan routing and review to other reviewing functions to ensure timely and relevant reviews are conducted;
- Coordinate input from outside regional, state or federal agencies to ensure timely and relevant reviews and help resolve issues that are identified;
- Challenge other department conditions when they appear inappropriate;
- Act as a single point of contact for the applicant to resolve issues that arise during the multi-departmental review process;
- Analyze the project to ensure consistency with regulations, policies and long-range plans;
- Coordinate with key decision-makers;
- Write and sign staff reports that provide decision-makers with a professional recommendation with enforceable conditions of approval that mitigate issues;
- Present concise, formal PowerPoint presentations of the project at public meetings;

Currently, Zoning Case Management Planners performs only some of these functions and there are inconsistencies among planners as to which functions are performed. For example, it was reported that some planning staff have not been given authority to drive the review process across development-related functions, so they have difficulty getting timely and/or relevant review comments and/or acting as the single point of contact to resolve project review issues. Also focus groups reported that Case Managers have

Comment [PZ18]: Mary, given the nature of this work I think we can drop this one for this function.

Comment [MM[19]: If you choose to delete this paragraph as noted above, we suggest you delete the entire section: Project Managers/Case Managers.

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difficulty challenging project conditions that may not be appropriate or relevant on a particular project.

15. ***Recommendation:*** **Empower the current planners to be Project Manages and perform all of the functions described above through formal policy and inter-departmental/Divisional agreements.**

Staffing

Interviews with staff indicated that activity levels are up and workload demands are getting more difficult to meet. However, data provided by the various Functions in the Division show that activity levels in the Zoning Case Management have been relatively stable since 2011. Annexation and Code Amendment activity levels have experience sharp increases and decreases since 2009, however Zoning Case Management Activities have remained relatively stable.

In addition, staffing levels for the Current Planning Division have remained relatively level over the last several years (see table __ in Section H of this report).

Technology

Technology for the Department as a whole is discussed under a separate chapter in this study. However, staff indicated that there are some technological issues that chronically hinder efficiency in the Division including the following:

- Time sheets are not automated;
- The AMANDA system is not configured properly for Zoning Case Management cases, Code Amendment, Annexation processing or Special District (e.g., MUD) workflows;
- Outlook does not contain an up-to-date address book for employees;
- The Zoning Case Review timelines and hearing scheduling have been programmed incorrectly in AMANDA;
- AMANDA Programming for the Zoning Case Report is faulty, which results in auto baseline information being generated inaccurately;
- The Public Notification scheduling system in AMANDA is inefficient (e.g., currently requires approximately 14 separate action before scheduling is complete);
- AMANDA does not auto-fill comments in case reports, so staff has to cut and fill from word documents;

Comment [MM[20]: Corporate HR is looking at an city-wide electronic timesheet system.

Comment [AG21]: I disagree

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- Division administrative staff do not utilize an electronic agenda-builder software system to create agendas and packets, requiring use of spreadsheets, word documents, scanning, cutting and pasting data in order to create;
- Some PDRD staff do not consistently use AMANDA, and some development-related departments do not use AMANDA (e.g., fire, health, etc.);
- The Historic Preservation Office database is not linked to or integrated with AMANDA Data base, which hinders research, review, permitting and inspection activities; and
- Meeting rooms have to be scheduled through Administrative staff, rather than through a scheduling system.

Staff indicated that these issues have been reported to the Help Desk over the last several years, yet they remain unresolved.

16. ***Recommendation:*** **The Development Services Manager for the Current Planning Division should ~~ensure immediately~~ work with the CTM Help Desk to resolve the long-outstanding technological issues identified above to improve efficiency in the Division.**

Comment [AG22]: This isn't accurate. Only Room 325 and the DAC Conference room require someone else to reserve them.

Comment [MM[23]: Would this be better suited in the Technology Chapter? The Development Services Manager should work with PDRD IT Manager for noted improvements.

Telephone/Emails

We received feedback that telephone and emails are not consistently returned by all staff in the department. Staff indicated that an informal policy exists for staff to return all emails and calls within 48 hours; however, this policy is neither adhered to nor enforced. A formal return email and phone call policy should be included in the Division's Policy & Procedures Manual (PPM) that requires all staff to return all phone calls and emails before the end of the day to further the City's overall goal of providing excellent customer service. This recommendation for the entire Department is included in earlier parts of this report.

Training/Cross Training

Budget staff indicated that they move money around in the budget, within certain limits, to accommodate training needs in PDRD. A review of the current budget approved for the Current Planning Division indicated that training funds are minimal. The Personnel Budget for the Division is $967,592.00. The general rule of thumb is to set aside at least 2% of the Division's Personnel Budget for annual training of employees, which equates to about $19,000.00 (e.g., 2% of $967,592.00). The training budget, which includes line items for seminars, education travel, memberships and library is only 0.6%, or $6,150.00, which is insufficient to provide needed supervisory training and send staff to relevant conferences and external training opportunities to enhance professional skill levels.

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Some Professional staff indicated that they are expected to receive 8 hours of training every six months, however, we were not able to verify this requirement. In addition, some staff in the Division indicated that have or intend to receive "Compact and Connected" training, which is training relating to new concepts in the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan, which is good. However, our interviews with staff indicated a need for additional training in the following areas:

- On the AMANDA system;
- Outlook;
- New Code Amendments;
- Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan;
- Roles of each Division in PDRD;
- Regional and National Conference Training; and
- Financial Analysis e.g., impact analysis.

Professional Staff indicated that they can attend national conferences on a rotating basis, but there is often insufficient time to attend.

The training budget for the Current Planning Division should equal a minimum of 2% of the personnel budget and 5% of staff's time as recommended earlier in this report. Available training budget monies should be communicated to staff at the start of each fiscal year and allocated to staff members on a rotating basis.

In addition to the above training needs, we received feedback from stakeholders that suggested a need for additional customer service training for all staff. We also observed that supervisory training for managers and supervisors is needed to strengthen leadership and management skill levels, particularly in the areas of proactive and timely communication and timely decision-making. For example, it was widely reported that management staff does not provide timely responses to critical communication that affects decision-making.

In addition, staff reported that the mission and vision of the Department is currently unclear, workloads are uneven and processing methods varies among staff, which creates frustration and tension within the Division.

Comment [AG24]: This is essentially the same information provided on page 11

See our recommendations under the "Meetings/Communication/Teamwork" heading concerning devoting time on each department meeting to training.

17. ***Recommendation:*** **The Current Planning Division should conduct internal training sessions with Current Planning staff on process, procedures, code and plan**

amendments, modified forms and zoning policies and the comprehensive plan to raise competency levels and processing consistency.

18. ***Recommendation:*** **Identify training needs related to customer service and the AMANDA system.**

See other parts of the report recommending manage, supervisor training needs.

Planners have little cross-training opportunities within the Division, or between Planning-related Divisions, such as Comprehensive Planning or Land Use Review, unless they get transferred to those Programs. Best Practice Communities strive to provide both comprehensive and current planning opportunities for planners to broaden staff's understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each function, expand skill sets and provide an avenue to supplement staff in one or the other functions during activity level peaks.

19. ***Recommendation:*** **Provide cross-training opportunities within the Current Planning Division and between the other Planning-related functions.**

Work Program/Business Plan

We reviewed the 2014 Business Plan for the PDRD, which outlines the charge of the Department and includes various accomplishments and goals for the year, as well as performance gaps and other data for the Department as a whole. However, it did not adequately cover the Business Plan for Current Planning Division activities.

While we agree with and often recommend preparation of a Department Work Program, it should include works tasks and initiatives for each Division, as well as corresponding staffing needed to accomplish identified tasks and initiatives. The Current Planning Division should create an annual Work Program as part of the budget process, that identifies, lists and accounts for all special projects and other initiatives the Division needs to accomplish, along with an estimate of the amount of labor hours required and projected date of completion for each project, to further assist the Department with managing workflow and staffing resources.

20. ***Recommendation:*** **The Current Planning Division should create an annual Work Program as part of the budget process.**

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D. PROCESS ISSUES

Overview

The application processes for the Current Planning Division vary depending on the type of application submitted and its location in the City. For example, applications in Waterfront Overlay areas may be subject to review by the Waterfront Planning and Advisory Board and the Environmental Board may review certain applications within sensitive environmental areas.

Generally, applications may be reviewed and/or approved by one or more different entities, such as staff, ~~the Board of Adjustment (BOA),~~ the Planning Commission (PC), Zoning and Platting Commission ZAP), Historic Landmark Commission (HLC) and the City Council (CC).

Comment [MM[25]: The Current Planning group does not staff the Board of Adjustment. This function is currently handled and located within DAC.

Decision-Making Authority

Table __ below shows the Decision Making Authority for Current Planning applications.

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Table _

Decision-Making Authority for Current Planning Applications

Current Planning Applications	Staff	Director	Building Official	Board of Adjustment	Historic Landmark Commission	Planning Commission/Zoning & Platting Commission[1]	City Council
Administrative PUD Amendment (non-substantial)	R	D	N/A	N/A	N/A	A	N/A
Annexations	R	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	R	D
Appeals to Use Determinations	R	N/A	N/A	D	N/A	B	N/A
Certificate of Appropriateness (Historic Landmark Commission)	R	N/A	D*	N/A	D	A	A
Certificate of Appropriateness (Staff approval)	D	N/A	N/A	N/A	A	N/A	A
Development Assessment and Alternative Equivalent Compliance (Pre-PUD zoning application)	R	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	B
Historic Demolition Application Permit	R	N/A	R	N/A	D	N/A	N/A
Historic relocation of structures	R	N/A	R	N/A	D	N/A	N/A
Historic Sign permit	R	N/A	R?	N/A	D	N/A	N/A
Historic Zoning	R	N/A	N/A	N/A	R	R	D
Land Development Code Amendments	R	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	R	D
Municipal Utility District	R	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	R	D
National Register Historic Districts permits	R	N/A	N/A	N/A	D	N/A	A
PUD Substantial Amendments	R	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	R	D
Public Improvement District (PID)	R	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	R	D
Rezoning	R	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	R	D
Use Determinations	R	D	N/A	A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Zoning	R	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	R	D

R = Review/Recommendation D=Decision A=Appeal N/A= Not Applicable B = Briefing only

[1] The City has two land use commissions: Planning Commission (PC) and Zoning and Platting Commission (ZAP). The ZAP has purview over cases in areas that do not have and adopted or ongoing neighborhood plan

[2] If Historic Land Use Commission fails to act by the 60th day after application receipt

As the above table shows, the Decision-Making Authority for the Current Planning Division occurs progressively, starting with Administrative decisions for more routine application types, which are made at the staff level. The BOA decides appeals for Administrative Zoning Use Determinations and the ~~Planning~~Land Use Commission ~~or Zoning and Platting Commission~~ decides appeals on administrative) PUD amendments (non-substantial). The Historic Land Commission is the decision-making body for

Comment [PZ26]: Would it make any sense and could the Planning Commission and the Zoning Platting Commission be combined?

