

VII. PLANNING DIVISIONS

The City of San Jose has two Planning Divisions:

- ✍ Planning Services – Mid- to Long-Range Planning and Public Information; and
- ✍ Plan Implementation – Current Planning and Permit Processing

The two Planning Divisions are profiled individually, below.

A. PLANNING SERVICES DIVISION PROFILE

Function

The Planning Services Division is responsible for the City's long range planning activities, including the San Jose 2020 General Plan, the San Jose Zoning Code, special plans and policy studies, and coordination with related outside agencies. Special plans include Area Plans, Specific Plans, Master Plans, and Neighborhood Revitalization Plans. Policy Studies that have been completed or are currently underway by the Planning Services Division include the Greenline Initiative/Urban Growth Boundary project, Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy, Housing Initiative, Emergency Homeless Shelter Criteria, School Facility Availability Policy and Ordinance, Riparian Corridor Policy Study, Burrowing Owl Study, and Willow Glen Parking Study. Outside agency coordination includes working with the Traffic Congestion Management Plans (CMP), County Permit Referral Process, School Site Reuse Plan, and Open Space Authority.

The Planning Services Division also provides supportive services such as Data Management and Public Information, monitors development activity, and provides development and demographic information to other City Departments, public agencies and the public.

Management

The Planning Services Division is under the direction of a Deputy Director of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement (PBCE). The Deputy Director reports to the Director of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement (PBCE).

Two Principal Planner positions report to the Deputy Director position. A third position was eliminated through recent budget cuts and was formerly occupied by the Deputy Director. Both remaining Principal Planner positions are filled.

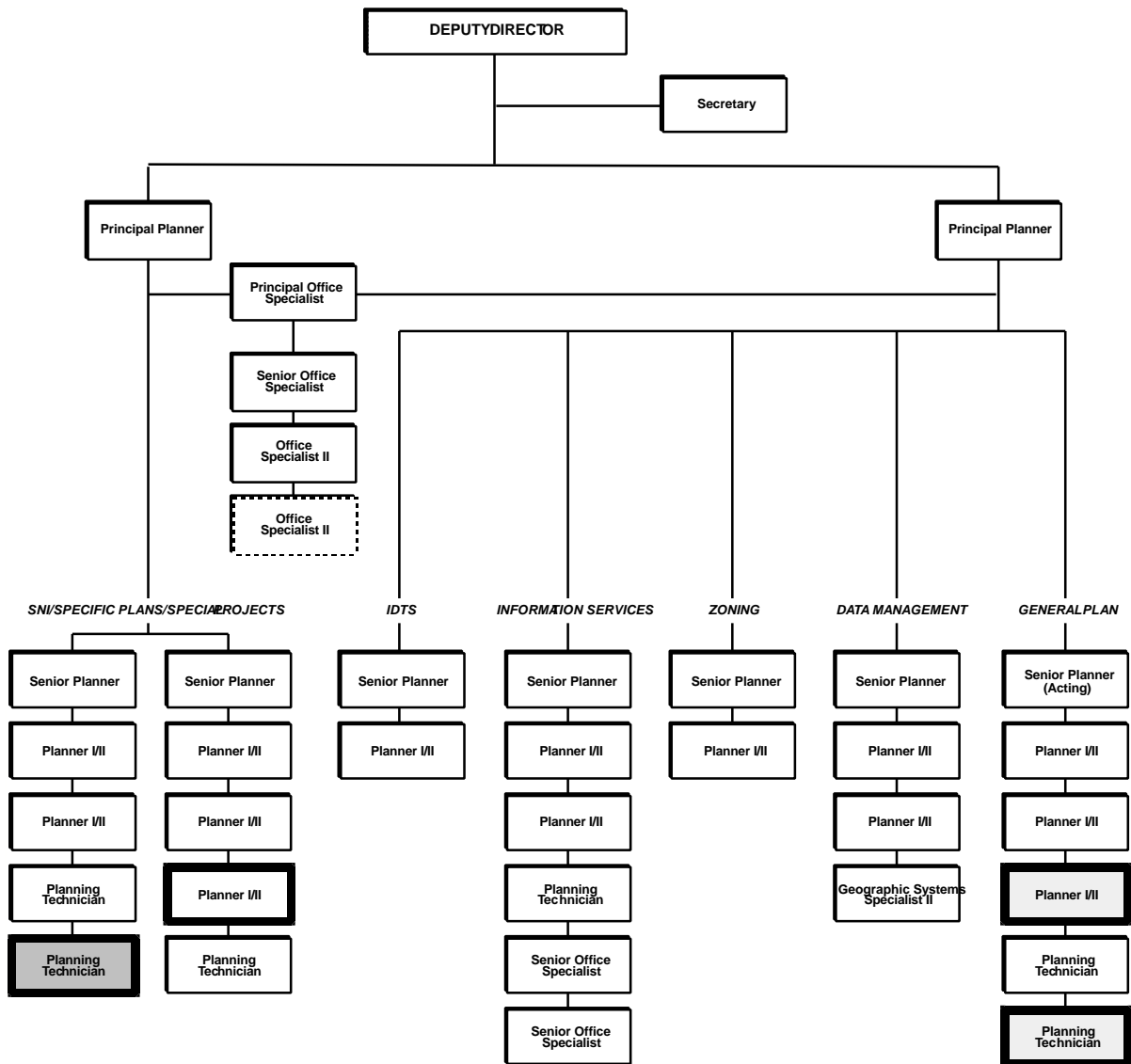
Organization

The Planning Services Division consists of seven teams:

- ✍ Integrated Development Tracking System (IDTS)
- ✍ Two Strong Neighborhood Initiatives (SNI)/Specific Plans/Special Projects Teams
- ✍ Information Services
- ✍ Zoning Ordinance
- ✍ Data Management
- ✍ General Plan

An organization chart of the Planning Services Division is shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6
Organization Chart for the Planning Services Division



Composition and Budget Impacts

There are currently 37, 1.0 FTE and one, .5 FTE positions in the Planning Services Division. One of the 1.0 FTE positions is vacant another has a staff member out on long-term disability.

Four positions were eliminated from this Division through FY 2002-03 budget cuts: one Principal Planner, two Planner I/II's and one Planning Technician. Two additional positions are funded through June 2003: one Planner I/II and one Planning Technician, who are assigned to the Housing Opportunities Study (HOS) project. These positions are indicated by a dark outline and dotted background on the organization chart in Figure 6.

Two temporary positions in the SNI/Specific Plans Team will only be funded through the Redevelopment Agency for an additional year. These positions are indicated by a dark outline on the organization chart in Figure 6.

The classification of all Planning Services Division positions and the number of incumbents, vacancies and recent changes are shown in Table 26.

Table 26
Planning Services Division Staff Classifications, Staffing and Vacancies

Classification	Current Number of FTE Positions	Current Number of Vacancies	Recent Changes FY 2002-03
Deputy Director	1	0	
Geographic Systems Specialist II	1	0	
Office Specialist II	2	1 disability	
Planner I/II	12 permanent 2 temporary	0	2 just eliminated, 1 only funded thru 12/02, 1 RDA funded for 1 year
Planning Technician	4 permanent 2 temporary	1	1 just eliminated, 1 only funded thru 12/02, 1 RDA funded for 1 year
Principal Office Specialist	1	0	
Principal Planner	2	0	1 just eliminated
Secretary*	1 @ .5 FTE	0	
Senior Office Specialist	3	0	
Senior Planner	7	0	
Totals	37 @ 1.0 FTE	1 vacancy, 1 disability	4 just eliminated, 2 funded thru 12/02, 2 funded 1 more year
	1 @ .5 FTE		No Change

*The Planning Services and Plan Implementation Deputy Directors share one FTE Secretary.

Scope of Study by Zucker Systems

This Development Services Study included an evaluation of four teams of the Planning Services Division: IDTS, Information Services, Zoning Ordinance, and General Plan. The SNI/Special Projects team manager was interviewed to obtain an overview of this team's interaction with other functions within the Division, but the team was not evaluated. The Data Management team was not interviewed or evaluated as part of this study.

The Planning Services Division teams that were evaluated are individually described below.

1. INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT TRACKING SYSTEM (IDTS) TEAM

The IDTS team consists of two positions, one Senior Planner and one Planner I/II, both of which are filled. The IDTS Senior Planner and staff report to a Principal Planner who also oversees the Information Services team. The Senior Planner has worked in the Department for 23 years, and the Planner I/II for 4.5 years. No staff changes were made in the IDTS team as a result of the FY 2002-03 budget cuts.

The primary function of the IDTS team is to implement the AMANDA permit tracking system.

2. INFORMATION SERVICES TEAM

The Information Services team consists of six positions, all of which are filled. The positions include one Senior Planner, two Planner I/II's, one Planning Technician, and two Senior Office Specialists. The Information Services staff reports to the Senior Planner, who reports to a Principal Planner.

The primary function of the Information Services team is to staff the Planning Divisions' reception area and Public Information Counter. As part of this function, the staff processes minor permits and "counter letters" verifying information for agencies such as the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) and the Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC), and updates various publications, handouts, brochures, applications and forms for the counter.

Reception Area

Two Senior Office Specialists are receptionists for the Planning Division. The receptionists greet all customers and answer and direct all calls for the Planning Division. The receptionists also answer basic questions for customers and direct them to the appropriate staff or department, and provide customers with permit applications, staff reports, plans and other planning-related customer service documents.

Public Information Counter

The Planning Divisions' Public Information Counter is open from 9:00 to 5:00 on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and 10:00 to 5:00 on Tuesday and Thursday. The later hours on Tuesday and Thursday are to accommodate mandatory staff meetings and training. The Public Information Counter does not close for lunch.

Two permanent Counter Planners and one permanent Planning Technician staff the Public Information Counter. All of the other Division Planner I/II's are on rotation to provide additional counter coverage.

The Counter Planners can process certain types of requests and permits. Other permits are taken in by the Counter Planners, but must be forwarded to a Project Manager for processing. For all other types of planning permits, applicants are instructed to call the Department's Plan Line to make an application intake appointment with a Planning Technician.

Other Public Information Requests

Public information requests are received from customers at the counter and by email, mail or fax. The Counter Planning Technician enters public information requests into the Department's Access system and assigns them to the full-time Counter Planners for processing. The Technician is also responsible for updating and copying publications, handouts, brochures, applications and forms for the counter, conducting research for planning customers, and assisting with preparing training materials and meeting agendas.

Meetings and Training Sessions

The Public Information Team meets between 8:30 and 10:00 every Tuesday, and the Public Information Counter Staff attends training sessions between 8:15 and 9:00 every Wednesday

Budget Impacts

Three positions were eliminated from Information Services through FY 2002-03 budget cuts: two Planner I/II's and one Planning Technician. The Planner positions were allocated as one Counter Planner and one Code Liaison position. The Planning Technician position was allocated to the Public Information Counter.

3. ZONING ORDINANCE TEAM

The Zoning Ordinance team consists of two positions, one Senior Planner and one Planner I/II, both of which are filled. The Zoning Ordinance Senior Planner and staff report to a Principal Planner. No staff changes were made in the Zoning Ordinance team as a result of the FY 2002-03 budget cuts.

The Zoning Ordinance team is responsible for updating and incorporating revisions into the City's core development ordinances.

4. GENERAL PLAN TEAM

The General Plan team currently consists of six positions, all of which are filled. The positions include one Acting Senior Planner, three Planner I/II's, and two Planning Technicians. The General Plan staff reports to the Acting Senior Planner, who reports to a Principal Planner.

The Acting Senior Planner has worked in the Department for 18 years and was on the General Plan team approximately 3-4 years before taking the Acting Senior Planner position. The Planners and Planning Technicians average approximately two years with the Department and have generally had prior planning experience before being hired by San Jose.

The primary function of the General Plan team is to maintain the General Plan by processing amendments and completing proactive long range planning efforts such as the Housing Opportunity Study, Fiscal Impact Study, etc. This team also coordinates with other regional studies (BART) and organizations (ABAG and AMBAG).

Volume and Workloads

The City very recently amended its policies and went from an annual cycle to allowing General Plan Amendments to be processed at least three times a year. Staff has typically processed 40-50 General Plan Amendments in an annual cycle. Since the change to a more frequent cycle has just been initiated, it is unknown whether the change will impact the number of amendments processed annually.

Budget Impacts

No staff changes were made in the General Plan team as a result of the proposed FY 2002-03 budget cuts. However, two positions (one Planner I/II and one Planning Technician) are only funded through June 2003. This staff works on Housing Opportunity Study (HOS)-related tasks as well as providing support to the General Plan team on a variety of projects, primarily the processing of General Plan Amendments. The Department is currently looking at ways to continue funding these two positions through FY 2003.

B. PLAN IMPLEMENTATION DIVISION PROFILE

Function

The Plan Implementation Division primarily processes planning permit applications. Permit applications are generally assigned and processed by four teams organized

around the ten San Jose City Council Districts. The Department reports having processed 3,153 permit applications last year and projects processing 2,718 in FY 2001-2002. The consultants compiled data from the Department's Web site and, based on the number of actual permits accepted for processing between January and May 2002, estimates that the Planning Division will process 2,771 permits this year.

The Plan Implementation Division provides Planning Commission support, conducts environmental review on all public and private proposals, and staffs and processes permits for the City's Housing Action Team and Historic Preservation program. The Division also has a newly formed team responsible for process improvements. Additional projects and responsibilities undertaken by the Plan Implementation Division staff include annexations, development agreements, and the Williamson Act. A new project potentially impacting the Plan Implementation Division is the upcoming Habitat Conservation Plan.

Management

The Plan Implementation Division is under the direction of a Deputy Director of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement (PBCE). The Deputy Director reports to the Director of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement (PBCE).

Under the current organization chart, four Principal Planner positions report to the Deputy Director position. All of the Principal Planner positions are filled.

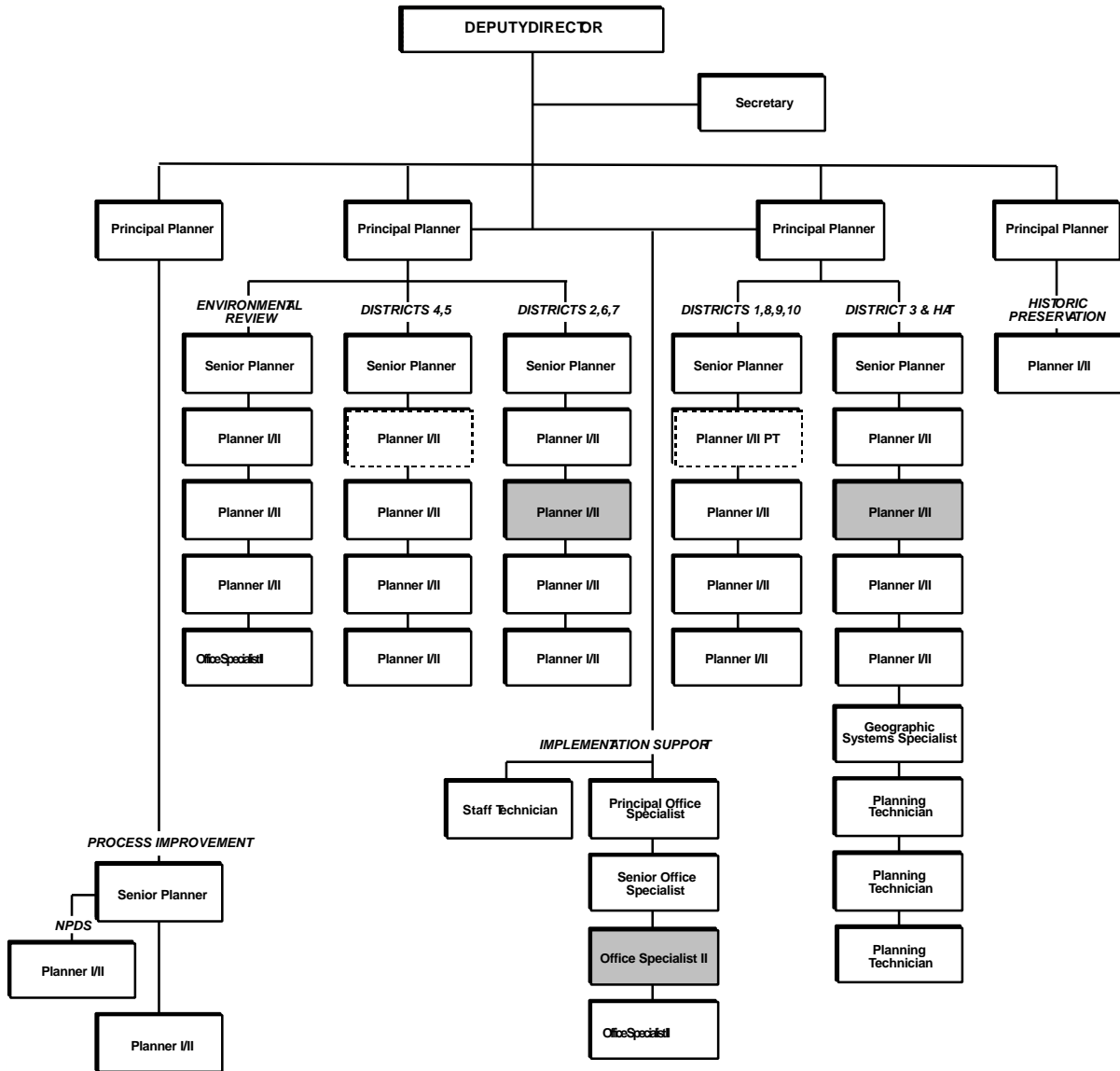
Organization

The Plan Implementation Division consists of seven planning teams and one clerical team:

- ✍ Process Improvement
- ✍ Environmental Review
- ✍ Districts 4-5
- ✍ Districts 2-6-7
- ✍ Districts 1-8-9-10
- ✍ District 3 and Housing Action Team (HAT)
- ✍ Historic Preservation
- ✍ Implementation Support

An organization chart of the Plan Implementation Division is shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7
Organization Chart for the Plan Implementation Division



Composition and Budget Impacts

There are currently 41, 1.0 FTE and two, .5 FTE positions in the Plan Implementation Division. Three of the 1.0 FTE positions are vacant and one 1.0 FTE and one .5 FTE position have staff members out on leave for one year. The vacant positions are indicated by a shaded box and the positions on leave are outlined with a broken line on the organization chart in Figure 7.

Four positions were eliminated from this Division through FY 2002-03 budget cuts: two Planner I/II's, one part-time Planner II, and one Planning Technician.

The classification of all Plan Implementation Division positions and the number of incumbents, vacancies and recent changes are shown in Table 27.

Table 27
Plan Implementation Division Staff Classifications, Staffing and Vacancies

Classification	Current Number of FTE Positions	Current Number of Vacancies	Recent Changes FY 2002-03
Deputy Director	1	0	
Geographic Systems Specialist II	1	0	
Office Specialist II	3	1	
Planner I/II	20	2 vacancies, 1 on leave	2 just eliminated
Planner II (part-time positions)	1 @ .5 FTE	1 on leave	1, .5 FTE just eliminated
Planning Technician	3	0	1 just eliminated
Principal Office Specialist	1	0	
Principal Planner	4	0	
Secretary*	1 @ .5 FTE	0	
Senior Office Specialist	1	0	
Senior Planner	6	0	
Staff Technician	1	0	
Totals	41 @ 1.0 FTE	3 vacancies 1 on leave	3 just eliminated
	2 @ .5 FTE	1 on leave	1 just eliminated

*The Planning Services and Plan Implementation Deputy Directors share one FTE Secretary.

Scope of Study by Zucker Systems

This Development Services Study included an evaluation of all seven teams within the Plan Implementation Division, as well as interviews with the Implementation Support staff. Each of the teams is further profiled and described below.

1. PROCESS IMPROVEMENT TEAM

The Process Improvement team consists of eight positions, all of which are filled. One Senior Planner and one Planner I/II report directly to a Principal Planner. The Senior Planner supervises a second Planner I/II, one Geographic Systems Specialist and three Planning Technician positions. One Planning Technician position was eliminated from the Process Improvement team as a result of the FY 2002-03 budget cuts.

The Principal Planner has approximately 10 years of experience in the Department. The Senior Planner has worked for the Department for 20 years. The Planner I/II's have approximately 1-2 years with the Department and have had prior planning

experience before coming to the City of San Jose. One of the Planning Technicians has been with the Department for approximately 12 years. The remaining Technicians and Geographic Systems Specialist each have about one year's experience with the Department, as well as prior experience working in planning.

Function

The Process Improvement team was recently formed to initiate and/or accept suggestions for improvements to the development review process, and to prioritize, develop, and implement those improvements as well as any needed changes to the development ordinances. Although organized under the Plan Implementation Division, the Process Improvement team is not specific to either of the Planning Divisions and works on improvements impacting all areas of the Planning, Building and Code Enforcement Department (PBCE).

The Planning Technicians supervised by the team's Senior Planner are responsible for application intake, file setup, and fees. The Technicians are part of the Plan Implementation Division technical pool and are under the Process Improvement team primarily because the Senior Planner who organized and supervised them recently became a part of the Process Improvement team. The Planning Technicians have just recently been reorganized under a Senior Planner in one of the permit processing teams.

2. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW TEAM

The Environmental Review team consists of five positions, all of which are currently filled. The positions include one Senior Planner, three Planner I/II's, and one Office Specialist II. The Environmental Review staff reports to the Senior Planner, who reports to a Principal Planner. No staff changes were made in the Environmental Review team as a result of the FY 2002-03 budget cuts.

Function

The primary function of the Environmental Review team is to identify environmental impacts and provide environmental clearance for all development ordinance revisions and all public and private development projects, including Capital Improvement Projects, Parks and Libraries bond projects, Redevelopment Agency projects, and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) projects.

Tasks and Workloads

All Environmental Impact Reports (EIR's) are prepared by outside consultants and coordinated, reviewed and approved by the Environmental Review team. Approximately 14 EIR's are prepared and processed each year. The Environmental Review team scopes the EIR, meets with the applicant and consultant, and may

facilitate a public scoping meeting on controversial projects. The team sends out the EIR draft for review and works with the consultant until the document is complete. The EIR process typically takes approximately six to eight months to complete.

All Initial Studies and Negative Declarations are prepared by the Planning Project Managers and reviewed by the Environmental Review team. The Environmental Senior Planner signs off on Initial Studies and Negative Declarations and assists the Project Managers in preparing the documents and responding to Negative Declaration Protests (appeals).

The Environmental Senior Planner also provides training for the other teams and divisions of the Department on the environmental review process as well as training to other departments.

3. DISTRICTS 4-5 PROCESSING TEAM

The Districts 4-5 Processing Team consists of four positions, all of which are currently filled. The positions include one Senior Planner and three Planner I/II's. A fourth Planner I/II position was shifted to the Historic Preservation team, and that staff member is currently out on leave for one year. The Districts 4-5 staff reports to the Senior Planner, who reports to a Principal Planner. No staff changes were made in the Districts 4-5 Processing Team as a result of the FY 2002-03 budget cuts; however, one Planner I/II position was shifted to the Historic Preservation team and that staff member is currently out on leave for one year.

Function

The primary function of the Districts 4-5 team is to process all permits for Council Districts 4 and 5, geographic areas that are largely industrial. The team also processes permits for a portion of District 3, which entails the airport portion of Rincon.

Tasks and Workloads

The Senior Planner typically provides training, supervision and direction for the Planner I/II's, determines and monitors workloads, and assists the Project Managers with difficult or controversial permit issues. Senior Planners do not generally carry permit projects.

The Districts 4-5 Planners are Project Managers who process all types of permit applications from pre-application through Certificate of Compliance. Project Managers also prepare all CEQA Exemption, Initial Study, and Negative Declaration documents, and respond to Negative Declaration Protests.

The Senior Planner estimates that Districts 4-5 Project Managers carry approximately 35 projects each, with anywhere from 10 to 25 active projects at one time. An estimated 25% of the projects are Planned Development Zonings.

The Districts 4-5 team recently lost two Planner I/II positions to other teams. One of the Planners was reassigned to Process Improvements to work on the NPDES storm water process changes. The NPDES Planner also still carries 15-20 permit projects, 5-10 of which may be active, and reports to the Districts 4-5 Senior Planner on those projects. The second Planner was reassigned to the Historic Preservation team.

4. DISTRICTS 2-6-7 PROCESSING TEAM

The Districts 2-6-7 Processing Team consists of five positions, one of which is currently vacant. The filled positions include one Senior Planner and three Planner I/II's. One additional Planner I/II position is vacant. The Districts 2-6-7 staff reports to the Senior Planner, who reports to a Principal Planner. Two vacant Planner I/II positions were eliminated from the Districts 2-6-7 Processing Team as a result of the FY 2002-03 budget cuts.

Function

The primary function of the Districts 2-6-7 team is to process all permits for Council Districts 2, 6 and 7, geographic areas that are largely industrial.

One of the Districts 2-6-7 Planners previously functioned as a Community Liaison Ombudsman, but the staff member was transferred to the SNI team. The Ombudsman position was eliminated through the FY 2002-03 budget cuts.

Tasks and Workloads

The Senior Planner provides training, supervision and direction for the Planner I/II's, determines and monitors workloads, and assists the Project Managers with difficult or controversial permit issues.

The Districts 2-6-7 Planners are Project Managers who process all types of permit applications from pre-application through Certificate of Compliance. Project Managers also prepare all CEQA Exemption, Initial Study, and Negative Declaration documents, and respond to Negative Declaration Protests.

The Senior Planner estimates that two of the Districts 2-6-7 Project Managers typically carry approximately 50 projects each and the third PM, who is relatively new, carries about 30. Not all projects are active at one time.

5. DISTRICTS 1-8-9-10 PROCESSING TEAM

The Districts 1-8-9-10 Processing Team consists of five positions, all of which are currently filled. The positions include one Senior Planner, three Planner I/II's and one, .5 FTE Planner II. The Planner II is currently out on leave for one year. The Districts 1-8-9-10 staff reports to the Senior Planner, who reports to a Principal

Planner. No staff changes were made in the Districts 1-8-9-10 Processing Team as a result of the FY 2002-03 budget cuts.

Function

The primary function of the Districts 1-8-9-10 team is to process all permits for Council Districts 1, 8, 9 and 10, geographic areas that are largely residential. The team also processes permits for large portions of Districts 6 and 7.

Tasks and Workloads

The Senior Planner typically provides training, supervision and direction for the Planner I/II's, determines and monitors workloads, and assists the Project Managers with difficult or controversial permit issues.

The Districts 1-8-9-10 Planners are Project Managers who process all types of permit applications from pre-application through Certificate of Compliance. Project Managers also prepare all CEQA Exemption, Initial Study, and Negative Declaration documents, and respond to Negative Declaration Protests.

The Senior Planner estimates that Districts 1-8-9-10 Project Managers carry approximately 25-30 projects each, with 15 active projects at one time. Permit volumes have slowed recently, and it has historically been typical for Project Managers to carry 40 projects. This team works with residential Districts that are experiencing relatively steady development activity.

6. DISTRICT 3 AND HAT PROCESSING TEAMS

The District 3 and Housing Action Team (HAT) Processing Team consists of four positions, three of which are currently filled. The filled positions include one Senior Planner and two Planner I/II's. One additional Planner I/II position is currently vacant. The District 3/HAT staff reports to the Senior Planner, who reports to a Principal Planner. One vacant, .5 FTE Planner II position was eliminated from the District 3/HAT Processing Team as a result of the FY 2002-03 budget cuts.

