

The Latimore Company, LLC

Community Process Improvement for Western Washington

Improving the Predictability, Efficiency and Collaboration of the Permit Process

WABO Annual Summer Business Meeting

Professional Development Segment

Spokane – June 23, 2006

Kurt Latimore

Agenda

9:00 to 10:30

Within the Bldg dept

- Common considerations for bldg departments
- Balancing services
- Managing productivity
- Surges in demand
- Innovation

10:50-12:00

Bldg Within the system

- Integrating with the broader system
- Reconciling priorities
- Sub optimization
- Role in land use, civils
- System improvement

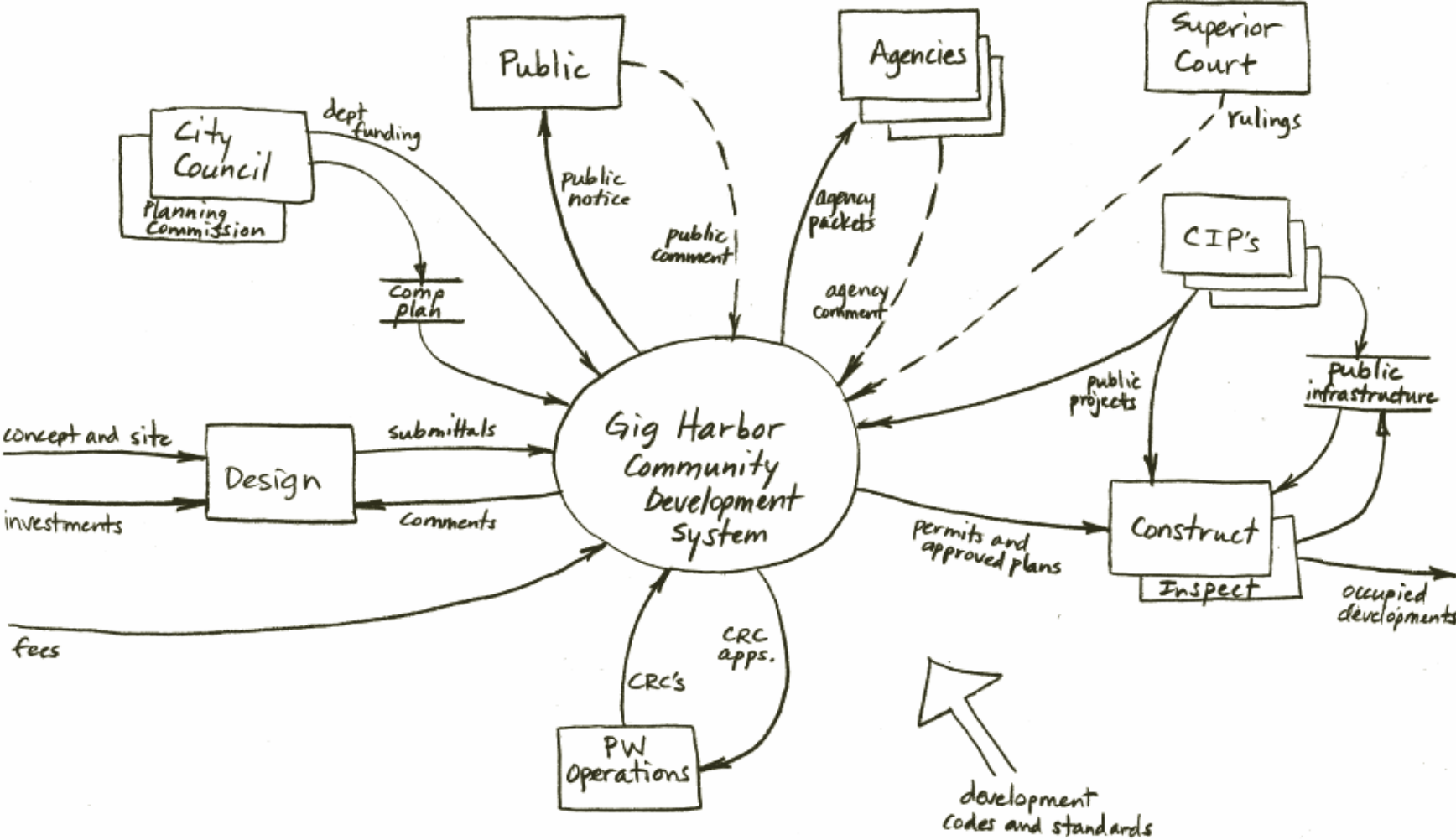
The Latimore Company

- Specializes in permit process improvement
- 18 Western Washington counties and cities served
 - Recently completed assessments for Whatcom County, Olympia and Gig Harbor
- Works within the team to analyze and improve process
 - Normal permit flow and spikes in permit demand
- Customized to your goals, policies, codes and trends
- Leads the Model Permit System