Comment [AG27]: Land Use Commission

Comment [MM[28]: What does the asterisk mean? Asterisk notation needs to be at end of chart.

Comment [MM[29]: D (decision)

Comment [AG30]: Incomplete sentence

Comment [AG31]: HLC is advisory on historic zoning cases which also go the Land Use Commission. Council makes the final determination.

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historic preservation-related applications and the Land Use~~Planning~~ Commission ~~or Zoning and Platting Commission, depending on the location of the property,~~ are the recommendation bodies for the non-historic zoning and code amendments, annexations, MUD's, etc. The City Council is the final decision-making body for all~~non-historic~~ zoning and code amendments, annexations, MUD's, etc.

Comment [PZ32]: Should we pull these together. Seems to me that this is the kind of confusion that impact the customers as well as staff?

The City's decision-making authority framework is largely consistent with Best Practice Communities, except the City has not established a development review board, comprised of review staff across the Planning and Development Review Department (PRD) to review cases as a team in an organized forum. Best practice communities tend to merge the Planning Commission and the Zoning and Platting Commission. However, the City separated these functions in an effort to more effectively manage case volumes.

Comment [PZ33]: Mary, any value of this merger here? Are number of applications workable? Normally I would want to combine.

In addition, the Board of Adjustment (BOA) remains a separate Board at the City. The national trend for Best Practice Communities is often been to combine Board of Adjustment duties with the Planning Commission to further streamline processing. In addition, some communities have also merged the Historic Preservation/Landmark Boards with the Planning Commission, where the volume of historic cases is low or the historic program is less prominent in the community, which does not appear to be the case in Austin. Given the volume of cases that the BOA and PC/ZAP hears at the City, combining these functions at this time is not practical.

Comment [PZ34]: Similar issue to above. Would it work with the numbrs?

Best Practice Communities have generally embraced the philosophy of allowing administrative approvals by staff for routine types of applications, which is the case with the Current Planning Division. They also combine the Administrative Approval processes with more simplified, electronic submittal requirements, so that trained staff can immediately approve these types of applications, within a few days or over-the-counter.

Austin is currently working towards electronic submittal and payment processes to further the "Green" initiatives and simplify and streamline processing, which we support because it will help free up staff time to focus on more complicated types of applications and continuous process improvements – which is a best practice.

Application Processes

The following sections describe the more common application processes that are administered by the Current Planning Division.

E. ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVAL PROCESS

Staff has been delegated Administrative approval authority for certain Use Determinations, PUD amendments (e.g., updating land use figures) and Certificates of Appropriateness, which are minor in nature. These processes have been streamlined to

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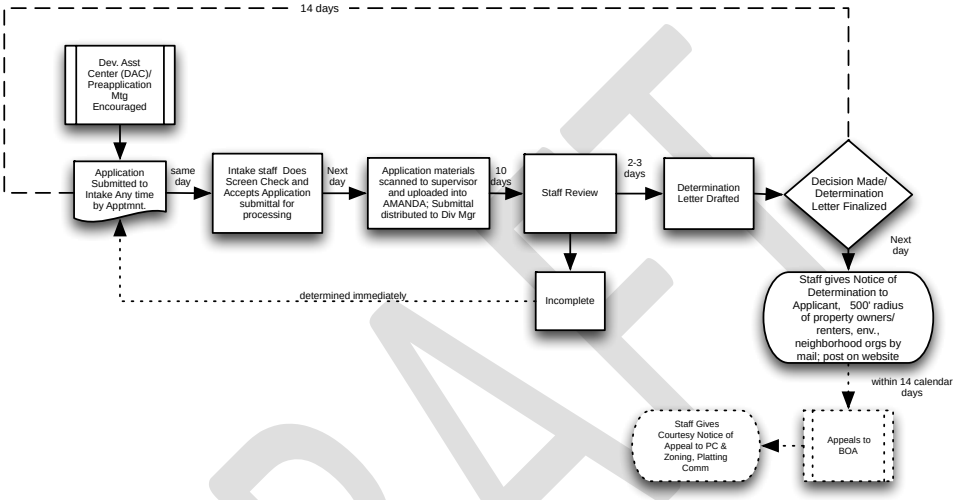
the extent possible, except for electronic submittal, payment, review and approval, which the City is working towards.

Figure __ below, shows the general process flow for the Administrative Use Determination Approval Process.

Figure __
Administrative Use Determination Approval Process



Comment [MM[35]: In the oval box with solid line: Staff does not always have to give notice.

As the above flow chart shows, the process is straightforward and is concluded within 14 calendar days. The steps in the process are briefly outlined below, along with our recommendations to streamline the process further.

Comment [PZ36]: When we talk you can explain the Adm. process to me. Maybe the words are throwing me off. Normally I think of adm process in 5 days. 14 seems too long.

1. Pre-application. A Pre-Application Conference/Development Assistance Center (DAC) meeting is optional. We advocate an optional pre-application meeting, rather than mandatory meeting for routine administrative processes.

2. Formal Application Submittal. An application can be filled out online, but must be submitted to the Intake Counter by appointment, Monday through Friday. Fees are also paid at the Intake Counter.

3. Intake staff quantitatively screen applications for all required submittal items. Data is entered into the AMANDA system, a case number is assigned and fees are collected. Incomplete applications are occasionally accepted for processing.

21. ***Recommendation:*** **A formal policy should be adopted to reject all incomplete applications.**

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Submittal materials are scanned and forwarded to the Intake Supervisor, as needed, and upload into the AMANDA system. Submittal materials generally consist of 2 copies of a completed application packet and an application fee. Pictures and other support materials may also be submitted, if desired. Staff is currently working towards configuring the AMANDA system to allow for online submittals and payment, which is good since it will eliminate the need for applicants to submit paper files/electronic storage devices that require intake staff to scan and/or upload into AMANDA. Administrative approval processes are good candidates for on-line submittal and payment, since they are less complicated.

22. ***Recommendation:*** **Configure the AMANDA system to allow online, electronic submittals and payment for Administrative applications as a first step towards online, electronic PDR Application submittals.**

Submittal materials are forwarded to the Division Manager in paper and electronic format via AMANDA within a couple of days of submittal. The Division Manager is the Case Manager for all Use Determinations.

23. ***Recommendation:*** **Configure the AMANDA system so that Administrative Applications can be reviewed and approved in the AMANDA system, online. Approval timeframes should be established in AMANDA for Administrative approvals and monitored, tracked and reported on to ensure that they are successfully being met.**

Data provided by the Division indicate that the volume of Use Determinations is low and as such can be more effectively managed by the Division Manager Directly, which we agree with.

24. ***Recommendation:*** **Once AMANDA is configured to process Administrative applications, the Division Manager should delegate case management to principal level staff, with final sign off in AMANDA by the Division Manager.**

Comment [MM[37]: Are you referencing to the use determination process or case managers in general? Clarify what you mean when you reference principal level staff.

4. The Case Manager immediately reviews the application to determine if it is complete. If it is incomplete, the applicant is contacted via email and/or telephone and advised to submit missing information.

Comment [MM[38]: Why do you list #'s before the paragraph.

Staff indicated that a completeness review timeframe has not been formally established by code or policy, nor has it been programmed in AMANDA so that it can be tracked, monitored and reported on.

See our recommendation under the "Performance Standards" heading about establishing Performance Standards for completeness reviews, technical reviews, etc., which should be met 90% of the time.

When necessary, administrative applications are reviewed by other development-related functions (e.g., engineering, etc.).

See our recommendations under the "Performance Standards" heading about establishing Performance Standard and the "Data Collection/Reporting" heading about collecting, tracking, monitoring and reporting on Performance Standards.

5. Once the project has satisfied any Case Manager and/or reviewer issues, the Division Manager drafts a Decision Letter.

6. Final Approval is granted by the Division Manager within 14 calendar days (for reasons described below), per the City Land Development Code and a formal Decision letter is sent to the applicant.

See the "Performance Standard Heading regarding establishing a shorter overall approval period for Administrative applications.

7. Following the final decision, the Division Manager's Administrative Assistant gives a 14-day notice of determination to the Applicant, property owners, renters, environmental and neighborhood groups within a 500' radius of the property to alert them that a decision has been reached on the application. In addition, the Notice of Decision is posted on the City's web page, which is a good practice

8. Administrative Use Determinations can be appealed to the Board of Adjustment (BOA) within 14 calendar days of the decision.

Comment [PZ39]: Seems long

Comment [MM[40]: Not all use determination case require notification.

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F. ANNEXATION

Function

The Annexation function is comprised of one Principal Planner and one Senior Planner. According to staff, the Annexation Program processed an average 13 annexation cases per year over the last ten years and an average of 5 special district cases (e.g., MUD's, PID's) per year over the last ten years. Data provided by staff shows that the Program processed an average of 11 cases per year from 2009 to 2013. This equates to about 5 cases per Planner, which is a fairly heavy caseload, given that the process takes months to complete and most of the workflow is completed manually (e.g., without workflow software). In addition, this function monitors the Texas Legislature to identify Bills that may affect City operations. Staff estimated that they typically analyze between 10 and 20 Bills per session.

Comment [AG41]: They only monitor bills related to annexation, MUD's, etc.

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This function does not currently use any consultants to supplement staffing resources. The Principal Planner manages a caseload while providing oversight to the Senior Planner and acting as a resource for PDRD. Staff indicated that other than meetings and other administrative tasks (e.g., phone calls, records management, etc.,) the majority of their time is devoted to case management and there were no reported backlogs. Thus, there appears to be sufficient staff resources available to the Annexation Program at this time. In addition, some efficiency in case management will be gained by implementing the recommendations contained in this report.