Function

The District 3/HAT team processes permits for Council District 3, which is a downtown redevelopment district.

The District 3/HAT staff also acts as an on-call resource for the Housing Agency, tracks housing data and provides Code Enforcement support.

Tasks and Workloads

The Senior Planner typically provides training, supervision and direction for the Planner I/II's, determines and monitors workloads, and assists the Project Managers with difficult or controversial permit issues. The Senior Planner estimates that there are 80-90 projects in the District 3/HAT team at this time. The projects vary in complexity, and about 50% of them are active. The Senior Planner is carrying approximately 25 of the projects from his prior position as a Project Manager, 10 of which are active.

One of the District 3/HAT Planners is a Project Manager who processes permits. Typically, the Project Managers process all types of permit applications from pre-application through Certificate of Compliance, prepare all CEQA Exemption, Initial Study, and Negative Declaration documents and respond to Negative Declaration Protests. For projects in the downtown core, though, the Redevelopment Agency processes its own development and use permits. The Planning Division Project Managers are only responsible for processing environmental documents, Historic Permits, Subdivisions, Rezoning and Tentative Maps for redevelopment projects.

The second District 3/HAT Planner had provided Code Enforcement support for the entire City of San Jose and did not typically process permits. However, Code Enforcement support was cut as part of the 2002-03 budget and this planner is closing out cases and will transition to development projects.

As a resource for the Housing Action Team (HAT), District 3/HAT staff also meets with developers to discuss the regulatory framework, attends monthly inter-discipline meetings with representatives from Public Works, Housing, Fire and Police to review projects and issues, and stays in touch with the affordable housing market. Staff also prepares monthly reports for the Director on entitlements and an inventory of projects on file with anticipated hearing dates

7. HISTORIC PRESERVATION TEAM

The Historic Preservation team consists of one Principal Planner and one Planner I/II, both of which are currently filled. A second Planner I/II position was shifted to Historic Preservation from the Districts 4-5 Processing Team, but the Planner recently went on leave for one year. The Historic Preservation staff reports to the Principal Planner, who reports to the Deputy Director of the Plan Implementation Division. No staff changes were made in the Historic Preservation team as a result of the FY 2002-03 budget cuts.

Function

The primary function of the Historic Preservation team is to provide staff support for the Historic Landmarks Commission and other related support for the City's historic preservation program. The historic preservation program includes evaluation of the

City's historic resources through the review and update of the Historic Resources Inventory, which catalogs over 2,000 historic structures; the designation of local landmarks, including the review of related Historic Preservation Permits; and the annual review of the Plan for the Past, a comprehensive plan of historic preservation programs for the City.

Tasks and Workloads

The Historic Preservation staff processes Historic Preservation Permits for projects brought in by outside agencies, such as the Redevelopment Agency. Project Managers process Historic Permits for other projects in their Districts with the assistance of the Historic Preservation staff. The staff also prepares and presents referrals for the Historic Landmarks Commission to review before going to the Planning Commission or Director for hearing.

The Principal Planner estimates that approximately 20 Historic Preservation Permits are processed each year, as well as 30-40 Referrals to the Historic Landmarks Commission and 20 Historic Resource Designations. Designations require a Historic Preservation Permit.

C. FINDINGS

We found many excellent characteristics regarding Planning Division operations and staff, as well as opportunities for improvement. Here are some of the positives:

- ✍ Many of the Planning staff and managers have been with the Department a long time and there are extremely deep roots and personal relationships among co-workers. This is an asset to developers as the team truly works together for the betterment of the community.
- ✍ Internal systems and processes are generally organized and flow well.
- ✍ The preliminary review and project review processes offer an excellent, professional service for customers and foster consistent and reliable information involving comments from several departments.
- ✍ The Planning Division Web site is one of the most extensive we have reviewed. The site is easy to use and provides the public with valuable information.
- ✍ The staff has taken Council direction for community involvement and neighborhood opinion to heart and is often out in the community. There is a push to set up community meetings early in the process and several meetings are held during each review period.

- ✍ The majority of the planning permits are processed at the staff or Director’s level rather than needing approval through the Planning Commission or City Council.
- ✍ Published Residential, Commercial and Industrial Design Guidelines create consistency, provide developers and the public with good information about design, and give the staff the power to demand high-quality development. As a result, the quality of new development is quite high.
- ✍ The AMANDA system, although in its infancy, has the potential to benefit staff and customers in the development review process.
- ✍ Staff does a good job of directing applicants to make positive changes to their projects, and developers have often commented after the process that the Planners’ remarks have “added value” to their projects.
- ✍ There is a strong link between development review and the vision of the General Plan.
- ✍ The staff is incredibly dedicated and energetic, and has worked hard under a lot of pressure and change over the years.
- ✍ There is a continual search for opportunities and a genuine effort to make needed improvements.

Opportunities for improvement are discussed along with recommendations in the following sections of the report.

D. COMMITTEES

The Planning Division works with and services the Planning Commission and the Historic Landmark Commission. Each is briefly reviewed below.

1. PLANNING COMMISSION

The Planning Commission consists of seven members who are appointed by the City Council for four-year terms. Three new Commissioners were recently appointed and have just begun their tenure on the board.

The Commission holds regular meetings twice each month and conducts additional sessions when necessary to work on projects such as the General Plan. The Planning Commission is authorized to conduct public hearings and make final determinations on Environmental Impact Reports and Conditional Use Permits. The Commission also acts as an appeal body and conducts public hearings and makes final determinations on the appeal of many permits decided by the Director administratively or at prior Director’s Hearings. The Planning Commission reviews at a public hearing and makes recommendations to City Council on General Plan Amendments, Prezonings and

Annexations, Regular Rezonings, and certain Single Family House Permits and the Capital Improvement Program.

Changes to some of the review processes have been recommended and are reflected under Review Authority, on Table 33 in the Planning Permit Processes section of this report.

The Plan Implementation Division provides staff support for the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission and Planning Division staff meets regularly throughout the year. They meet annually for a retreat and have an informal dinner twice each month before the regularly scheduled Planning Commission Meeting to discuss issues and concerns. Occasional study sessions between the Commission and staff are also held on evenings before regularly scheduled Planning Commission Meetings.

The consultants sat in on one of the informal dinners between the Commission and Staff and attended two Planning Commission Meetings where a number of Public Hearings were observed. The level of professionalism and the comfortable, but mutually respectful relationships between the Commissioners and Staff impressed us. There was a high level of citizen involvement at the Public Hearings and, in general, the public was well prepared to give testimony. The Commissioners made a point of encouraging citizens to continue their participation and vigilance in planning for their neighborhoods. We did not find any issues with the relationships or mannerisms between the Planning Commission, citizens and staff.

Committee Survey

The confidential survey shown in Figure 8 was sent to all seven of the Planning Commissioners. Only three Commissioners returned the survey. This is a much lower response rate than we expected. Although we did not receive a full report from all of the Commissioners, we summarized the thoughts of those who did participate.

Figure 8 Planning Commission Survey

1. Please check the Commission you are a member of.						
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Planning Commission <input type="checkbox"/> Historic Landmarks Commission						
2. Which members(s) of the PBCE staff work with your Commission?						
_____ _____ _____						
QUESTION	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NO OPINION	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NOT APPLICABLE
3. I'm satisfied with the service our or Commission receives from the PBCE Department.	1	2	0	0	0	0
4. The reports and material I receive from the PBCE staff are of high quality.	2	1	0	0	0	0
5. PBCE staff presentations and responses to Commission and citizens questions are of high quality.	1	2	0	0	0	0
6. We receive our agenda and backup materials in a timely, organized and contextually complete manner.	0	2	0	1	0	0
7. PBCE staff is knowledgeable about the proposals and issues that come before us.	3	0	0	0	0	0
8. Staff recommendations are consistent and sound.	0	3	0	0	0	0
9. PBCE staff is responsive and helpful.	3	0	0	0	0	0
10. PBCE staff is accessible when I need them.	2	1	0	0	0	0
11. PBCE staff returns my telephone calls and emails promptly.	1	1	1	0	0	0
12. PBCE staff is knowledgeable about the function of our Commission.	2	1	0	0	0	0
13. Our Commission has a clear purpose and understands its function and level of authority.	1	2	0	0	0	0
14. The City provides training, orientation and educational opportunities to help us do our job as professionals.	1	2	0	0	0	0

Planning Commission Survey continued

QUESTION	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NO OPINION	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NOT APPLICABLE
15. PBCE staff provides useful training and orientation through timely study sessions and retreats.	2	1	0	0	0	0
16. Please add any comments or suggestions you may have. Please give us at least one idea for improving PBCE or service to the Commission.						

Positive comments received from the Planning Commissioners were as follows:

- ✍ *“Overall, the Planning Commission is well-served by a very efficient, knowledgeable and competent Planning Staff. There is mutual respect and professional and cordial relationship.”*
- ✍ *“In the past few years, there have been more briefings, which have helped Commissioners get additional depth and perspective. These have been very helpful and should continue.”*

A discussion of the Commissioners’ responses to Questions 3 through 15 is as follows:

- ✍ The Planning Commissioners strongly agreed or agreed with all but one of the questions on the survey.
- ✍ Question 6: One Commissioner agreed, but added *“usually--every now and then there may be a problem, but it’s not typical.”* Another Commissioner disagreed and requested that staff proofread their reports, adding, *“quite often, conflicting information is presented from one paragraph to another.”*

76. Recommendation: Staff Reports and other documents presented to decision makers should be proof read to ensure information contained in the report is not contradictory or conflicting.

- ✍ Question 8: One Commissioner added *“most of the time.”*
- ✍ Question 13: One Commissioner added *“this varies; depends on the composition and experience levels of the individuals.”*
- ✍ Question 14: One Commissioner wrote *“staff works hard to help us, but more training and orientation is always valuable—as we are ‘lay’ citizens, not planning professionals.”*

77. Recommendation: The Department should provide more opportunities for training and professional development for Planning Commissioners.

Specific suggestions made by the Commissioners and our recommendations are as follows:

- ✍ *“On a biannual basis, staff and the Commission should meet to review work to date, look at key issues ahead and new developments in land use and community concerns—as well as discuss the nuts-n-bolts of the public hearings procedure and process—what could be improved—what problems occur—how can we improve how meetings are conducted (some self-reflection and analysis), direct feedback from Commissioners and staff and vice-verse!”*

78. Recommendation: The annual retreat between Planning Commissioners and Planning staff should include revisiting the past year and planning for the coming year in terms of issues, concerns, procedures and possible improvements with feedback to and from all participants.

☞ *“Staff should explain why some items are on consent vs. public hearing (in general)—what’s the thinking and criteria.”*

79. Recommendation: The Director or Deputy Director should brief the Planning Commission on the general reason for placing items on consent, as opposed to the public hearing agenda.

☞ *“Informing Commission when EIR will be heard. (This was done in May-June timetable due to so many EIR’s and it was very helpful. Should be done routinely.)”* Information about EIR’s was an issue with both the Planning Commission and the Historic Landmarks Commission.

80. Recommendation: Early notice of pending EIR’s should be routinely provided to decision-making bodies.

☞ *“Make brief cheat sheet for new Commissioners.”*

81. Recommendation: Planning Commission training for new members should include the provision of an outline or brief list of key points to consider when conducting application review and participating in the public hearing process.

☞ *“Make sure that all applicants are required to follow the same set of rules.”*

☞ *“Make sure that notices are sent to neighboring residents as required.”*

☞ *“Make sure that area maps are inserted in all staff reports. It makes it a lot easier to visit the application location.”*

☞ *“One map of City with all projects on agenda identified would make it easier for Commissioners to plan site visits.”*

82. Recommendation: Every Staff Report should include a map that clearly locates the project site, and the hearing packet may include a single map with all project locations identified, if practical.

2. HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION

The Historic Landmarks Commission is a seven-member advisory body appointed by the City Council. The Commission holds regular public meetings each month to review Historic Preservation Permits and Landmark Designations. The primary duties of the Commission include the review of additions and deletions to the Historic Resources Inventory, holding public hearings and making recommendations to the City Council on proposed City Landmarks, and making recommendations to the Director of Planning on Historic Preservation Permits and other proposals which may affect historic structures, sites, or objects.

The Department's Plan Implementation Division provides staff support for the Historic Landmarks Commission. A Principal Planner oversees the Historic Preservation staff and has been designated as the City's Historic Preservation Officer.

Committee Survey

The confidential survey shown in Figure 9 was sent to all seven of the Historic Landmarks Commissioners. Only three Commissioners returned the survey. This is a much lower response rate than we expected. Although we did not receive a full report from all of the Commissioners, we summarized the thoughts of those who did participate.

Figure 9 Historic Landmarks Commission Survey

<p>1. Please check the Commission you are a member of.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Planning Commission <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Historic Landmarks Commission </p>						
<p>2. Which members(s) of the PBCE staff work with your Commission?</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> _____ _____ _____ </p>						
QUESTION	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NO OPINION	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NOT APPLICABLE
3. I'm satisfied with the service our or Commission receives from the PBCE Department.	2	0	1	1	0	0
4. The reports and material I receive from the PBCE staff are of high quality.	1	2	0	0	0	0
5. PBCE staff presentations and responses to Commission and citizens questions are of high quality.	1	0	1	1	0	0
6. We receive our agenda and backup materials in a timely, organized and contextually complete manner.	1	2	0	1	0	0
7. PBCE staff is knowledgeable about the proposals and issues that come before us.	2	0	0	2	0	0
8. Staff recommendations are consistent and sound.	0	2	0	1	0	0
9. PBCE staff is responsive and helpful.	2	1	0	1	0	0
10. PBCE staff is accessible when I need them.	2	1	0	0	0	0
11. PBCE staff returns my telephone calls and emails promptly.	2	1	0	0	0	0
12. PBCE staff is knowledgeable about the function of our Commission.	2	0	0	2	0	0
13. Our Commission has a clear purpose and understands its function and level of authority.	1	2	0	0	0	0
14. The City provides training, orientation and educational opportunities to help us do our job as professionals.	1	1	0	0	1	0

Historic Landmarks Commission Survey continued

QUESTION	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NO OPINION	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NOT APPLICABLE
15. PBCE staff provides useful training and orientation through timely study sessions and retreats.	2	1	0	0	0	0
16. Please add any comments or suggestions you may have. Please give us at least one idea for improving PBCE or service to the Commission.						

Positive comments received from the Historic Landmarks Commissioners were as follows:

- ✍ *“...I am extremely pleased with the quality and level of support the HLC (and I...) receive from our direct support staff...”*
- ✍ *“Other than [Cinnabar], I am pleased with the packets I receive and the information provided.*
- ✍ *[The Historic Preservation Officer] is excellent in her role...excellent! [and other senior staff] is good!”*

A discussion of the Commissioners’ responses to Questions 3 through 15 is as follows:

- ✍ Two Commissioners strongly agreed or agreed with most of the survey questions, Negative comments or ratings generally had to do with the mishandling of one project, as discussed below.
- ✍ One Commissioner left Question 5 blank and the other strongly disagreed with Question 14 and commented, *“There have been very limited opportunities for attendance at conferences and meetings except locally where cost was minimal or free. Financial assistance for other conferences either not offered, very minimal and/or occurred...[too] close to [another] event.”*

83. Recommendation: The Department should ensure that funding is sufficient and that Historic Landmark Commissioners are encouraged to attend regular training and professional conferences and meetings.

- ✍ The third Commissioner only strongly agreed or agreed with Questions 4, 6, 9, 10, 11, 13, and 15, had no opinion on Questions 3 and 5, and disagreed with Questions 7, 8, and 12. Comments on these questions have been incorporated with others’ comments and suggestions below.

One Commissioner commented that the HLC *“Should have a stronger working relationship with the Planning Commission.”*

84. Recommendation: The Planning Commission and Historic Landmarks Commission should meet on occasion to discuss common concerns and goals and projects of interest.

There were a number of negative comments by the Commissioners in regard to the way the Cinnabar Commons EIR process was mishandled. We spoke with staff about Cinnabar Commons and, admittedly, there were serious flaws in how the project was handled in the Planning Division. Staff assured us, though, that the Planning Division has since changed its internal procedures to ensure that this won’t happen again.

Some Commissioners feel that not everyone views Historic Preservation in a positive way.

85. *Recommendation:* The City’s goals and policies for Historic Preservation should be recognized as important by every department or agency involved in development. To accomplish this, we recommend that the Historic Landmarks Commission be placed on an END CSA meeting agenda to discuss Historic Preservation goals.

E. STAFFING LEVELS

Calculating the appropriate number of staff for any organization is a difficult task. Numerous variables impact staffing levels, such as:

- ✍ Competency levels of staff members.
- ✍ Automation.
- ✍ Approaches to peak seasons.
- ✍ Approach to customer service.
- ✍ Difficulty of measurement.

A variety of indicators are useful in examining staffing levels. Often, indicators of overstaffing include one or more of the following:

- ✍ Employees coming in late, leaving early, taking long lunch hours.
- ✍ Employee boredom.
- ✍ Conducting reviews in excess of need.

None of these are present to any extent in the San Jose Planning Division. Thus, overall, one could conclude that the Planning Division is not overstaffed.

Understaffing is somewhat easier to determine, and could include one or more of the following indications:

- ✍ High turnover of staff.
- ✍ Burnout and stress leave.
- ✍ Employees complaining that they don’t have enough time to complete their work.
- ✍ Excessive overtime.
- ✍ Poor maintenance of work areas and facilities.

All of these factors are present in the San Jose Planning Division. Thus, overall, based on these factors, one could conclude that the Planning Division is understaffed.

We looked at three factors in analyzing staffing in the San Jose Planning Division: project workloads, staff time involved in processing permits, and non-fee, or work program items. Neither the data nor the conclusions are precise. Nevertheless, the analysis is helpful in evaluating current levels of staffing.

Workloads

Many of the Planning Division managers and staff asked the question, “*What is the appropriate number of permits a Project Manager should be processing at one time?*” This is not an easy question to answer, as many factors are involved, such as:

- ✍ Skill level
- ✍ Mix of simple, moderate and complex projects
- ✍ Other non-permit projects

The majority of the processing staff felt that, while volumes are beginning to level off with economic slowdowns, project workloads are still too high. And some Districts have more work than others, thus workloads among the Project Managers is not balanced. We asked each of the Implementation Senior Planners how many permit projects their Project Managers were carrying. Estimates varied between District Processing Teams, as follows:

- ✍ Districts 4-5: 35 projects each, with 10-25 active
- ✍ Districts 2-6-7: 50 projects each, not all of which are active
- ✍ Districts 1-8-9-10: 25-30 projects each, with 15 active at one time
- ✍ District 3/HAT: 80-90 projects in the Team, 25 of which are being carried by the Senior Planner and the remaining 55-65 split between the two Project Managers.

In order to more accurately pinpoint project workloads, we gathered data on projects-in-process from the Planning Division’s Web site. The data does not tell us how many of the projects are inactive and, thus is not perfect, but is useful. Table 28 is a summary of the data we compiled from the Web site reflecting the number of projects-in-process, as of May 25, 2002.

To simplify the data for this exercise, permit types were grouped based on whether they were decided administratively, through a Director's Hearing, or through hearings before the Planning Commission, the City Council, or both. Administrative permits are considered to be simple, permits decided at a Director’s Hearing are moderately-complex, and permits going to a hearing before either or both the Planning Commission or City Council are considered to be complex. The data indicates that permits are split pretty evenly by complexity. If Administrative permits are separated from all of those that go to any type of public hearing, 33% are simple and about 68% are complex.

**Table 28
Project Manager Workloads as of May 25, 2002**

	Administrative	Director's Hearing	PC Hearing	CC Hearing	PC and CC Hearings	Total PC + CC Hearing	Total Projects	1/2 Assumed to be Active
Project Manager 1	15	19	5	2	7	14	48	24.0
Project Manager 2	10	22	6	5	13	24	56	28.0
Project Manager 3	11	26	6	2	8	16	53	26.5
Project Manager 4	26	16	7	0	5	12	54	27.0
Project Manager 5	13	18	7	2	6	15	46	23.0
Project Manager 6	20	13	5	0	4	9	42	21.0
Project Manager 7	18	18	5	0	7	12	48	24.0
Project Manager 8	19	33	8	2	5	15	67	33.5
Project Manager 9	30	15	6	2	6	14	59	29.5
Project Manager 10	12	20	7	0	10	17	49	24.5
Total	174	200	62	15	71	148	522	261.0

Senior Planner 1	6	14	7	0	5	12	32	16.0
Senior Planner 2	3	1	2	0	1	3	7	3.5
Senior Planner 3	2	2	1	0	1	2	6	3.0
Total	11	17	10	0	7	17	45	22.5

Total All Projects	185	217	72	15	78	165	567	283.5
% of Total	33%	38%	13%	3%	14%	29%	100%	

*Project Manager workloads were estimated using projects-in-process data obtained from the Planning Division website. Projects reported as being assigned to Planners who resigned, are on leave, or were transferred to a non-processing function were divided evenly among the 10 Project Managers currently processing permits.

This may be an oversimplification of Project Managers' actual workloads because the level of complexity ranges within each type of permit, as well as between different permit types. The data is helpful, however, for the purpose of pinpointing project workloads at a point in time. According to the data, most of the Project Managers are carrying more than 50 project and a few of the Senior Planners are carrying projects to reduce the Project Managers' workloads. Not all of the project files are active, though, and in the absence of data that tells us the number that are inactive, we used the Senior Planners' estimates that about half are active. Using this estimate, Project Managers are carrying workloads of anywhere from 21-34 active permit projects.

Staffing Analysis of Project Managers

The Planning Division staff does not typically keep timesheets to record hours spent on projects. This data needs to be kept in order to accurately monitor fees, to evaluate staffing levels, and to prepare work programs. In the City of San Diego and other cities, staff keeps accurate timesheets of all of their time and timekeeping records are printed out on a monthly report. The monthly reports enable management to quickly and continuously monitor staffing levels and work program needs. This is a good system and one that we recommend for San Jose.

86. Recommendation: Planning Division staff should use a timekeeping system to record time spent on all planning projects. Timekeeping data should be printed onto a management report on a monthly basis and used to monitor staffing levels and work program needs.

A Fee Study was conducted for the Planning Division in 2001. In order to set fees, the planning staff was asked to track time spent on permit projects over a period of a few weeks. The data compiled from these few weeks of tracking is some of the best data we have seen in estimating staff hours-per permit. According to the Deputy Director, the Fee Study times were distributed to staff with the intent of having staff use the data to budget the time spent on future permits. This is critical, as these are the estimates of time that were used to set permit fees and also to determine staffing levels. Our findings, though, were that few, if any of the supervisors and staff are using the data as a budgeting tool.

87. Recommendation: The Planning Division managers and supervisors should use the Fee Study time estimates to budget staff time for all planning permit projects. Staff should be held accountable for using the time estimates as a standard by which to budget time spent on permits.

A detailed Planning Staffing Analysis is included under Appendix J of this report. The Planning Division used the base Fee Study time data shown on the Analysis matrix to determine staffing levels by multiplying staff's time estimates by the number of permits processed over a period of time. We believe that the time frame for permit volumes used in the original analysis was one year preceding the Fee Study. Economic factors are different now than they were when the Fee Study was conducted; thus, the volume of permits and the types of permits being submitted for processing has changed. In order to relate the Fee Study time data to current volumes and permit types, we used actual project intake data gathered from the Planning Division Web site for the first 24 weeks of 2002. For those categories or levels of permits not available on the Web site, we applied a factor of -12.1% to the original data to estimate current permit volumes. (Those categories that were available on the Web site were, overall, 12.1% lower in volume than the volumes used in the Fee Study; thus the factor was subtracted from Fee Study volumes to estimate volumes for the remaining permit types.) Here are our conclusions in regard to Project Manager staffing.

Based on the actual number of permits accepted for processing in the first 24 weeks of 2002, the Planning Division needs 12 FTE Project Managers to process permits for the ten City Council Districts. This does not include Historic Preservation permits or General Plan Amendments, which are typically processed by separate teams, or non-permit projects, which are discussed under Planning Work Program, further below in this section.

There are currently ten Project Managers in four teams that are processing permit applications for the City Council Districts. An eleventh Planner is in a District Processing Team, but is the Code Enforcement Liaison and is not carrying a permit project workload. Another of the District Processing Team Planners is on maternity leave and two positions are vacant and cannot be filled due to the hiring freeze. Thus, four of the District Planner positions allocated are not available to process permits.

88. Recommendation: The two vacant Planner positions should be filled. The maternity leave position should be filled in the interim by staff reassignment or a temporary contract. The Code Enforcement liaison should be assigned to process permits.

Staffing Analysis of Principal and Senior Planners

The data on the Planning Staffing Analysis matrix indicates that, overall, the Senior Planners and Principal Planners are spending 68% of the time Project Managers spend on permits. For some of the more complex permits, Seniors and principals are spending up to three times more time than the Project Managers on the permits. Based on these numbers, the equivalent of three Senior Planner FTE's and one Principal Planner FTE would be needed just for processing permits. Thus, the two Principal Planners and four Senior Planners over permit processes have little time to manage other tasks and functions or to provide necessary training and guidance to the processing staff, many of which are relatively new.

89. Recommendation: The Principal Planners and Senior Planners need to spend less time on permit projects, increase the level of delegation, and increase the time spent on management functions, particularly training.

Planning Work Program

The Project Management staff feels that there is no support for the non-fee generated functions, or the “invisible” workload they carry in addition to processing permits. Over the years, there has been a big shift in the amount of additional work that has been placed on the Project Managers. A few quick examples are process improvements, Web site maintenance, the designing and training involved in getting the AMANDA system in place, and, most recently, project conformance and condition compliance. It appears that the long range managers and staff don't have time to do much more than reactionary planning, and there is little time to work on needed amendments and updates to the Plan and ordinances. And the newly formed Process Improvement Team has a long list of projects identified as potential improvements, but has difficulty finding staff who have time to work on improvement projects.

Most creative planners, as well as City Council members and Planning Commission members, can suggest more planning projects than a city can or will financially support. Therefore, it is important that planning projects have clear work programs and priorities. The Planning Division has a number of problems in this regard. First, staff does not use time sheets to document the time it takes to prepare various plans; therefore, work programming cannot be accurate. We recommended detailed timekeeping earlier in this section, which is needed in order for the Planning Division to create work programs. Second, the Division does not use a comprehensive work program. We prefer the adoption of an annual work program that lists all non-fee planning projects, the amount of labor required and projected completion dates. This program should be reviewed by the END CSA and included as part of the annual budget document. Since some flexibility is needed during the course of the year, we also recommend that the Division set aside a certain amount of staff allocation and consulting funds that are not programmed and can be used on high priority items as the year progresses.

90. Recommendation: The Planning Division should prepare and adopt an annual planning work program.

F. ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES

We found several organizational issues within the Planning Division. A discussion of each of the issues and our recommendations are as follows.

Planning Services Division

Through the recent budget cuts, the Planning Services Division has been reduced from three to two Principal Planner positions. One of the remaining Principals oversees the SNI/Special Projects Teams and still has official responsibility for the support staff, which includes the records management function. We made a recommendation in the Clerical Support segment about the need to officially transfer supervision of the records management function to the other Principal Planner, who oversees Information Services. We do not have any other recommendations in regard to the organization as it relates to the SNI/Special Projects Principal Planner.