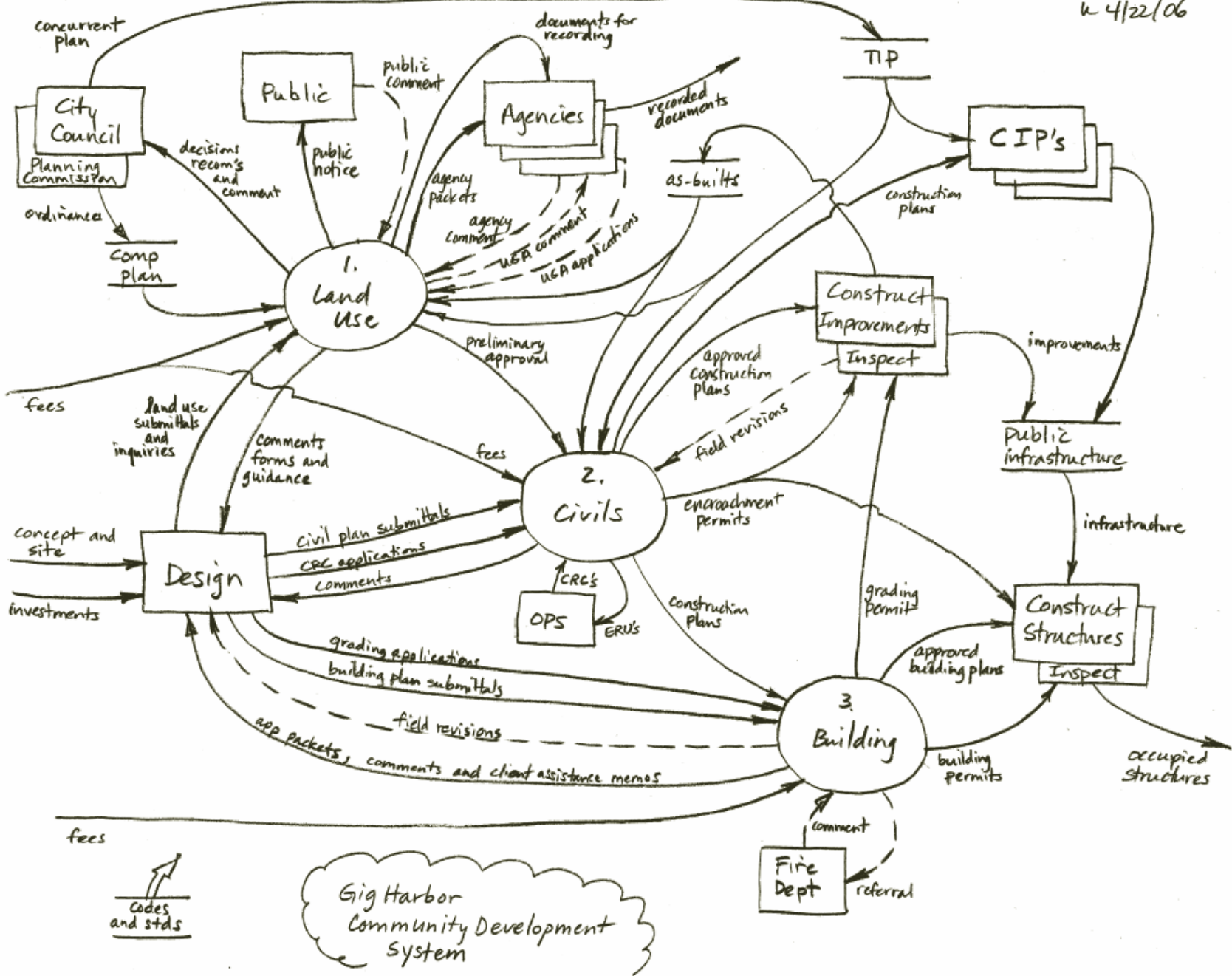
Model Permit System

- Initiative by the Snohomish County EDC
- Designed by jurisdictions, developers, interests
 - Refined during the course of a 2003-04 pilot program
 - Goal of predictability, efficiency, collaboration
- Techniques
 - Enhanced pre-submittal collaboration
 - Completeness determination at intake
 - Single points of contact
 - Coordinated departmental reviews
 - Staff decisions and use of the hearing examiner system
 - More...