Annexation Policy/Plan

Annexation authority is granted to the City through Chapter 43 of the Texas Local Government Code and Article I, §6 and §7. In addition, the City has established Annexation Policies as part of the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan, which was recently adopted. These policies help create a more rational approach to Annexation in the City, which is a good. We did not receive any negative feedback concerning the City's Annexation Policies/Plan.

Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) /Municipal Utility District (MUD)/Public Improvement District (PID) Policies

In addition to the Annexation policies listed in Imagine Austin, the City adopted an Extraterritorial Jurisdiction Adjustment Policy in 2007, a PID Policy in 2008 and updated its MUD Policy in 2011. Together, these policies help form a more comprehensive Growth Management framework for the City, which is a good practice that we support and advocate. We reviewed these policies and they appear to provide an adequate framework. However, staff indicated that they felt that the MUD and PID policies should be updated to reflect changed and emerging financial and political realities in the City and the region.

25. ***Recommendation:*** **The City should update the MUD and PID policies to provide an updated growth management framework for the City.**

Annexation Approval Process

The annexation process in the City is straightforward and the process has been very streamlined to facilitate completion quickly, on an annual basis. Figure __ below, depicts the basic, milestone steps in the existing process.

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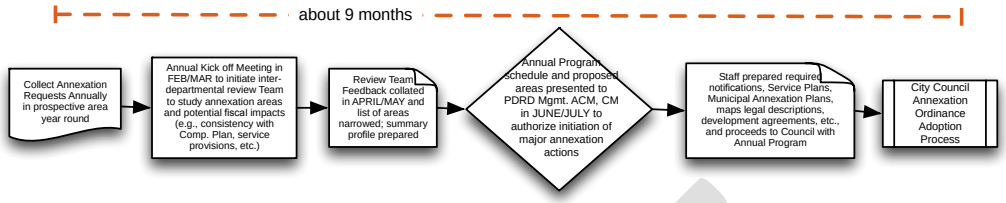
Figure ___
Existing Annexation Approval Process



The Annexation process is an annual process that begins each February. Generally annexation requests are collected throughout the year. In February/March, Annexation staff initiate a kick-off meeting with an interdepartmental PDRD Review Team, comprised of staff, such as Austin Energy, Fire, Health, Law, Library, Parks and Recreation, Solid Waste, Public Works, Transportation, Engineering, Finance and others, to begin the review of annexation areas and study the potential fiscal impacts (e.g., consistency with Comprehensive Plan, etc.) of each proposal.

The Review Team studies the impact of each proposal and provides comments to the Annexation Program Staff. Annexation Program Staff then narrow the list of proposed areas based on the Review Team's feedback and create a summary profile and Annual Program Schedule comprised of the remaining annexation areas under consideration. This review process typically occurs in April and May each year.

In June and July each year, the Annual Program Schedule and summary profile of the proposed areas are formally presented to a Management Team, consisting of PDRD Management, the Assistant City Manager and City Manager in a structured meeting. The Management Team provides Annexation Program staff with authorization to proceed with initiation of the list of Major Annexation Actions through City Council.

Around August of each year, Annexation Program staff proceeds with the Major Annexation initiation process, which consists of a multitude of steps that strictly adhere to Texas state laws. Generally, it involves preparing public notifications and draft service plans, municipal annexation plans, maps, legal descriptions, development agreements, etc. and scheduling, attending and presenting proposals to the City Council at multiple hearings where the final project is adopted by Ordinance.

Staff has created an internal procedure for the annual annexation process, which is good. We reviewed the process and found it to be fairly comprehensive. We did not receive any negative feedback concerning the annual annexation process, which is also good.

Staff indicated that the AMANDA system is not currently used to manage the annual annexation process workflow as it has not been configured for the process. Additionally,

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it would be difficult to utilize AMANDA to manage the process since a number of City Departments/Division do not currently use AMANDA, such as Fire, Water, Budget and Health.

However, AMANDA could help further streamline the annexation workflow. For example it would eliminate the need for a separate case file log and reduce reliance on paper case files. It could also automate the staff review process, provide templates for staff reports, etc.

See our recommendations under the "Development Review Committee" heading of this section regarding establishing a DRC for review of annexation and other planning application projects.

26. ***Recommendation:*** **Configure AMANDA to create an Annexation Module for the Annual Annexation process to eliminate the need for paper file creation and maintenance, facilitate distribution of review materials and collation of review comments, etc.**

G. CODE AMENDMENTS

Code Amendment Function

The Code Amendment function consists of one, full-time Senior Planner. It was reported that the Code Amendment function is short-staffed. Data provided by the City indicated that Code Amendment staff is currently directly managing and overseeing the processing of 18 active code amendment cases. This is a significant case load, given the existing approval process, the difficult Land Development Code and software gaps in the City's AMANDA workflow software which hinders coordination and communication. In addition, Code Amendments are, by their nature, politically sensitive, and as such, staff responsible for processing Code Amendments is under more scrutiny to perform the work as quickly as possible to resolve code issues. Some efficiency will be gained by implementing the AMANDA system improvements we have recommended throughout this report. In addition, the completion of the CodeNEXT project should help to reduce the volume of code amendment processed annually. Labor data was not available for processing time frames for the Code Amendment function, as such a detailed staffing analysis was not performed for this function.

However, the City is currently updating its fee structure for the PDRD and it should be possible to develop a staffing model for this function from using the labor hours derived from the fee study.

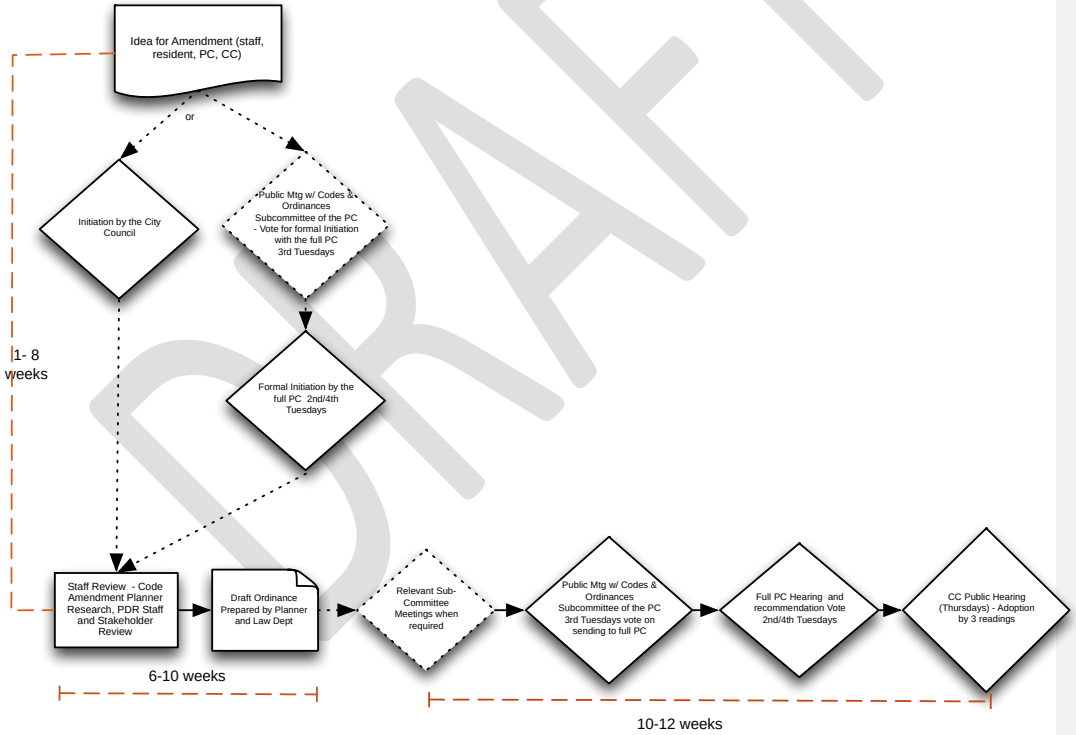
27. ***Recommendation:*** **Create a staffing model for the Code Amendment Function using application labor hours derived from the PDRD fee study to**

determine appropriate staffing levels for the function to justify the need for additional staff.

Code Amendment Approval Process

The City has created a fairly streamlined process for processing and approving Code Amendments, which is summarized in Figure __ below and the discussion that follows. Our suggestions for streamlining the process are noted in the discussion.

Figure ___
Code Amendment Process



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As the above Figure shows, the process is typically completed in about 8 months and involves a series of milestone steps to complete, including the following:

1. Idea for Code Amendment by staff, community members, the Planning Commission (PC), City Council (CC), etc.; An amendment can entail text only or map amendment only or both. However, staff indicated that the majority of amendments involve amending the text;

2. Initiation of the Code Amendment(s) by the CC or Codes and Ordinances Subcommittee of the PC. If the Subcommittee initiates the Code Amendment(s), it is scheduled for consideration by the full PC for discussion and formal acceptance. If it is initiated by CC, a resolution is typically adopted outlining CC's desire for the Amendment and their timeline for completing the Code Amendment process (if it is an urgent matter). Meetings with the Subcommittee, PC and CC are scheduled by respective administrative staff liaisons. An Agenda is posted on the City's web page and at City Hall, 72-hours prior to the scheduled meeting and serves as notice to the public of the upcoming meeting.

3. Once Amendments are formally initiated, the staff review process begins. The initiation process can take between 1-8 weeks depending the urgency of the matter and whether it is initiated by the CC or PC Subcommittee. A minimum 14-calendar day public notice is published and posted prior to the formal PC hearing.

4. The Code Amendment(s) are typically assigned to the Code Amendment Planner. However, some Code Amendments are processed by other staff within the PDRD or other departments instead of the Code Amendment Planner based on subject matter. When this occurs, the Code Amendment Planner is still responsible for overseeing the processing to ensure that it is managed properly and as expeditiously as possible. Assigned staff then begins the Staff Review process, which consists of a study of the issues, research and meetings with relevant PDR Department staff, Law Department Staff, Subcommittees and environmental and neighborhood groups. This process is iterative and may result in multiple meetings and multiple, revised draft Ordinances. It typically takes a minimum 6-8 weeks to complete. Once the review is complete, the Code Amendment Planner and designated Law Department staff draft a final Ordinance outlining the proposed Code Amendment in a "strike-through" format so that the changes are easy to follow.