When the third Planning Services Principal Planner position was eliminated, the second remaining Principal Planner was left to manage IDTS, Information Services, Data Management, Zoning and General Plan. Because there are experienced Senior Planners in four of five of these functions, the span of control appears to be stretching, but not overwhelming the Principal Planner. There are two issues with the current structure, though. First, the IDTS Team will continue to require a significant amount of time and resources to finish the AMANDA permitting system. Second, an Acting Senior Planner currently supervises the General Plan Team, which needs a higher

level of oversight. Long range planning has been set aside for a long time, and the Planning Services Division needs to develop a strategy for a comprehensive update of the General Plan. The Planning Services Deputy Director, who was the former Principal Planner over General Plan, has taken on the challenge of finding a way to stretch resources to process the numerous General Plan Amendments and get to the other long range planning projects. We believe that these issues should be dealt with at the Principal Planner level. The Planning Services Division could be reorganized to create three functional units, each of which would be managed by one Principal Planner. The functional units we recommend are:

- ✍ SNI/Special Projects
- ✍ ITDS and Data Management
- ✍ Zoning and General Plan

91. Recommendation: An additional Principal Planner position needs to be created to oversee long range planning functions, particularly the General Plan, either through reassignment or upgrading.

Plan Implementation Division

The Planning Division did not have a formal mechanism for implementing ideas and recommendations for process improvements, many of which came from the staff as well as from a number of studies and reports completed over the past several years. Thus, the Process Improvement Team was formed and is now responsible for compiling, organizing, and orchestrating process improvements. The Process Improvement Team is organized under the Plan Implementation Division, and consists of one Principal Planner, one Senior Planner, and two Planner I/II's.

Currently, the Process Improvement Principal Planner and Senior Planner coordinate efforts for both Planning Divisions, which sometimes includes interaction with other development departments. Each of the Process Improvement Team members does some of the work needed to complete improvements, usually in coordination with other experts and members of staff. For example, the Process Improvement Senior Planner is in the process of updating the Subdivision Ordinance in cooperation with Public Works and the Planning Division's Zoning Team. One of the Planner I/II's is working on the Annexation process and the other is completing the work necessary to implement NPDES Storm Water regulations.

The effort the Planning Division has made to complete process improvements is commendable. However, we recommend the following changes:

92. Recommendation: Process improvements should be the responsibility of the entire Department. A process improvement work program should be developed and all relevant staff assigned to work on improvements in

their departments. One person should be designated to coordinate all programmed process improvements, and this position should report to the Director or Administrative Officer.

G. CHANGE AND IMPLEMENTATION

It is sufficient to say that life in the Planning Division has been unstable for the last five years and that the staff and managers are reeling from change. In spite of all that has been lost, though, the San Jose staff and managers are some of the finest and most determined professionals we've worked with.

Here is a summary of some of the major changes affecting the Planning Division since 1997:

- ✍ The former PBCE Director was a 30-year veteran with the Planning Division. He had been the Director for 17 years when he left the Department in 1997. He was replaced by a long-tenured Deputy Director who served as Director for four years. When he left in 2001, he was replaced by another tenured Deputy Director who essentially functioned as both the Deputy and the Acting Director for ten months between June 2001 and April 2002. A permanent Director was hired April 2002 and is quickly integrating into the new position; and the Deputy Director is now settling back into his former position over the Plan Implementation Division.
- ✍ Another 20+-year veteran vacated the Planning Services Deputy Director position last year. As with the interim Director position, an existing manager was reassigned to temporarily fill the vacancy. One of the Principal Planners spent a year juggling both the Principal Planner and Acting Deputy Director duties until being hired into that position permanently this May. The Principal's former position was eliminated in the recent round of budget cuts, which leaves the Planning Services Division with the permanent loss of a position they've struggled without for the last year.
- ✍ The Department reports that 42 permanent employees who worked Planning and Administration have left since May 2000, which represents a 49.4% turnover in the past two years. Many of those who left took years of institutional knowledge and expertise with them.
- ✍ The Planning Division recently lost eight staff positions through budget cuts, has three employees out on long-term leave, and has four vacancies that can't be filled because of a hiring freeze.
- ✍ Change is also being felt from other areas of the City, where new Directors have been hired in Public Works, Economic Development and Housing. There

is also an interim Director over a new division of Design and Permitting in the Redevelopment Agency.

While we sometimes find a few guarded participants when we begin our studies, we were somewhat surprised at the initial amount of cynicism and skepticism expressed by some of the San Jose staff. As we moved forward, though, we were impressed with their overall enthusiasm, optimism, hopefulness and willingness to participate in our study. The Planning Division staff has many ideas for how to improve their workplace and have been through a number of studies in the past, yet many of them are discouraged because nothing seems to ever really change. Many of the staff and managers ended interviews or questionnaires by saying that they expected a higher level of recommendation to come from this study and that, this time, things need to change. Some felt strongly that if things didn't change, those who were on the brink would give up hope and there would be another mass exodus. They feel that management needs to either implement their recommendations or stop asking for their opinion, or at least explain why their ideas are not being implemented.

We raised a few important points in a meeting with the new Director, which bear repeating in this report. Past studies and implementation efforts were not necessarily sanctioned by the manager on board, or got lost in the years of management shuffle. And recommendations have come from a number of different efforts, as evidenced in the extensive matrix the Planning Division's Process Improvement Team has compiled to try and get a handle on all that needs to be done. Because of the years of turmoil, effective change has been difficult to achieve. And, while this study will add significantly to the Department's "to-do" list, the study is timely and is being endorsed and embraced by the new Director and both Deputy Directors, all of whom are in place and ready to bring effective, positive change to the Planning Division.

93. *Recommendation:* The Planning Division staff needs to be assured that this study is endorsed and embraced by management and that their recommendations will be implemented to bring positive, effective change to their workplace.

Mission Statement

One of the standard questions we ask employees on our questionnaires is how they would describe the goals or mission of the Department or Division. Some of the Planning staff and managers quoted the Mission Statement, which is "*Guide the physical change of San Jose to create and maintain a safe, healthy, attractive and vital place to live and work.*" Others really thought and wrote about the goals and mission from their own perspectives. Many have very high expectations for themselves and the department in regard to what they believe their mission is and we were impressed with the amount of thought that went into some of the responses.

Staff had some good ideas for what the mission should, or could be, as reflected in the following comments:

- ✍ We have a quality mission, and everything we do should relate back to that mission.
- ✍ I think our mission “is”/should be 1) to develop policies and regulations that will encourage new development to take place in a way that reflects the community’s priorities and needs, and 2) to review proposals to ensure that they conform to the intent of 1).
- ✍ I feel we should include or add also “value” to this statement. Also, to include a statement regarding the employees and their value and commitment to the organization.

On the other hand, many of the comments were laced with frustration and pessimism. Here are some of the more negative comments we received from the Planning Division staff:

- ✍ I’m not sure I truly know what the Department’s mission is.
- ✍ Umm, they’re a little unclear to me.
- ✍ I have never received the Planning Department’s Goal or Mission Statement as a new employee to this division.
- ✍ Unclear. I am sure that there is a general desire to provide good customer service, fast responses and a quality product, but I do not see a real commitment. There is attention to “personal comfort level” of upper level staff and not on comfort of customers.
- ✍ I would say the goals of this department are sometimes contradicted by the goals of other agencies.
- ✍ Lacks a clear customer focus.
- ✍ Our current goal seems to be to process as many permits as possible, to bring in fee income, and to be able to show what we do with statistics.
- ✍ I think we miss on the “attractive” part.
- ✍ Appease the City Manager and City Council.
- ✍ It appears that the mission is to process permit applications as quickly as possible and treat developers as if they were retail customers.
- ✍ Staff would like the goals to be quality development in the City and improving the quality of life for its residents, but in reality, the goal seems to be counting the number of widgets and how fast we process those widgets.
- ✍ Not sure; certainly not what’s on the plaques in the reception area.

The Department's Mission Statement was crafted through an extensive staff participation effort as a part of the City's "Investing in Results" process about two years ago. In order to implement the Mission, the Planning Division follows the goals of the General Plan, primarily as identified in the seven Major Strategies of the Plan. The Planning Division is currently in the process of re-validating their collective values as Planning staff, so that they can do a more effective job of aligning their work with the Mission. From the number of employees who didn't know what the mission is or how to answer the mission statement question, it is clear that there is work to be done in clarifying and reinforcing that mission for staff.

94. Recommendation: The Planning Division managers should review comments made by the Planning staff and meet with staff to clarify and reinforce the Division's goals and Mission Statement.

Leadership and Decision Making

Much of the frustration and pessimism reflected in staff's comments about the Planning Division's mission stem from a lack of leadership from managers and supervisors and mixed messages being communicated to staff. One of the staff, when responding to the question, "Do you have all the equipment you need to properly do your job?" and asked to list what was needed wrote "Hope, Inspiration, and Leadership."

Here are some comments from staff about the lack of leadership and how decisions are being made in the Planning Division:

- ✍ Sometimes it takes forever to make a decision because managers and supervisors are so concerned about not hurting anybody's feelings and they need to get everybody's input and the input needs to be digested and then that needs to be re-reviewed by the group.
- ✍ Nobody feels they are bold or qualified enough to make a decision. Questions get passed from one person to the next.
- ✍ I have to get buy-in from too many seniors and principals before I can call an applicant back with a response. My senior should have more power to make a decision without consulting the principal, who consults the deputy, who consults the environmental senior, who consults the zoning senior, and so on.
- ✍ Conflicting guidance and decision-making. The position the City takes on a particular project can change day-to-day or week-to-week. When conflicting information gets to the public, the City loses credibility. Supervisors and managers need to communicate better so that the whole department is on the same page and consistent decision-making can happen.

- ✍ Decisions are coming from the top as last-minute directives, but nobody is prepared to implement them. Mid-managers are so busy they can't look up. They have no time to meet with Principals, no time to look at improvements.
- ✍ Senior Planners don't tend to do any real supervising; they're too busy working.
- ✍ More recently I've seen a drop in leadership at the management level, a reluctance to stand up for the wiser planning schemes and a lack of willingness to educate the powers that be to take more responsible actions, which leads to inefficiency in planning and development.
- ✍ Principals and Deputies don't know how to say "NO," just "how high."
- ✍ Supervisors need to take management courses to learn how to take care of their staff, the foundation of the organization. The culture has been this way a long time.

The Planning Division needs to make a major shift in leadership thinking. Staff has independence, but wants strong leadership and direction. They need to have some flexibility, but want clear direction. Management spends too much time working, and not enough time developing processes, mentoring, and being leaders. One of the managers put it succinctly in the following comments:

“ The Planning Division needs to return to stability of leadership. Now that the Director and both Deputy Director's are in place, the Division needs to get past the 'acting' stages of leadership and get stabilized and squarely and strongly on the same page as a management team. Then the managers need to clearly share that direction with all staff and move forward. “

95. Recommendation: Planning Division managers and supervisors should meet in a retreat setting to discuss management and leadership issues. An outside facilitator may be appropriate for this retreat.

There are clearly too many players involved in making decisions. Top management should be involved only in a few cases, but it seems that many of the projects require consensus all the way to the top. Two or three levels of managers are reviewing staff reports and other routine documents prepared by staff. And project assignments and reviews involve everyone in the Implementation Division. More decisions need to be delegated downward to relieve managers of the day-to-day decisions and let the supervisors and staff make the judgment calls. This is a critical learning and empowering experience that is being denied the supervisors and staff and keeping the managers from managing.

96. Recommendation: The Planning Division managers and supervisors need to evaluate how decisions are being made to identify opportunities for delegating the majority of the day-to-day decisions downward.

Employee Evaluations, Performance and Recognition

Not all supervisors and managers in the Planning Divisions are performing employee evaluations. While some are diligent, others do not conduct evaluations or conduct them in a haphazard manner. One supervisor reported not having had a performance evaluation since 1997; and the 1997 evaluation only took place because the supervisor requested one. The staff would also like an opportunity to evaluate their supervisors.

97. Recommendation: Annual performance evaluations should be completed for every employee and should include an evaluation of both the employee and the supervisor.

98. Recommendation: If necessary, supervisors should seek assistance from the Human Resources Department in developing performance evaluations.

Staff would like more feedback and an opportunity to discuss goals and expectations with their supervisors and managers, which should be provided more frequently than at the annual evaluation.

99. Recommendation: Supervisors need to check in with their employees at least quarterly to discuss goals and expectations.

Staff feels that they do not receive recognition or enough “kudos” for doing a good job or being assertive or innovative in their work. A brown bag lunch and “awards” presentation is an informal, but effective way of gathering staff together to let them know about each others’ efforts and successes, and often builds teamwork and staff morale.

100. Recommendation: The Planning Division managers need to develop a program for more frequent, timely and effective employee recognition.

One of the greatest challenges facing managers is the fine line between promoting a comfortable and flexible workplace while making everyone accountable. In every organization, some pull more of the weight than others do. Most work diligently on their own, but others need constant supervision. The Planning Division staff feels overworked from top managers down through the clerical staff, and many are putting in numerous hours of overtime to get the work done. There is some resentment of those who appear to frequently be late or absent from work, who are not accountable for doing their own work, or who dress or act unprofessionally. It seems to some of the staff as if management lets people slide, but forgets that others have to pick up the slack.

101. Recommendation: Managers and supervisors need to ensure that all employees dress and conduct themselves in a professional manner and are accountable for their work.

H. COMMUNICATION AND MEETINGS

We received many comments about meetings from the Planning Division staff and managers. The few comments we have summarized below seem to touch on the general sentiment expressed by most of the staff:

- ✍ We are supposed to be cost-recovery in Implementation, yet we spend at least half our time performing tasks or attending meetings that are not covered by fees. Cut the amount of meeting time per week by 50%.*
- ✍ Some meetings are poorly structured and an inefficient use of time. We need an agenda that is followed at all meetings.*
- ✍ Meeting discussions can't be random, but must be relevant and significant.*

Meetings and training are important, and we believe that staff recognizes this. At the same time, meetings take time away from other work and staff needs to know that the time they spend in meetings is of real value. This includes having and adhering to a clear agenda and ensuring that the staff who attends needs to be there, and that the right people are in the meetings to make them effective.

Not only is there a need to ensure that all meetings are efficiently run, the staff and managers are spending too much time in meetings. A matrix of standing meetings and group training sessions in the Planning Division is provided in Appendix H. The matrix shows that Planners and Planning Technicians spend anywhere from 12-18% of a 40-hour week attending standing staff meetings and group training. This percentage does not take into consideration public meetings, work sessions, hearings, community meetings, meetings for special projects, or meetings with applicants, supervisors or other staff members. Some of the staff estimated in their confidential questionnaires that they spend 25% of their time in meetings. This is probably a realistic estimate for most, and may be a low estimate for other staff members. Looking again at the matrix, the Principal Planners and Senior Planners spend 21-35% of their time in just the meetings noted on the matrix. This is also a conservative estimate and does not consider many other meetings that the senior staff needs to attend throughout the week.

Some recommendations for reducing meeting time are made below.

Tuesday Plan Implementation Staff Meeting

The Tuesday morning Plan Implementation Division Staff Meeting serves three main functions. The entire staff attends the first half to discuss general business. The second half of the meeting is for preliminary reviews and the assignment and distribution of new project files. The Planning Technicians, Project Managers, Senior Planners and Principal Planners typically stay for the second portion of the meeting. About 20 people stayed for the meeting we observed. Comments from staff and our observations and recommendations are as follows:

☞ *The Tuesday Staff Meeting could be shorter if the Principal Planner reviewed the agenda ahead of time to decide which preliminary reviews warranted review by 20 + planners. Right now, we review all of them.*

Since the inception of the paid preliminary review process, the number of preliminary reviews is expected to go down. The first agenda we reviewed after the paid process was implemented only had one preliminary review on it. Applicants only pay a fee of \$100 for the Basic, Planning-Only Preliminary Review Process, but these reviews are conducted in front of 20+ Planners, Senior Planners and Principal Planners. This is cost prohibitive. Although there is some value here as a training opportunity for staff, fewer people clearly need to be involved in the preliminary review process.

102. Recommendation: Basic, Planning-Only Preliminary Reviews should be conducted after new project review and should be conducted only in the presence of the Project Managers who have been assigned Preliminary Reviews and their direct Senior Planners and Principal Planners.

☞ *The review of projects would be more productive if the plans were on the wall and maps were on an overhead projector so that everyone could see.*

We think that there is some value and truth to this statement. In one meeting we observed, the Principal Planner had to interrupt the discussion at the table a number of times to get staff sitting along the perimeter to curtail side conversations. Some of the staff are bored with the meetings and see them as an inefficient use of time as many of the discussions don't directly relate to their projects. In management's view, the ones who complain the loudest are sometimes the ones who have the most to learn and need to be paying attention to the review as a training experience. Perhaps if everyone could see the project without crowding around the table, staff would be more interested in participating. Posted or projected visuals might also be helpful in the Thursday Project Review Meeting, which is highly attended as well.

103. Recommendation: Project plans and maps should be displayed in a way that allows everyone to visually participate in the project review process.

☞ *It would be good to have the Principal Planners review the Planning Commission and City Council agendas briefly at Staff Meetings to explain what the actions were and PC/CC direction so staff can be aware of the main projects and issues and stay consistent.*

This is a good idea as long as the discussion is short and structured and has a clear educational benefit.

104. Recommendation: A short segment of the Tuesday Staff Meeting should include a brief review of Planning Commission and City Council agendas to educate staff about key decisions, issues and the direction of the hearing bodies.

Thursday Project Review Meeting

An interdisciplinary meeting is held every Thursday to go over new project files. The meeting is attended by the Plan Implementation Division Deputy Director, Principal Planners and Planning staff, and representatives from the Building, Public Works, Code Enforcement, Transportation, Environmental Services, Fire and Police departments. The meeting takes place the week after files are distributed to the Project Managers, which is about two weeks after referrals have been sent to all of the interested parties. Typically, all departments are ready with their comments and, after discussing the project at the Thursday meeting, staff is prepared to finalize the 30-day review process. This meeting is an excellent service for customers, who sometimes attend the review session. Here are some specific comments by staff about the Project Review Meeting:

☞ *The Thursday interdepartmental meeting is GOOD.*

☞ *Though various functions are located in different departments, there is excellent coordination amongst them. The weekly Project Review meeting is the forum that makes this possible.*

While the Project Review Meeting provides an opportunity for the different divisions to work together on projects, many of the Planning Division managers and staff feel that there is a general lack of communication between divisions and a lack of understanding of the daily functions of divisions that must work together to achieve a common goal. Some see it as a real problem and think that it slows down permit cycle times. One comment we received was that the Department should continue to strive for the tightest coordination between the functions of Planning, Public Works, Fire and Building, and if it means bringing the Fire and Public Works divisions into the same department to do it most effectively, then that is what should happen. We made specific recommendations regarding coordination between divisions in the Planning Process Improvements section of this report.

Need for Additional Meetings and Communications

The Planning Division staff and managers spend a lot of time in meetings. While most would like meeting time to be significantly reduced, others recognize the need for better communication and even for more meetings under certain circumstances.

There needs to be more direct communication between the Planning Division senior managers and middle managers, middle managers and supervisors, and supervisors and staff. Some of the Principal Planners, Senior Planners and staff feel that higher-level managers react to situations and make sweeping changes in policies and processes without asking for input or communicating with those that the changes will effect the most. The staff commented that critical information to do their jobs doesn't always filter down from management and that there needs to be a greater flow of information up and down the chain of command. And there does not appear to be adequate coordination and communication between the levels about bigger picture issues and the general direction of the organization. As a result, there is a lack of understanding of the overall direction of the organization among the staff, as well as some of the managers.

105. Recommendation: Decisions need to be discussed with and include the input of relevant staff.

The Planning Division's Deputy Directors, Principal Planners, and sometimes Senior Planners need some form of regular meeting to improve coordination and communication between the Plan Implementation and Planning Services Divisions and between the functioning teams within the Divisions. The Plan Implementation Deputy Director and Principals do not meet as frequently as the Principals feel they need to meet as a group. It seems that regular meetings fell by the wayside when the Deputy was Acting Director and were never resumed. The Planning Services Deputy Director does meet regularly with the Planning Services Principal Planners and generally invites the Plan Implementation Division Deputy and Principals to join the meeting, but they seldom attend. Even the physical separation of the two Divisions lends itself to mental separation, and joint meetings could be a big step toward better integration.

106. Recommendation: Both Planning Division Deputy Directors should meet on a regular basis with their Principal Planners. On occasion the Deputy Directors and Principal Planners and, when necessary, Senior Planners from both Divisions should meet jointly to discuss intra-divisional issues.

The PBCE Director recently initiated a bi-monthly meeting with all of the Department Deputy Directors. This meeting is different from the weekly PBCE Senior Staff Meeting on Monday mornings, and is more of a forum for implementing ideas for better integration and coordination between the various departments and divisions.

Although still in the discovery stage, this meeting could be an excellent mechanism for improving Department communications once a regular format and agenda of issues is established.

Staff Training Meetings

The Public Information Counter Staff Meeting and Training session is held on Wednesdays from 8:15-9:00, and is mandatory for all of the Planner I/II's. Attendance is optional for the Planning Technicians, most of whom attend. Some of the Senior Planners and the Clerical Staff also attend. The Wednesday Training session we observed was attended by about 30 employees and the Senior Planner commented that it seemed to be a small group, perhaps because Zucker Systems was simultaneously conducting interviews that morning. The meeting opened with announcements and then the General Plan Team talked with the group about the General Plan Amendments and meetings, leaving time for questions and answers. In a subsequent session that we did not attend, but were updated on, the Senior Planner and staff prepared a power point presentation with sound. This presentation was a step-by-step overview of a specific process, and the plan was to download the presentation onto the intranet so that staff could refer back to it as a training tool. This is an excellent idea, and the suggestion was made to the Senior Planner that other procedures and training summaries could also be placed on the intranet as on-line training references. Having the materials on the intranet would also make it easy to update them and quickly provide staff with changes in processes and procedures.

On Thursdays, All Planning Staff Training is held from 8:30-10:00. This meeting is mandatory for all of the Planning Division staff and includes attendance by the Senior and Principal Planners as well. The training that we observed was attended by more than 30 employees and was an engaging and interesting presentation by the City Arborist and a non-profit tree specialist. The list of other topics discussed at Thursday Training is impressive and includes a wide variety of topics, such as *Historic Preservation, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design, CEQA, General Plan, Enterprise Zones, Planning Law, The New Zoning Code, Grading 101, How to do a PD Zoning, and How to Write a Staff Report.*

The Planning Division's efforts to provide well-organized and topical group training sessions are commendable. And we think that group training sessions should continue, but less frequently than every week. Of primary importance is that staff is spending 2 hours and 15 minutes a week in group training when what they need is more focused, one-on-one training that directly relates to their day-to-day job. In addition, some of the staff feel that the group training introduces them to the topic of the day, but there is no follow-through by supervisors to see they understood the issues; and when the topic comes up in your project workload, you have to pull notes from the training session and start asking questions. We talked more about specific one-on-one training needs in the section on Training and Professional Development,

and recommend here that the amount of hours spent in group training be reduced as follows.

107. Recommendation: Mandatory group training sessions on selected topics should be held on a monthly basis and should be conducted before 9:00 a.m. or during a one-hour brown-bag lunch session.

I. TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Training Budget and Program

From all levels of the Planning Division, from the Deputy Directors to the support staff, the response in regard to whether they've received adequate training to do their jobs is "sink or swim." Few have been hired, promoted, or given a new task with any real orientation, training or supervision, and many looked around at the piles of documents in their new work areas and figured it out for themselves. One of the questions raised by the senior managers when we began our study was, how do we know what an appropriate workload is, and how do we prevent burnout? One of the Planners put it well by writing the following comments in the confidential questionnaire:

"When I first started, I was thrown a bunch of projects and expected to run with them. Senior staff didn't really have the time to provide sufficient training, and I was left to handle a fairly heavy workload. While I appreciated the opportunity to learn a lot and have some amount of independence, I ended up taking longer with the review/processing than I should have. Sometimes I learned by trial and error. I have survived, but I've seen new Planners flounder and, all too often, leave. Mentoring and sufficient training are needed to retain the 'new kids' and to prevent burnout."

Some of the Planning Division managers feel that there are sufficient funds budgeted for training, but that no one has time for training. We find that most Planning Departments do not have sufficient time *or* money budgeted for training, and that very few departments have adopted a formal training program.

Table 29 summarizes recent budget totals and payroll amounts for both San Jose Planning Divisions. Because staff is frequently rotated between the two Divisions, training funds are used collectively for all staff training.

Table 29
Current Training Budget for Both Planning Divisions

Division	FY 2001-2002	FY 2002-2003
Planning Services	\$1,050	\$1,050
	\$56,000	
	00-01 carryover + \$24,750	
Plan Implementation	\$80,750	\$56,000
Total Training Budget Per FY	\$81,800	\$57,050
Planning Division Total Payroll	\$6,776,649	\$6,964,269
Training Budget as a % of Payroll	1.2%	0.8%
1.0% x Payroll	\$67,766	\$69,643
1.5% x Payroll	\$101,650	\$104,464

We normally recommend a training budget of 1.5% of payroll. At 1.5% of the FY 2002-03 Planning Division payroll, the training budget should be \$104,464. The training budget was \$12,000-15,000 in prior years, but was increased to \$56,000 in FY 2001-02. This is a 340-367% increase in the training budget, which is outstanding. The large increase was in recognition of the loss of half of the Planning Division's experienced staff through turnover, particularly in the development review functions, and the acknowledged need for the new and remaining staff to receive additional training to regain some of the lost expertise. As the Department has already made a significant investment to increase the prior training budget, a further increase to achieve 1%, rather than 1.5% of payroll is reasonable.

108. Recommendation: The Planning Division training budget should be increased to 1% of payroll.

The Planning Division has an admirable program of weekly training sessions to discuss processes and contemporary planning-related topics. In a separate discussion about standing meetings, though, we recommended that these all-staff sessions be reduced to a monthly basis. The intent is not to reduce the amount of training, but to refocus training. The need for more focused training is clearly reflected in the analysis of staff tenures below, and the following summary of comments by Planning Division staff and managers:

- ✍ Group training is fine, but one-on-one training, which should be reflected in performance targets, is necessary to prepare the staff to do the work.
- ✍ We get training, but not on the day-to-day aspects of our jobs.
- ✍ Assign all supervisors to directly train their staff and not totally depend on group training.

- ✍ Ultimately, we need staff to mentor each other to provide needed training.
- ✍ Need more one-on-one training. Group training needs to include basics of going over ordinances and plan.
- ✍ Project Managers are treated as paper pushers and time managers, which is somewhat necessary, but they need to be trained and treated as facilitators.
- ✍ Somehow our department needs to make the time for existing staff and make it happen with the new staff as they come on board.
- ✍ Supervisors are supervisors and need to take the time to properly mentor their new employees. I have found supervisors and staff not knowing how to do things, or, for that matter, not knowing what each other is doing or why.

The extensive turnover in recent years has significantly reduced the collective level of experience in the Planning Division. The experience of the planning staff in general is much lower than ever before, as reflected in the staff tenure percentages compiled by the Planning Division and summarized in Tables 30 and 31 below.