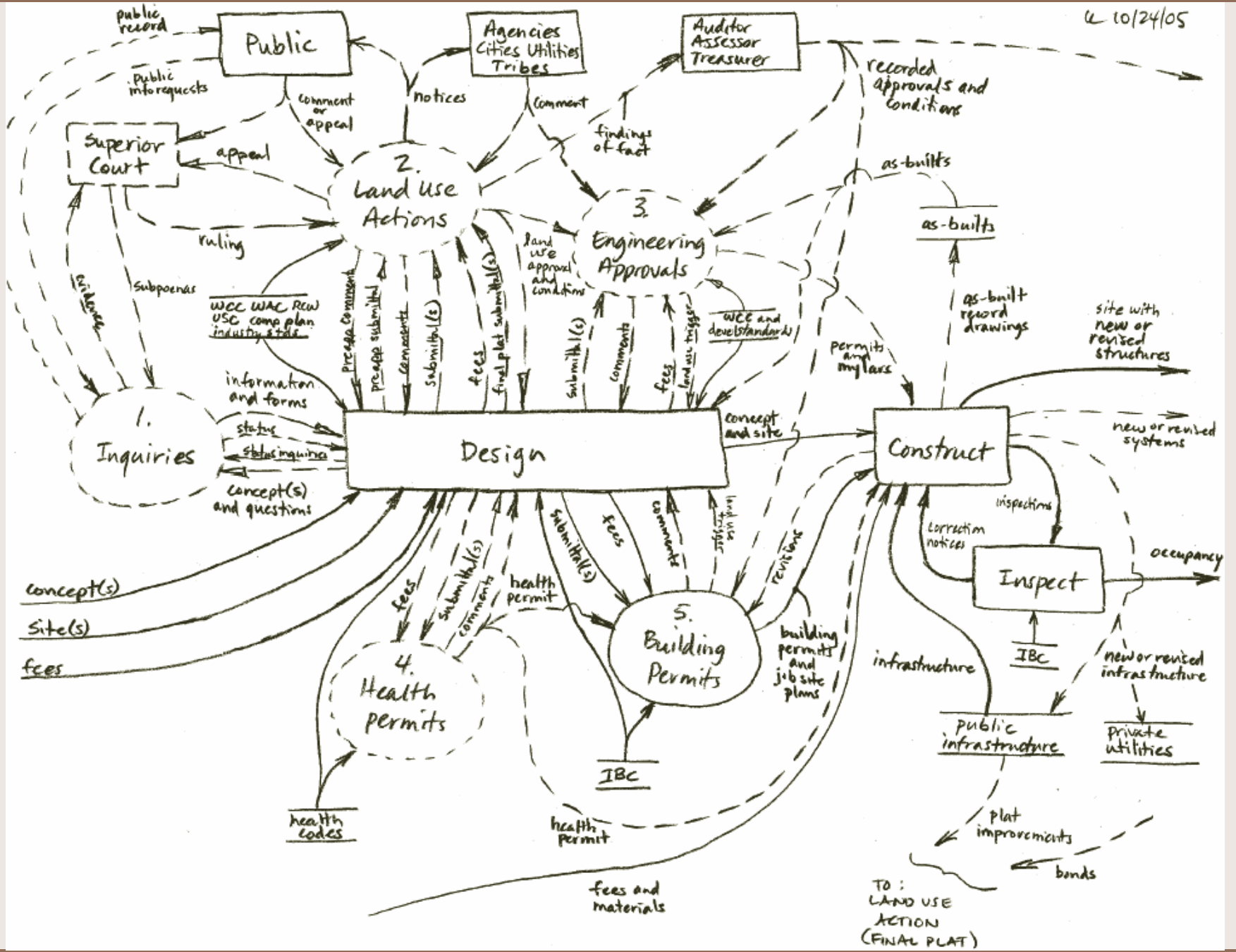
System View



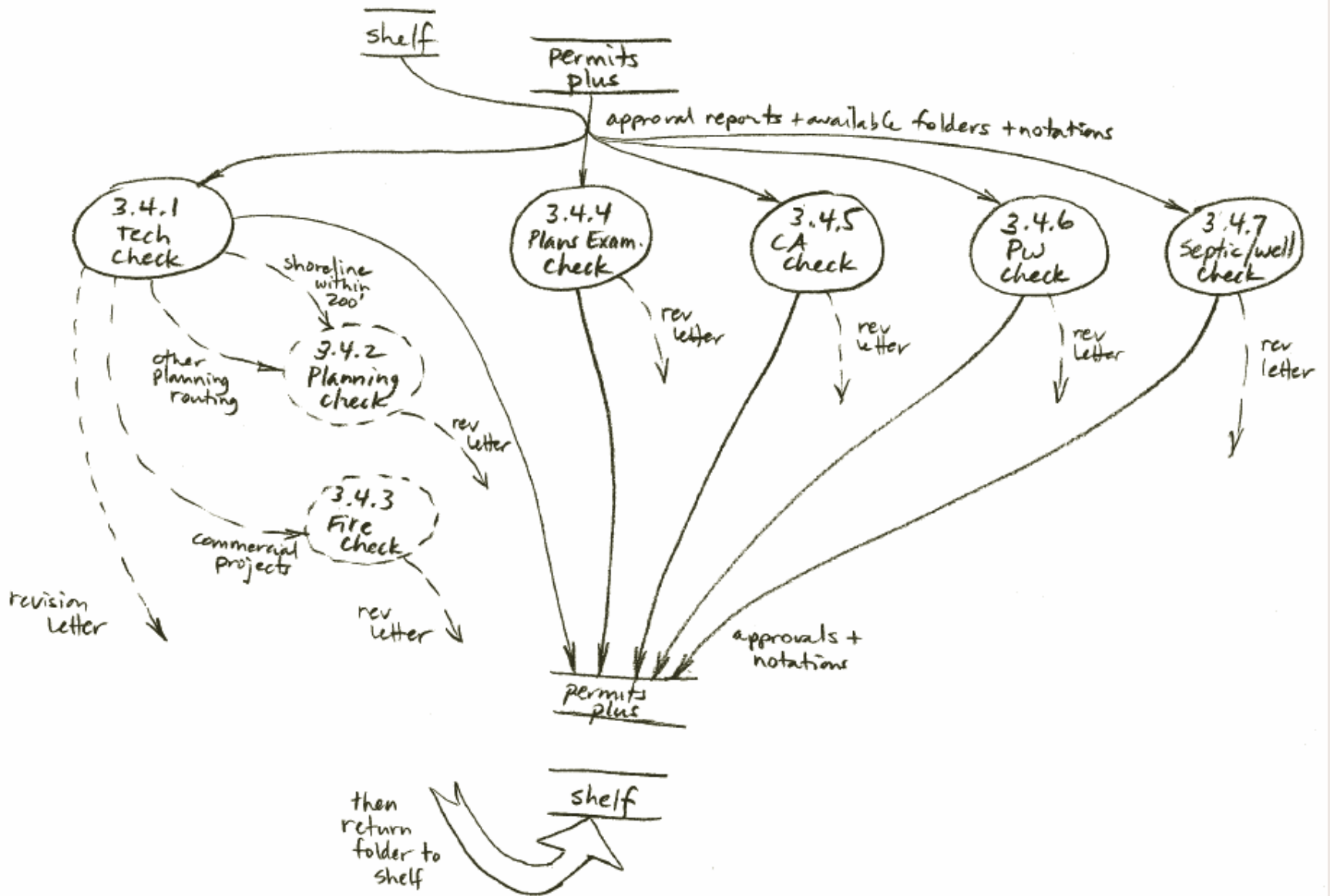
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6/10/24/05



3.4 Bldg Review (Skagit Co)



Theory of Constraints

- Eliyahu Goldratt (physicist, Israel) “The Goal”
- Modeled organizations as **systems**
- All systems have a **constraint**
- To improve performance:
 - Define the system and its goal
 - Identify the constraint
 - Maximize performance of the constraint
 - Sync other depts with the constraint
 - Increase personnel (rarely need this step)

Today's Presentation

- Predictability, efficiency and collaboration
 1. Within the Building dept
 2. Building dept within the overall system
- Present common situations
- Considerations for Building Officials
- Backdrop
 - The bldg dept is rarely the constraint of the system
 - Affects and affected by other depts and approvals

Within the Building Dept

- Transaction standards, expectations, examples, prerequisites
- Permit technicians, coordinators, clerks
- Intake rigor, case setup
- Inquiries, back office support, MTBI, an assistance center
- Fast track?
- Appointments vs. intake on demand
- A good tracking system, good practices, online access, velocity
- Know your numbers, total elapsed time, measure weekly
- Handling application spikes, manage WIP
- Scaling, outside review and checking
- Mixing plan review and inspections, a 2-4 hour time block
- Consolidated fire and bldg review

Transaction Standards

- Transactions
 - Intake
 - Resubmittal
 - Comment letter
 - Issuance
- Standards, expectations
 - Reinforced at pre-app, inquiries, handouts
 - Intake
 - Intake checklists that prescribe completeness
 - Full checklist screening at intake counter
 - Incomplete applications explained and remanded back
 - Prerequisites as appropriate...

Prerequisites

- Choose what occurs in parallel vs. sequentially
- Everything is there by the start of bldg review
- Sample prerequisites
 - Water availability
 - Septic approval (or soils)
 - Critical area review
 - Lot certification
 - Preliminary plat approval
 - Civil plan (engineering) approval

Choose based on
the needs and
trends of your area

Transaction Standards

- Standards, expectations
 - Comment letter
 - Review checklists
 - Consolidated or dept letters OK for bldg (depends on your team)
 - Monitor trends for checklist revision (quarterly tech evaluation)
 - Resubmittal
 - Test at counter for responsiveness (based on the comment letter)
 - Issuance
 - Tracking system: all reviewers, fees OK (avoid brittle failure)
 - Initialize the inspection list
 - Distinguish standard conditions from special requirements
 - BMP
 - Requirements for all applicants of this case type

Transaction Standards

Examples: show applicants what success looks like

Site Plan Instructions

Note: The numbers in parentheses, e.g., (1), correspond to the numbers on the sample site plan attached to these instructions.

Format - All drawings shall conform to the following requirements.