5. The draft Ordinance is then scheduled for and considered by relevant Subcommittees (if needed), depending on the subject matter.

6. The draft Ordinance is then scheduled for and reviewed by the Codes and Ordinances Subcommittee of the PC.

7. The draft Ordinance is then scheduled for and considered by the full PC.

Comment [PZ42]: This is not early notice, what else could we do?

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8. Following the full PC review, the Draft Ordinance is heard by the City Council for final action. Depending on the number of public meetings and draft revisions required, this public meeting and hearing process typically takes a minimum 10-12 weeks to complete and the overall processing typically takes about 8 months.

Staff indicated that the Code Amendment process has not been automated through the AMANDA permitting software system, as the system has not been configured to manage Code Amendment cases. As such, staff uses a spreadsheet to track assign new case numbers and creates a paper file for each case. In addition, the workflow tasks are more labor intensive because staff reviews, meeting scheduling, report and ordinance writing, agenda packet preparation and overall coordination is done manually, requiring more time and effort, rather than through the centralized AMANDA software system.

Configuring AMANDA to manage the Code Amendment process, would help streamline the workflow and provide PDRD and Law Department staff and the community with earlier notice of Code Amendments, as well as keep them apprised of the status of pending Code Amendments.

28. ***Recommendation:*** **Configure AMANDA/create a Code Amendment Process Module for the Code Amendment Process.**

H. HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Historic Preservation Function

The Historic Preservation function currently has 4~~3~~ approved FTE positions, including a Principal Planner, Senior Planner and (2) Planner I's. The Senior Planner is currently vacant and Planner I position was recently filled. However, staff believes one additional FTE should be added to the function to manage activities more effectively. One of the focus groups also indicated the likely need for more staff for this function. ~~As noted earlier, activity data for this function was not available, thus we are unable to provide a conclusive recommendation about whether the function is staffed appropriately.~~

~~29.~~ ~~-~~*Recommendation:* Create a staffing model for Historic Preservation Function using application labor hours derived from the PDRD fee study to determine appropriate staffing levels for the function to justify the need for additional staff.

Comment [AG43]: Data to be provided

Comment [MB44]: Will change if we ever get data

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Applications

Generally, projects that propose changes to buildings, sites, and signage that are a Historic Landmark, within a Historic District, National Register Historic District or

properties that are over fifty years old, are either approved by Historic Preservation staff, (e.g., if minor and meet criteria) or the Historic Landmark Commission (HLC), prior to construction.

The Administrative and HLC Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) approval processes for Certificates of Appropriateness are outlined in of the City's Land Development Code (e.g., Chapter 25-11), as are the sign permit and demolition and relocation provisions for historic structures. Application forms and checklists are posted on the City's website and are fillable, which is a best practice. In addition, staff has created an annual "Application Deadlines for Historic Landmark Commission Public Hearings," to assist applicants in the submittal process, which is also a best practice. Staff indicated that they typically receive more applications for historic sign permits, as well as demolition and relocation permits than COA's. However, we have highlighted the COA processes as an example of the Historic Preservation application process.

Figures __, __ and __ below, are flow charts that show the general flow of the existing Administrative COA approval process and the discretionary HLC approval process. We were not able to obtain a detailed flow chart of the Historic Preservation application processes and recommend that the City generate charts to assist users in understanding the processes (see below recommendation).

We did not receive significant negative feedback concerning the Historic Preservation Program application processes, which is good. A summary discussion of the process and our recommendations follow.

Figure __
Existing Administrative Certificate of Appropriateness Approval Process

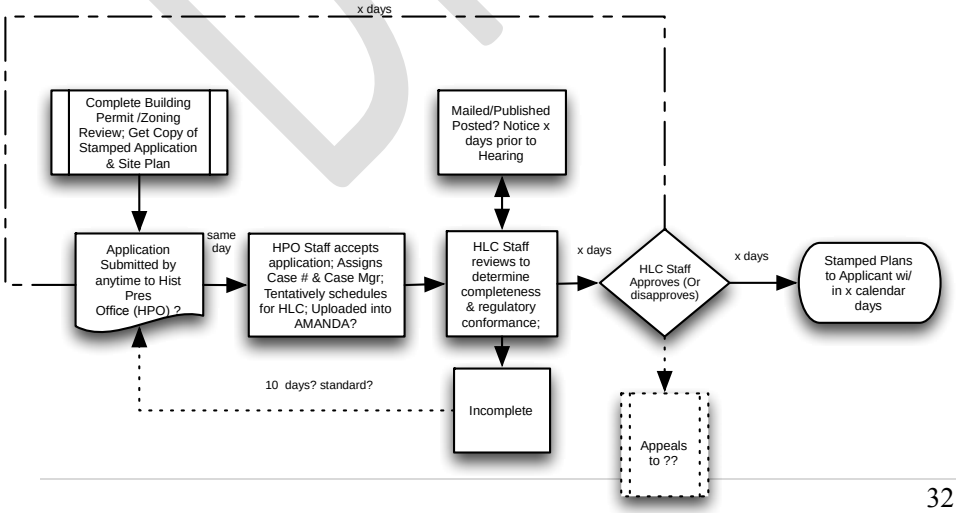
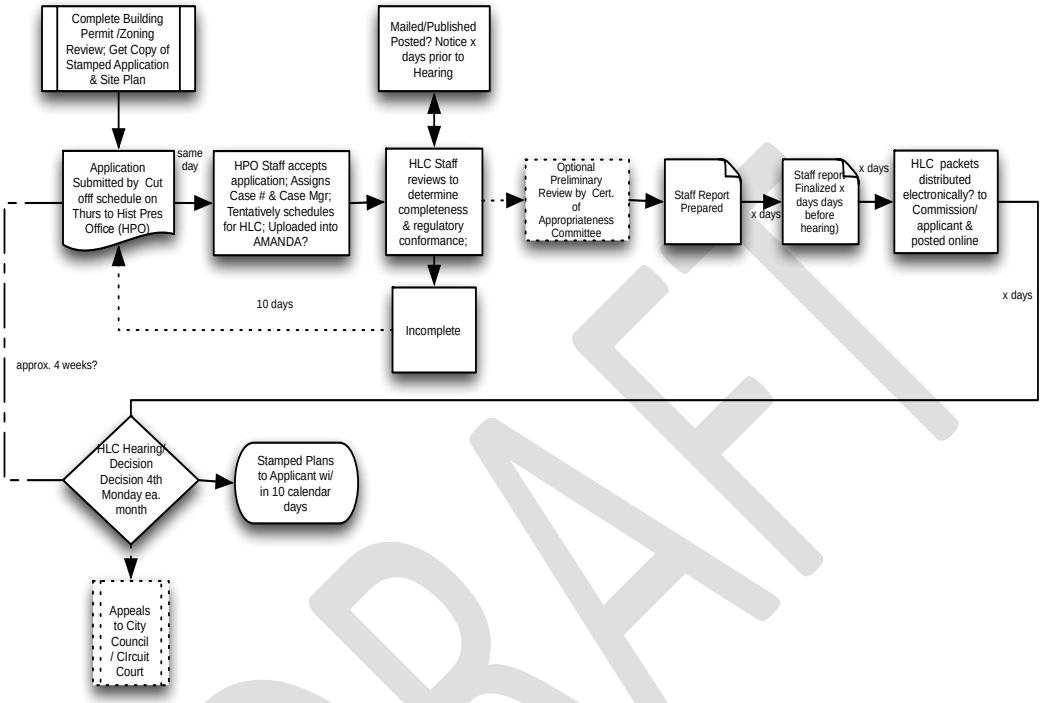


Figure __ Existing Discretionary HLC Certif

icate of Appropriateness Approval Process

Comment [MM[45]:



1. The First Step in both the Administrative and HLC, Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) approval process is to complete the Building Permit /Zoning Review and get a copy of the stamped application & Site Plan.

Comment [AG46]: Formatting is off

2. Formal Submittals can be made anytime to the Historic Preservation Office (HPO) (by appointment. For discretionary applications, submittals should be made by the cutoff dates shown on the "Application Deadlines for Historic Landmark Commission Public Hearings," schedule, which is about 4 weeks prior to the scheduled hearing so that staff can comply with public hearing notice requirements. However, staff will accept applications after the cut-off date if public notice is not required. Submittal requirements include one set of dimensioned building plans, including elevations, floor plans, site plan, roof plan, etc. showing all exterior changes and materials and finishes proposed. Electronic submittals are preferred in .pdf format; however paper copies are accepted if reduced to 11"x17" scale. Digital images of the site, structure, elevations are also preferred, however samples and other information may be requested. In addition, a

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completed applications, fee, stamped application authorization form are also required at submittal.

3. Applications are screened, case numbers are assigned and tentatively scheduled for an HLC hearing, when required. For Historic Land Mark cases, Historic zoning case numbers are utilized for all COA cases. New case numbers are assigned for COA's within historic districts. Cases that require public notice are uploaded into AMANDA. Staff makes the determination for public notice based on the extent of the improvements. For example, some COA projects involve minimally invasive improvement, such as painting, window replacement, roofing, etc., and do not require public notice.

4. The HPO Planner reviews the application for completeness immediately to determine whether the application is complete. Incomplete applications are typically rejected, however, at times they may be accepted, but will not be scheduled for hearing until they are complete.

5. Complete applications may be forwarded to other staff within the PDRD as deemed necessary for a technical review. Formal review timeframes have not yet been established for COA applications. Review comments are compiled by the HPO Planner and sent to the applicant via email.

See our recommendations concerning establishing performance standards for these and all other Current Planning Division applications under the "Performance Standards" heading of this study.

6. Some COA projects require public notice.

   If the COA is an administrative application and meets the approval criteria, it will be approved by staff. Following approval, HPO staff forwards a stamped copy of plans to the applicant within 1-2 calendar days. Staff indicated that the project may be scheduled for HLC consideration, in those cases where the applicant disagrees with staff's recommended changes for approval.

   Formal processing Performance Standards have not yet been established for overall processing for administrative applications and we have recommended Performance Standards for Administrative applications under the "Performance Standards" heading of this section.