Table 30
Planning Division Staff Tenure as of May 1, 2002

Staff Category	Number of Staff With Stated Years of Experience								Total
	0-1	1-2	2-3	3-5	5-10	10-15	15-20	>20	
Planner II	4	10	4	2	2	4	2	1	29
Planner I	4	1							5
Planning Technician	4	1	2			2			9
Total	12	12	6	2	2	6	2	1	43
Percentage of Staff	28%	28%	14%	5%	5%	14%	5%	2%	100%

Table 31
Percentage of Staff at Certain Levels of Tenure

Staff Category	Percentage of Staff With Less than Stated Years of Experience								
	>1	>1.5	>2	<2.5	<3	<5	<10	<15	<20
Planner II	14%		48%	55%	62%	69%	76%	90%	97%
Planner I	80%	100%							
Planning Technician	44%		56%	78%				100%	

The staff tenure analysis provides evidence that the Planning staff, in general, is pretty green.

- ✍ 62% of the Planner II's have less than three years' experience.
- ✍ 100% of the Planner I's have less than 1.5 years' experience.

- ✍ 78% of the Planning Technicians have less than 2.5 years' experience.
- ✍ 56% of the entire Planning staff has less than two years' experience, and 70% has less than three years' experience with the Planning Division.

In breaking down the data even further, of the 11 Planner I/II's in the District Processing Teams, one has 10 and another 15.75 years' experience, but the remaining nine have been with the Division less than three years and five of those were hired within the last two years. That means that 82% of the Project Managers have been with the Planning Division less than three years and 45% less than two years.

We made separate calculations of Planning Division management's tenure based on information gathered through personal interviews. SNI and Data Management were not studied, thus those Senior Planner tenures are not included in this analysis. Otherwise, the Planning Division's management tenure is summarized in Table 32 below.

Table 32
Planning Division Management Tenure as of May, 2002

Management Category	Number of Managers With Stated Years of Experience							Total
	1-2	3-5	5-10	10-15	15-20	20-25	<25	
Deputy Director					2			2
Principal Planner	1			1	2		2	6
Senior Planner		1	1	2	3	3		10
	1	1	1	3	7	3	2	18
% of Management	6%	6%	6%	17%	39%	17%	11%	100%

Table 32 illustrates that the bulk of the Planning Division's experience is at the management level.

- ✍ 67% of the Planning Division managers and Project Managers' supervisors have been with the Division for more than 15 years.
- ✍ Five, or 28%, have been on board for more than 20 years.
- ✍ Only three, or 17% of the managers and supervisors have fewer than five years' experience, while 70% of the Planning staff has been with the Division less than five years.

Managers and supervisors need to do a better job of passing down their years of experience to the junior staff, providing one-on-one training and other support to give them the adequate tools to effectively do their jobs. More direct and effective training and supervision is needed in some of the following areas:

- ✍ Orientation to the Department and the Planning Division, including an overview of the different divisions and their roles and responsibilities in the development review process;
- ✍ The basics about project files, permit searches, and other standard office procedures;
- ✍ Specific, one-on-one training in the daily functions and decisions associated with processing permits;
- ✍ A systematic review of the General Plan, Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Ordinance and other development ordinances to ensure that staff understands and knows how to implement them; and
- ✍ The review of policies, practices and processes to ensure that staff is providing accurate, consistent information at the counter.
- ✍ An informal mentorship program should also be in place to foster growth and continuity amongst planners as people come and go and to increase the level of planning knowledge available to them.

Our earlier recommendation was to reduce the Wednesday and Thursday morning group training from a weekly to a monthly basis. The purpose of this is to provide more time for one-on-one training. The two hours and 15 minutes set aside for weekly group training can now be shifted. One-on-one training can be provided for a minimum of two hours every week for three weeks of the month, and the fourth week, all or part of the two hours can be used for all-staff group training. The one-on-one training program should include both individual and small-group training. For example, for some training, supervisors would sit one-on-one with individual staff members. At other times, training would take place in small groups, such as a Senior Planner going over sections of the Zoning Ordinance with his or her District Processing Team, or a Principal Planner meeting with all of the Senior Planners for a mentoring session in how to be good supervisors and managers.

The City and Department are very supportive of training. A variety of classes are available through the City's Training Catalog, and some staff have taken University Extension courses, for which the City will reimburse expenses for tuition and books. The City's IT Department is also available and helpful to staff who take computer classes. However, some of the Planners mentioned needing more specific training on technical issues. Their comments are summarized below:

- ✍ Planners constantly need updates on Planning law.
- ✍ We receive periodic in-house full day training on CEQA, Land Use and Subdivision Map Act legal issues, but need more detailed "how to" training.
- ✍ We would like more training on issues such as grading and drainage, landscaping, accessibility and life safety code requirements.

109. Recommendation: Managers and supervisors need to provide a minimum of two hours of training for each employee each week. At least three weeks of the month, one-on-one technical training should be provided in individual or small group settings. The fourth week, all or part of the two hours allotted for training can be spent in an all-staff group meeting or brown-bag luncheon.

Staff Rotations

Some of the staff feel qualified to do more, but are not getting the experience they need to get a promotion. There need to be more opportunities for professional growth and career development within the Department, not just through outside coursework.

In addition, some of the staff has been doing the same job for more than 15 years, with no change in assignments and no promotions. This is certainly not good for morale, nor is it good for spreading the knowledge around the department. Most of the questions at the front counter, for instance, relate to plan implementation; but the majority of the Planners have never worked in implementation. By keeping staff in the same job for too long, some get bored, lose the incentive to learn, and develop bad habits. The past Director's strategy was to rotate the staff on an annual basis, but this hasn't happened for several years, which limits everyone's opportunity for growth and advancement. In one staff's opinion, if the Planning Division gets the annual rotations back on track and makes sure no one "overstays" in a position, they will be doing the department a lot of good. We agree and so do the many of the staff and managers.

One concern amongst managers is that, with the recent loss of so many specialists, those specialists who remain are sometimes anchors in their areas and it is difficult to move them. And for some, there may not be anywhere else for them to go. In one example, such as with the Principal Planner who is the Historic Preservation Officer, it may seem that the position could not rotate, but we don't necessarily agree. The Principal Planner is currently only supervising one or two members of staff and only handles the Historic Preservation Program. Having that position oversee additional functions is a form of rotation that would broaden the Principal Planner's experience.

However the new Director chooses to set up the system, the staff is losing the broad exposure previously gained through rotations and staff rotations should be resumed.

110. Recommendation: The Planning Division should reinstate a staff rotation system at a level of frequency to be determined by the Director.

The Ladder of Experience

According to some of the Principal Planners, new Planners begin their tenure by processing lower-level permits and gradually work up toward more complex permits as they get more experienced. If this is true, it is an excellent system and one that we often recommend for our clients. According to staff, though, new Planners are hired and put straight into permit processing without adequate training or mentoring. Often, management's response to understaffing is to broaden the responsibility of each employee to absorb the excess work, and permits are assigned to those perceived to have the *time* and not necessarily the *expertise* to process that type of permit. Projects should be assigned to staff based on their ability to process them; but this is not necessarily happening in San Jose.

Aside from making sure that a Planner is qualified to do the work on all of the permits that he or she has been assigned, another important consideration is how the permits are mixed. When a Planner is assigned an assortment of simple, moderate and complex permits, processing efficiency is reduced for all of them. No one has time to look at simple permits even though they could sometimes be completed within a few days or weeks. And complex permits get slowed down if staff takes the time to deal with the simple or moderate permits. This is a real frustration for the San Jose Planning staff and we can see why. We looked at the assignment data on the Division's Web site and found that all of the Project Managers have been assigned a full range of permits from the most simple to the most complex. One Project Manager has a workload that includes eight lot line adjustments, two annexations, five PD Zonings, an ABC Exemption, one Site Development Permit, two Single-Family House Permits, a Variance, a Reasonable Accommodation Request, three Special Use Permits and three Conditional Use Permits, among others. Looking down the list of assignments, this is a very typical variety of projects carried by the Project Managers.

A much more efficient system is to assign simple (or "quick" permits) to junior staff, moderately complex permits to mid-level staff, and complex permits to experienced staff. We think that the Planning Division's District Processing Teams could be organized this way to some extent. The processing teams are organized by geographic City Council District; thus, all levels of permits need to be processed by each District Team. Since recent budget cuts and a freeze on filling vacancies, three of the District Teams only have three Planners processing permits and the fourth Team has two. Before geographic teams were formed, Planners were specialists who focused on a specific type of permit, such as zonings, subdivisions, or site development. Now that there are so few Planners within each team, specialties are difficult to maintain. The geographic system is an excellent way of handling the permit processes and no one thinks that going back to the previous system is a good idea. But a lot of specialists were lost through attrition and others faded away when the Division went to the geographic permit review system. The Project Management staff often needs an expert to go to, but few remain in the Planning Division. Management has asked us what can be done and we think that the answer is, they need to "grow" more experts.

Rather than having the District Processing Teams comprised of generalists who can process any type of permit in their unit, the focus should be narrowed to develop experts. We talk about how to do this later in this section.

Another consequence of being understaffed is that no one has time to document the policies and procedures that should be followed every time a permit is processed. We heard many complaints by staff and managers in every function about the lack of consistency and the need for documented procedures. Every process and function can and should have clear and concise policies and procedures in place to ensure that training and methodology in performing each of the Division's functions is consistent and efficient. But writing policies and procedures is typically such an overwhelming task for any planning department that it simply does not get done, or the department attempts to have a third party write the procedures with little success.

The Planning Division should assign the task of writing policies and procedures to those Planners who are most proficient (or specialists) in processing a particular type of permit. Each specialist should begin by documenting the existing process for his or her type of specialty permit, and management should critique and sharpen the draft. The first attempt at getting policies and procedures documented should be a rough write-up, nothing fancy, and should reflect how the Planners *are currently processing* the permits, not necessarily how they think they *should be processing* them. Once the process is on paper and being followed, the specialist can work on refining it. The first draft should include the development of simple checklists, such as required forms and information by permit type as well as a list of documents and the order in which they should appear in every case file. Once approved, the draft policies, procedures and checklists would be used to train the new staff and to process all future permits.

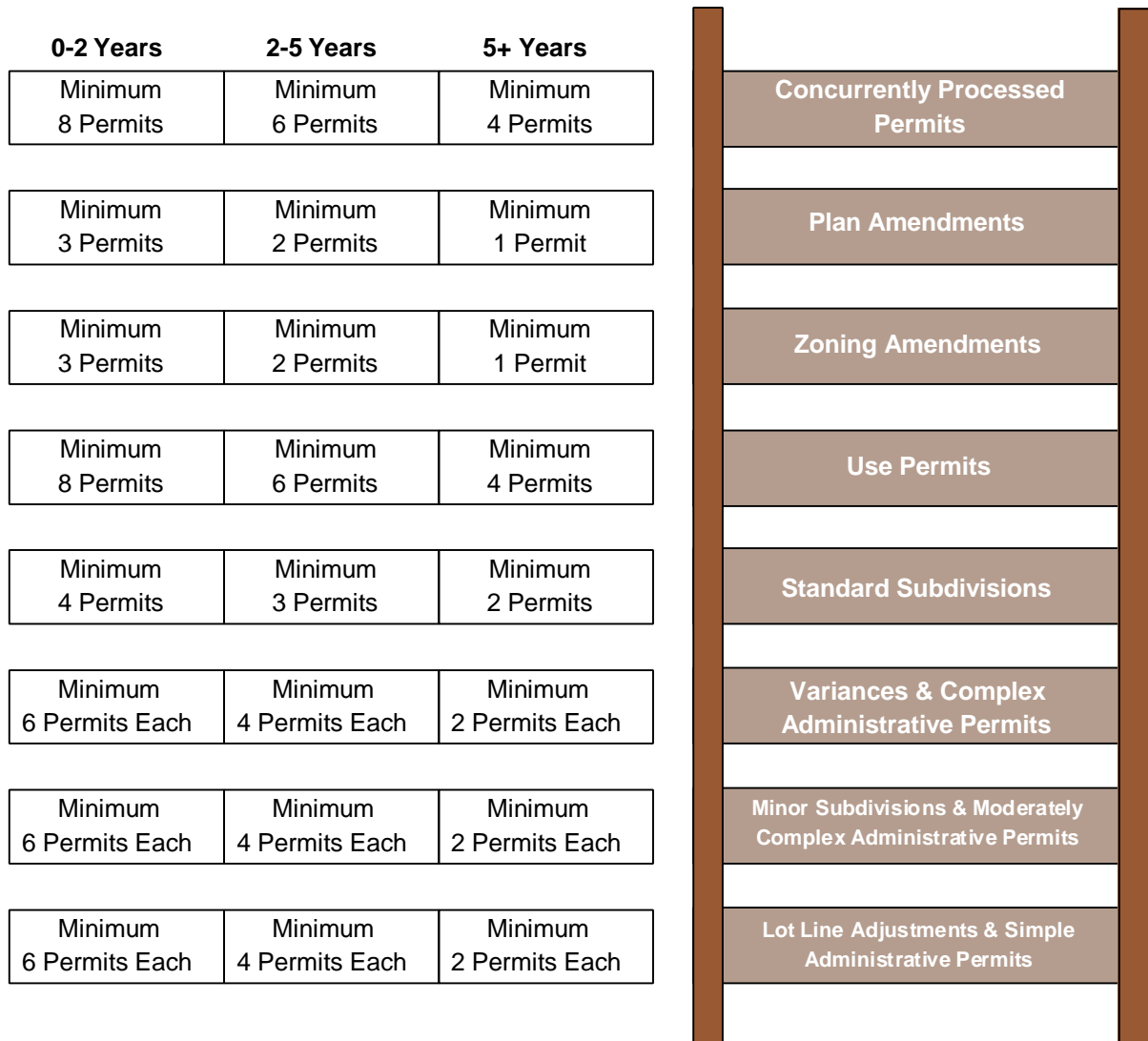
The final issue is how to train every Planner to become an expert in processing planning permits for San Jose customers. Planners who process planning permits should be trained under a system we refer to as the "ladder of experience." Under the "ladder of experience," Planners learn to process the simplest types of permits first. After having successfully processed a set number of the simplest type of permit, the Planner would graduate up the "ladder" to the next level of permit. For example, if the lowest level of permit is a Lot Line Adjustment, six Lot Line Adjustments might be assigned to and processed by the Planner before he or she could begin processing the next level of permit. The Planner would continue to process permits and move up the "ladder" until he or she became an expert in processing all types of permits for the Department.

The Planning Division managers should determine the sequence of permits from least- to most-complex and should establish a minimum number of each permit type required to be successfully processed before the Planner can graduate to the next level on the "ladder." Different standards should be established based on the level of experience each Planner has when he or she is hired into the Planning Division, or has achieved as an existing Planner within the Department. The designated specialist for

each type of permit should assist management in training and supervising other planners as they move up the ladder.

The “ladder of experience” should look something like Figure 10, with the Planning Division management fine-tuning the order in which permits must be processed as well as the number of each type of permit needing to be processed according to experience.

**Figure 10
Ladder of Experience**



111. Recommendation: The Planning Division should implement the “Ladder of Experience” training and documentation system, as defined below:

1. Make each Planner a specialist.
 - a. Determine who should be the specialist for each type of permit processed by the Planning Division. One specialist should be chosen amongst the four District Processing Teams. In other words, there would be one Planning Division specialist for Special Use Permits, not four.
 - b. Assign all future permits of that type within his or her District to the specialist to process.
 - c. Have the specialist assist each of the Senior Planners in training their District Team Project Managers in processing the specialty permits.

2. Write policies and procedures for processing each type of permit.
 - a. Assign the task of writing a rough draft of the policies and procedures to the Planner designated as the specialist for that type of permit.
 - b. Have management critique and sharpen the draft.
 - c. Revise, accept and begin using the policies and procedures to process all future permits and to train others to process them.

3. Establish a “ladder of experience” to train all Planners in processing all types of planning permits.
 - a. Create or refine the example “ladder of experience” to meet the Planning Division’s needs.
 - b. Begin training each Planner by having them process the simplest type of permit first.
 - c. Elevate the Planner to the next level of permit only after he or she has successfully processed the pre-determined number of simpler permits.
 - d. Have the designated specialists assist management in training and supervising the other Planners in processing each new level of permit.

This three-way recommendation, when implemented as a whole, will accomplish a number of things, primarily increasing the efficiency and consistency in the way the Planning Division’s permits are processed.

- ✍ Every Planner is properly trained before moving on to the next level of permit.
- ✍ Planners gain confidence and experience in processing all types of permits and will begin to thrive as they become planning experts..
- ✍ Planners can be trainers and mentors to new staff.
- ✍ Over time, all permits will be processed more quickly, consistently and competently.
- ✍ Specialists can document processes and procedures to guide and enforce the way in which all permits are to be processed. By dividing the task among the staff and having everyone participate in the process, the work will get done more quickly and the personal buy-in will result in better observance and enforcement of the procedures. Having those who actually process the permits write the procedures will ensure that they are complete and accurate, more so than if a third party wrote them. And, by the end of the exercise of writing and revising the procedures, each of the specialists will be an expert.

J. PERMIT PROCESSES

The permit processes within Planning are quite complex. We counted 36 separate types of applications. The processes are the source of much of the customer’s

dissatisfaction with Planning. Chapter II outlines many of the customer concerns, which can be grouped as follows:

- ✍ Complete plan checking
- ✍ Time to process permits
- ✍ Policy and reasonable conditions
- ✍ Treatment by staff

These concerns match our national experience, which almost always boils down to two primary customer concerns as follows:

- ✍ Customers want to know up front what they need to do and have this remain consistent throughout the process.
- ✍ Customers want short timelines or at least timelines they can count on.

Throughout this chapter of the report, we have included numerous recommendations that attempt to address these issues.

Process Timelines

Virtually all process requires timelines in order to meet customer expectations. Setting timelines also addresses one of Parkinson's Laws (work expands to meet the time available), and can actually improve efficiency. The END CSA includes only one permitting timeline for the Planning function, i.e. "Initial Comments Mailed within 30 Days." While this is an excellent performance measure, we believe Planning needs a number of more specific timelines.

We have been discussing timelines for Planning beginning with our initial work for San Jose in 1992. This has also been a concern of permit customers. In the June 2001 Business Climate Focus Group, the customer comments were as follows:

"Planning doesn't seem to have a sense of urgency regarding timing. There are no published timelines or performance standards. The major and minor problems seem to be mixed up. Suggestion: Timelines should be set for all projects."

Planning staff has resisted setting timelines. They seem to feel that each project is different and it is impossible to control the time the customer takes in responding to City concerns. To some extent, these concerns are real. However, there are a variety of ways to set timelines and still respond to these concerns.

✍ Segment Timelines

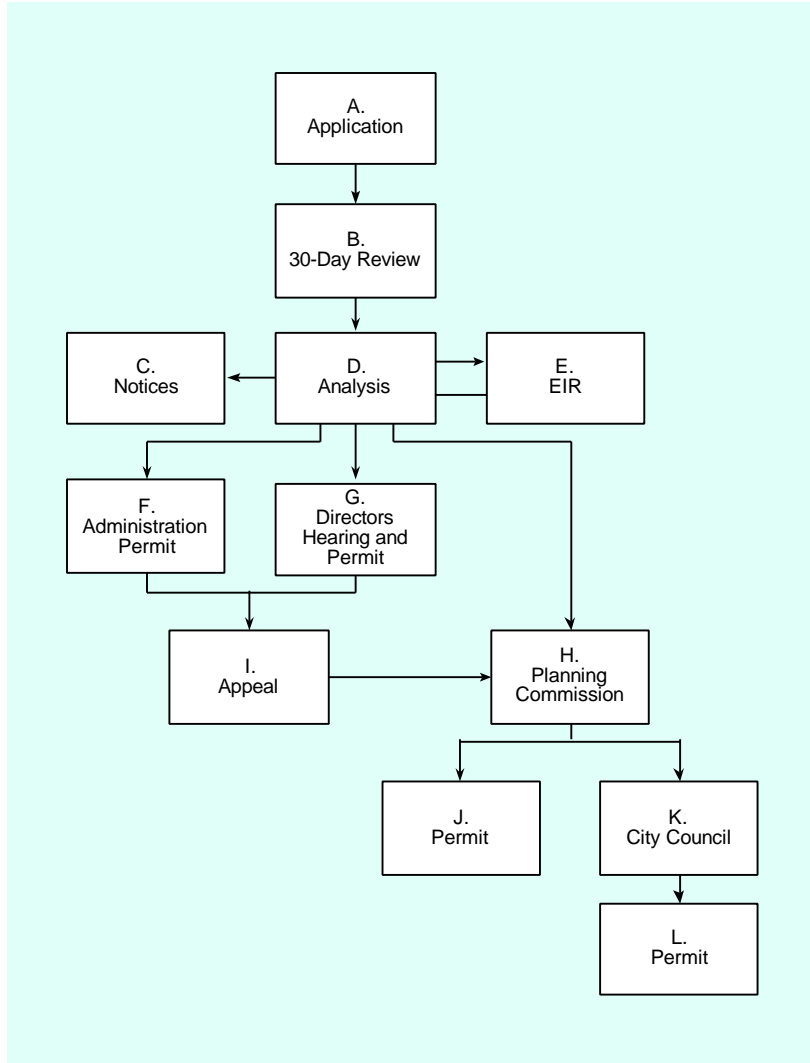
In Figure 11 we show 12 process segments, each designated by a letter of the alphabet. Each of the 39 permits requires only selected segments. We believe fairly rigid timelines can be set and monitored for 11 of the segments. In fact, most of these segments already have what amounts to de-facto timelines. For

example, in Segment A, there is a Friday cut-off date for many applications. The application is processed and ready for staff review at a meeting the following Tuesday, a two day timeline. This is the type of pre-set and automatic process that works and can be effective in arriving at overall shorter timelines. Parts of Segment B are also pre-set. The week following the Tuesday meeting includes a Thursday meeting of the Planners and the various review departments. Preliminary comments by all these reviewers are due at this meeting and are generally available. This is an excellent start for Segment B. However, since the data shows that the 30-Day performance standard is not being consistently met for this segment, additional internal process changes are required. Ideas for these are discussed later.

Segment D is the most difficult segment for which to set a timeline, and may require some experimentation. It generally requires a series of negotiations or re-submittals by applicants or other divisions and departments, as well as a number of internal reviews. As part of the 30-Day Review letter sent under Segment B, staff is indicating to the applicant the possible hearing date for the process. This is an excellent procedure that is not followed by many communities. However, achieving this date requires diligent work by all involved. There are two features that we believe can be helpful to control timelines in Segment D, as follows:

- † The END CSA has a performance measure that 85% of projects should receive thorough, complete, consistent review in the first cycle of staff review. This needs to apply to the Project Managers, but also to the various Planning supervisors and managers who may be involved with a permit. Obviously, it also needs to apply to all the other reviewing agencies as well. This is a new measure and the methodology for measurement is not yet in place.
- † The timelines for staff review of applicant's submittals is critical. The 30-Day timeline for Segment B is a good start. Similar timelines within Segment C would be useful. What we have in mind is quite simple in concept. Each time the applicant brings in a revision to a prior staff comment, a response time is guaranteed. If multiple submittals or reviews are required, the timeline is shortened each time. This is similar to the first-check, second-check, third-check timelines we have suggested in the Building and Development Services Divisions. Some experimentation will be needed in order to set the timelines and develop a workable system. The AMANDA system should allow easy monitoring of the timelines. As a start, we suggest 10 working days for the first cycle (i.e. second check) and 5 working days for the next. For simple items or permits, the timelines might be even shorter.

Figure 11
Typical Application Processes



112. Recommendation: Customer response timelines should be set for all permit submittals.

✍ Overall Timelines

When possible, we also prefer to set overall timelines; i.e. if the application is received by a certain date, the permit will be issued or denied by a certain date unless the applicant asks for a continuance and more time. Under such a system, clear ground rules must be established for both the applicant and the City, such as response times. If ground rules are not followed, then the timelines are extended. To some extent staff is already setting these timelines as part of the 30-Day letter. What are missing are estimates of timelines that can be shared with the public even before they apply for a permit. Announcing

these publicly can be an effective way to communicate expectations to staff. Additionally, the timelines given as part of the 30-Day review cycle may need more clarification so that the applicant is clearly aware of their responsibilities.

113. Recommendation: Publish expected timelines for all processes.

✍ Separate City Time and Applicant Time

In order to accurately monitor timelines it is necessary to separate City time from Applicant time. This should be possible with the City's new computer system.

114. Recommendation: Separate applicant from City time in the AMANDA permit monitoring system.

✍ Automation

The last thing that is desired is a labor-intensive measurement or monitoring system. In an ideal system, the measuring and monitoring are byproducts of the work in process. This can be accomplished with the City's new computer system. When a particular process is off target, the system sets forth an exception flag so that staff or management can intervene and determine the problem along with a solution.

115. Recommendation: The AMANDA system should be programmed to automatically track timelines and provide exception reports when timelines are not met.

Process Improvements

Permit processes could be greatly improved if the majority of effort was focused on those land use approvals that would make the most difference in strengthening the City and its neighborhoods, while other types of approvals that were costly and not especially productive were eliminated or significantly streamlined. We have made several specific recommendations to this effect below. And those processes that are kept need to be improved so that they are as efficient as possible. That involves streamlining the day-to-day operations of permit processing through measures that include, but are not limited to the following:

- ✍ Refocusing training efforts toward specific, day-to-day review functions and decisions (this is discussed in more detail under the section on Training)
- ✍ Developing straightforward procedures and establishing a clear timeline and scope of review for different permits and different levels of permits (Planners

disagree on basics such as “how long do you take to review this?” and “should a site visit be conducted?”)

- ✍ Updating policy documents
- ✍ Preparing standard conditions
- ✍ Creating and consistently using checklists and templates (some exist, but they are not always being used and some could be improved; the AMANDA checklists are, according to some, too cumbersome)
- ✍ Other system upgrades to make the day-to-day work of the Project Managers more efficient.

116. Recommendation: The Planning Division needs to effectively streamline the day-to-day permit review and processing functions by establishing a clear scope of review for all levels and types of permits and developing policies, procedures, checklists, templates, and standard conditions for each permit type.

A number of specific opportunities for improving and streamlining the planning permit processes are discussed below.

Application Forms

We counted and reviewed 36 types of planning permit applications and application packets during this study. They ranged from single-page applications for administrative permits to application packets for more complex permits. In general, the applications and packets were of good quality and contained a lot of useful information. But we recommend the following improvements.

Every type of permit or process has a unique application form. We suspect that this is a maintenance nightmare. Most jurisdictions have gone to a universal form, or to a few forms that are used for groups of simple, moderately complex and complex types of permits, with permit-specific information provided on a supplemental sheet or handout. A universal application form keeps basic data consistent and saves staff and applicants from having to search for information. When a proposal requires more than one type of permit or process, applicants only have to enter the data once. And a universal form makes computer data entry, copying and maintenance much easier.

117. Recommendation: The Department should create and implement a universal planning permit application form.

Not all application packets were consistent, but typically included filing instructions, an application form, Affidavit of Ownership documents, notice requirements and a Sample Mailing Label Sheet, if applicable, and other permit-specific forms and

information. Some, but not many, included an application check sheet, a description of the review process, review criteria, or the review body. Very few provided an estimate of how long the process should take, and only one, Reasonable Accommodations, included a process flowchart.