Sheet size - Preferred sizes are 11"x17", 18"x24", 24"x36", or 30"x42". An 8 1/2"x11" site plan is acceptable only if all information can be shown at a legible and reproducible scale. One 8 1/2"x11" reduced copy is required for recording by the Auditor for Land Use Permits.

(1) **Title Block** - Locate the following information on the right hand or bottom margin of all sheets:

- Owner's Name
- Date
- Owner's Address
- Site Address
- Page Number
- Name, Address & Phone number of person preparing drawings
- Tax Parcel Number
- Lot Description
- Drawing Title
- Drawing Scale
- Revision Date & Number

(2) **Scale** - All site drawings shall be of a consistent and industry standard scale.

Indicate scale with bar symbol for plan reduction integrity. Site drawings are preferred to be at a scale of 1" = 20', 30', 40', or 50'. Scales of 1" = 100' or 200' should only be used for very large parcels, and then a smaller scale drawing should also be submitted to provide greater detail of the area where new work is proposed.

Graphic scales shall not substitute for dimensioned drawings.

(3) **North Arrow** - Include on all site and site-related drawings (i.e., vicinity map, detail enlargements, floor plan, etc.).

(4) **Property Lines** - Show the location and dimension of all property lines.

(5) **Easements** - Show location for all existing and proposed utility, open space, drainage, and access easements and/or private roads; draw to scale and accurately dimension.

(6) **Existing and Proposed Structures** - Show location, dimension, and use of all existing and proposed buildings and structures on the site; show distances to EACH property line from the furthest most projection of the structure, including overhangs and decks. All setbacks are measured to the furthest most projection of any structure, including overhangs and decks.

(7) **Adjacent Buildings, Wells, and Septic Systems** - When your building, well or septic system is within 50 feet of any adjacent property line, you must show all buildings, septic systems and well locations on the adjacent parcel that are located within 50' of the property line. Show distances from the adjacent property line to the neighboring structures.

(8) **Setbacks** - Show applicable minimum setbacks to ALL property lines and to the center-line of ALL adjacent roads.

(9) **Driveways and Parking** - Show location of on-site driveways and parking.

(10) **Adjacent Roads** - Locate and label the existing roads or rights of way, both county and private. Show centerlines.

(11) **Spot Elevations and Topography** - Show surface elevations at each corner of the site and at each corner of the structure base. Where any portion of the parcel has a slope that exceeds 1:10, show existing and proposed contours at 5-foot intervals.

(12) **Show location of Water Supply, Service lines and Storage Tanks** - Include zones of protection for well, and zones of protection for any well on adjoining property that extends across property boundaries. Also see item 7 for additional requirements.

(13) **Show location of all Sewage Disposal Systems** - Include location of all test holes for sewage disposal permits and the general area and layout planned for the sewage disposal system. If the system is built, show as built.

(14) **Water Bodies, Wetlands, and Drainage** - Show all ponds, wetlands, wetland buffers, streams, and bodies of water.

IN ADDITION, A DRAINAGE PLAN MUST BE SUBMITTED WITH THE BUILDING PERMIT APPLICATION WHEN REQUIRED BY THE UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT CODE SECTION 6.

Shoreline Parcels

The remaining items are required to be shown on the site plan if any portion of the proposed construction is located within 200' of the shoreline (O.H.W.M.).

(15) **Ordinary High Water Mark (O.H.W.M.)** - Must be shown for all shoreline parcels.

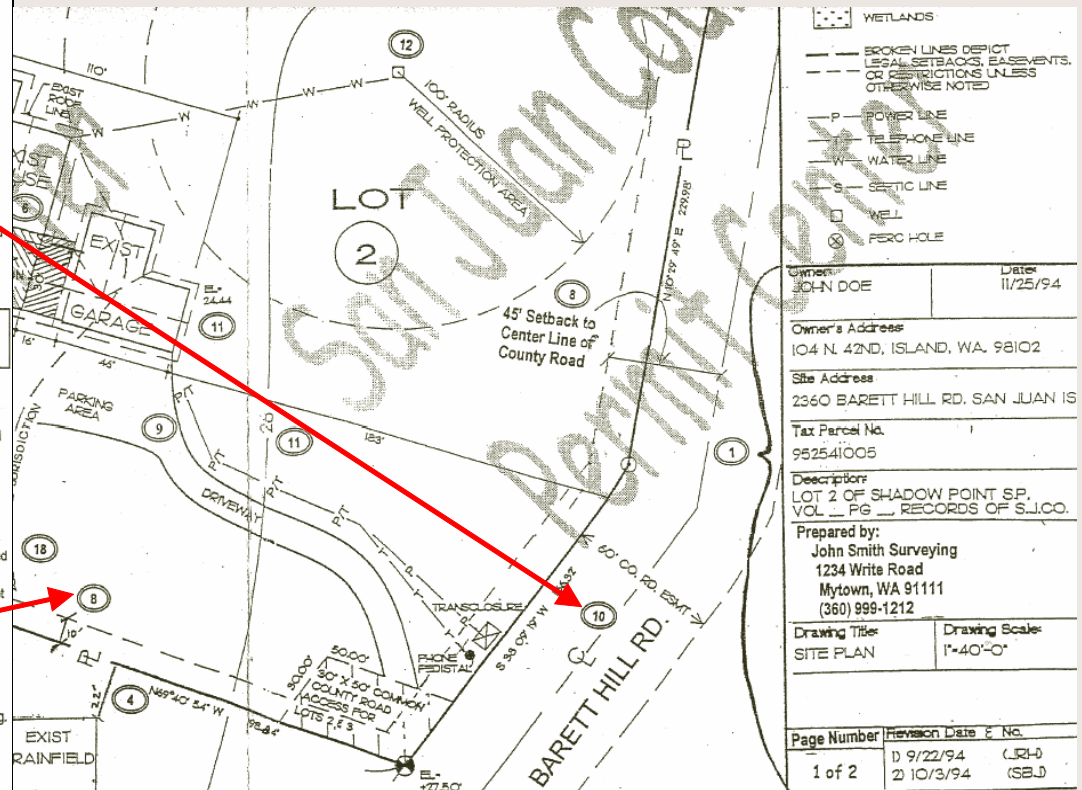
(16) **Top and Toe of Bank** - Show top and toe of bank or berm.

(17) **Setback from Top of Bank** - Show distance from the top of the bank to the seaward face of the structure(s). To be measured at a right angle from the top of the bank or berm.

(18) **200' Shoreline Jurisdiction** - Show a line marking 200 feet from Ordinary High Water Mark. This line should follow the contour of the shoreline.

