

# Planning and Development Services

Semi-Annual Presentation to Council  
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## *PDS Mission Statement*

*The mission of Planning and Development Services is to ensure growth and development occurs in a manner that protects public health, safety and welfare, preserves the natural environment and ensures the quality of life enjoyed by citizens and visitors in Whatcom County is maintained and enhanced.*



# PDS Divisions

Administration (5 FTE's)

Building Services (12 FTE's)

Permit Center (4 FTE's)

Natural Resources (11 FTE's)

Current Planning (6 FTE's)

Long Range Planning (5 FTE's)

Code Enforcement (3 FTE's)

# PDS Administration Focus

## *“Change Management”*

- ▶ Implementation of the new EnerGov permit tracking software.
- ▶ Identify clear and consistent customer service strategy and expectations.
- ▶ Cross-training staff—get out of our silos.
- ▶ Implement new Title 22—Permit Review Procedures.
- ▶ Prepare for permit data migration to new EnerGov system—clean-up old/expired permits.
- ▶ Improve communications with our customers about *what* we do and *how* and *why* we do it.

# New Permit Software Project Status

## ► Status of Project

- Ending the First Phase of the project “**Assess & Define**” where all the business processes and work flows in each Department are carefully mapped.
- The next Phase is “**Build & Validate**” when the vendor “builds” the system and permit case types to our specifications and migrates data from old systems.
- The “**Testing & Training**” phase starts in mid 2019 with PDS, Health & Public Works and initiating outreach efforts to help prepare customers for the new permit system.
- Goal is for implementation by end of the year.

# Customer Service Strategy

- ✓ The coordinated Customer Service Strategy with PDS, Public Works, Health, Parks and Human Resources kicked off in September 2018 with leads and management attending a “Charter for Service Success” training and staff surveys.
- ✓ This was followed up with a training for front line customer service staff in October 2018 from all 4 departments to begin to “Re-Craft” Customer Service.
- ✓ *In March 2019 staff identified the services we deliver and the barriers to delivering those services at the individual division or program level and recommended actions to overcome those barriers.*
- ▶ Next Step: Develop new PDS customer service strategy implementation plan to identify performance improvement, staff development and customer service tool box and best practices.

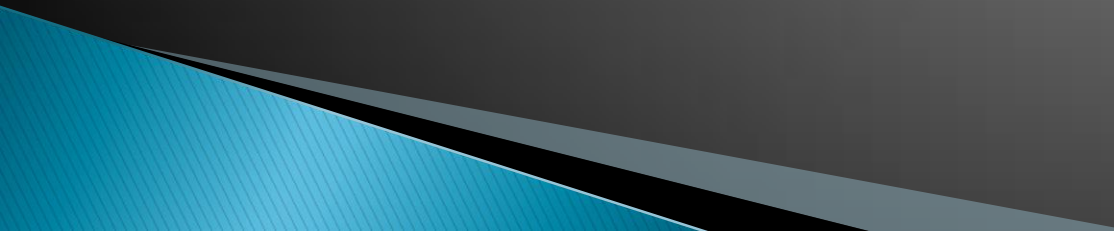
# PDS Services and Benefits

- ▶ Implement and Enforce Comprehensive Plan & Development Regulations
- ▶ Facilitate Private and Public Sector Investment (\$122M in 2018)
- ▶ Successful Permitting Increases Local Property Values
- ▶ Provide Public Assistance, Information, Outreach and Education on Land Use Issues
- ▶ Guide the Public and Policy-Makers through the Permitting and Legislative processes





# Top 5 Stressors or Barriers to Providing Great Customer Service

- ▶ Lack of available technical information for the public and the staff
  - ▶ Complicated/confusing/fragmented code language
  - ▶ Different expectations between applicants and staff
  - ▶ Lack of (cross)training for all staff in PDS operations and protocols
  - ▶ Not following procedures, timelines and preparing effective written reports
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# Top 5 Recommended Actions to Improve Service Delivery

- ▶ Improve internal (intra-county) and external (public) lines of communication
- ▶ Update/overhaul County Code(s) to be clear, consistent and in plain english
- ▶ Establish and follow commonly-accepted permit review protocols and procedures
- ▶ Provide cooperative on-going training of permitting procedures and policies for all staff
- ▶ Write permit conditions and NOARs understandable to the public

# Example: Cross-Training

- ▶ Current Planning & Natural Resources staff helping Long Range staff with development regulation updates and the legislative review process.
- ▶ Building Inspectors trained on erosion and sediment control to help reduce stormwater runoff from construction sites—reduces need for Natural Resources staff review time.
- ▶ Code Enforcement staff working with all other PDS division staff to develop new enforcement procedures that work for all divisions and can increase our enforcement resource capabilities.
- ▶ Administrative support staff from each division learning the procedures and protocols of other divisions to better provide back-up and cover when need arises.
- ▶ Long Range staff to help out at the front permit counter to better understand public Q & A's and permitting and code interpretation issues.
- ▶ Start internal seminars/brown bag lunches for all work groups to learn *what* other divisions do and *why* and *how* they do it.

# Example: Notices of Additional Requirements (NOARs)

## ► What are we doing about it?

- Instituting pre-screen meetings for building permits and pre-application meetings for many land use permits to better inform applicants of potential project issues and impacts that need to be addressed BEFORE you submit your application
- Created stand-alone Site Plan Review permit path to approve building site plan PRIOR to submittal of subsequent building permits
- Using checklists to clearly identify permit application requirements
- Increase outreach to consultants/builders about code requirements and permit review protocols (i.e., what it takes to get your permit approved)
- Create and have staff uniformly follow defined templates for NOARs and staff reports using plain english
- Supervisors and Leads to review all NOARs and staff reports before they are sent out to edit for clarity and ensure consistency

Thank You!

Questions?