118. Recommendation: Application packets should be standardized and should include consistent types of documents and information, such as the following:

- ✍ Standard Application Form
- ✍ Permit-specific information sheet that includes:
 - a) A brief description of the permit, including when the permit is appropriate or required, applicable limitations or other permits required;
 - b) A brief description of the approval process, review criteria, review body, and process for appeals;
 - c) A process flowchart with timelines for significant stages of the process, such as 30-day review, environmental analysis, scheduling of hearings, and a final decision; and
 - d) Who to contact for more information or assistance and a telephone number.
- ✍ Filing instructions and a checklist of criteria, plans, forms, documents and other information that must be submitted with the application.
- ✍ Notice requirements, if applicable, including a Sample Mailing Label Sheet.
- ✍ City Council Public Outreach Policy (for large or complex projects).
- ✍ Examples of layouts, site plans, acceptable measurement standards or other information typically needed by an applicant.
- ✍ Affidavit of Ownership documents.

We found some good information on the Department's colorful customer brochures, or handouts, and some good information on separate sheets of information that were included in a lot of the application packets or available on line. While the handouts were fairly consistent in content and format, only the Reasonable Accommodation application packet contained a complete description of the Department's policy, processes, review criteria and a process flowchart. The same type of information needs to be provided to customers whether it is on a brochure or an information sheet. Having two informational documents is a duplication of efforts and creates maintenance issues.

119. Recommendation: One type of information sheet and/or brochure should be created for each permit or process as a handout or information

available on line, and all such documents should be consistent in content and in formatting.

The Reasonable Accommodation application form is three pages long because it lists and contains space for applicants to address the approval criteria. If provided, this information should not be printed on the application form, but should be included as a separate document.

120. Recommendation: Space for applicants to address the approval criteria should be provided on a document or checklist separate from the application form.

About half of the planning permit applications and application packets are available on the Department's Web site. This is a good service for customers.

121. Recommendation: All of the Department's planning permit applications and application packets should be available on line.

Permit Codes

Some of the Department's codes used to number planning permits are confusing, like "AT" for Lot Line Adjustments, "H" for Site Development Permits and "C" for Zonings. Codes such as "LLA" for Lot Line Adjustments, "SDP" for Site Development Permit and "Z" for Zonings would be simpler and easier for customers and staff to identify and refer to.

122. Recommendation: Confusing planning permit codes should be changed so that they are easier for customers and staff to identify and refer to.

Preliminary Review Process

The Planning Division has just completed and is now implementing a new system for its Preliminary Review Process. The new system is no different than the existing system except that applicants will now be charged a fee for one of the following three levels of review:

- ✍ Level 1: Existing Single-Family Property Review – \$50
- ✍ Level 2: Basic, Planning-Only Review – \$100

The Single-Family and Basic Review processes do not include a meeting with the applicant, although applicants can request a meeting with the Project Manager for an additional \$100. Project Managers will make their own

arrangements for meeting with the applicants, which staff expects will take place within five days of the request.

✍ Level 3: Comprehensive, Multi-Discipline Review – \$950

Comprehensive Review processes are expected to take three weeks to complete, during which time an inter-departmental meeting will be held with the applicant. The Comprehensive Review will generally include representatives from Planning, Public Works, Fire and Police. Other departments may be included as needed, depending on project needs.

Under the old system, all Preliminary Review requests were held for distribution and discussion at the Tuesday morning Implementation Staff Meetings. This system was problematic because it added one to seven days to the review process, and customers were complaining that Preliminary Review took too long. Staff's experience shows that about 90% of the Preliminary Review requests are simple enough to be handled by the Project Managers with occasional consultation with a Senior Planner. Under the new system, Senior Planners will immediately assign these simple Preliminary Review requests to a Project Manager for turn around in five working days. The remaining 10% deemed to be complex or have learning value would be held for the larger group discussion on Tuesdays. If the complex requests will sit idle, though, until being discussed at the Staff Meeting, every complex request will have anywhere from one to seven days added to the process. And these are the requests that will need the most attention and take the longest time to review.

123. Recommendation: All Preliminary Review requests should be forwarded to Project Managers the same day they are accepted for processing.

124. Recommendation: Project Managers should immediately begin the review of both simple and complex Preliminary Review requests and bring complex reviews to the next Tuesday Staff Meeting for discussion.

Preliminary Reviews are not required for any type of permit; they have always been and will continue to be held at the option of the applicant. In many jurisdictions, a preliminary review meeting is required to be held for certain levels of permits and can only be waived if the applicant or developer has extensive experience with the specific type of application in that jurisdiction. A mandatory meeting ensures that all issues are raised before complex projects are designed, but also serves the purpose of weeding out applications that are clearly not able to meet the standards, goals and policies of the jurisdiction or are not in the best interest of the community. San Jose staff raised this issue about General Plan Amendments, many of which are contrary to the basic tenets of the General Plan or otherwise inappropriate. The Department currently processes 40-50 General Plan Amendments a year, which may or may not increase now that annual amendment cycles have increased. A mandatory Preliminary

Review meeting between the applicant and Planner could provide a mechanism for turning away such proposals before the applicant and staff invests time and resources.

125. Recommendation: General Plan Amendments should be required to go through the Preliminary Review Process.

Many General Plan Amendments are being proposed for the purpose of converting industrial land for the development of housing. The cumulative impact of these decisions is affecting the City's ability to do long range planning while providing for economic development and housing, and a more comprehensive review of these proposals is warranted.

126. Recommendation: When General Plan Amendments involve the conversion of industrial land for housing, Planning, Housing and Economic Development staff should be involved in the Preliminary Review Process.

One of the staff suggested providing a service called a Property Profile Report, which would give customers a complete profile of the property (zoning, General Plan Designation, flood zones, environmental facts) from the GIS system. The City of San Diego offers such a service, which is called a Zoning Information Request. This is a free service that can be ordered at the Permit Center or online through the Development Services Web site. San Jose might consider offering a Property Profile Report as part of its Preliminary Review Process, as it is assumed that staff will begin such a review by gathering exactly this type of information.

127. Recommendation: The Department might consider providing customers with a Property Profile Report as part of the Preliminary Review Process and as an independent service that could be ordered at the Public Information Counter or online.

Concurrent Processing

The Zoning Ordinance allows for the concurrent filing and processing of permit applications with rezonings, prezonings, annexations and other types of development permits. Two specific recommendations from the Mayor's Housing Production Team were #26, to combine the PD Zoning, PD Permit and Tentative Map processes, and #60, to promote concurrent processing of General Plan, PD Zoning, PD Permit and Tentative Map processes. According to staff, both of these recommendations have been followed through and were reported to City Council in memorandums in July and August 2001.

While staff encourages developers to submit these actions concurrently and commonly gets concurrent permit and tentative map submittals, most developers do not take advantage of the opportunity to submit concurrent zoning and permit requests or plan amendments with permit requests. Developers typically don't think it's worth spending the resources on permit submittals before Council acts on the rezoning or amendment request and the status and conditions of approval are known and the appeal period has expired without protest. This seems to be working and, as long as staff makes developers aware of the opportunity and risks and encourages concurrent submittals, we believe the Mayor's Housing Production Team recommendations have been satisfied.

Intake and Assignment of New Project Files

The intake, initial processing and file set-up functions take a minimum of two days to complete; thus, applications received up through 2:00 p.m. on a Friday will be given to the Project Managers the following Tuesday. If an application is received after 2:00 on Friday it is held over one week. At times, Project Managers will be on the lookout for a particular application and will track the file down before the Tuesday meeting. Otherwise, they get their files at the staff meeting.

Some of the Project Managers expressed wanting to have their files earlier than that for three reasons: 1) they can become familiar with the project before attending the Tuesday meeting to discuss it; 2) referrals can be confirmed and, when needed, additional referrals can be sent out the first week; and 3) it would give them an extra few days to begin the review and get the 30-Day Letter out on time. There does not appear to be an issue with files that have been accepted later in the week, say between Wednesday and Friday at 2:00, as those will go to the Project Managers anywhere from two to four working days after submittal. But projects accepted after 2:00 on Friday up through Tuesday will not reach Project Managers for another five to seven working days. And, according to the Project Managers, they sometimes receive their files 2-3 weeks into the application process during times of high development activity. This may be one reason why 30-Day Letter timelines have been so poor.

We typically like to see new project files given to the Project Managers two or three days after they are submitted. The Planning Division has established a good system, though, for assigning and discussing new projects and, under these circumstances, we think that seven working days is OK, but should not be exceeded. We also think that Project Managers who feel they will have time to begin their file review should be able to get assignments earlier. The only concern management had with this system was that Project Managers needed to be responsible for remembering to bring their new files to the Tuesday meetings for discussion.

128. Recommendation: Project Managers should be able to receive new project files before the Tuesday Staff Meeting when they have time to

immediately begin their review, but should be held accountable for remembering to bring these new files to the meeting for discussion.

The Planning Technicians identify the departments and outside agencies that need to be notified of the pending application for review and comment. This task appears on the Technician's To-Do list on the AMANDA system and needs to be completed soon after application intake. Project Managers have the opportunity to request additional referrals once they begin to review the project file, but this is sometimes a week or two into the process. Project Managers have commented that the Planning Technicians are generally very good at their jobs, but at times, referrals have gone out to parties who didn't really need notice and additional parties should have been, but weren't, sent notification. This may simply be a training issue.

129. Recommendation: The Planning Technicians should receive additional training on sending out referrals.

Special Handling

Projects meeting certain criteria, generally related to affordable housing, economic development or the large scale provision of jobs, can be determined by the Principal Planners and Deputy Directors as warranting Special Handling. These projects are flagged in the AMANDA system and a memorandum is sent to specific departments, offices and agencies as notification of the project and its handling status. The Planning Technicians are responsible for flagging the files in AMANDA, but this isn't always being done. And the Project Managers are responsible for preparing the memo to notify other departments of a Special Handling project, but this, also, isn't always being done. There was confusion among the Planners as to whether they even knew that memos had to be sent, or whether they weren't being sent because it wasn't flagged in the system and they didn't know it was a Special Handling project.

130. Recommendation: Planning Technicians must flag every Special Handling file in the AMANDA system and Project Managers must send the Special Handling memo to all appropriate parties.

Public Outreach

There is a desire by some to have more, or earlier, citizen involvement in the planning process. Others feel that the Public Outreach Policy is over ambitious and makes even small projects controversial. While one Planner believes that the City is very "inclusive" in its public outreach and responds well to the public's concerns when possible, another commented that the public only gets involved on a project-by-project basis and often not until after all of the major decisions have already been

made. This “reactive” outreach makes the process more contentious and time consuming, rather than cooperative. Staff is torn between the seemingly conflicting mandates to process permits quickly, but involve everyone in the process. There is a need to do both, and both can be accomplished better if the outreach program shifts and becomes more proactive.

The City Council adopted a Public Outreach Policy in 1999 for the purpose of encouraging early and frequent communication, and identified specific means of outreach for large and controversial projects. Council gives staff some flexibility, though, in determining which means of outreach are appropriate for standard development projects. Given the choice, most will opt for a reduced level of public outreach because it is perceived to save time. In the long run, however, a good public involvement program will educate the public and improve the development review process, as well as result in a better-built community. Public Involvement efforts need to be proactive and include a higher level of early communication for both controversial and standard development projects.

One request in particular was that sites be posted when a project application has been accepted for processing. The Public Outreach Policy defines proposals according to size or level of controversy and sets forth a matrix of public outreach methods appropriate for each project level. Although not listed on the matrix, provision 5 of the Policy speaks of on-site noticing for large and controversial projects and requires that the applicant purchase and install signs on the project site to provide information to immediate neighbors and passing citizens.

131. *Recommendation:* When accepting applications on large or controversial projects, staff should provide applicants with a copy of Council’s Public Outreach Policy 6-30 and inform them that they are responsible for posting the site according to provision 5. of the Policy document.

132. *Recommendation:* The Council Public Outreach Policy matrix should be updated to show that on-site noticing is required for large or controversial projects.

Neighborhood associations used to be noticed of projects through the public hearing notice process; but there is no longer a practice of providing such notice. Public notice should always be provided to neighborhood associations, but is provided somewhere around ten days before the first hearing and is much too late in the process to be effective as the only form of notice. Neighborhood associations also need to be notified of projects early on, when applications are filed with the Planning Division. According to staff, though, early notice has not been sent to neighborhood associations for many years. The Neighborhood Development Center (NDC) was responsible for maintaining a list of neighborhood organizations, but the data was not

kept up-to-date and became somewhat unreliable; so the practice was discontinued. We are surprised that neighborhood associations are not getting any formal notice of projects, a standard procedure in most committees.

The Planning Division Process Improvement Team is currently working with the NDC to create a comprehensive and up-to-date database, and once the database is complete, the plan is to resume the practice of notifying neighborhood associations when project applications are filed. The Planning Division SNI/Special Projects team has good neighborhood information for the SNI areas, but that only accounts for 25-30% of the City's neighborhoods. Nevertheless, this effort needs to be a higher priority and needs to be coordinated with SNI and their data incorporated.

133. *Recommendation:* Neighborhood associations should be on the project referral lists and be notified of all new project applications filed in their neighborhoods. Public hearing notices should also be sent to neighborhood associations, when applicable.

134. *Recommendation:* The effort to develop a comprehensive and up-to-date database of neighborhood associations should be a higher priority and should be coordinated with the SNI/Special Projects staff to incorporate their existing neighborhood data.

Community meetings are a good way of providing early notice to neighbors about upcoming projects. The Public Outreach Policy states that “the applicant / representatives...should plan on conducting the meeting unless staff has agreed to other arrangements,” and recommends “that the community meeting be held as early as possible in the process.” The Project Managers attend community meetings for many of their projects, but typically the meeting is held a few weeks or more after the application is submitted for processing. Unless the community meeting is held at the conceptual stage, the public typically sees a presentation of what has been decided by the architects, developers and planning staff and has no real opportunity to contribute to the project. Sometimes the only input the public has is as an opponent at the public hearing or appeal level. This is contrary to the purpose and discourages public involvement. A successful public outreach program can result in a better-built community, and some of the most successful programs we've seen require that the developers meet with the community at the conceptual stage, before all of the details of a project have been decided and an application filed.

135. *Recommendation:* The Council Public Outreach Policy matrix should be updated to show that early community meetings are required for large or controversial projects. Such meetings should be held at the conceptual stage, before the project details have been decided and before an application is filed with the City.

136. Recommendation: The Preliminary Review Process should include a written evaluation by the Project Manager setting forth the level of public outreach appropriate and required for every project.

137. Recommendation: The application submittal packet should include documentation verifying that the applicant has complied with any early public outreach requirements, such as community meetings and on-site posting.

Comments and Conditions from All Divisions

The lack of coordination between development divisions makes completing the planning permit process difficult. A large part of the problem exists with completeness review and conditioning projects, which could be much more efficient if all of the various divisions (including Planning) had their comments ready by the Thursday Project Review meeting. While most have their comments ready on time, there are occasions where someone is not prepared, which makes it difficult for the group to determine whether the application is complete and for the Project Manager to proceed with the 30-Day Letter. Project review occurs two weeks after the application is submitted and referrals have been sent out, which is ample time to complete an evaluation of the project.

138. Recommendation: All of the development divisions, including Planning, must have their comments ready so that application completeness can be determined at the Thursday Project Review Meeting.

One exception to having comments ready at the Thursday Project Review Meeting is that Public Works Development Services Division is expected to have preliminary comments at the Project Review meeting, but needs more time to prepare final comments. The standard is to have Public Works' comments to the Project Managers in final memo format by the third week of process review, but this does not always happen. An END-CSA Performance Measure has set the 2002-2007 goal of having 75% of all Public Works' final memos to the Project Managers within three weeks, which is down from the END-CSA 2001-2002 estimate of 81%. This goal is too low and we recommended 95% in the section on the Investment Strategy and Business Plan. Apparently one of the difficulties in meeting this goal has been that the two divisions have not established a clear process or timeline for notifying Development Services of when the final memos must be submitted to planning.

139. Recommendation: The Planning Division managers should meet with Public Works to lay out a process for notifying Development Services

and to establish a definite timeline for finalizing Public Works memos to meet or exceed the END-CSA Performance Measure 95% of the time.

The Fire Department's input on planning projects is often general or vague and contains unnecessary boilerplate language. Staff tells us that there have been several instances of major fire life/safety issues affecting the basic site layout and building design that were not caught until the Building Permit stage. This problem was due in part to a significant and long-standing under-staffing of the Fire Department's project review function and some improvement has been seen lately. Nevertheless, the two divisions need to develop specific standards that will guide the Fire Department in making more project-specific comments and completing a more thorough review at the planning permit stage.

140. *Recommendation:* Specific standards need to be developed to ensure that the Fire Department conducts a thorough review of planning projects and provides project-specific comments to the Project Managers.

Different divisions use different styles of language and different word processing programs in preparing their comments and conditions. The Project Managers typically need to retype all of the other divisions' memos so that the wording and format is appropriate for their permits. These memos need to be consistent among divisions so that the Project Managers can simply merge the comments and conditions into the permit instead of having to retype them.

141. *Recommendation:* All comments and conditions should be typed in standard MS Word format in exactly the words and style of language that needs to appear on the planning permit. The Planning Division needs to develop a template and standard language for other divisions to use in preparing comments and conditions.

Another difficulty is the lack of continuum across the sections of divisions involved in project review. While each division is focused and works proactively to move development applications along within their groups, interdepartmental coordination needs improvement. Part of the problem could be resolved if the staff had a better understanding of each others' functions and policies. For example, Public Works doesn't always seem to have a handle on basic planning concepts, like the difference between a rezoning and a land-use permit, and planners are not engineers. There may be some benefit to having cross training, job shadowing, or one-day crash courses for engineers to learn about planning processes and planners to learn about engineering processes. The development review process would also improve if planners went out on Code Enforcement and Building Inspections more frequently, and got out in the

field to see the effects of the policies they implement and the recommendations they make.

142. Recommendation: The Department should develop ways to improve staff's understanding of each of the different development functions and processes through cross training, job shadowing, and short training sessions.

143. Recommendation: Planners need to spend some time in the field with Code Enforcement and the Building Inspectors to better understand the outcome of planning policies and recommendations.

30-Day Letter and Follow-Up

One of the END CSA Performance Measures is to have 90% of the Planning Department's initial comments mailed within 30 days. In our discussion about Setting the Strategic Direction and Performance Standards, we felt that this standard was too low and recommended 95%. The Planning Division is striving to reach the END CSA goal and is making headway in improving its 30-Day Letter timelines. The 95% 30-Day Letter goal is important and must continue to be a priority. Some recommendations we make below will help by setting external deadlines and providing staff with policies for how to deal with unresponsiveness.

144. Recommendation: 95% of all 30-Day Letters must be mailed within 30 days of the day a permit application is accepted for processing.

We reviewed the Planning Division's 30-Day Letter template and think that it is excellent. One of the staff suggested that each 30-Day Letter include a tentative schedule for the applicant that provides a roadmap to a public hearing as well as the steps needed to complete the entitlement process. The Letter does include a tentative hearing date and refers to an attached timeline, although we did not review the attachment. The only suggestions we have for the 30-Day Letter template are as follows.

The last page of the 30-Day Letter refers to the old day (Friday) and year (1999) for Project Review.

145. Recommendation: The 30-Day Letter template should be updated to reflect the current Project Review day and year.

The telephone number for contacting the Project Manager is the Planning Division's main telephone number.

146. Recommendation: The 30-Day Letter should include the Project Manager’s direct telephone number and email address in the body and under the signature line.

After the 30-Day Letter goes out, a significant amount of time can go by without a response from the applicant and staff feels like they have no control over this part of the process, yet are held accountable for overall timelines. Process timelines will improve if applicants are also held accountable. Two measures seem to be particularly helpful in expediting applicant response times.

The 30-Day Letter template tells applicants that their “*timely response will further expedite the process...*” and gives them a specific date by which to submit information in order to the project to be scheduled for the tentative hearing date. But the letter does not clearly tell applicants that their delays will extend the processing timeline and may result in rescheduling the public hearing. In a discussion with management about this issue, the consensus was that the Department has not always done a good job of holding the applicant accountable by either rescheduling the hearing (notices have already gone out and rescheduling is not that simple), or bringing the application to the hearing with a recommendation for denial when needed information has not been provided in a timely manner. More typically, an issue is dropped or a requirement reduced in order to get the application to hearing on time. These are policy decisions that are beyond the scope of our review; but a more firm explanation of the consequences of delays may prompt better response times by applicants.

147. Recommendation: The 30-Day Letter should clearly explain to applicants that delays in providing needed information will extend processing timelines accordingly, and may result in denial of the application.

If the property owner is not the same party as the applicant, the owner may not be aware that it is their representative, and not the City, who isn’t performing. By copying the property owner(s) on all requests for information, all parties become more accountable and response times typically improve.

148. Recommendation: A copy of the 30-Day Letter and any subsequent requests for a response should also be mailed to the property owner(s) if different from the applicant.

The San Jose Zoning Ordinance is silent on how staff is to proceed if there is no response to a request for more information. The Ordinance does state that the Director, Planning Commission or Council can deny an application on the grounds that the information provided is inadequate to demonstrate that it should be approved.

In order to enforce this provision, the 30-Day Letter should state that the application, as submitted, does not meet the approval criteria and, unless specific additional information is received by the determined response date, will be subject to denial. Even then, staff should send a second request that is the same as an “inactive file letter” to alert the applicant that a continued lack of response will result in denial. This issue relates to the earlier discussion about inactive files and the need for staff to have a way to get them off their desks. If there is a clear policy giving staff the authority to be proactive when response timelines are not met, processing timelines will improve and files will not lie dormant for six months.

149. Recommendation: The Department needs to set a clear policy for how staff is to proceed when an applicant does not respond to a request for information or action by the deadline set forth in the 30-Day Letter.

Condition Compliance -- Project Conformance

Council recently approved a Project Conformance position to be certain that what they approve gets built. This FTE is divided among the Project Managers, who coordinate with the Building Division to review conditions. It is an integrated approach that the Department is trying to get underway, but is still in the planning stages. AMANDA is being programmed to automatically flag the Project Manager’s “to-do” list to alert them that the plans have arrived, and Project Managers will be responsible for going down to Building to check the plans for conformance. When we talked with the staff about project conformance, no one really knew what was going on or how it was going to work, yet the work was beginning to show up on staff’s desks. Recognizing that this process is still in the pilot stage, many new processes or ideas have been implemented without the necessary forethought or training. This creates problems with policies and procedures down the line and is a real source of frustration for staff.

150. Recommendation: The Department needs to establish a clear process, document procedures and train staff before implementing the new Project Conformance/Condition Compliance review process.

Inactive Project Files

The Senior Planners estimate that 40-50% of the Project Managers’ files are inactive because the applicant or another party has not followed through on a request for information or action. These files just sit idle, yet are still on the clock as permits in process, and both the Planning and the Redevelopment staff expressed a desire to have a better system for terminating them. At times, inactive letters have been sent to applicants, but according to staff, this is the exception rather than the rule and is typically only done at the supervisors’ prompting. We were provided with one sample

“inactive file” letter, which was sent to an applicant in 1999. With such heavy workloads, inactive files are a low priority. Clear policies need to be set to officially render files as “inactive,” notify applicants, and terminate those that are not going to move forward.

151. Recommendation: The City should adopt a policy to officially render planning projects “inactive” after six months of dormancy, at which time staff should notify applicants that, unless files are reinstated or withdrawn, they will be processed for denial.

152. Recommendation: The process of terminating inactive project files should be a routine project management function carried out by all of the Planners and monitored by their supervisors.

With the newly installed AMANDA system, there should be a simple means of monitoring and flagging inactive files and automatically generating a standardized inactive file letter to be mailed to the applicant. Once a standard template is created, staff should only need to enter information about the applicant, subject property and project number, and specify the application date, last date of activity, and date by which the application needs to be withdrawn or will be processed for denial, which should be 30 days after the date on the inactive file letter.

153. Recommendation: The AMANDA system should be programmed to flag all project files that have been inactive for six months and automatically generate a standardized inactive file letter for customization by staff.

The denial of an inactive file is currently done through the public hearing process. If applicants are sent a letter after six months of inactivity, one of two things are likely to happen. Either the applicant will contact the City to reinstate or withdraw the application, or there will be no response. If the applicant wishes to keep the application open, it should be kept open for another six months; and then a second, and final, inactive letter should be sent if there is no further activity. If there is no response to the either inactive letter within 30 days, it is safe to assume that the applicant is no longer interested in the project and the application should be denied. These denials should be administrative, or at a maximum, placed on the consent agenda for a Director’s Hearing.

154. Recommendation: If an applicant does not respond or does not reactivate or withdraw an application within 30 days after an inactive file letter is sent, the application should be denied through an administrative process.

The backlog of inactive files in both the Planning Division and Redevelopment Agency needs to be purged as soon as possible. This might be a project that Planning Technicians or clerical staff can assist with, but needs to be put on a work program for completion.

155. Recommendation: Management should designate staff and a set a timeline to clear the backlog of inactive project files so that all inactive files are either reinstated or withdrawn by the applicant, or denied.

The City should adopt a formal policy for dealing with inactive project files and should include it in the Administration and Permits section of the Zoning Ordinance. Zoning Ordinance, Chapter 20.100.170 appears to be the appropriate place to deal with inactive files, as it is entitled “Amendment or Withdrawal of Applications.” But the text of .170 only really refers to application amendments. The text should be amended to include policies for both withdrawals and inactive files, whether in subsection .170 or in a new subsection.

156. Recommendation: The Zoning Ordinance should be amended to reflect clear policies on dealing with withdrawn and inactive project files.

Review Authority

The Department already processes the majority of its planning permits at the staff or Director’s level rather than having them go to the Planning Commission or City Council. The ability to approve many permits through weekly Director’s Hearings expedites approvals. A number of additional opportunities exist for further streamlining the permit process and expediting permits by changing the level of review or by separating simple from complex permits within the same category. Candidates for this type of change are discussed below.

The authority for approving planning permits is summarized in Table 33 below. The current process is shown in regular text and recommended changes are shown in bold. Other symbols used in the table are explained in the KEY below the table. The numbers to the left of permit categories correspond to the subsequent paragraphs of text where recommendations are discussed in detail.