(19) **Tree Plan** - Show species and trunk diameter for all existing trees that exceed 3 inches in diameter at 4-feet above the ground located within the 200' shoreline area. Also identify any trees that you will be removing in the future.

(20) **Lot Width** - Indicate lot width at seaward face of building. In addition you will need to provide photographs taken from the shoreline toward the project and from the project to the shoreline.



WETLANDS	
---	BROKEN LINES DEPICT LEGAL SETBACKS, EASEMENTS, OR RESTRICTIONS UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED
P	POWER LINE
T	TELEPHONE LINE
W	WATER LINE
S	SEPTIC LINE
W	WELL
X	PERC HOLE

Owner:	JOHN DOE	Date:	11/25/94
Owner's Address:	104 N. 42ND, ISLAND, WA. 98102		
Site Address:	2360 BARETT HILL RD. SAN JUAN IS		
Tax Parcel No.:	95254005		

Description:	LOT 2 OF SHADOW POINT SP. VOL. 1, PG. 1, RECORDS OF S.J.CO.		
Prepared by:	John Smith Surveying 1234 Write Road Mytown, WA 91111 (360) 999-1212		
Drawing Title:	SITE PLAN	Drawing Scale:	1"=40'-0"

Page Number	1 of 2	Revision Date & No.	1 9/22/94 (JSD) 2 10/3/94 (SBJ)
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Permit Technicians, Coordinators, Clerks

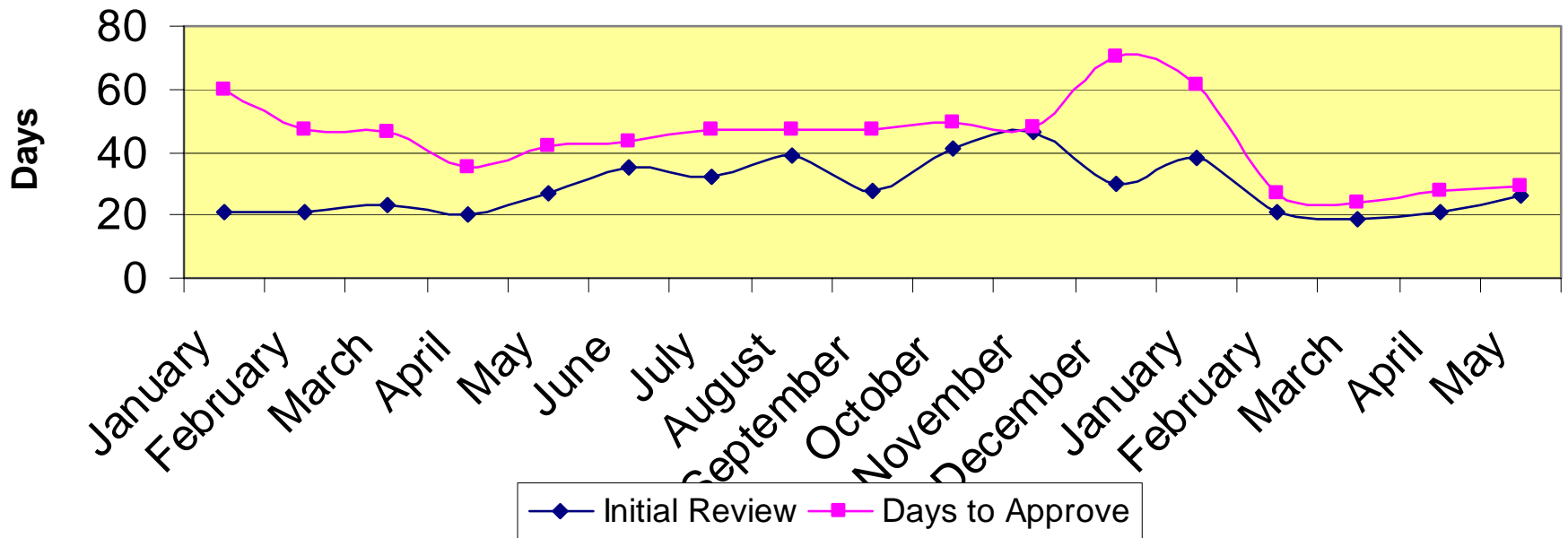
- I'm a big fan of permit technicians
 - They have the best view of the overall system
 - Make the most of (and develop) their skill sets
 - Intake checklist screening
 - Status, routing, tracking
 - Zoning criteria
 - Issuance
 - Addressing
 - Inquiries
- Lead quarterly process improvement meetings
- Empower with a good tracking system, process
- Broaden responsibility as skill increases
- Bldg officials often manage the techs

Intake Rigor

- Test for completeness at the counter
 - Prescriptive checklists
 - Good training
 - Experts to draw on as needed
- Initialize case records at intake (don't lose files)
- Collect fees (once determined complete)
- An hour for a NSFD intake
 - Need adequate capacity (manage lobby queues, lunchtime)
 - Efficient second tries (if incomplete at first)
 - Upcoming technology will help
- The efficiency of the review is set at this moment...

The Effect of Intake Standards

Initial Review vs Approval 2005-2006



Inquiries, Back office Support, MTBI

- Techs often answer ~50% of the questions
- We want to encourage up-front questions
- Questions often span multiple disciplines
 - Need the skills, intuition to recognize issues
 - Need continuous access to the dept experts
- MTBI – mean time between interruptions
 - Counter calls fragment review time blocks
 - Task choice largely governed by MTBI expectation
 - Mitigate with on-call hours and one 2-4 DND time block
- Assistance centers are great

Fast Track?

- To fast track or not to fast track...
- Three predominant approaches
 1. One track
 2. Fast track day (and/or dedicated reviewer)
 3. Appointments for live review and issuance
- It is valuable to separate small project review
 - Improves customer service, economic devel.
 - Reduces WIP (work in progress)
 - Can be seasonal

Appointments vs. Intake on Demand

- Many applicants like appointments
 - Helpful target for them and their subs to work toward
 - Promotes more rigorous applicant preparation
 - Few lobby waits, very predictable, more relaxed
- But many applicants don't want to wait for one
 - If calendar fills, appt backlog grows (a capacity issue)
 - Backlog can extend for weeks or months
 - With long timelines predictability falls again
 - People begin complaining, tensions rise, code/fee changes
- Some applications warrant more rigor than others
- Best is to offer both options
 - At a minimum, intake on demand is necessary (if ready!)

