

## **DAT Meeting Comments on Development Review Process, August 19, 2010**

Staff from the Economic Development Division led a discussion on the Development Review and Approval Process Initiative with members of the Development Assistance Team (DAT). The following is a summary of the comments provided by individual attendees and do not necessarily reflect a consensus of all participants or by their reviewing agencies.

- Madison Metro is rarely involved in development reviews other than to locate bus shelters and bus stop pads. Tim Sobota will send a memo to EDC regarding Metro's role.
- The special customization of each application makes it difficult to create one track that all projects go through. Complex projects are labor intensive for staff because the history of a site or project has files in many units and departments along with the institutional memory of staff.
- The Zoning Code rewrite may not help with the most complex projects but will provide standards and more predictability. It will also provide a stronger link to adopted neighborhood plans.
- DAT meetings are beneficial to developers. The DAT meetings are also a great forum for staff to learn who to contact in other departments regarding projects.
- The DAT meetings are helpful for pre-application reviews-staff can raise technical and political red flags early for developers.
- A question was raised, would the use of community meetings to educate people about development process be beneficial? Zoning responded, noting that they have tried but most people only attend if there is a project proposed. Zoning and Planning staff attend neighborhood meetings to talk about the process for specific projects. These meetings are often held at the request of an Alder.
- Zoning often sends out pages from the Development Guide to developers and citizens to answer process questions.
- The Development Services Website is hard to find, however, once someone finds it they say great things about it.
- Staff can be put in a difficult position when by ordinance something, such as a driveway, is allowed by staff and a commission says the opposite. This sends a mixed message to the applicant. While not a regular occurrence, there have been some instances when bodies have wished to waive ordinance requirements or take actions beyond the scope of that body, which can also lead to confusion between the applicant, commissions, and staff. It was noted that the different reviewing boards vary in their role in the process and their areas of expertise and that coordination between staff and commissions is important.
- The Fire Department has given presentations to the UDC on fire lanes and other items the Fire Department reviews on plans. These have been educational on the technical aspects. This has worked well.
- It was also noted that applicants that utilize DAT in combination with informational meetings with boards and commissions can help to flag concerns and outline the necessary approvals.

- Sometimes projects do get hung up in referral at a board or commission. Could projects be recommended for “approval with reservations”? This would give the developer the option of going forward to the next decision-making body, making revisions, or withdrawing a plan. Eventually a decision would have to be made.
- The job of City staff is to enforce ordinances and policies.
- Incomplete submittals are often accepted in order not hold up project review and the missing items are requested by staff and the supplemental information added to applications.
- State statutes govern some reviews and recording of documents.
- Complex, multi-phased projects require more staff time. There is an increased demand for these and, in some agencies, inadequate staffing. Someone to shepherd projects through development is a great asset to businesses. Example: City staff person did this with the St. Mary’s hospital expansion that happened smoothly.
- There is a technical issue with staff in different departments not having access or even read-only access to all files. If all staff cannot access the same drives and files the information can’t be shared.

Mr. Cooley concluded the discussion noting he will bring back preliminary report to DAT to discuss it within the next month.