**Table 33
Review Authority**

	Type Of Permit	Director	Historic Landmark Commission	Planning Commission	City Council
	Adjustments	X			
	Administrative Permit	X			
	Certificate of Compliance	X			
	Lot Combining	X			
	Lot Line Adjustment	X			
	Sidewalk Caf?	X			
	Negative Declaration	X		A/H/X	
	Planned Development Amendment	X		A/H/X	
	Site Development Amendment	X		A/H/X	
1	[Tree Removal Permit]	[X]		[A/H/X]	
	Tree Removal Permit				
	- Level 1: Administrative	Ø			
	- Level 2: Standard Process	X		A/H/X	
	Tentative Map in Conventional Subdivision	X			A/H/X
	Historic Preservation	H/X	R		
2	[Reasonable Accommodation]	[X, A/H/X]		[A/H/X]	
	Reasonable Accommodation	X		A/H/X	
3	[Planned Development]	[H/X]		[A/H/X]	
	Planned Development Permit and Tentative Map, if any				
	- Level 1: Administrative	Ø			
	- Level 2: Director's Hearing	H/X		A/H/X	
3	[Site Development Permit]	[H/X]		[A/H/X]	
	Site Development Permit				
	- Level 1: Administrative	Ø			
	- Level 2: Director's Hearing	H/X		A/H/X	
3	[Special Use Permit / Renewal]	[H/X]		[A/H/X]	
	Special Use Permit / Renewal				
	- Level 1: Administrative	Ø			
	- Level 2: Director's Hearing	H/X		A/H/X	
	Variance/ Exception	H/X		A/H/X	
	Liquor License Exception				
	- No new CUP required	H/X		A/H/X	A/H/X
	- New CUP required	R		H/X	A/H/X
	Environmental Impact Report	R		H/X	A/H/X
3	[Conditional Use Permit /Renewal]	[R]		[H/X]	[A/H/X]
	Conditional Use Permit / Renewal				
	- Level 1: Administrative	Ø			
	- Level 2: Director's Hearing	ØH/XØ		ØA/H/XØ	
	- Level 3: Planning Commission Hearing	R		H/X	A/H/X

Review Authority continued

Type Of Permit	Director	Historic Landmark Commission	Planning Commission	City Council
Historic Landmark Designation		R/H/R		H/X
Rezoning and Annexation	R		H/R	H/X
General Plan Amendments	R		H/R	H/X
Zoning				
- Conforming Process	R			H/X
- Regular Process and Planned Development District	R		H/R	H/X
Zoning Protest	R			H/X
Single Family House Permit				
- Level 1: Administrative	X			
- Level 2: Director's Hearing	H/X		A/H/X	
4 - [Level 3: Council Hearing]	[R]		[H/R]	[H/X]

KEY: R = Current Level - Review and Recommend
 A = Current Appeal Rights
 [X] Change Recommended
 X = Current Approval Authority

H = Public Hearing is Held
 [X] = Eliminate
 ÖÓ = Recommended New Level

Tree Removal Permit Process (See #1 on Table 33)

Tree Removal Permits are the highest volume type of permit processed by the Plan Implementation Division. The Department reports processing 180 Tree Removal Permits in 2001 and data from the first 24 weeks of 2002 indicates that 126 might be processed this year. Until recently, Tree Removal Permits were processed separately from related development proposals. Now, a permit to remove trees with, and as a consequence of, development is reviewed as a concurrent process. We agree with this change. The Tree Removal Permit process could be further streamlined through the creation of an administrative process where the City Arborist would approve the removal of blighted trees, trees that obstruct overhead wires, or other dangerous trees that should be removed for purposes other than development.

157. Recommendation: Tree Removal Permits requesting the removal of blighted, obstructing or dangerous trees and not associated with development should be administratively processed by the City Arborist.

Reasonable Accommodation Process (See #2 on Table 33)

San Jose has established a process to provide reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities needing housing. Staff calls the San Jose process “almost unique” and thinks that it should be eliminated or significantly revised.

The Reasonable Accommodation Guidelines set forth by City Council in 1998 establish clear standards for the review of housing for the disabled. The initial review is an administrative decision by the Director. Notification of the Director’s decision is sent to adjacent property owners who can, and generally do, request a Director’s Hearing as an appeal of the decision. Decisions made at the Director’s Hearing can

again be appealed to the Planning Commission, where a second public hearing is held. Although neighbors are invited to air their concerns about Reasonable Accommodation Requests, this is not a process for a permit and conditions cannot be placed on the requests; it is simply an administrative process to ensure that the request meets specific guidelines set forth by Council. The City wants to give citizens an opportunity to participate; yet the process is not useful and is frustrating to those who try and participate, but are powerless to make a difference. And these reviews require a full staff report and the investment of many hours of staff time with no real public benefit.

158. *Recommendation:* Reasonable Accommodation Requests should be administrative decisions by the Director. Appeals should be heard by the Planning Commission only, and should only be accepted when an appellant has valid grounds for the appeal specific to the review standards established by City Council in the Reasonable Accommodation Guidelines.

Multi-Level Permit Types (See #3 on Table 33)

Many types of permits can range between simple and complex depending on the project, yet are processed in the same manner regardless of whether the project is for a duplex or an industrial campus. We reviewed the Department's fee study data and found staff times for seven types of permits divided by categories of minor, average and complex: Planned Development Zonings, Planned Development Permits, Site Development Permits, Conditional Use Permits, Special Use Permits, Single Family House Permits and Tentative Maps in Planned Development Zoning Districts (PT). Of the seven, only Single Family House permits are processed differently based on the level of complexity or project scope. Other permit types with multiple levels of complexity will be expedited if divided into two or three levels and reviewed and processed accordingly. For example, small-scale Site Development applications that meet or exceed standards and guidelines should be able to be approved administratively.

Those permits marked with #3 on Table 33 are our recommendations for using a multiple level review structure. There may be other permits for which different levels of review are appropriate and, if so, the Department should include those when implementing this recommendation.

159. *Recommendation:* Permits that routinely range from being simple to complex should be divided into two or three levels and reviewed and processed accordingly. Thresholds for determining the level of review, documentation, and decision for multiple level permit types should be determined by the Director and Plan Implementation Deputy Director, and approved by City Council.

Single-Family House Permits (See #4 on Table 33)

A single-family house permit is required when proposed construction or a remodel exceeds certain thresholds regarding height or Floor Area Ratio (F.A.R.), or the house or site has historic significance. There are three possible levels of review: administrative, Director's Hearing, or public hearing before both the Planning Commission and City Council. It is clear that City Council needs to respond to the public's concern about homes being built out of scale for established residential neighborhoods or the visibility of massive homes in open areas. But this process accomplishes very little for the amount of work required, particularly when the review has to go through both the Planning Commission and City Council. There are no guidelines or restrictions that make a real difference in how individual homes are designed and built, and the changes that staff can require are minimal. And single-family house review is triggered even for homes built within the development standards, as City Council approval is required for houses exceeding 30 feet in height when the Zoning Ordinance allows heights up to 35 feet in all of the single-family residential districts.

The discretionary single-family house review process is an expensive and cumbersome process. It also has not proved to be effective in promoting good design, even though it may reduce the size of structures. While size is an important issue, how these structures are integrated into existing neighborhoods is being missed. Single-family house review needs to be narrowed to specific neighborhoods in which design and preservation are important and, for those areas, the City needs to adopt specific design guidelines and review standards. Once the standards are in place, the detailed review should be conducted at one or two levels with straightforward proposals going through administrative review and those that exceed established thresholds being decided at a Director's Hearing. Appeals would only be to the Planning Commission, and not to City Council, for whom this level of detail is not appropriate.

160. Recommendation: Single-Family House Permits should only be required in specific neighborhoods or areas where design and preservation are important.

161. Recommendation: The City should develop and adopt specific design guidelines and review standards for those areas where Single-Family House Permits are required.

162. Recommendation: Single-Family House Permits should be approved administratively or at a Director's Hearing.

Other process improvements not specific to Table 33 are as follows.

Director's Hearings

According to staff, 90% of the permits reviewed at the Director's Hearings have been worked out ahead of time and are non-controversial. It is typically only staff and the applicant who attend the hearing and ten Planners have to sit and wait while each item is read into the record. A considerable amount of time can be saved by placing non-controversial items on a consent agenda, only calling those items with opposition or issues to the level of a public hearing.

163. Recommendation: A consent agenda should be created for non-controversial items required to be reviewed at the Director's Hearing level.

Annexations

The Planning Division staff does not have needed expertise in processing Annexations. Here are comments written by one of the Project Managers:

"We used to have specialist for Annexations. When the decision was made five years ago to spread responsibility for this complex process out to all processing staff, procedures to guide the process were inadequate. Since then, new legislation has resulted in significant changes to the process. Everyone asked to handle an annexation is faced with a research project to figure out how the process works. It is extremely inefficient and results in a high percentage of errors and documents returned from City Clerk and County repeatedly. Unofficial efforts to develop procedures have resulted in draft documents, but there has been no process for getting such efforts reviewed and blessed by the Department."

One of the Planner I/II's assigned to the Process Improvement Team has been researching changes in Annexation statute and is in the process of updating the Department's Annexation procedures and Resolutions. The Annexation process is "getting polished day by day," but is not complete or approved by the Department. This project needs to be completed. We counted seven Annexation applications assigned to five different Project Managers in the first 24 weeks of this year, and there are no guidelines in place by which to process them. Annexations are highly specialized; they are subject to statutory changes and require coordination with LAFCO. Thus, Annexations should not be processed by all Project Managers, but by a specialist. The Planner I/II who is completing the Annexation research could be a good candidate as the department's specialist, but that should be determined by the Plan Implementation managers.

164. Recommendation: The update of the Annexation procedures and Resolutions needs to be completed and approved by the Department, and the Plan Implementation Deputy Director and Principal Planners should

designate a Planner as the Department’s Annexation specialist, who will process all future Annexation requests according to the new procedures.

General Plan Amendments

The General Plan Team typically processes General Plan Amendments and the District Project Managers process development permits. As discussed in detail in another section of this report, many of the General Plan Amendments are being requested to facilitate development and will be followed by (if not filed concurrently with) development permit applications. We have the same question as some of the staff, which is “under these circumstances, why aren’t the Project Managers processing both the Plan Amendment and the development permit?” Perhaps one reason to have the District Project Managers process both applications is that the General Plan Team will have more time to do the long-range planning, which is a challenge right now. This is an area management needs to work through, but regardless of whether it is the General Plan Team or the Project Managers who process these types of applications, a few key issues need to be noted.

When General Plan Amendments are a precursor to development, both the General Plan Team and the District Project Manager need to be involved in the process. The General Plan Team must be able to monitor plan amendments for their cumulative impact and overall effect on the goals and policies of the General Plan. Equally as important, the Project Managers need to be aware of development trends and projects in their neighborhoods. From the developer’s standpoint, the process should be as seamless and consistent as possible, even if the applications are not filed concurrently.

165. Recommendation: When a General Plan Amendment is filed concurrently with, or will be followed by a development permit, a member of the General Plan staff and the District Project Manager should act as a team to jointly oversee the Plan Amendment and development permit process. The team should work closely together on the process with the same Planner processing both permits and being the lead and a point-person for the developer, while the other is closely involved in an advisory capacity.

Planned Development Zonings

The City’s reliance on the Planned Development Zoning process is extreme and inappropriate, and places an enormous amount of work on the staff unnecessarily. Because the Zoning Ordinance is not specific enough to allow for higher densities and mixed-use developments, an enormous amount of time and money is being spent processing Planned Development Zonings to rezone property to achieve the type of development the City is really trying to encourage. Even 3-4 unit residential

developments and small infill projects are being approved through the six-month rezoning process, which requires City Council approval. The lack of ability to take these rezonings to a lower level of review makes them seem more important or onerous than they really are and adds two months to the processing time; and City Council is placed in a detail-reviewing role more appropriate for staff. This process also creates a record-keeping nightmare, as the standards approved with each Planned Development are different and tracking what has been approved is difficult and time consuming for staff.

Many of these projects would be able to be moved quickly if the Zoning Ordinance was amended. Throughout the recent Zoning Ordinance update, the Department struggled to identify politically feasible ways to wean City Council, Planning Commission and the community off of this reliance, but found little they considered feasible. One of the managers suggested that the City target 5-6 frequent housing types (mixed use, Neighborhood Business District, transit-oriented, downtown, court homes, small-lot single family) and create codes that set those parameters. Then, embark on a proactive program to rezone the transit corridors and districts so that future development within the parameters could be approved through a Director's Hearing. However it is accomplished, amending the Zoning Ordinance to reduce the number of Planned Development Zonings is the most significant streamlining opportunity available to the City.

166. *Recommendation:* The Zoning Ordinance must be amended as needed to reduce the number of Planned Development Zonings being processed to achieve desirable development projects.

There is a City Council-initiated rezoning program that is designed to bring zoning into conformance with General Plan, but the program has not been pursued for several years due to budget. By resuming this process, the Department could eliminate numerous inconsistencies between the Zoning Ordinance and General Plan that create confusion for the public and time-consuming rezonings for developers.

167. *Recommendation:* Use of the City Council-initiated rezoning program to bring zoning into conformance with the General Plan should be resumed.

Wireless Communications Facilities

Wireless Communications Facilities applications for monopoles or antennas located in residential zoning districts are currently required to go through a Conditional Use Permit process that involves a public hearing before the Planning Commission. This is overkill for what should be a routine review against specific standards. City Council adopted a Land Use Policy for Wireless Communications Facilities in 1991, when cell

sites were a relatively new issue for the public to deal with. Times have changed, and Council anticipated this change in a Future Considerations provision where the Planning Commission was asked to review the Policy periodically to determine its adequacy. While these sites still need to be regulated, the review should be administrative or, at a maximum, conducted through a Director's Hearing with an opportunity to appeal to the Planning Commission.

168. Recommendation: Wireless Communications Facilities in residential zoning districts should be reviewed at the Director's Hearing level with an opportunity for appeal to the Planning Commission.

K. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Staff from the Planning Division, the Redevelopment Agency and several CEQA consulting firms all provided comments about the City's Environmental Review process. We heard from all sources that some, but not many, of the staff working on environmental review have sufficient experience and are qualified to do the work. One consultant commented that staff's knowledge was "outdated," and both the Planning staff and CEQA consultants commented that the consultants spend a lot of time in the "educational mode," advising staff and providing much-needed CEQA expertise. As one consulting firm put it, up until four or five years ago, San Jose had the best CEQA process of any city around. The Department lost a lot of CEQA expertise through recent turnovers and changes in administration.

CEQA is a sprawling statute and set of regulations that is very difficult to keep up with and requires high-level expertise. A Principal Planner position was designated to oversee the Environmental Review process, but the position was not filled and has since been shifted to another function. One of the Deputy Planning Directors and a Principal Planner have extensive CEQA experience, but neither directly oversees the CEQA review processes or staff. Currently, many of the staff in the Planning Division Environmental Review section are planners and not necessarily CEQA experts. In a separate discussion about who should lead the CEQA process for Redevelopment Agency projects, it has been recommended that the Planning Division retain the lead, but that the Planning Division function needed to be strengthened.

Given the importance of CEQA, the relationship with the Redevelopment Agency, the complexity of state regulation and court interpretations, we believe it is essential to strengthen the Planning Division's CEQA efforts.

169. Recommendation: The Planning Division should strengthen its CEQA section and processes and consider if this function requires a Principle Planner expert.

Order specific recommendations to strengthen the CEQA process as described below.

Training

Many of the Planning Division staff expressed a desire for more CEQA and NEPA training. As one member of staff put it, “we need real, in-depth training in how to do detailed environmental analysis, not just rudimentary the training we’ve received through CEQA update classes.” Comments we received from a number of sources indicate that staff involved in environmental review in both Planning and Redevelopment would benefit from more training.

170. Recommendation: Planning and Redevelopment staff involved with environmental review needs expert, in-depth training in how to do detailed environmental analysis.

We also received comments that both the Planning Division and Redevelopment Agency staffs need to have a better understanding of the goals of environmental review and training in specific areas. Some suggestions are as follows:

- ✍ Staff needs to understand their role and the goal of the environmental process.
- ✍ They need to be trained to know how to ask the right questions.
- ✍ Staff should follow prescribed procedure and act within the scope of their authority and not try to be too creative or “win awards.”
- ✍ There is a lack of appreciation for the budgets that are necessary to undertake CEQA review of projects that are as big or as controversial as some being proposed.
- ✍ Make sure that the desires for analytical scope and budget are fully reflected in the contracts signed with consultants.
- ✍ Emphasize that they would get a better response to RFQ’s and RFP’s if/when they make the experience less frustrating for consultants.
- ✍ Instead of looking at CEQA as an opportunity, it’s an obstacle. It should be a process that is there to help them. If you pursue it as an impediment, you make it harder and end up with a flawed document.
- ✍ The environmental staff is not willing to review documents until the whole packet is ready and all reports are in. Maybe they could be providing more assistance for technical review early on and not waiting for a final packet.

171. Recommendation: Planning and Redevelopment staff should specifically be trained to understand their roles in achieving the goals of environmental review within the budget, timelines and scope of authority for each project.

Process Improvements

The Process Improvement Team matrix of Planning Work Commitments shows three CEQA Streamlining Efforts, two of which require amendments to the CEQA Guidelines and the third requires a Code revision.

The amendments to the CEQA Guidelines were recommended by the Mayor's Housing Production Team and would allow exemptions for infill housing and for conforming Planned Development infill projects on no more than 5 acres. Staff forwarded its recommendations for making the revisions to City Council in May.

172. Recommendation: City Council should proceed with adoption of amendments to the CEQA Guidelines to increase projects exempt from CEQA.

The Planning Division has drafted an ordinance amending the Zoning Ordinance to eliminate the Negative Declaration Protest process. This process creates delays to allow for special hearings to be set and requires major staff work, and costs are not recoverable at a fee of \$50 per protest. Protests thus far have not typically brought forward new issues to compel an EIR and are primarily used to slow down the development process. Staff has discussed the amendment with the City Attorney and engaged in public outreach and anticipates City Council adoption some time in 2002.

173. Recommendation: City Council should proceed with adoption of the ordinance to eliminate the Negative Declaration Protest process.

The Environmental Senior Planner is designated to sign off on Initial Studies and Negative Declarations after the Project Managers have prepared them. Some of the Project Managers feel like this handoff delays the review process and that they may have faster turnaround times if their own supervising Senior Planners reviewed them and signed them off. On the other hand, the Environmental Review Team reports that they often don't get the documents until a day or two before they are due. No matter who reviews them, the documents need to be ready for review sooner than some apparently are. Perhaps a more important question is whether the handoff for environmental review creates a disconnect between the Project Managers and their Senior Planners. It may make it more difficult to balance priorities, but also, the Project Managers and Seniors are more familiar with the Districts and the projects than the Environmental Review Team, which is why Initial Studies and Negative Declarations are being prepared by the Project Managers and not Environmental Review. The Planning Division has an admirable goal of having an expert in Environmental Review advising the Planning Division and doing quality control of Initial Studies and Negative Declarations, and we think that this should continue. There may be an advantage, though, to having the direct supervisors sign off the environmental documents and having the Environmental Senior Planner audit 5% for

quality control. One problem with such a change would be that not all Senior Planners have the expertise to be qualified for this level of environmental review and for ensuring that all documents produced across the Division are consistent. The Planning Division could create a program to “certify” Senior Planners who have achieved the level of environmental expertise that qualifies them to sign off on Initial Studies and Negative Declarations, and then those Seniors could sign off for Project Managers.

174. Recommendation: The District Senior Planners should be certified to review and sign off on Initial Studies and Negative Declarations and the Environmental Senior Planner should audit 5% of the documents for quality control.

Many communities publish guidelines that merely regurgitate the CEQA Guidelines, yet most have unique approaches to the CEQA process. One of the CEQA consultants suggested that specific guidelines be prepared for how things are done in San Jose. There are some guidelines for noise studies and other technical reviews, but the Department could use better documents for consultants defining the standards, scope of review and formatting for technical studies and reports.

175. Recommendation: The Department should create guidelines and formatting examples specific to the San Jose CEQA process for consultants to use in preparing environmental documents and technical reports.

Coordination on Redevelopment Agency Projects

It is recommended elsewhere in this report that the Planning Division retain the lead for CEQA review on Redevelopment Agency projects. Essentially, the recommendation reflects our belief that the City should not have two staffs with CEQA expertise and that there is value in providing consistency in the way environmental reviews are handled across all City departments and functions.

Much work needs to be done, though, to mend relationships between the Planning Division and Redevelopment Agency and to impress upon both staffs the importance of each others’ jobs. Here are some of the comments we received about the relationship between the Planning Division and the Redevelopment Agency:

- ✍ The two divisions hold an historic and deeply rooted opposite view in regard to many issues and objectives.
- ✍ Need to emphasize that they both work for the same ultimate boss.
- ✍ The relationship between the two divisions is antagonistic and perhaps the saddest side of the antagonistic relationship is that good solutions are missed and better plans are not being made.

- ✍ The divisions get pitted against each other publicly instead of internally dealing with issues beforehand.
- ✍ The staff has no idea what others' priorities and responsibilities are; they have no real understanding or empathy for each other's mandates or missions.
- ✍ There's a bunch of handholding and getting the departments to buy in and defend the documents.
- ✍ When we used to have consensus, it was because the senior people built consensus. Now, it's a shoot-out.
- ✍ Both sides claim to understand each other's point of view and to be willing to compromise, but when push comes to shove, clashes occur. When there is a schism between divisions, staff of each one claims that they are the authoritative one on every issue. It's difficult to walk the very fine line between the two divisions.
- ✍ Someone has to begin building trust between Planning and Redevelopment.

This relationship suffers from a lack of leadership, cooperation and consensus building from the top down and both divisions would benefit from cross training and a higher awareness of their mutual goals. A recommendation for team building was made in the Redevelopment section of this report and should include the discussion of some of the comments and issues reflected here.

L. PLANS, POLICIES AND ORDINANCES

General Plan

The last comprehensive update of the General Plan was conducted in 1994. Staff anticipates needing to conduct the next update within a few years, but nothing has been planned or initiated by Council at this point.

Although there are no clear statutory guidelines on General Plan review, a comprehensive update of the Plan every ten years is standard in most jurisdictions. The fact that there are so many General Plan Amendments being processed in San Jose may be an indicator of the need for a major review if the General Plan is going to truly serve as the City's guiding policy document.

176. Recommendation: Staff should begin to set forth a work program and timeline for completion of a comprehensive General Plan update. Zoning Ordinance

Although the Zoning Ordinance went through a comprehensive update in February 2001, the Planning Division staff and managers had many suggestions for amendments, which we analyzed and have listed below.

The Planning Services Division Zoning Team is ideally responsible for identifying and bringing needed amendments to the Planning Commission and City Council. In reality, the Zoning Team spends 80% of their time in a reactive mode and there is no time to develop arguments for needed amendments. Since the inception of the Process Improvement Team, amendments are prioritized by management and jointly carried out by the Process Improvement Team, Zoning Team, and other staff members who have expertise in the subject. Some of the amendments listed below (and others not listed here) are currently on the Process Improvement project list and are in progress or are being considered by the Department. We have identified those of the following that we think are the highest priorities. Other amendments should be considered and prioritized by the Planning Division managers based on their relative importance in streamlining processes or changing/eliminating cumbersome or excessive regulations.

✍ Revise ZO to reflect GP designations so that conforming rezonings and site plans can be processed instead of time-consuming PD rezonings. For example, ZO does not address mixed-use projects, medium density residential or high-density residential projects.

† **High Priority; recommendation made elsewhere to make needed amendments.**

✍ Eliminate the Negative Declaration Protest process

† **Priority; in progress; recommendation made elsewhere to proceed with adoption.**

✍ Historic Preservation Permit changes to allow Adjustments

† **Priority; in progress; should be completed.**

✍ Revise ZO to allow development in the Industrial Park District without discretionary approval if the development meets specific zoning standards. This type of development is fairly predictable and often needs to move quickly, and discretionary permits would only be required for projects that don't meet certain parameters

† **Priority; should be placed on Process Improvement task list.**

✍ ZO needs to be revised to eliminate Lmax noise standards and include State Model Noise Ordinance; and

✍ Modify the noise level requirements in the ZO for property line noise to not be single-event noise. At the present, although we can “deal” with approval of uses through the use of a CUP, the fact that the standards are now so stringent that a shouting child in a yard can trip the noise means we're having lots of problems doing any permitting without a CUP. While this is on the list, we should move it up.

† **Priority; should be upgraded on Process Improvement task list.**

- ✍ Drive-Thru policy should be updated to account for ADA issues.
- ✍ Massage Facilities ordinance is much too arbitrary. It discourages acupressure, acupuncture and other traditional healing arts. We need a more expansive ordinance that promotes choice and alternative forms of treatment by licensed practitioners.

177. Recommendation: Suggested amendments to the Zoning Ordinance should be considered, prioritized, and placed on a work program for completion.

Subdivision Ordinance

The Subdivision Ordinance used to be maintained by the Public Works Division, but was recently taken over by the Planning Division’s Zoning Team. The Process Improvement Team is jointly working with the Zoning Team and Public Works on lot line adjustment and tentative map changes made at state level and affecting the Subdivision Ordinance. Otherwise, no amendments have been made to the Subdivision Ordinance in 14 years. The Ordinance has not been updated to reflect smart code street design standards and other standards appropriate for urban and infill development, which is essentially what is being built in San Jose. One comment was that staff thinks that the Subdivision Ordinance is only a reference for what the City can do differently than the Subdivision Map Act. Design standards are basically in the residential guidelines and the Planned Development process is being used for flexibility to build to modern standards.

178. Recommendation: Amendments to the Subdivision Ordinance to reflect smart code street design standards and other contemporary standards appropriate for urban and infill development should be placed on a work program for completion.

City Council and Planning Commission Policies

A number of City Council Policies have been identified on the Process Improvement list as needing to be updated or eliminated to reflect current conditions and improve consistency with other policies. The following Policies are on the Process Improvement list:

- ✍ Drive-Thru
- ✍ Cellular Antenna
- ✍ Gateway Signs
- ✍ High Pressure Gas Pipelines

- ✍ Church Location Policy
- ✍ 24-Hour Policy
- ✍ Bars and Night Clubs
- ✍ 5-3 LOS Policies

Only one, the Gateway Signs Policy, is listed as a high priority. We also recommend that the Cellular Antenna (Land Use Policy for Wireless Communications Facilities) be a priority on the Process Improvement list, and have made specific recommendations in regard to revising that Policy elsewhere in this report. Two policies that are not on the Process Improvement list are also seen as priorities, and those are the City Council Public Outreach Policy and the Planning Commission Reasonable Accommodations Guidelines. Recommendations for updating each of these documents have also been made in another section of the report.

The Council and Commission policies are not in one place or easy to access by the entire Planning staff. In addition, the policies have gone for years without attention and many now need to be updated all at once.

179. Recommendation: The City Council and Planning Commission Policies need should be consolidated into a folder that can be at each Planner's desk and/or on the intranet for all staff to access.

180. Recommendation: City Council and Planning Commission Policies should be placed on a regular cycle of review.

Residential Design Guidelines

A focused update of the Residential Design Guidelines is listed on the Process Improvement matrix as a #3 priority, and "in progress" with the last activity taking place in April. The May 2002 Mayor's Housing Production Team Progress Report states that the "work program to update Residential Design Guidelines has been put on hold pending the outcome of" this study. According to staff, the "hold" is simply to ensure that 1) there is a real interest in proceeding with the update and 2) any additional ideas or direction coming from this study were incorporated. We believe that completion of this update is a high priority, particularly because the infill and high-density sections of the guidelines will be strengthened and there is a real need for the guidelines to reflect San Jose's more urban/dense environment and to reflect current trends in transit-oriented and high-density housing. The Residential Design Guidelines also need to address the Regional Water Quality Control Board revised storm water permit regulations.

181. Recommendation: The Residential Design Guidelines update should proceed as a high priority and should reflect current trends in transit-oriented and high-density housing as well as the Regional Water Quality Control Board revised storm water permit regulations.