A Good Tracking System

- A whiteboard, spreadsheet or database
- Record of all WIP (cases)
- Queries for case types, oldest, by discipline
- Means of indicating status, approvals, holds
- Management reporting
- Online access

Know your Numbers

- Know your numbers
- Track WIP and aging (case load and age)
- Measure weekly (automated reports preferred)
- Prioritize as a system, based on the constraint
- Reprioritize sparingly
 - Beware the feedback loop
- Select performance targets
 - Publish current performance
- The majority of total elapsed time is applicant rework of applications



Permit Case Summary

Case Number:

Case Number: BLD05-00009	Case Status: Finald	Date Received: 1/5/2005
Description: NEW SFR W/ ATTACHED GARAGE AND DECK	Date Issued: 1/31/2005	
Applicant: JAMES O'NEIL	Expiration Date: 1/31/2007	
Site Address: 690 PIONEER DR	Case Finald: 2/21/2006	
Parcel No: 990603227- Other Cases Parcel Data Map It More Details		

Case Actions

Below is a list of actions that have been taken by staff for this permit case. They are sorted based on the date they were added to the database with most recent actions at the top. A value in the "Date Completed" field indicates that the action has been completed.

Description: Insp - FINAL FINAL Building
Date Completed: 2/21/2006

Description: Insp - Final Building
Date Completed: 2/21/2006

Description: Insp - Final Building
Date Completed: 2/17/2006

Description: Insp - Final Building
Date Completed: 2/3/2006

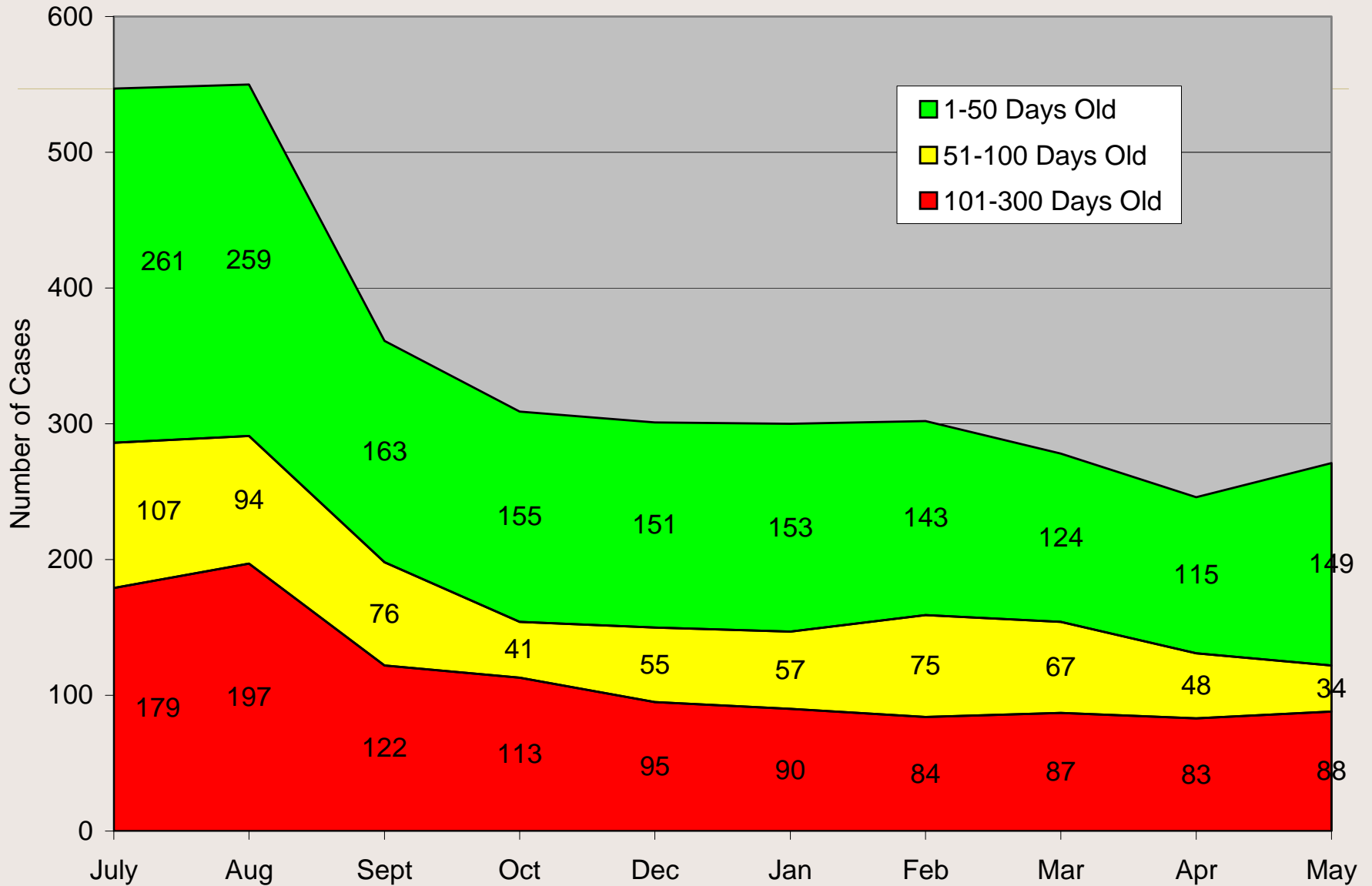
Description: Insp - Final Building
Date Completed: 2/1/2006

Description: File Archived
Date Completed: 1/27/2006

Online Access

- Highly recommended
- Reduces status sorties
- Improves applicant confidence
- Improves community access
- Online permitting too
- Requires good user practices and design
- But ensure velocity