7. Appeals of an administratively approved COA's are heard by the HLC.

8. For HLC approved COA applications, the project is scheduled for HLC hearing and public notice is sent by mail to interested parties, renter, property owners, etc.,

within 500' of the property about 11 days prior to the hearing. Applicants are encouraged to meet with the Certificate of Appropriateness Committee (COAC), prior to HLC consideration, but it is not required. Additionally, applicants can seek preliminary review by the COAC at the very beginning stage of their development process if they choose. They do not have to wait until they make a formal submittal. Staff prepares a staff report from a template, typically 3 days (72 hrs) prior to the scheduled hearing. The staff report and support materials are posted on the Commission's agenda online about 3 calendar days (the Friday before the Monday meeting) before the scheduled meeting. Commissioners view the agenda packets on the City's website, in their electronic form, which is good. At times, paper packets are printed for a few Commissioner's for use at the hearing. However, as a rule, staff no longer prints out packets and hand delivers them to Commissioners prior to hearings. Staff indicated that computers are available at the dais for viewing electronic materials, which is good.

9. The HLC hearing is held and a final decision is rendered, typically within 30 calendar days of submittal. However, if the applicant makes a submittal after the published cut-off dates, final action is delayed by 30 calendar days, since the HLC only meets once a month. HLC can approve, approve with conditions, continue or deny a project. Approved applications are issued a signed COA and stamped plans, which is transmitted to the applicant by Historic staff immediately following the hearing via email or regular mail as needed. HLC decisions can be appealed to City Council and must be filed within 30 days of the HLC decision.

~~30.~~29. ***Recommendation:*** **Configure AMANDA to allow for online submittal and payment of Historic Preservation Applications.**

~~31.~~30. ***Recommendation:*** **Flow charts of the applications managed by the Historic Preservation Office should be posted online to aid users in understanding the various processes.**

I. ZONING

Zoning Case Management Function

Staffing for the Zoning Case Management function consists of 5 FTE's including a Principal Planner that manages day-to-day operations of the Program and 4 FTE Senior Planners. This function does not currently use any consultants to supplement staffing resources.

The Principal Planner manages a caseload, while providing oversight to Planners in the Program and acting as a resource for Planner in Comprehensive~~Neighborhood~~ Planning and the 4th Floor. Planners indicated that other than meetings and other administrative

tasks (e.g., phone calls, records management, etc.) the majority of their time is devoted to case management.

Activity data provided by Division, which was shown in the Table at the beginning of this section, indicates that activity levels have remained fairly constant since 2011. Staff reported that caseloads vary from 15 to 30 cases per year per planner. This caseload is impacted in that the City's system tends to be labor intensive and AMANDA system has configuration issues, which hinders workflow efficiency. However, this caseload is well within national norms.

There appears to be sufficient staff resources available to manage current planning projects as none of the staff interviewed indicated that there was a staffing shortage and reported that they are able to complete assigned work and that no backlogs exist.

Zoning Case Management Applications

The Zoning Case Management Program consists of a Principal Planner and four Senior Planners that process zoning/rezoning and zoning amendment (e.g., (Restrictive Covenants, Site Plan Deletions, PUD Amendments, PDA Amendments) application processes.

Comment [AG47]: Same as information presented on page 34

The approval processes for Zoning Case Management application are outlined in the City's Land Development Code (e.g., Chapter 25-2) Application forms and checklists are posted on the City's website and most are fillable, which is a best practice. We did not receive significant negative feedback concerning the Zoning Case Management Program application processes, which is good.

See our recommendations under the "Handout heading" about working with CTM to make all checklists and applications fillable, etc.

Figure __below, is a flow chart that summarizes the standard Zoning/Rezoning approval process currently in place. A summary discussion of the process follows along with our recommendations for streamlining.

Figure __
Existing Standard Zoning/Rezoning Approval Process

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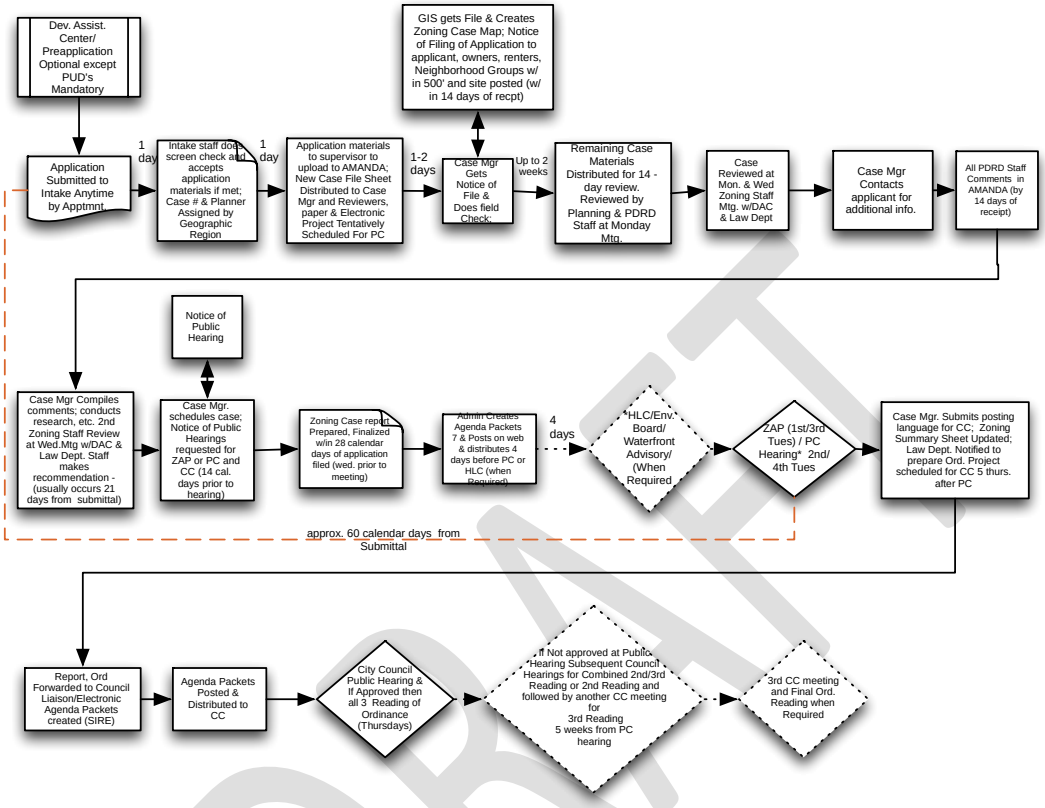

* If project is located within Waterfront Overlay, it is heard by the Waterfront Advisory Committee prior to the PC consideration; if in Historic District, heard by HLC prior to PC; If project is a PUD, it is heard by the Environmental Board prior to PC consideration

1. DAC/Pre-application. This step is the same as Step 1 in the Administrative Approval process, except that PUD's must undergo a DAC/Pre-application review, prior to formal submittal. A DAC/pre-application for all other zoning/rezoning application types is optional.

2. Formal Application Submittal. An application can be filled out online, but must be submitted to the Intake Counter by appointment, Monday through Friday. Fees are also paid at the time of submittal.

See our recommendation above under "Historic Preservation Application Processes" regarding configuring AMANDA for online submittals and payment of fees for Current Planning Division application processes.

Comment [MM[48]: Please format.

Comment [PZ49]: Is this needed?

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We were unable to locate an "Annual Application Deadlines for Zoning and Zoning Amendment applications," to assist applicants in the submittal process. Best Practice Communities typically create "Annual Application Deadlines" for applications processes to help them better manage the submittal process and provide customers with estimated time frames for processing from submittal to commission hearing. The schedules outline submittal deadlines that correlate to upcoming an annual hearing date schedule. Typically, best practice communities establish submittal dates that are 6-8 weeks prior to a scheduled Planning Commission hearing date, depending on staff review procedures and public noticing requirements. Council Meetings typically occur 2-4 weeks after a scheduled PC hearing date, depending on public notice and ordinance reading requirements.

~~32.~~31. ***Recommendation:*** **Publish an "Annual Application Deadline" for Zoning/Rezoning applications to help better manage the submittal process for staff and customers.**

Comment [AG50]: The department accepts application on any business day and does not have submittal deadlines.

Although zoning staff created a checklist for zoning application submittals, it was reported that incomplete applications are routinely received for processing, which delays processing and creates frustration.

See our above recommendation regarding establishing a formal policy to reject all incomplete applications for the Current Planning Division.

3. Intake staff quantitatively screens applications for all required submittal items. Data is entered into the AMANDA system, a case number is assigned and fees are collected. Incomplete applications are occasionally accepted for processing.

Submittal requirements typically include one paper copy of the completed application, fee, tax plat, tax certificate, acknowledgement form, traffic impact analysis (TIA) and other items outlined in a submittal checklist.

Currently, submittals cannot be made electronically. For zoning cases, the applicant submits a paper application with paper attachments to Intake and then this information is sent to a supervisor who scans the data into the AMANDA records system, where it becomes available in the "Attachment" tab. Staff indicated that the only submittal information that is scanned for the benefit of those reviewers that do not have access to AMANDA, such as the Law Dept, Neighborhood Housing and Community Development (NHCD), Austin Energy-Green Building, Watershed Protection-Chief Environmental Officer, and Fire Review.

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Reviewers that have access to AMANDA typically only receive a paper copy of the distribution sheet. However, Zoning Management staff still create and use paper files to take to meetings with applicant, neighborhoods, Commission and Council meetings.

~~4.~~ The Zoning files ~~Paper~~ are processed at~~files~~ ~~travel from~~ Intake ~~to a Supervisor~~ for scanning, uploading and distribution. ~~The project is also tentatively scheduled for the next available PC/ZAP hearing and other Boards/Commission as may be required (e.g., Historic, Environmental, Waterfront, etc.).~~

4.

5. The Zoning Case Manager receives a one-page Notice of (new application) Filing sheet that notifies them that a new application has been filed, within 1-2 days of submittal. A Notice of Filing is generated by the Notification division and sent out within 14 days of the case filing to applicant, owners, renters, environmental, and neighborhood groups, etc., within 500' radius. In addition, notification signs are posted on the site. The Notification staff saves this information in AMANDA under the Documents tab once the notice is generated and sent out. GIS also gets a notification of a new file and creates a zoning case map.