Historic Preservation Policies

According to the City's Historic Preservation Officer, the Historic Preservation Ordinance is out of date and needs a number of amendments. Possible updates include, but are not limited to the following:

- ✍ Adjustment or amendment procedure for Historic Preservation Permits (which was included under Zoning Ordinance amendments);
- ✍ Adoption of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards to guide design changes;
- ✍ Provisions to allow for the designation of thematic historic districts and Conservation Areas;
- ✍ Better links to CEQA; and
- ✍ Changing the Mills Act to allow its use in historic districts.

In addition, the General Plan could include more Conservation Areas and additional Historic Preservation Goals.

182. Recommendation: Needed changes to the Historic Preservation Ordinance should be identified, prioritized, and placed on a work program for completion.

183. Recommendation: General Plan amendments to add Conservation Areas and Historic Preservation Goals should be considered and placed on a work program for completion.

The Historic Preservation Ordinance directs the Department to produce Design Guidelines for historic resources. There are guidelines for the St. James Historic District and guidelines in the works for both the Downtown Commercial Historic District and the Hensley Historic District. There are no guidelines developed or in process for San Jose's other Historic Districts.

184. Recommendation: Historic Preservation Design Guidelines should be produced for all Historic Districts.

M. PUBLIC INFORMATION COUNTER

Hours of Operation

The Planning Division has rearranged the Public Information Counter hours to open at 10:00 every Tuesday and Thursday morning to accommodate training and meetings. While training and meetings are important, they can happen before 9:00. Development customers should be able to conduct their business during regular business hours.

In addition, customers should have all development services available to them from 9:00 to 5:00. In another area of this report, we recommended that the hours of business should be uniform for all of the City's development-related counters (Building's Permit Center, Public Works' Development Services Counter and Planning's Public Information Counter) to provide "seamless" customer service and to set the stage for the new City Hall.

185. Recommendation: The Public Information Counter should be open from 9:00 to 5:00 every day, including the lunch hour.

When customers enter the Public Information Counter area there are three places that appear to be counters: the reception desk is straight ahead, the planning counter is to the left, and an auxiliary counter sits off to the right. We noticed a few times that customers were looking around wondering which way to go. Signs could be hung saying things like "Receptionist-Start Here," "Planning Counter," or "Self-Help Area" to help orient customers.

186. Recommendation: There should be professionally made signs directing customers to the different areas of the Public Information Counter area.

Receptionist Function

The Planning Division reception area is served by two Office Specialist II's, one of which was recently hired after a two-year vacancy at the front desk. During the vacancy, all of the clerical support staff and supervisors from both Planning Divisions rotated as the second receptionist. These rotations put additional pressure on the already heavy workloads of the clerical staff and supervisors, who are glad to see that a second receptionist has been hired. Although there are very busy times at the reception area, we observed the lobby on each of our trips and found that most lunch times seemed to be pretty quiet and could be handled by one receptionist. With the second receptionist trained and in place for a few months now, the clerical staff should no longer be needed for backups except for times when the regular receptionists are absent from work or on vacation.

187. Recommendation: The two receptionists need to provide coverage for each other at all times, including lunch and breaks. The clerical support staff should only be asked to provide reception coverage when one of the receptionists is on vacation or absent from work.

In the past, there have not been computers at the reception desk, but computers have recently been ordered for both of the receptionists. The computers will give the receptionists access to email and the intranet and allow the Division to automate several functions of the public information service, including processing payments for publications and other non-permit money transactions, recording, monitoring and tracking customer activity, scheduling meeting rooms, and accessing staff calendars. Staff providing backup coverage for the receptionist area would like more training in how to answer phones, greet customers, and handle money, and to know where customer service forms and materials are located. Some have had to tell customers to wait for the regular receptionist to return because they did not know how to give them assistance. Particularly with the new computers being installed, training needs to be more focused at the reception area.

188. Recommendation: Training for the receptionists and all backups to the receptionists needs to be more focused and include training in how to answer phones, greet customers, handle money, locate materials, and perform other routine reception duties for customers.

Counter Service

The customer data tracked by staff was reviewed to determine the total number of daily walk-in and telephone customers served by the Public Information Counter. This data is summarized in Table 34.

Table 34
Total Average Public Information Counter Walk-In and Telephone Customers
Per Planner/Per Day

Customer Type	Per Day	Per Hour	Per Planner/Per Hour (3 Planners)
Walk-In Customers	115	14	5
Telephone Customers	80	10	3
Total Customers	195	24	8

Staff hand-tracked wait times for customers arriving at the Planning Division on three days in April, 2002. The data is summarized in Table 35.

Table 35
Planning Division Walk-In Customer Wait Times

Day	Between Hours of 9-1		Between Hours of 1-5		Overall Average
	# Customers	Average Wait	# Customers	Average Wait	
April 3	72	8.5 minutes	55	17 minutes	12 minutes
April 10	46	10 minutes	69	6 minutes	7.5 minutes
April 22	64	20 minutes	54	18 minutes	19 minutes

A closer look at the data was necessary to break down customers arriving for assistance at the counter versus customers having an appointment or waiting to see someone else from the Planning Division offices. That data is summarized in Table 36.

Table 36
Wait Times for Counter Service versus Meetings or Appointments with Others

Day	Waiting for a Specific Person		Waiting for Counter Service	
	# Customers	Average Wait	# Customers	Average Wait
April 3	3	29 minutes	124	11.7 minutes
April 10	1	5 minutes	114	7.5 minutes
April 22	7	26 minutes	111	18.8 minutes

Customers Waiting for a Specific Person

Without knowing all of the circumstances, such as whether all those who waited had appointments or whether they arrived twenty minutes before their scheduled time, it is difficult to say why the average time for customers waiting to see a specific person ranged from 5 to 29 minutes over three different days. A closer look at this data reveals that the three customers on April 3 waited 24, 35 and 29 minutes. Only one waited on April 10, for five minutes. On April 22, customers waited 1, 5, 20, 30, 33 and 43 minutes to see a specific member of staff. If customers arrive early or without an appointment, longer times may be justified. But no one with an appointment should wait more than five or ten minutes beyond their scheduled time, and no customer arriving with or without an appointment should wait for assistance for more than 15 minutes.

189. Recommendation: Customers with appointments who are waiting to see a specific person should not have to wait more than five to ten minutes. If the person scheduled to meet with the customer has a conflict, another member of staff should be sent to assist the customer within five minutes of the appointed time.

190. Recommendation: If customers arriving without appointments need to see a specific person and that person or someone equally as qualified will not be available within 15 minutes, the customer should be asked to make an appointment to come back at another time.

Walk-In Counter Customers

Table 36 shows that customers waited for assistance at the Public Information Counter an average of anywhere from 7.5 to 18.8 minutes on the three days that staff kept data. A closer look at the data is summarized in Table 37, below.

**Table 37
Customers Waiting for Counter Service**

Day	AM/PM	Total Customers	Number of Customers Waiting in Each Category of Minutes									
			0-5	6-10	11-15	Total Served Within 15 Minutes	16-20	21-25	26-30	31-45	46-60	
April 3	AM	69	31	16	18	65	94%	2	2	0	0	0
	PM	55	15	9	9	33	60%	4	5	3	7	3
April 10	AM	46	18	8	7	33	72%	6	6	0	0	0
	PM	68	36	22	7	65	96%	3	0	0	0	0
April 22	AM	60	8	6	8	22	37%	9	12	10	5	2
	PM	51	6	4	6	16	31%	14	14	4	3	0
Total		349	114	65	55	234		38	39	17	15	5
Percentage			33%	19%	16%		67%	11%	11%	5%	4%	1%

According to the Department’s data, only 67% of the Planning Division’s walk-in counter customers received service within 15 minutes of their arrival. Another 27% waited for up to 30 minutes and 5% waited between 30 minutes and one hour before being served. This is too long to wait for customer service.

191. Recommendation: 100% of the Public Information Counter customers should be assisted within the first 15 minutes of their arrival.

Looking at the data for the morning of April 3 and the afternoon of April 10, the percentage of customers receiving service within 15 minutes of arrival is almost 100%. On the contrary, only 34% of customers got 15-minute service on April 22. Also interesting is the fact that customer wait times sometimes increased when volumes decreased, such as between the morning and afternoons of April 3 and April 10. This indicates to us that the counter is not being properly staffed when customer activity is perceived to be slower. Either Planners are leaving the counter area to conduct other business or additional backups are not being called. Customer wait times should be monitored as one of several performance standards used in

determining whether staffing is sufficient, as discussed under the section on Counter Staffing Levels, below.

Telephone Counter Customers

Wait times for customers calling in to speak with a Counter Planner are not currently tracked by the Planning Division. However, staff hand-tracked the number calls specifically for Counter Planners and the number of detectable “hang-ups” on the telephone system for a number of days in February, March and April 2002. Table 38 summarizes the data tracked by staff during that time.

**Table 38
Telephone Call Data**

Month - Number of Days Tracked	Average Calls Per Day				Number of Known NHang-Ups	
	Before 9 AM	9 - 1	1 - 5	Total	Number of Days Tracked - Average Hang-Ups	
February - 19 Days	0*	37	41	78	Not Tracked	
March - 21 Days	5*	40	38	83	5 Days	8 Per Day
April - 14 Days	4*	40	40	84	14 Days	9 Per Day

* Not tracked in February; tracked for 5 days in March; tracked for 9 days in April

The Planning Division telephone rings eight times and, if the receptionists do not answer the telephone, the system automatically forwards the call to a general voice mailbox. The hang-ups tallied on Table 38 could be wrong numbers, or could mean that eight or nine people a day got tired of waiting for someone to answer the phone. Even some of the staff complained that they have a difficult time trying to get through to the Planning Division when calling from an outside line. The receptionists should have more time by not having to screen calls and by having Planners and Project Managers use their direct lines, and should be able to pick up the telephone on the first few rings, if only to say that someone will be right with them.

192. Recommendation: Calls coming in on the Planning Department’s main telephone line should be answered by the third ring, even if it is only to tell the customer someone will be right with them.

The receptionists check the general voice mailbox regularly throughout the day and forward messages to the appropriate parties for a response. When customer walk-ins and calls for the counter are high, the receptionists ask customers if they can take a message. The receptionist tells customers that it may be as long as 48 hours before calls are returned, but the Planning Division policy is to return all calls within 24 hours. As recommended under the general discussion about Telephones and Telephone Policy, all telephone calls need to be returned the same day that they are received and not within 24 or 48 hours.

When the counter is slow, Counter Planners will begin returning calls. At times, the counter supervisor will ask Planners who are not on duty to also help by returning some of the calls. This is a fragmented system that puts too much of a burden on the receptionists, the customers, the Counter staff, the supervisor and the Planners who are not assigned to counter duty. We believe that there are more efficient ways to handle customer calls.

When customers arrive at the counter, they should be attended to. Likewise, when a customer is on the phone, they should be able to talk with someone to have their questions answered. When Planners have to mix telephone customers in with walk-ins, customers who took the time to come down to City Hall sometimes have to wait even though they may have been there before the call came in. In many jurisdictions, call-in customers are handled separately from walk-in customers or can be forwarded to a designated off-counter person if the counter activity is high. This system can be very efficient because Planners at the counter are not trying to field calls in between customers and someone is always available to answer and respond to telephone customers. Time can often be saved by not having to place customers on hold, take messages, and return calls, and customer service can improve for both types of customers. If the Counter Planners are available, they should be given incoming calls. But if they are busy, calls should be forwarded to a designated off-counter person who has been assigned for telephone duty.

When handled as a separate function, telephone coverage is typically handled the same way as counter rotations, with each Planner receiving a two- to four-hour assignment for either counter or telephone duty. Planners could answer the telephone from their desks, but the preference is to have a separate telephone-duty desk and resource area. Each has advantages and disadvantages, but having a separate resource area and telephone makes it easier for the receptionists because, regardless of who is on duty, all calls are forwarded to the same number. The telephone-duty desk could also have its own voice mail and then overflow calls would be forwarded to a central place instead of to individual Planners' desks, and part of telephone duty would be to return those calls sent to the central voice mail.

193. *Recommendation:* Walk-in and call-in customers should be handled as two separate functions of the Public Information Counter and Planners should be rotated for assignments to cover either counter or telephone customers.

Experience at the Counter

One Planner wanted to know the rationale for putting relatively high-paid professionals on the counter. If it is for experience, then why aren't the Senior Planners rotated for counter duty?

For years, San Jose management has said that its best people should staff the Public Information Counter. In practice, that hasn't always occurred, and the lack of leadership and experience at the counter has contributed to longer service times and inconsistencies in customer information and processes. The counter supervisor should be managing all of the Information Services staff and functions. But because the Planning Division's other Senior Planners are not rotated to the counter for counter duty, there is a lack of needed experience and the counter supervisor spends much of the day helping at the counter instead of managing. More experienced Planners need to be out at the counter throughout the day to relieve the supervisor from providing needed Senior-level expertise. Occasionally rotating the Plan Implementation Senior Planners to the Public Information Counter would strengthen the counter, elevate the level of customer service at the counter, and put the Senior Planners in a position to see issues first-hand and to identify staff training needs. And a higher level of experience at the counter will provide additional oversight and increase the consistency of information given out at the counter.

194. Recommendation: Senior Planners trained to process permits should rotate to the counter for one, four-hour shift each month, with the long-term goal being to have a Senior Planner or very experienced Planner at the Public Information Counter at all times throughout the day.

195. Recommendation: When opportunity presents itself (through attrition, additions to staff, or staff interest), consideration should be given to permanently assigning one Senior Planner to the Public Information Counter.

Counter Rotations and Backups

There are presently 31 Planner I/II's in the Planning Division, almost all of whom rotate for duty at the Public Information Counter. Exceptions are made when Planners are working on special projects or have particularly pressing assignments. When staff levels are sufficient, the counter supervisor tries to give 25% of the Planner I/II's a break from counter rotation; but that isn't always possible. Planners can also bargain with others to take their counter shift or trade shifts to accommodate other work priorities.

Figure 12 is a summary of the current counter rotation system, as we understand it.

Figure 12
Current Public Information Counter Rotation System

✍ All of the Planners work in four-hour shifts. Thus, every day, six Planners staff the counter: the two permanent Counter Planners and four who rotate from the Division’s pool of Planner I/II’s, as follows:

9:00-1:00	#1 Permanent	#3 Rotating Planner I/II	#5 Rotating Planner I/II
1:00-5:00	#2 Permanent	#4 Rotating Planner I/II	#6 Rotating Planner I/II

✍ Planner I/II’s who rotate for counter duty have shifts approximately once each week, which is about 16 hours per rotating Planner per month at the counter.

Many of the Project Managers feel overwhelmed by counter duty and see it as a huge disruption of what little time they have to process permits. It is difficult for the counter supervisor to cover the full-time Counter Planners when they are absent and to find Planners who have time to come to the counter or take a few calls to reduce customer load and waiting times when it is extremely busy. Some of the Planners would like to not have to take counter duty at all. Others feel drained and frustrated after two hours and think that morale and customer service would improve if assignments were only for one or two-hours at a time. It is clear that there needs to be a more effective and reliable Public Information Counter rotation and backup system, and the counter supervisor has asked us to provide some suggestions.

We think that the Public Information Counter is somewhat unstable with so many Planners rotating and providing backup. There is a lack of continuity and the Planners are not at the counter long enough to truly feel that they are part of the “Counter Team.” And, having so many Planners involved makes it difficult for the supervisor to coordinate counter efforts. Previous recommendations should help stabilize the counter, such as separating counter and telephone functions when necessary and bringing more experienced Planners to the counter on occasion. In addition, Planners need to spend more, not less time at the counter in order to take “ownership” and to provide continuity for customers; and shifts shorter than four hours would only further reduce consistency and reinforce the “temporary” nature of counter duty. Over time, the Planning Division should be moving toward having more Planners that are permanently assigned to the counter. This transition should be completed before the move to the new City Hall. Here is our suggested method for beginning to make this transition and for improving the Public Information Counter rotation and backup system.

Figure 13
Proposed Public Information Counter Rotation System

- ✍ Planners still work in four-hour shifts and every day six Planners still man the counter. But two are permanent Counter Planners, two are assigned for 3-6 month permanent shifts, and only two rotate from the Division’s pool of Planner I/II’s, as follows:

9:00-1:00	#1 Permanent	#3 Planner I/II on 3-6-month assignment	#5 Rotating Planner I/II
1:00-5:00	#2 Permanent	#4 Rotating Planner I/II	#6 Planner I/II on 3-6-month assignment

- ✍ Planner I/II’s who rotate for counter duty now have shifts approximately once every other week, which is about 8 hours per rotating Planner per month at the counter.

This new system accomplishes several things. The longer-term assignments will foster “ownership” for staff and continuity for customers. The consistency of processes and information given out at the counter will increase. The overall number of hours spent each month by the other rotating Planner I/II’s will be cut in half. And coordination efforts for the counter supervisor will be simplified.

A few key points are in order for this new system to work effectively:

- ✍ Planner I/II’s assigned for permanent shifts should be those that are suited for customer service and enjoy working at the counter. The Planning Division should begin by seeking volunteers for this new system.
- ✍ While on permanent counter duty, Planners should be assigned mostly simple or moderately complex permits or special projects to work on in their off-counter hours. The focus for these 3-6 months should be at the counter.
- ✍ For consistency, the morning and the afternoon shifts should be permanently assigned. In other words, the morning Counter Planner and one permanently assigned Planner I/II should work together every morning for 3-6 months, and the afternoon Counter Planner and the second permanently assigned Planner I/II should work together every afternoon for 3-6 months. Thus, two Planners would be permanent and only one Planner would be “temporary” each morning and each afternoon.
- ✍ To smooth transitions at the counter, reassignments should be staggered by at least a month or two. In other words, the permanent morning and afternoon Planner I/II assignments should not change concurrently.

196. Recommendation: The Planning Division should move toward having more permanent assignments at the Public Information Counter and should complete the transition before relocating to the new City Hall. To begin the transition, two Planner I/II's should be appointed to the counter for 3-6 month assignments under a system that considers the key points noted above.

Some Planners schedule their own applicants to come and see them while they're on counter duty. That time is supposed to be dedicated to helping walk-in customers. This is frustrating because the counter is already short staffed and the burden is on the other Planners to take up slack.

197. Recommendation: Planners should not be conducting their own project work or meeting with their own applicants during the time they are assigned for counter duty.

Code Enforcement Database

Planning does not have access to Code Enforcement's database and has no way of determining whether there are conformance issues or code cases open on a property. The Code Enforcement liaison is not always in the Planning Division to provide this information, which is important to know before processing adjustments or other types of permits. Our understanding is that the Code Enforcement database is on a different system than the one used by the Planning Division. This issue should be explored further between the Planning and Code Enforcement Divisions to see if the Code Enforcement system can be changed or there is another way of providing quick answers to the Counter staff about code enforcement cases.

198. Recommendation: Planners should have access to Code Enforcement information to alert them of conformance issues or open code cases before permits are processed.

Conditions on Plan Sets

When staff processes Adjustments at the counter, they type the conditions into the AMANDA system and then manually write the conditions on the permit application and stamp and condition three sets of plans. Processing could be streamlined and timelines reduced if staff could type the conditions, print out four copies, attach the copies to the permit application and individual plan sets, and then stamp the plans as original. No plans would be valid without the attached condition sheet and a lot of staff and customer time would be saved. It may also be possible to program AMANDA so the conditions are table driven.

199. Recommendation: Staff should type conditions into the AMANDA system, print out four copies for attachment to the permit and plan sets, and stamp the plans as original. If possible, AMANDA should be amended so the conditions are table driven.

Counter Letters

The Counter Planners provide several different types of Counter Letters for customers verifying information for agencies such as the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) and the Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC). Staff developed a database to track Counter Letters and Table 39 is a summary of letters processed by the Counter Planners since the tracking system was implemented in July 2001.

Table 39
Planning Division Public Information Counter
Counter Letter Volumes from 7/01-4/02

Type of Letter	Total	Number of Months Tracked	Approximate Monthly Average
Legal Non-Conforming Status	55	9	6
ABC Zoning Affidavit	93	9	10
DMV Zoning Confirmation	67	9	7
Zoning and General Plan Letter	184	9	20
Residential Care Facility Letter	13	6	2
Other	15	9	< 2
Total			46

The Planning Division's goal is to have all Counter Letters turned around within five days, but the letters are taking two weeks to process. Counter Letter turnaround times need to be monitored as one of several performance standards used in determining whether staffing is sufficient, as discussed under the section on Counter Staffing Levels, below.

200. Recommendation: Counter Letters should be processed to completion within five working days.

Counter Letters are not currently automated, but could be if the MS Access database was merged with form letters so that applicant addresses were automatically merged into the letters. In addition, the addresses could be printed to labels for each mailing rather than having to type and print them out again.

201. Recommendation: The MS Access database should be merged with form Counter Letters to automatically print applicant addresses on the letters and mailing labels.

General Inquiry Emails

The Planning Division Web site provides an email link for customers to ask questions or provide comments or suggestions. The emails come to one of the Counter Planners who is solely responsible for responding to them during the off-counter hours. This is about four hours a day, but includes other tasks such as completing research, letters and other administrative tasks for counter customers. Many of the emails are easy to answer and can be responded to immediately. Others take a little time to research and are set aside, sometimes for a few days, until the answer is determined. In one case, an email had been set aside for more than a week because it would take time to research and the Planner hadn't found the time to deal with it. We asked, but there is no policy for either the time in which emails need to be answered or for notifying customers that the email was received, but would take time to research.

202. Recommendation: All general inquiry emails for the Public Information Counter should be responded to the same day they are received. Customers should be provided with either the answer to their question, or a courtesy notice that the email has been received and research should be completed and an answer provided within 24 hours.

There were quite a few emails set aside when we were shown the system. The backlog needs to be cleared and all new emails from this day forward responded to under the same-day/24-hour policy recommended above.

203. Recommendation: Management should set a time limit of two days to clear the backlog of emails and implement a same-day/24-hour response policy for all emails received from this day forward.

The number of emails received each day is not tracked, so it is difficult to determine whether one person will be able to maintain a same-day or 24-hour response time. General Inquiry Email response times need to be monitored as one of several performance standards used in determining whether staffing is sufficient, as discussed under the section on Counter Staffing Levels, below.

204. Recommendation: Staff should begin tracking the number of general inquiry emails that come each day so that management can appropriately staff the function.

Interdepartmental Referrals

Not all of the City staff uses the Interdepartmental Referral form when sending customers from one department to another.

205. Recommendation: An Interdepartmental Referral form should be completed and given to all customers who are sent by staff to another department.

In a booklet entitled “Phone and Counter Tips for Good Customer Service” used by the Public Information Team, the referral courtesy goes a step further if the customer has come from another department and needs to go to yet a third department for their answer. Under this circumstance, it is suggested that staff should walk the person to the next department and hand them off so they don’t feel like they’re getting the run-around. The booklet also notes that Planners can establish contacts by going to other departments themselves. These are great suggestions, as long as there is sufficient staff coverage at the counter to absorb the absence, and the absence is brief. In the new City Hall, experts will be brought to the customer in one place. But for now, staff needs to accommodate customers who need additional expertise.

206. Recommendation: If time permits and sufficient coverage remains at the counter, staff should take a brief moment to walk customers to the next department if they have been sent from place-to-place.

Staffing Levels

Two Planner I/II’s and one Planning Technician are permanently assigned to the Public Information Counter. Three counter-related positions were recently cut and included a third permanent Counter Planner, a Counter Planning Technician and a Code Liaison. The Counter Planners work in ½-day shifts, spending four hours at the counter and four hours doing research, letters and other administrative work. In addition to the Counter Planners, all of the other Planner I/II’s rotate in four-hour shifts for counter duty and two Planners are assigned for each shift; thus, there are always three Planners assigned to the counter at any one time. When counter activity is high, the supervising Senior Planner asks additional Planners if they have time to come to the counter or take a few phone calls. This happens often and the supervisor terms it “going begging.”

Using the data shown in Table 33, three Planners serving 195 customers at the counter or by telephone during an eight-hour period would only have seven minutes to complete each customer transaction. The backlog of customer work indicates that this is insufficient time to complete all of the work and answer all of the phone calls coming in through the Public Information Counter.

- ✍ Customer wait times are approaching one hour; and 37% of the customers are waiting more than 15 minutes for service.
- ✍ Telephone customers are waiting at least a day for calls to be returned.
- ✍ While the goal is to have Counter Letters turned around within five days, they are taking in excess of two weeks to complete.
- ✍ And there is a backlog of general inquiry emails waiting for a response from the one Planner assigned to that task.

It took the Planning Division many years to get approval for the third Planner position and customer wait times, response times and process times were improving with the third position in place. The third Planner position may need to be reinstated in order to improve customer response times and help implement other customer service improvements, or it may just be that, with recommended improvements, additional backups are needed during peak times. The way to determine whether counter staff levels are sufficient is by implementing our recommendations for reducing workloads and streamlining some of the counter-related functions, and then monitoring the performance standards we set in this report to determine whether current staffing levels are sufficient to maintain the standards.

207. Recommendation: The Planning Division needs to implement counter-related recommendations to reduce workloads and streamline counter functions and then monitor the following performance standards to determine whether counter staffing levels are sufficient:

- ✍ **100% of the Public Information Counter customers should be assisted within the first 15 minutes of their arrival. (Recommendation #193)**
- ✍ **Telephone calls coming in on the Planning Department’s main telephone line should be answered by the third ring. (Recommendation 194)**
- ✍ **Counter Letters should be processed to completion within five working days. (Recommendation 202)**
- ✍ **All general inquiry emails for the Public Information Counter should be responded to the same day they are received. (Recommendation 204)**
- ✍ **All telephone calls need to be returned the same day that they are received. (Recommendation 243)**

Automated Tracking System

The Public Information Counter staff currently tracks customer counts and wait times by hand and uses a “lollypop” system of colored pegs to tell the Counter Planners

how many customers are waiting on hold or how many adjustments need to be done. The Planning Division is exploring options for an automated customer tracking system and will additionally rely on the AMANDA system to track permit volumes when that system is fully integrated and has reporting capabilities. Until the Public Information Counter is co-located with other development counters in a one-stop or combined counter system, though, it may not be practical to install much of a tracking system just for the Public Information Counter. But it is important that the data be collected. Systems are also being explored for the new City Hall. If feasible, perhaps the Planning Division could test some of the potential new systems or use the same system as the Building Division.

Customer Brochures and Handouts

There is a rack of colorful brochures available for customers in a self-help area of the Public Information center, but the rack is on a wall behind two desks and isn't readily available or inviting to customers. We mentioned to staff during one of our visits that the brochures needed to be moved and they agreed.

208. *Recommendation:* Customer brochures and handouts should be moved to a location that is inviting and easy for customers to access.

Some of the brochures and other informational materials are out of date. Some have old counter hours on them, others, like the General Plan brochure, need to be updated to reflect a change in policy.

209. *Recommendation:* All brochures and handouts need to be updated to reflect accurate hours of business, policies, procedures and reference to the Planning Division Web site.

Staff recommended that there be a handout that promotes the Web site, so that walk-in customers can take it with them and remember to use the Web site if they can instead of coming into the office.

210. *Recommendation:* The Planning Division should create a Web site brochure to inform customers of the services available on line.