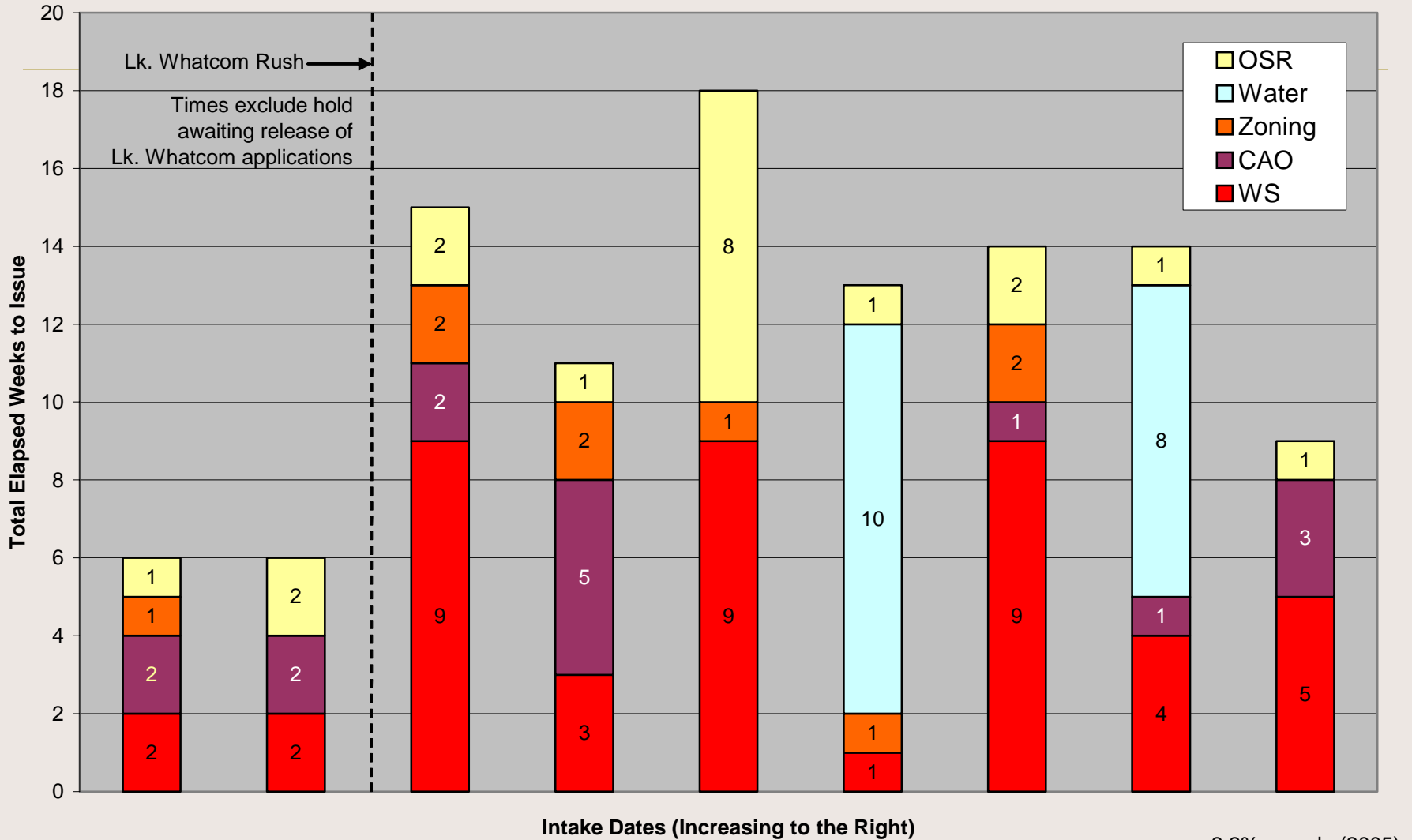
Bldg, Septic, DRD, Road Approach Cases



Spikes!

- Hints of a moratorium? Removing one?
- Magazines saying you're the new hot spot?
- Permit departments are vulnerable to spikes
- Rushed applications are notoriously poor
 - Intake scrutiny also tends to decline when overloaded
 - Leads to a surge in comment letters, more WIP
- Tendency to release all cases for review ASAP
 - Multitasking increases, productivity declines, backlog grows, complaints rise, interventions rise, multitasking increases....
- Put a buffer (queue) in place immediately
 - Hold back work, level load the WIP at the constraint
 - Triage queue cases (enable application repair before review begins)
 - Synchronize other dept reviews to that of the constraint (measure)
 - All cases will clear faster

Sample SFR Task Times (Watershed, CAO and OSR)



2.2% sample (2005)

Outside Review

- Bldg depts have become very scalable
(also tend to be first with improvements)
- Plans examiner review is rarely the constraint
- Good to have surge/special capacity available
 - Brief outside reviewers on your standards
 - Work towards minimum in-house checking
 - Generally send resubmittals outside too
- Invoicing and fee tracking can be problematic

Mixing Plan Review and Inspections

- Many plans examiners also inspect
 - Inspections generally come first
 - Plan review occurs as time pockets allow
- Reserve at least one scheduled 2-4 hour time block per week for dedicated plan review
 - Review the larger, more complex projects then
 - Fill in available gaps with smaller projects
- For greater inspection efficiency
 - Make sure applicants have marked their driveways!
 - Leave good notes on correction notices
 - Territories can lead to diverging standards

Consolidated Fire and Bldg Review

- Great productivity to combine fire review with plans examiner check for typical projects
- Indicative of a good relationship between Building Official and Fire Marshal
- Reduces routing and admin efforts
- Can improve insights at pre-app

Within the Building Dept

- ✓• Transaction standards, expectations, examples, prerequisites
- ✓• Permit technicians, coordinators, clerks
- ✓• Intake rigor, case setup
- ✓• Inquiries, back office support, MTBI, an assistance center
- ✓• Fast track?
- ✓• Appointments vs. intake on demand
- ✓• A good tracking system, good practices, online access, velocity
- ✓• Know your numbers, total elapsed time, measure weekly
- ✓• Handling application spikes, manage WIP
- ✓• Scaling, outside review and checking
- ✓• Mixing plan review and inspections, a 2-4 hour time block
- ✓• Consolidated fire and bldg review

Today's Presentation

- Predictability, efficiency and collaboration

✓ 1. Within the Building dept

2. Building dept within the overall system

20 min
break

- Present common situations
- Considerations for Building Officials
- Backdrop
 - The bldg dept is rarely the constraint of the system
 - Affects and affected by other depts and approvals

Agenda

9:00 to 10:30

Within the Bldg dept

- Common considerations for bldg departments
- Balancing services
- Managing productivity
- Surges in demand
- Innovation

10:50-12:00

Bldg Within the system

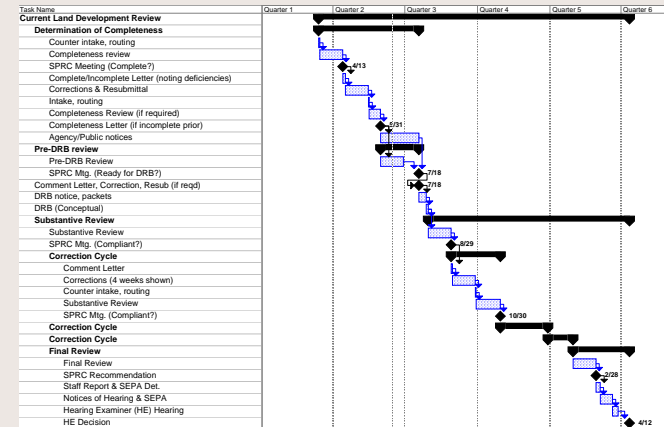
- Integrating with the broader system
- Reconciling priorities
- Sub optimization
- Role in land use, civils
- System improvement