   The Zoning Case Manager conducts preliminary research for related cases and determines whether the site is located within environmentally sensitive areas, neighborhood study areas, etc. The Case Manager conducts a site inspection and makes contact with the applicant via email and/or phone and requests any additional information deemed necessary.

   Staff indicated that zoning cases do not undergo a completeness check as other applications, such as site plans and subdivisions do. We advocate for qualitative completeness checks for all planning applications because it ensures that staff does not waste time processing incomplete applications and it provides early feedback to applicants concerning the status of their application. Performance Standards should be established for completeness checks to ensure that they are completed early in the process.

~~33.~~32. ***Recommendation:*** **Completeness checks for Zoning Case Management Applications should be completed within 5 working days of submittal. The Completeness check should be accomplished within the context of the staff review (Development Review Committee) period, so that all reviewers can help evaluate the whether the project is complete and ready to continue through the hearing process.**

Comment [PZ51]: If scanned, do we still need this?

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Comment [PZ52]: For early notice, could this be shorter?

Comment [PZ53]: Could we do completeness checks in 5 days?

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6. Up to two weeks later, the complete submittal is distributed to the Zoning Case Manager and reviewers, such as such as Comprehensive Planning, Drainage Engineering, Electric, Environmental, Fire, Floodplain, Green Building, Law Dept., Industrial Waste, Mapping, Notice Team, Public Works, Transportation, Water Quality, Heritage Trees, Subdivision, etc., for a 14-calendar day review.

See our recommendation under the "Performance Standard" heading in this section about establishing staff review standards for up to three review cycles.

7. The Zoning Case Manager introduces the new case to Zoning Case Management Staff and other PDRD staff at the regularly scheduled Monday morning staff meeting and the group makes a tentative recommendation for the case.

Obviously, the delay in the distribution of the full application submittal materials, hinders processing of zoning applications. However, this delay should be eliminated once the Division completes the transition to a digital submittal process.

Comment [PZ54]: Needs to be edited?

~~34.~~33. ***Recommendation:*** **The Development Services Manager for the Current Planning Division should ensure that all applications materials are immediately distributed, within 1-2 days max to the case manager and reviewers. Once digital submittals are possible, application materials should be submitted and distributed electronically only.**

8. The Zoning Case Manager continues the review of the application and presents it at the regularly scheduled Wednesday staff meeting with Zoning, DAC and Law Dept. staff and a tentative recommendation is made by the group. Case Managers contact the applicant once the group recommendation is made to discuss the recommendation and scheduling dates.

~~8.~~9. The Zoning Case Manager receives input from the public via phone, email, or meetings.

~~9.~~10. Staff "review comments" are due in AMANDA.

Staff indicates that the applicant can review the staff comments once they are sent by the reviewers in AMANDA system using the City's website link to AMANDA, which is good.

~~10.~~11. The Zoning Case Manager Compiles comments; conducts research, etc. 2nd Zoning Staff Review at Wed. staff meeting w/DAC & Law Dept. and

makes a final staff recommendation for the proposal. The final recommendation typically occurs within 21 days of application submittal.

Zoning Case Management Review

As indicated above, the Zoning Case Management Program has a labor-intensive review process, consisting of multiple group reviews. Best practice communities often create a Development Review Committee (DRC), instead, in order to make the review process more efficient. The DRC is a process where interdepartmental staff from development-related functions meet to collectively review zoning and other planning applications to identify issues, conditions of approval and determine whether the application is complete for processing. Some communities create a separate completeness determination step, where the Case Manager is responsible for qualitatively reviewing the project for completeness before it is distributed to other reviewers.

Comment [MM[55]: Do you need a header?

Comment [PZ56]: Same issue?

We are advocates of the DRC process, particularly in communities, such as Austin where development-related functions are dispersed throughout different floors and divisions and departments because it helps to bring the related review functions together in one place, at one time, to discuss and resolve issues before projects are scheduled for decision-making hearings, instead of being independently discussed at Program level meetings.

The DRC also provides the applicant with a structured forum to review to identify, discuss and resolve development-related issues with review staff early in the application review process.

Moreover, the DRC process facilitates early problem solving, so that projects are not unnecessarily delayed by repeated reviews with individual reviewers and/or postponements/continuances by the decision-makers. In Best Practice Communities, the DRC is typically held only for more complicated projects, such as zoning cases, historic projects and/or large scale and/or economically significant development proposals (e.g., annexations, improvement districts, etc.).

The City should consider establishing a DRC for more complicated projects, such as Zoning Case Management cases. The DRC should include senior level decision-making review staff from core disciplines, including: engineering (e.g., utilities, transportation), planning, building, fire, as well as parks and police, legal and other PDRD disciplines.

DRC meetings should be led by the Zoning Case Manager/Planner assigned to the case, who should act as the Project Manager (see our discussion under the "Project Manager" heading, above). DRC meetings should be held within 10 working days of the submittal in order give staff adequate review time to identify any "deal breaker issues," potential design and regulatory concerns and make a qualitative determination about the application's completeness. Each designated DRC member should be required to come to

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the DRC meeting with a list of written comments/issues to be discussed during the meeting.

The lead Planner should steer and focus the DRC discussion by using an agenda and a computer and large display screen or monitor, to display project plans for the entire group, where possible. The lead Case Manager Planner should present each project to DRC members, highlight known issues, and solicit feedback and discussion from each discipline. To guide this discussion, lead Case Manager Planner should create a DRC review checklist to ensure that projects are consistently reviewed to cover the full scope of review of each discipline. The applicant should be invited to attend the meeting and be allowed to discuss identified issues with staff reviewers with the goal of developing potential solutions to issues. Written comments by DRC Members should be documented in AMANDA and collated by the lead planner in advance of the meeting. The applicant should be provided with an electronic copy of staff comments at the close of the meeting. If changes to comments or conditions occur during the meeting, staff should have the ability to change them on the spot, display on the smart board in the room, and print a copy for the applicant.

The Zoning Case Management, Annexation, Historic Preservation and Code Amendment functions should determine, which of the more complex project types should be subject to DRC review, such as certain Code Amendments, Rezoning, and subdivisions, and routinely schedule those project types for DRC review.

All review materials should be sent electronically to DRC members, through the AMANDA system to reduce the amount of paper used and provide staff with as much time as possible to review project materials before the DRC meeting.

~~35.~~34. ***Recommendation:*** **Establish a DRC function, so that it serves as a case review function for more complex zoning projects, as described above. The DRC should also be used to review complex subdivision and site plan projects.**

The DRC should include the following features:

- An annual "DRC Schedule," which outlines the dates that the DRC meetings are scheduled;
- A determination of which types of Division Applications should be routinely scheduled for DRC, so that they can automatically be scheduled by the front counter at submittal (in-take), through the AMANDA system (if possible);
- The designated Principal Planner should proactively manage the DRC meetings to ensure that assigned staff attend regularly, are prepared, and thoroughly outline issues, which encompass their entire scope of review;

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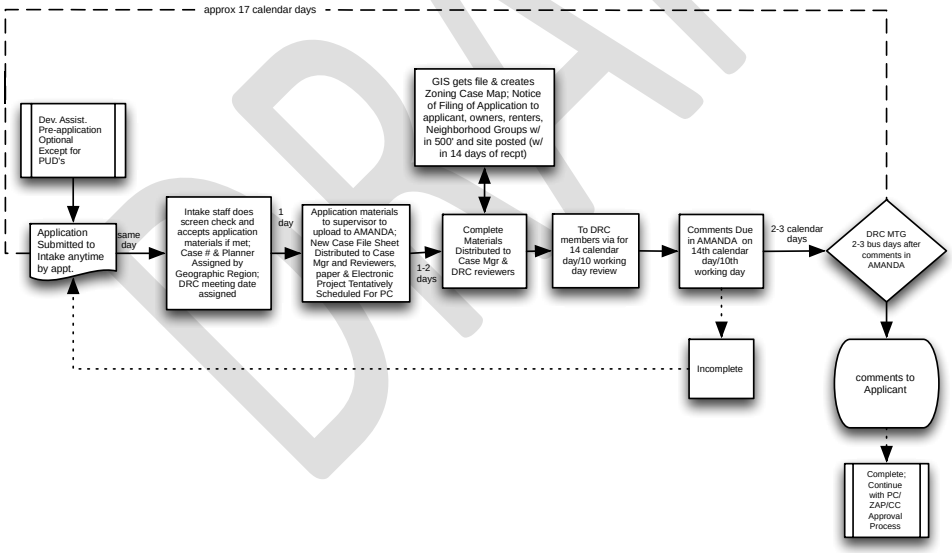
- The assigned Case Manager Planner should lead the DRC meetings and discussions, as a project manager, using the agenda, a computer and display screen to display project plans;
- A DRC Agenda should be prepared and posted on the PDRD web page, as well as sent to the applicant via email;
- The Agenda should note that all applicants whose projects appear on the DRC Agenda are encouraged to attend the meeting to discuss the project with staff; and
- Create a checklist of discussion items for use by the Case Management Planners for each project scheduled for DRC.

Figure __ below is a flow chart that shows how the existing Zoning Case Management Approval process could work with a DRC function integrated into the workflow. This process will be further streamlined, once digital submittals are used.

Figure __
Zoning Case Management with DRC Flow Chart



~~11.~~12. he Case Manager confirms hearing schedule and Notice of Public Hearings are requested for ZAP or PC and CC approximately 14 calendar days prior to hearings. The Case Manager requests the notice of public hearing in the AMANDA system and within 2-3 business days, the Notification staff alerts staff that the public hearing notice is drafted and ready for review. The

Comment [MB57]: Paul; Note I have the DRC helping to make the completeness determination (like they did in san mateo) because zoning cases are more complex. Also because if the completeness review was redesigned as separate process (like in the subdivision process), it would add time and cost. If the qualitative completeness review was designed to occur before distribution to reviewers (like it was in Kansas City) AMANDA would have to be reconfigured to provide a new workflow.

Comment [MM[58]: Please format

Comment [PZ59]: Need more early notice?

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Case Manager reviews, edits and finalizes the public hearing notice and the notice is distributed 11 days prior to the scheduled hearing.