Customer Computer

Better service could be provided if a public-use computer was provided in the Public Information customer service area. With a public computer, customers could obtain information about all of the departments and their applications, processes and

ordinances on line through the Web site, and could have access to GIS and other information such as specific project data.

211. Recommendation: A computer for public use should be installed in the Public Information center.

Remote Phones and Headsets

The Counter Planners use standard telephones that have been mounted on the wall in several places behind both the Public Information Counter and the auxiliary counter across the room. A good part of their day is spent talking with customers on the phone, at which times other staff members and managers are helping customers at the counter. The stationary phones limit movement and staff is constantly ducking wires extended behind the counter. The Planning Division intended to purchase wireless remote phones and headsets for the counter staff, which would cost approximately \$3,000. But funds have not been made available to make the purchase.

212. Recommendation: Funding needs to be reallocated to purchase wireless remote phones and headsets for the Public Information Counter staff.

N. PLANNING SERVICE AT THE BUILDING COUNTER

There is a long history of issues between the Planning and Building Divisions in regard to planning service at the Permit Center counter. Past recommendations for the two Divisions to communicate and efforts to work out their differences have not been successful. In fact, one manager said to us that if we told them to communicate as a recommendation of this study, it would be the fourth time we made that recommendation.

We see the primary issues and some suggested solutions as follows.

Clarification of Lead Departments

There is disagreement over the “ownership” of the Planners at the Permit Center and about which tasks are appropriate for them to perform. Some of these issues are discussed in more detail below. As indicated through our recommendations, the Building and Planning Divisions need to come to terms on the assignment, supervision, and tasks of the Permit Center Planners and decide how the operation will continue from this point forward. In at least one other circumstance where two Divisions needed formal clarification of their relationships and duties, the Division Chiefs executed a letter of understanding and matrix that clearly outlined leadership

roles and responsibilities and tasks. Such a letter and matrix would be an appropriate measure in this instance as well.

213. Recommendation: The Planning and Building Divisions need to execute a letter of understanding and matrix to clarify leadership, roles and responsibilities in regard to planning service at the Permit Center counter.

Organization

Planners are hired and trained by the Planning Division, but appear on the Building Division organization chart.

214. Recommendation: The Planner positions should be shifted to the Planning Division organization chart and referenced on the Building Division organization chart.

Training, Supervision and Accountability

The Permit Center Manager supervises the Planners at the Permit Center. The Planners are also supervised by and receive training from the Planning Division and often go to the Planning managers for advice. The Planning Division clearly needs to supervise and train the Planners to ensure that all of the processes and procedures between the two counters are consistent and that the Planners stay abreast of policy changes and contemporary planning issues. At the same time, the Building Division needs to have the ability to supervise all of the Permit Center staff for process and presence.

215. Recommendation: The Planners at the Permit Center should report to the Planning Division for content and to the Building Division for process and administrative procedures.

Assignments to the Permit Center

Both the Planning and Building Division counters need to be staffed with the best planning experts available to serve customers. Accomplishing this takes a shift in attitude and the dedication of the right staff and resources.

All of the Counter Planners are an integral part of a professional team and need to be strongly connected with the Planning Division and other Planners. This is particularly important at the Permit Center counter because it is physically separated from the Planning Division; but applies to the Public Information Counter as well. To ensure

that the Permit Center Planners remain Planning experts, the Divisions may consider rotating them on occasion either to the Planning Division Public Information Counter or into another function of the Planning Division. When Permit Center assignments were initiated more than 10 years ago, they were intended to be on a rotational basis; but rotations never happened. The Planning Division recently decided to try 18-month rotations, but they haven't been implemented. One problem is that nobody in Planning wants to be rotated to the Permit Center. Planners see it as a demotion and a dead end job. Planners need to recognize the importance of providing professional planning expertise at the Permit Center counter and only Planners who want to work at the counter should be given the assignments.

216. Recommendation: Planners hired, assigned or rotated to the Planning and Building Division counters should be suited for customer service and not see the counter as a dead end or punishment.

Level of Expertise and Authority

Building customers are often sent to the Planning Division for answers to complex questions and the Building Division expressed wanting higher level Planners to serve their customers. Even one of the Planning Division managers felt that Permit Center customers were only getting superficial planning service because staff could only answer simple questions. The Planners at the Public Information Counter have easy access to the Senior and Principal Planners for complex questions; but the Permit Center staff is isolated and often goes to the Planning Division with or without a customer for advice. When Planners have to leave the Permit Center for help, customer service is reduced and it is disruptive and leaves a gap for the other Planners to fill.

217. Recommendation: The Permit Center Planners should have the level of expertise and authority needed to respond to customer questions without leaving the Permit Center counter.

Many of the issues about appropriate tasks, supervision and expertise could be resolved if a Senior Planner or experienced Planner I/II was assigned to the Permit Center, at least until a one-stop Permit Center is established.

218. Recommendation: The Planning Division should assign a Senior Planner or experienced Planner I/II to the Permit Center.

Tasks

The Planning and Building Divisions have had a number of discussions about the types of tasks appropriate for the Permit Center Planners, but there still appear to be unresolved issues in this area. From a Planning manager's perspective, they have evolved into glorified zoning technicians and are sometimes asked to perform functions more appropriate for the building technicians. Some Planners feel that Planning Technicians could perform these tasks and question whether the Planners are working out of class.

219. Recommendation: Every task to be performed by the Planners in the Permit Center needs to be clarified and listed on the matrix that will accompany the Divisions' letter of understanding.

Counter Hours

The Permit Center Planners attend mandatory Planning Division training and meetings between 8:30-10:00 every Tuesday and Thursday morning. The Permit Center opens at 9:00; thus, the Planners are unavailable between 9:00 and 10:00 two mornings each week. The Tuesday morning Public Information Team meeting is important because it is specific to counter training and processes. The Thursday morning meeting is a mandatory staff training, about which we have made recommendations in another section of this report. Either way, the Permit Center needs to have Planners available during all hours that the counter is open. There are several ways to provide continual coverage at the Permit Center and still allow the Planners to attend training and meetings in the Planning Division.

220. Recommendation: The Planning Division needs to rearrange its meeting times so that all Planners are in the Permit Center at 9:00 every morning.

The Building Division's recorded phone message offers "limited service" at the counter between 12:00 and 1:00. On one of our visits, none of the Planners were in the Permit Center between 12:00 and 1:00. How much coverage is needed during the lunch hour needs to be determined by the Permit Center Manager based on activity levels, but Planners should be available to serve customers every hour that the counter is open. We recommend a minimum of two Planners during the lunch hour, which can be accomplished by staggering lunch hours.

221. Recommendation: Two Planners should be available to serve Permit Center customers during the lunch hour.

The Team Approach

The Planning and Building Divisions need to improve relationships from management levels down through the staff, beginning with communicating a team approach to serving customers. Some of the staff sense a real division of loyalties between Planners who have worked at the Permit Center. Those who started by working in the Planning Division are committed to “planning,” and those who have never worked anywhere other than the Permit Center tend to side with “building.” Planners report having felt pressured to “bend the FAR rules” so that a building customer would not have to apply for a planning permit. Building managers resent spending time training Planners only to have them moved upstairs. As they put it, as soon as a Planner gets really good, they’re whisked back up to the Planning Division And building supervisors resent having a lack of control over the Planners schedules. This divisive “us against them” attitude is unproductive and is not unique in the Department. There needs to be an attitudinal shift by all managers and staff toward recognizing the importance of thinking and operating as a team.

222. Recommendation: Planning and Building Division managers and staff need to recognize the importance of thinking and operating as a team and should work toward serving customers from a team approach. This could include, but not be limited to the following activities:

- ✍ **Periodic meetings together between Planning and Building Division managers and staff;**
- ✍ **Some cross-training;**
- ✍ **Staff rotation programs; and**
- ✍ **Similar activities.**

O. CLERICAL SUPPORT

The Planning Division has two clerical support teams, one in the Planning Services Division and another in the Plan Implementation Division. The teams are largely independent of each other and have separate supervision and functions with the exception that all of the clerical staff rotated as backups to the receptionist position. We found a few issues in regard to clerical functions, as discussed below.

Planning Commission Packets

Staff Reports and other information needed for Planning Commission packets are almost never submitted to the clerical staff on time. Packets need to go out on Wednesday, but the clerical staff estimates that packets have gone out on Wednesday once in the past year. Both the planning staff and the applicants are given a deadline of having all information in by 5:00 on Tuesday, but things still trickle in on

Thursday. Apparently, no one will enforce the Tuesday deadline with applicants. We heard similar comments from the Principal Planners when talking about the reluctance to reschedule public hearings or recommend applications for denial when the applicant does not provide needed information on time. As discussed in the 30-Day Letter segment of this report, this is a political issue beyond the scope of our study, but needs to be addressed. Another problem is the Public Works Development Services Division. Often the Staff Reports can't be copied because staff is waiting for the final Public Works memo, which is required to be included for all hearings. We made a recommendation regarding Public Works memos in the section entitled Comments and Conditions from All Divisions.

When the Planning Commission packets are finally ready, a Senior Planner and/or the Planning Technicians hand deliver them to each of the Commissioners. They frequently leave the office at 3:30-4:00 in the afternoon to make the deliveries. This is an inefficient use of valuable staff time and Planning Commission packets need to be mailed instead. In order to accomplish this, though, a real shift needs to take place. Everyone, including applicants, would need to be held accountable for deadlines, and deadlines for getting information to the clerical staff would need to be moved up to allow sufficient time for them to be mailed.

Council Memos

The Project Managers are responsible for preparing Council Memos to report the results of Planning Commission recommendations to the City Council. Council Memos need to be prepared and given to the Planning Division's clerical staff the morning after the Planning Commission meeting, as the clerical staff has to process the Memos and forward them to the City Manager's office the same day. The deadlines are established by the City Manager's office and are tight and strict because of the amount of processing the City Manager's office needs to do in order to meet City Council timelines. This puts pressure on both the Project Managers and the Planning Division's clerical staff, but there is no way around it. Not all of the Project Managers are aware of the reason for the immediate deadlines and sometimes the clerical staff has to push them to get the Council Memos in on time and takes the heat from the City Manager's office when they are late.

223. Recommendation: The Project Managers must prepare Council Memos as their first task on mornings following Planning Commission meetings and immediately forward the Memos to the clerical staff for processing.

Workloads and Coordination

As with all of the Planning staff, the clerical staff has very heavy workloads and barely seems to have enough time to do their work let alone to complete any long-range projects like procedure manuals, implementing process improvements, or

giving proper attention to supervision. One of the clerical supervisors commented, “right now we’re ‘slow’ and we can’t keep up.”

Our recommendation under the Public Information Counter section to relieve the clerical staff of the need to provide daily reception coverage will help clerical supervisors plan better and give the clerical staff more focused time to complete their regular work. One of the supervisors felt that projects affecting the clerical staff are often discussed in meetings where they are not present and supervisors needed to have input and be more involved in decisions affecting their staff’s workloads and priorities. The supervisor would also like to have 10-15 minutes of time during the weekly all-staff meeting to address concerns, timelines, and changes in process affecting the clerical staff.

224. Recommendation: Clerical supervisors need to be included in more meetings and their input sought whenever projects and decisions will affect their workloads and priorities. The weekly Planning Services and Plan Implementation Staff Meetings should provide for a few minutes of time where the clerical supervisors can address concerns, timelines and changes in processing affecting their staff.

P. INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Databases

A lot of parts and pieces of similar documents, lists and other types of related information are on different computers, in desk drawers, in binders or missing. Staff spends a lot of time searching and asking others for procedures, guidelines, policies, project numbers, and address lists to complete a project. Some of the staff has made an effort to centralize the information once they’ve gone to the trouble of compiling it. But much more of this related information needs to be gathered together and recorded in one place, such as the intranet, for everyone to access.

225. Recommendation: The Planning Division needs to take inventory of the types of information that could be combined and stored in central databases and assign staff to compile and store the information on the intranet.

Data Entry and Accuracy of Information

The Planning Divisions face a critical issue with data not being entered or being entered inaccurately into the AMANDA system. AMANDA is intended to provide most of the data needed for performance measurements and management activity

reporting, but the data is only good if it is consistently and accurately entered and updated by staff. This applies to managers, as well, who are not always entering their stages of the data, which has to then be entered or updated by the staff before a process can continue.

226. Recommendation: Every staff member and manager needs to be held accountable for consistently and accurately entering and updating data in the AMANDA system.

File and Records Management

There is no single issue more frustrating for every member of the Planning Division staff and management than the “horrendous mess” that exists with the Division’s filing system and filing and imaging backlog.

- ✍ Active project files are constantly on the move and end up everywhere, often in boxes of “jumbled” files nobody has taken the time to file or return to the proper owner.
- ✍ Treasure hunts and emails in search of missing files are an every-day event. Some files are missing for months on end and others are never found.
- ✍ The contents of files are missing almost as often as files themselves. Documents never seem to stay intact and there is a backlog of years worth of papers waiting to be filed and no hope of ever having complete files because it never gets caught up.
- ✍ The system for incremental microfilming broke down and none of the files were processed for years. Now, about ten years worth of inactive project files are boxed up and can’t be accessed by staff because they are waiting for imaging.
- ✍ And, because the system is in such disarray, there is little respect for what system is in place and everyone further contributes to the problem.

Fortunately, some headway is being made in dealing with file management issues; but there still need to be improvements. Some recent changes that are positive moves toward reducing the problem are as follows:

- ✍ A simple jacketing, labeling and organizing system has just been designed and implemented for keeping track of active project files. Support staff places colored jackets over new project files and attaches an “Active File” label that will include the Project Manager’s name. Project Managers have been provided with dividers to organize active project files in their work areas. Any file labeled as “active” goes back to the Project Manager. Once the project is complete, the jacket gets a “Closed File” label and everyone knows that those

files now go to the filing room. This is a good system and resolves the question of where to return floating project files.

- ✍ The Planning Division has had an opportunity to use short-term excess contract funds to expedite the imaging of some of the backlog. On our most recent trip, we were impressed with the large number of boxes that had disappeared from the stacks. The Principal Planner overseeing this project reports that more than 200 boxes had been gone through in the first two weeks, and that the pressure is on. Staff is working overtime and on weekends, and Friday's have been identified as Imaging Party days. The hope is to make a sizeable reduction, clearing perhaps as much as 50% of the backlog before the contract ends the first week of August.

There has been discussion, but not formalization of a system that would require the Project Managers to prepare and send their completed files directly to the central imaging center instead of to the support staff. This would free up a lot of time for the support staff and help avoid additional backlogs. But the support staff is responsible for performing file close-out functions in AMANDA, and will probably continue to be responsible for removing staples and post-its, repairing torn pages, and doing other things necessary to prepare the files for imaging. The Project Managers need to be doing a lot of this work before forwarding closed files to the support staff to assist with the preparation of files for imaging.

227. Recommendation: The Project Managers should assist in preparing files for imaging by avoiding the use of, or removing, staples, post-its and other excess items and properly purging, organizing and repairing documents.

The records management function and employee are part of the Planning Services Division clerical unit and are officially supervised by the SNI/Special Projects Principal Planner. This "official" line of supervision is left over from when the SNI Principal was responsible for the planning counter. But the Information Services functions, staff and Public Information Counter are now under the supervision of a different Senior and Principal Planner and, although the SNI Principal recently completed a performance evaluation for the file employee, daily supervision is being provided by the Principal Planner who oversees Information Services. This change in supervisory responsibility needs to be officially transferred and reflected on the Planning Division organization chart.

Consideration is being given to transferring responsibility for the records management function to the Senior Planner who oversees Information Services. This is an excellent choice in terms of the Senior Planner's skills as a supervisor and a finder of creative solutions. But the Senior's span of control involves the counter and three permanent counter employees, weekly counter training for all of the planning staff, all of the rotations and backups to the counter, two receptionists, and, recently, more focused

training and interaction with the three Planners at the Building Permit Center. Transferring supervisory responsibility to the Senior may be an excellent long term solution, but until the imaging and filing backlog has been cleared, a workable filing system is in place, and some supervisory issues have been resolved, the records management function needs a higher level of oversight.

228. Recommendation: Direct supervision of the records management function should be officially transferred to the Principal Planner over Information Services. Once the records management system and staff is stabilized, supervisory responsibilities should be transferred to the Information Services Senior Planner.

The records management function is currently only staffed by one position, a Senior Office Specialist. This position is responsible for filing, imaging preparation, copy requests, library maintenance, requests from the City Attorney's office, and subpoenas/public records requests. Because the years-long backlog of imaging and filing existed when the current employee was hired, it is difficult to know whether this function needs more resources or whether one person could be successful in maintaining the system once things were caught up. One support staff vacancy was recently filled. A second support position is vacant due to an unresolved disability. Once the disability issue is resolved, this position needs to be staffed. At full staff, one Principal Office Specialist and one Office Specialist II might be able to manage the support function and half or all of the second Office Specialist II position could be converted to a second records management position. In the meantime, the backlog of paper filing and imaging needs to be cleared so that staffing needs can be more accurately determined. Although management estimates clearing about 50% of the imaging backlog using the excess contract funds, another 50% will remain to be imaged. In addition, there are years worth of paper filing needing to be integrated into the files, which is critical to having complete records of project transactions, studies and decisions. From what we have seen, we do not believe that this backlog can ever be cleared using only the existing staff resources.

229. Recommendation: Additional resources are needed to clear the backlog of filing and imaging in records management.

We found it understandable, but curious that the staff is so outraged at the backlog and the daily treasure hunts for missing files; because it is generally the staff who mishandles the files in the first place. The support staff estimates that files are not checked out properly at least 75% of the time. Outcards are not being placed in the vacated spot, files are not being signed out, and files are haphazardly returned and stacked everywhere. Suggestions for improving the "system" have ranged anywhere from getting electronic tracking systems to using bar codes. Since every file is in the AMANDA system and every employee has access to AMANDA, we thought that

AMANDA might work, so we asked management if AMANDA could be programmed with a physical file location field to “electronically track” the files. Here is the response we were given:

“AMANDA already has such a mechanism. The only problem is it requires a human being to enter the information about the file! Not much confidence that we would get that to happen, given everything else we are struggling with.”

Everyone agrees that there needs to be a better filing system, but no matter what system is in place, some level of human intervention is necessary. A better system begins with everyone taking responsibility for using whatever system is in place.

230. Recommendation: Every employee needs to take responsibility for properly managing files and records. The Principle Planner and Senior Planner need to develop a monitoring system to enforce good file and records practice.

Planning Division Library

The Planning Division does not have a credible library. There are a few bookcases next to a small conference room along the wall near the filing area, but space is limited and materials are not always in order, thus many books, technical materials and reports are being stored in the staff’s cubicles. Not only does this take up workspace but, more importantly, the materials are not really accessible as resources for the entire planning staff.

There does not appear to be any space in the present facility to house a true library. Large conference rooms have lots of wall space and a large table and often successfully also serve as staff libraries. While the present Planning Division conference room isn’t sufficient for this purpose, this might be a consideration in the new City Hall. Meanwhile, the backlog of imaging is stacked in a large area and once the imaging is complete, it may be feasible to use this space as temporary library. Either way, it is important that staff has a central place to store and access resource materials.

231. Recommendation: The Planning Division needs to take inventory of materials appropriate for a library and find a suitable area in which to consolidate and properly maintain them for the staff.

232. Recommendation: The new City Hall should include space for a Planning Division library.

Q. TELEPHONES AND EQUIPMENT

Copiers

A number of comments were made by staff in regard to the need for more, or better photocopier machines in the Planning Division. The copiers are leased and break down constantly. Planning is paper-intensive and does a lot of high volume copying, especially since the City did away with the copy center and it was decided not to contract out the hearing notices. More reliable and higher-volume copiers are needed, but there is a question as to whether the City can renegotiate the current three-year lease to get replacement equipment.

233. Recommendation: The Administrative Officer should continue to work with General Services to resolve contractual issues and get more reliable and higher-volume copiers in the Planning Division.

Email

All of the Planning Division staff has access to email at their desks except the receptionists, who will be getting email soon with the installation of two new computers at the reception desk. While staff likes having email as a means of communicating with others, some think it works too well.

Email gets clogged up pretty quickly with non-business uses, such as jokes and FYI's that require extra time to manage and delete. And sometimes messages are overkill, like "copy paper is on the way," or "phone books are here." Some staff feel like there is too heavy a reliance on email as a way of getting tasks off peoples' desks, and that sometimes a telephone call or a face-to-face discussion is more appropriate.

234. Recommendation: Supervisors need to emphasize that non-business or non-essential emails affect everyone's workload and may need to train staff in proper email usage and etiquette and when it is more appropriate to use the telephone or have a personal discussion.

The Project Managers get so many voice mails that some days it takes 30-60 minutes to listen to them and write them down. There is technology available that automatically forwards voice mails to the email system, which would save time and allow staff to scan and print out email messages and quickly "triage" responses.

235. Recommendation: The Department should investigate the cost and effectiveness of purchasing and installing a system that converts voice mails to emails.

Ergonomic Furniture and Equipment

Some of the Planning staff feel like they are the City's forgotten stepchildren. While everyone else seems to get new furnishings, there is never any money in the Planning Division's budget so they're using all of the stuff left over from the 70's. For some functions, ergonomic desks, keyboards and other equipment are essential to the safe performance of repetitive and routine tasks. One of the clerical staff is already out on disability from a job-related injury and won't be returning to the Planning Division. It is assumed that there will be newer furniture and equipment in the new City Hall, but some upgrades are needed now. Once furniture is selected for the new City Hall, perhaps some could be installed in Planning as a test.

236. Recommendation: The Planning Division needs to provide proper workspaces, chairs, desks, keyboards, and other ergonomic equipment for all functions performing repetitive and routine tasks.

Headsets

The staff would like to see more headsets purchased to leave hands free to work and to relieve neck strain from holding the telephone between head and shoulders all day long. Management had hoped to buy regular headsets for all of the staff to promote better telephone ergonomics and reduce the burden of talking while handling plans and other file materials. The cost for the headsets is estimated to be \$7,000. This is a good investment for those who spend the better part of their day on the telephone.

237. Recommendation: Headsets should be purchased for Project Managers and other members of staff who spend much of the day on the telephone.

Layout Space

The Planning Division area is overcrowded. Some of the cubicles are mounded with paperwork to the point that it's hard to find the desks and chairs. The Planners and Project Managers have no place in which to lay out maps or plans and often put them on the floor and lean over their chairs to read them while they work. Work areas need to be reconfigured so that the Planners and Project Managers have more space and a place to fully and safely layout maps and plans while they are working. While this may be impossible to resolve in the current building, it is important that it not be repeated in the new City Hall and was specifically mentioned in the City Hall discussion elsewhere in this report.

Telephones and Telephone Policy

Overall, staff had no real problems with the telephone equipment. Several commented that they would like to have indicator lights to let them know they have a message or

were not able to transfer calls, and one staff member could not reprogram the phone with new telephone numbers. Basic functions like message indicator lights and the ability to transfer or use speed dial should be on all telephone equipment. Whether there will be new telephones in the new City Hall, or whether staff will have to take existing equipment with them, some upgrades should be made now.

238. Recommendation: All telephones should be equipped with basic features such as message indicator lights, transfer and hold buttons, and speed dial.

Several staff members suggested that people who are on hold for the Public Information Counter could be listening to recorded information about the Web site, common questions and processes, instead of dead air. One person felt that it was probably one of the best investments the Department could make. There may be some truth to that, especially if someone on hold finds the answer to their question, or jots down the Web site address, hangs up, and gets their questions answered on line. The workload is reduced for staff, and the customer gets faster service.

239. Recommendation: The Planning Division should record information about the Web site, commonly asked questions, and common processes for customers to listen to while waiting on hold.

All of the Planning Division staff members have direct-dial telephone numbers. The Division has had an ongoing struggle, though, with changing policies in regard to telephones... Should customers be able to call the planners and managers directly, or should the receptionists screen all calls first and then transfer them to the person or their voice mail, depending on whether they are "available" for the customer? The Planning Division has tried both methods. Until very recently, the receptionists were screening and transferring all calls, which is a lot of extra work they shouldn't be doing. The Division's newest policy now requires all Project Managers and other Planners to advertise and use their direct phone lines. Direct-dial numbers were recently published on the organization chart and Web site and are being printed on every business card. The managers have said that they need to finish the implementation of this policy by instructing the receptionists to completely stop screening calls and put all calls directly through to the requested person. We agree with this policy.

240. Recommendation: The receptionists need to be instructed to completely stop screening calls and put all calls directly through to the requested person.

We are hearing the same issues from San Jose Planners as we hear in many other jurisdictions.

- ✍ We don't have time to take every call.
- ✍ Having to stop and answer calls every time the phone rings is disruptive.
- ✍ We can't get any work done if we're always answering the phone.
- ✍ We don't want to talk with some people until we've had time to prepare for the call.
- ✍ Unless they're screened, how do I know if a call is from a family member or someone I need to talk to, rather than a "cold call"?

The response of some of the Project Managers to the direct-dial policy is, "we'll just let all the calls go to voice mail and screen them later." The Planners and Project Managers need to understand that using their direct lines and answering their telephones is part of their job.

Our policy has always been to have all callers dial directly to the intended party, and to have calls picked up immediately or, if the person is not available, to have voice mail messages returned before the end of the day.

241. *Recommendation:* All telephone calls should be answered immediately. If the staff member is temporarily unavailable to answer the phone, all voice mail messages should be returned before the end of the day.

There have been a number of customer complaints about not getting calls returned after leaving several voice mails. If an employee is consistently not picking up the telephone or responding to messages, it's a supervisory issue.

242. *Recommendation:* Supervisors need to enforce telephone policies and hold staff accountable.

In fairness to the Project Managers, there is a resulting voice mail logjam at the end of the day that needs resolution. We can attest to how late some of the managers and Project Managers have been working and that they do make an effort to respond to at least our requests for information. Some of our emails have been returned before 8 a.m., after 6:30 on a Friday night, and on Saturday.

One of the recommendations we made above was to consider purchasing a system that converts voice mails to email. If feasible, this is one way of saving a significant amount of time for the Project Managers. And, if they could print out messages, some might be able to be quickly handed off to the Planning Technicians or other staff members for a response the Project Manager may not have time to provide. In addition, fewer voice mails would be accumulating if the Planners could block out

time to work and be required to pick up the phone at all other times. While a few hours of quiet time is OK, “office hours” should not be abused.

243. Recommendation: Project Managers and their supervisors should agree on regular “office hours” and two- to three-hour blocks of uninterrupted time when the staff can concentrate on project work. Other members of staff and management, as well as customers, should respect office hours and quiet time.

Web Site

The Planning Divisions currently have more than ten people responsible for entering and maintaining information on the Web site. This is another “stepchild assignment” for staff and is one of the number of functions that need to be accounted for on a detailed work program, which we’ve discussed in another area of this report.

Because different people do all of the web postings, everyone is using different templates and different styles and someone has to go back and clean up the mess later. This work might require a professional Web site manager, or at least should be overseen by one person assigned as the Department’s web coordinator.

244. Recommendation: The Planning Division should assign or hire one person as the designated planning web coordinator to ensure consistency in how information is presented and maintained on the Web site.

Other improvements we believe would be useful are in recommendation format, below.

245. Recommendation: The Zoning Ordinance and General Plan should be searchable on the Web site.

246. Recommendation: All documents and publications available in hardcopy format for distribution should also be available on the Web site.