As noted under the "Technology" heading of this section, the public notice process that was set-up in AMANDA is inefficient and takes up to 14 different processes to complete and we have recommended that this and other configuration issues be addressed as soon as possible.

~~12.~~13. The Case Manager prepares a Zoning Report about 6 days prior to the scheduled Commission meeting(s), from a template created by the Division, which is good. Currently, the Land Development Code specifies that Summary Reports are to be completed within 28 calendar days of the filing of the application and staff indicates that reports are generated within this timeframe. Staff contacts the applicant to discuss the report and recommendations.

The AMANDA system was intended to be programmed to automatically generate the Zoning Summary Review Staff Report from all of the baseline information and staff review comments input into AMANDA. However, staff indicated that this feature does not work as intended despite attempts to re-structure the system and the report so that this feature is functional. As a result, staff report preparation is less efficient than it could be.

See our discussion under the "technology" heading of this section about resolving these and other technology issues in the Division.

~~13.~~14. A paper copy of the Zoning Report is forwarded to the assigned Commission agenda coordinator on the Wednesday prior to the Tuesday meeting. The coordinator scans the report to a .pdf format, adds the case to an agenda spreadsheet and creates an agenda is a word document. The agenda, Zoning Reports and back-up materials are uploaded into an electronic agenda packet that is posted online. In addition, paper copies of agenda materials are sent to an off-site printing company to make 12-25 copies of the agenda packets. Packets are then delivered by car to Commission members, the Friday before the scheduled meeting (e.g., 4 calendar days prior to).

~~36.~~35. ***Recommendation:*** **Purchase I-pads or laptops computers for Commission members, if they are not currently available in hearing chambers, so that agenda packet materials can be viewed electronically at hearings instead paper.**

~~37.~~36. ***Recommendation:*** **Once electronic submittals are possible through the AMANDA system, the Development Service Manager for the Current Planning Division should ensure that agendas packets are only distributed electronically to**

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members, as well as posted online to eliminate the time and cost associated with copying and paper agenda packet delivery.

~~14.~~15. PC hearings are held on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of each month and ZAP hearings on the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of each month. Staff provides a brief overview of the case, followed by a more comprehensive PowerPoint presentation by the applicant. Zoning cases must be heard within 181 calendar days of filing or they expire, per City Code.

~~15.~~16. The case is required by Code to be heard by the City Council for a public hearing within 40-days of a ZAP or PC Commission recommendation. The staff submits the posting language for the zoning case to the agenda office 3 weeks and 1 day prior to the City Council meeting. The Case Manager updates the Zoning Summary Review Report to reflect actions at the PC or ZAP hearing and completes a Council agenda and "Request for Readings" sheet.

If a case has a positive recommendation from the Commission and does not have opposition, the staff will request an ordinance from the Law Department within a week (e.g., 7-calendar days). The Law Dept. has an ordinance deadline document that they prepare for the year based on the City Council dates.

Staff indicated that the AMANDA system is not used for the Ordinance preparation process through the Law Dept., even though the Law Dept. is set up to receive distributions through AMANDA. Instead, the process is completed through, fax, interoffice mail or email. Typically, staff scans the ordinance/public restrictive covenant/street deed requests along with the case report, maps, legal description (field notes) and any other relative information and then e-mails the information to the Law Dept. The Law Dept. sends an e-mail back to the Case Manager to acknowledge receipt.

~~38.~~37. ***Recommendation:*** **Use an electronic system for the ordinance drafting process to eliminate the practice of email, scanning and interoffice mail coordination.**

16. The updated Zoning Report, Ordinance and back-up materials are forwarded to the Council liaison for inclusion in an electronic agenda packet (e.g., SIRE agenda builder).

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17. Electronic Agenda Packets are posted online and distributed electronically to Council about 7 days prior to the scheduled hearing.

18. The Council then considers the case at a regularly scheduled Thursday Public Hearing. The case is presented at City Council as a consent item, and all three readings of the ordinance are completed, if the project is recommended for approval by the Commission recommendation and there is no public opposition. If not, the case is presented to council as a postponement item or a discussion item. If a case is contentious, has neighborhood opposition or the applicant does not agree with the Commission's recommendation, then it is typically scheduled as a Discussion item and only the1st reading is completed. It is the ZAP, PC and City Councils' policy to grant all first postponement requests by either the staff, applicant or neighborhood.

    After the first postponement, a subsequent postponement is usually up for discussion by the Council. The City Council then closes the public hearing and makes a motion on 1st reading only. After that occurs, the staff requests a draft ordinance for 2nd/3rd readings as soon as possible (within 2 weeks, or by the next available Law deadline request date). According to staff, Austin requires 3 readings to provide time for input and the applicant and staff to work through outstanding issues.

    When the ordinance is prepared, the staff contacts the applicant about the proposed 2nd/3rd reading date and then submits the posting language for 2nd/3rd readings to the agenda office. This does not require notification because the public hearing is closed. In rare cases, a case is scheduled for 2nd reading only to work out details/issues that arise after the CC motion at first reading. Then after 2nd reading the staff will request a draft ordinance from Law for the 3rd and final reading. The City Code provides Council with 360~~231~~ calendar days to complete required ordinance readings.

    We received feedback from interviewees that postponements are excessive and create significant processing delays. For example, we were made aware of an existing case that has been postponed 8 times and another cases that have almost a dozen council actions and several years to complete.

    Staff indicated that the City's existing policy is to grant all first time postponement requests, whether they are made by staff, the application, neighbors or a neighborhood group. After the first request, the Commission or City Council has discretion (depending on where the application is in the approval process) over whether additional postponement requests are granted.

    The reasons for postponement requests vary, but are often the result of a pending petition of opposition and the applicant needing additional time to resolve outstanding issues, such as traffic and/or environmental issues (e.g., hydrology, trees, etc.). In

Comment [PZ60]: Why three? Texas law?

Comment [MM[61]: City code requires 3, state law requires 2 readings.

Comment [MM[62]: Staff is providing.the data.

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addition, staff may have to request a postponement in some cases to keep zoning request active if there is an outstanding issue.

~~39.~~38. ***Recommendation:*** **Work with the City Council to modify the existing postponement policy in order to curb the practice of excessive postponements, which is a drain on city resources.**

Application Processing Times

Tables __, below show sample data on 10 recent Current Planning Division applications, including Land Development Code Amendment, Use Determination Historic Preservation and Zoning Application cases.

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Table 179
Ten Recent Current Planning Division Applications Processed

Case Type Name and #	Date Submitted	Date Deemed Complete	# of Working Days from Submittal to Deemed Complete	# of Working Days for Staff Review(s) from Deemed Complete	# of Staff Review Cycles	Decision Date	# of Calendar days from Submittal to Approval
Land Development Code Amendment Mobile Retail C20-2013-034	11/7/13	6/26/14	158	45	9	6/26/14	231
Land Development Code Amendment - Breweries C20-2013-026	10/3/13	4/17/14	133	30	6	4/17/14	196
Land Development Code Amendment - Urban Farms C20-2013-005	2/26/13	11/21/13	187	60	25	11/21/13	268
Zoning C14-2012-0108 – Ross Road Center	8/30/12	8/31/12	1	32	1	12/13/12	104 Cal/75 working days
Zoning C14-2013-0093 – Lynnbrook Condos	5/14/13	7/30/13	77	29	1	10/3/13	142 Cal/103 working days
Rezoning C14-2013-0053 – Still Waters	5/15/13	5/16/13	1	43	1	8/22/13	99 Cal/72 working days
Certificate of Appropriateness	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not availabl e	Not available	Not available
Certificate of Appropriateness	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not availabl e	Not available	Not available
Use Determination UD-2014-0001 – Gorman Use Determination	6/9/14	6/9/14	0	71	1	In process (appealed to BOA on 10/27/14	In process due to appeal
Use Determination UD-2014-0003 – Cross Fit Use Determination	7/25/14	7/25/14	0	25	1	8/19/14	25 (not appealed)

Comment [MB63]: Will change if we get data

As the above table shows, staff reviews for Land Development Code Amendment cases ranged from 30 to 60 days. Since these cases are generated by the City, completeness determinations and the number of staff reviews is less relevant, as these types of cases are

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often studied by multiple groups over extended time periods. Overall processing for the 3 cases sampled, took from 6.5 to 9 months to complete, which is consistent with the 8 month timeframe outlined by City staff.

The Zoning cases sampled showed that two completeness determinations occurred within 1 working day, however the rezoning case was not deemed completed for 77 working days, which seems excessive and is far beyond completeness timeframes achieved by best practice communities, which typically range from 5 to 15 working days (e.g., 1 – 3 weeks). Staff review timeframes for these cases ranged from 29 to 43 working days, which is also lengthy and beyond what is typically established in best practice communities for zoning cases. Each of the 3 cases were reviewed in one review cycle and overall processing for 2 of the cases was completed in just over 3 months, which is consistent with the timeframe outlined in the process flowchart.

Comment [MM[64]: Not sure how you arrived at this as there is no completion check required for zoning case applications.

Performance Standards

Performance Measures for the Current Planning Division were identified and established in the City's adopted budget for the Department and are shown in Table __ below.

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Table
Existing Performance Measures for Current Planning

Function	2011	2012	2013	2014*	2015
Annexation					
Full Time Employees (FTE's)	2	2	2	2	2
# acres annexed and served by City of Austin water/wastewater service	1,596	4,544	3,980	3,000	1,202
% annexed served by City of Austin water/wastewater	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Code Amendment (map and text)					
FTE's	1	1	1	1	4
# amendments prepared	18	21	28	20	20
% of amendments adopted *(text or map)*	44%	57%	75%	85%	82%
Historic Preservation					
FTE's				3	
No Measures listed					
One Stop Shop (OSS)					
FTE's	-	-	1	1	1
No Measures listed					
Zoning Case Management					
FTE's	11	11	11	11	11
# applications processed	137	129	140	130	130
# neighborhood plan rezonings on Planning Commission agenda	2	2	0	3	0
# neighborhood plan rezonings adopted by City Council	2	2	0	3	0

Comment [PZ65]: Are these map or text?

Comment [PZ66]: What is the story on this increase?

Comment [MM[67]: For a budget alignment, the numbers did go from 1 to 4 because the CodeNEXT personnel were added to Code Amendment. So when the project is completed, staff will be incorporated into the Planning section.

Comment [MB68]: Paul FTE data not shown in budget. Do u have this?

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As noted earlier in this report, the Performance Measures established, are not true standards and are not effective measures of performance for the Current Planning Division, particularly with regards to case processing functions. In addition, some of the feedback that we received suggests that these Performance Measures promote a "pro-development" and/or "pro-approval" culture among staff since staff's performance is evaluated based on meeting these measures. As such, we have suggested Performance Standards in the table below that are intended to provide a measure of staff's performance.

Comment [PZ69]: So, what should they do?

In addition to the above Performance Measures outlined in the adopted Budget, there are a number of Performance Standards established by the Land Development Code and/or state law or for the various applications processed by the Current Planning Division for completeness reviews, staff reviews and overall case processing. However, Standards are not tracked, managed or reported on to determine whether they are being met successfully.

Table __ below shows the existing Performance Standards, established by various means, for the various applications processed in the Current Planning Division.

Application Types	Completeness Review Performance Standard	Staff Review Cycle Performance Standard			Staff Report Completion from time of submittal	Processing from Submittal to PC hearing	Overall Processing from submittal to Final Decision-body (BOA, Council, or Staff HLC)	Established Standard for % Time Met
		Cycle One	Cycle Two	Cycle Three				
Appeals to Use Determinations	None	None	None	None	None	N/A	N/A	None
Certificate of Appropriateness (Historic Landmark Commission)	Immediate	None	None	None	None	N/A	60 Calendar days to HLC	None
Certificate of Appropriateness (Staff approval)	Immediate	None	None	None	None	N/A	None	None
Historic Demolition Application Permit	Immediate	None	None	None	None	N/A	60 Calendar days to HLC	None
Historic relocation of structures	Immediate	None	None	None	None2	N/A	60 Calendar days to HLC	None
Historic Sign permit	Immediate	None	None	None	None2	N/A	None	None
Historic Zoning	Immediate2	10 working days/14 calendar days	None	None	20 working days/28 calendar days	40 working days/60 calendar days	65 working days/105 calendar days	None
National Register Historic Districts	Immediate2	None2	None	None	None	N/A	60 Calendar days to HLC	None

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permits								
Rezoning/Zoning (standard – e.g, no other additional boards, commissions, studies, etc.)	None	10 working days/14 calendar days	None	None	20 working days/28 calendar days	40 working days/60 calendar days	65 working days/105 calendar days	None
Use Determinations	None	None	None	None	N/A	N/A	-	None

Table __
Existing Performance Standards for Current Planning Applications

Table __ below shows our suggested Performance Standards for the application processes listed.

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Table
Suggested Performance Standards for Current Planning Applications

Application Types	Suggested Completeness Review Performance Standard	Suggested Staff Review Cycle Performance Standard			Suggested Staff Report Completion from time of submittal	Suggested Processing from Submittal to PC hearing	Suggested Overall Processing from submittal to Final Decision-body (BOA, Council, or Staff HLC)	Suggested Standard for % Time Met
		Cycle One	Cycle Two	Cycle Three				
Appeals to Use Determinations	None	N/A	N/A	N/A	None	N/A	20 working days/30 calendar days	90%
Certificate of Appropriateness (Historic Landmark Commission)	5 working days	10 working days	5 working days	3 working days	None	N/A	32 working days	90%
Certificate of Appropriateness (Staff approval)	2working days	5 working days	3 working days	1 working days	None	N/A	15 working days	90%
Historic Demolition Application Permit	5 working days	10 working days	5 working days	3 working days	None	N/A	32 working days	90%
Historic relocation of structures	5 working days	10 working days	5 working days	3 working days	None	N/A	32 working days	90%
Historic Sign permit	5 working days	10 working days	5 working days	3 working days	None	N/A	32 working days	90%
Historic Zoning	5 working days	10 working days	5 working days	3 working days	None	40 working days	65 working days	90%
National Register Historic Districts permits	5 working days	10 working days	5 working days	3 working days	None	N/A	32 working days	90%
Rezoning/Zoning	5 working days	10 working days	5 working days	3 working days	None	40 working days	65 working days	90%
Use Determinations	5 working days	5 working days	3 working days	1 working days	None	N/A	15 working days	90%

Comment [PZ70]: Do we need 10 days for completeness?

Comment [MB71]: We have to be careful about being too aggressive with performance standards because their existing code is onerous (has 100's of zoning classifications), there databases are not integrated and their filing systems are in flux – which all translates into difficulties doing research = more time needed.

J. CODENEXT TEAM

Organization

The CodeNEXT team is a stand-alone ~~special~~ Section working on the land development code revision ~~within the Current Planning Division~~. It consists of five staff as shown in Figure __ and Table __. The ~~Development Services~~CodeNEXT-Division Manager reports to an Assistant Director who manages the Current Planning Division.

Comment [MM[72]: From a budget perspective CodeNEXT is under Current Planning, however they currently report to the Assistant Director.

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Figure
CodeNEXT Team Organization

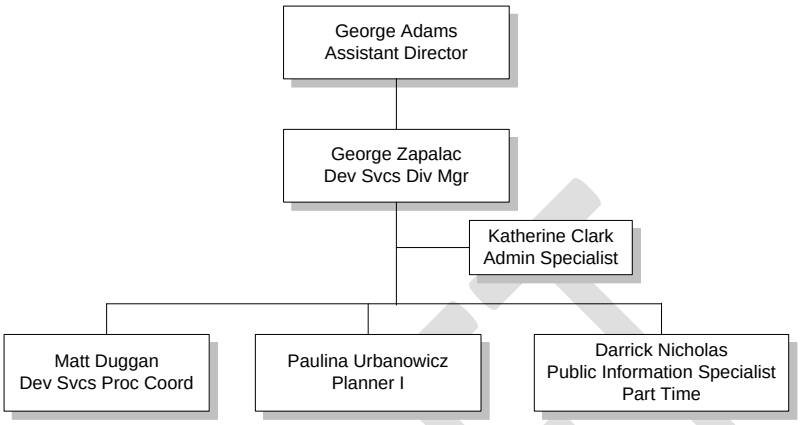

Table
CodeNEXT Staffing

Position Title	Number of Positions	Responsibilities	Reports To
CodeNEXT~~Dev Svcs~~ Div Mgr	1	Manages the CodeNEXT project and staff, Land Use Review Division and DAC	Assistant Director
Admin Specialist	1	Standard administrative support functions plus some social media	Dev Svcs Div Mgr
Dev Svcs Proc Coord	1	Works with the Code Advisory Group, website, invoices, reviews consultants reports	Dev Svcs Div Mgr
Planner 1	1	Handles Community Character in a Box, handles some of the outreach and events	Dev Svcs Div Mgr
Public Information Specialist	1	Coordinates consultants and outreach	Dev Svcs Div Mgr

The Project

The City has embarked on a 2 million dollar multi-year project to revise/and or replace the current Development Code. The project is being completed by a consulting team headed by Opticos Design Inc. along with 13 sub-consultants. A special 11 person Land Development Code Advisory Group has also been appointed. The new code is expected to go into effect in 2017.

Comment [MM[73]: Note: George Zapalac is CodeNEXT Division Manager. Please use disclaimer.

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The Department staff works closely with the consultants and community outreach and meetings. The "Character in a Box" processes uses the consultant's methodology but is being implemented by the City staff.

Our study is designed to coordinate closely with the CodeNEXT work. As part of this study we met with the CodeNEXT staff and the consultants. We observed part of the public meeting of Code Approaches held on September 4 and have communicated with the consultants by telephone.

CodeNEXT Code Advisory Group

We met with the CodeNEXT Code Advisory Group on September 3rd with 7 members present. Although no votes were taken, the following items were discussed:

- The current consulting contract does not include funds for mapping changed from the new code;
- The current consulting contract does not include funds for computerizing the new code;
- There is a desire for more expedited housing;
- It was noted that there have been many new plans adopted over the last few years;
- The City has high paid police but low paid planners; and
- The Planning and Development Department Director has not actively participated in the CodeNEXT project.

We are not directly involved in the Code NEXT project but do have a number of concerns based on our code work elsewhere. It is essential the budget be found for both mapping and a computerized code. We were surprised to see that this was not in the adopted budget. This appropriation would come from the General Fund and no out of the One Stop Shop budget. This is one of the most major projects for the Planning and Development Review Department, as such we believe it is essential that the Department's Director have a major involvement.

~~40.~~39. ***Recommendation:*** **There should be an appropriation for mapping of the new code and an electronic code.**

~~41.~~40. ***Recommendation:*** **the Director of the Planning and Development Review Department should actively participate in the CodeNEXT project.**

Impact on Department Organization

The CodeNEXT Code Diagnosis report indicates:

- **Department Organization:** "The current complexity of the Land Development Code has an adverse effect on the organizational structure of the Planning and Development Review department." While we agree that this is likely, it will not be possible to fully integrate our workflow study with CodeNEXT since the workflow study will be complete before CodeNEXT has its recommendations. This means that there may be some organizational changes and study needed at a later time. However, it appears that many of the current issues within the PDRD relate to other issues outside the code. If these issues are corrected, it should be easier to integrate CodeNEXT recommendations into the organization.
- **Incomplete and Complicated Administration and Procedures:** "A lack of clarity and consistency in decision-making, interpretation, and review of the code, as well as missing or incomplete code administration information, make for a lengthy and unpredictable review process." We agree that this is the case. However, there will be additional ways to address the lengthy processes.
- **Workspace Issues:** Although the code does impact the workspace issues, the lack of good technology and housing the related functions on five floors may have even a greater impact on productivity, confusion and timelines.

Possible Areas To Be Considered in CodeNEXT Work

In our research we noted the following Code areas that should be considered in the CodeNEXT project:

- Combine Building and Fire Board of Appeals, Electric Board, Mechanical, Plumbing and Solar Boards, Recommendation 50.
- Work to eliminate local building code amendments, Recommendation 61.
- Examine and maintain rural zoning policies, Recommendation 127.
- Add emphasis to nodal activity centers, Recommendation 128.
- Narrow criteria for invoking Appeals for time extensions, Recommendation 250
- Expand items for administrative subdivision cases, Recommendation 254.
- Allow some final plats to be approved administratively, Recommendation 255.

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