Bldg Dept in the Overall System

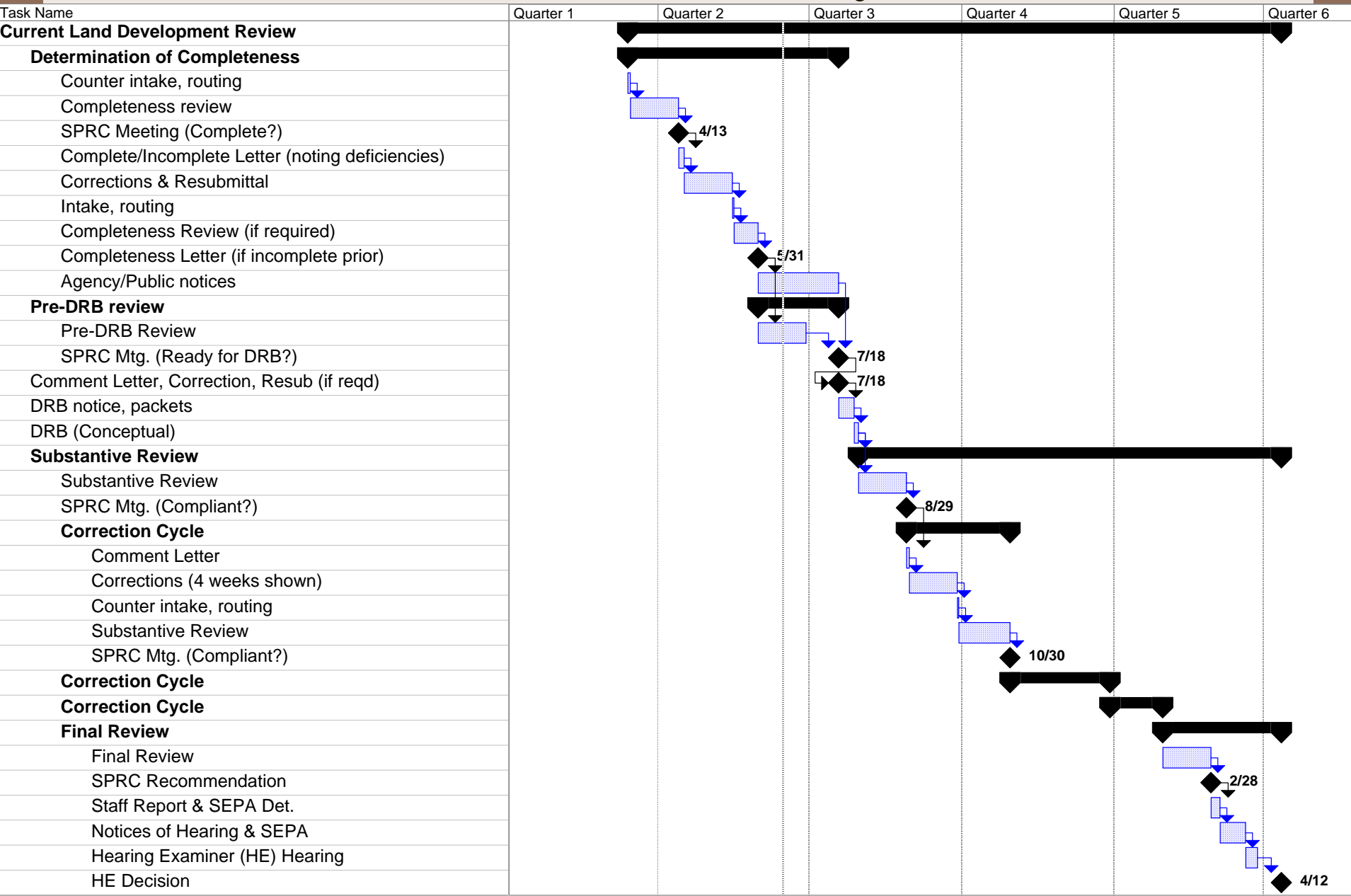
- A plan, a cycle, structured transactions
- Land use application review, Design review
- The constraint and avoiding sub optimization
- Weekly system management, prioritize around constraint
- Calibrate inspection capacity to the constraint
- Workflow distribution and mentoring
- Timing of health, planning, public works, plat reviews
- WRIA: a rising tide
- Passive notification: knowing when it's OK to issue
- Decorum
- Mission statement
- All-hands meetings, process focus, quarterly (techs)
- Innovation

A Plan, a Cycle, Structured Transactions

- A plan
 - Define what constitutes your plan review (across departments)
 - Establish integration points
- A cycle
 - Choose a timeline to complete your review cycles (4 weeks for instance)
- Structured transactions
 - Pre-app and scoping
 - Intake checklists, meetings
 - Debriefing meetings
 - Resubmittal meetings
 - Pre-con meetings
 - After-action reviews



Your Current Cycle



Land Use and Civil Plan Review

- Few building depts review land use actions or civil plan (engineering) submittals
 - Addressing an exception if bldg issues them
 - Land use pre-apps can be highly valuable though
- Land use pre-apps
 - Occupancies rarely known at this phase
 - Land use choices can really affect bldg costs
 - Less experienced applicants especially
 - Fire access is key at this step too (especially bldg/fire)
 - Your insights at this meeting can really help
 - Emphasize expensive or complicated features
 - Include key advisories in land use staff reports

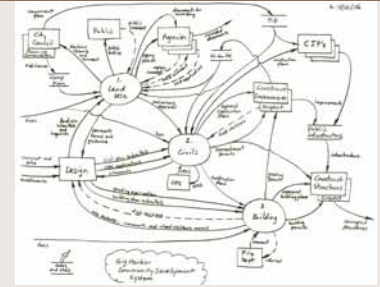
Design Review

- Cities (and some Counties) are adding design review to their approval processes
- Most focus at bldg permit phase
 - Streetscapes, scenic views, zone transitions
 - Fit with neighborhood, district special themes
 - Sometimes administrative, sometimes Boards
 - Scares applicants (many avoid at all costs)
- Some focus at land use phase (or both)
- Design review can be a valuable tool for communities
- But another variable that impacts bldg review

The Constraint

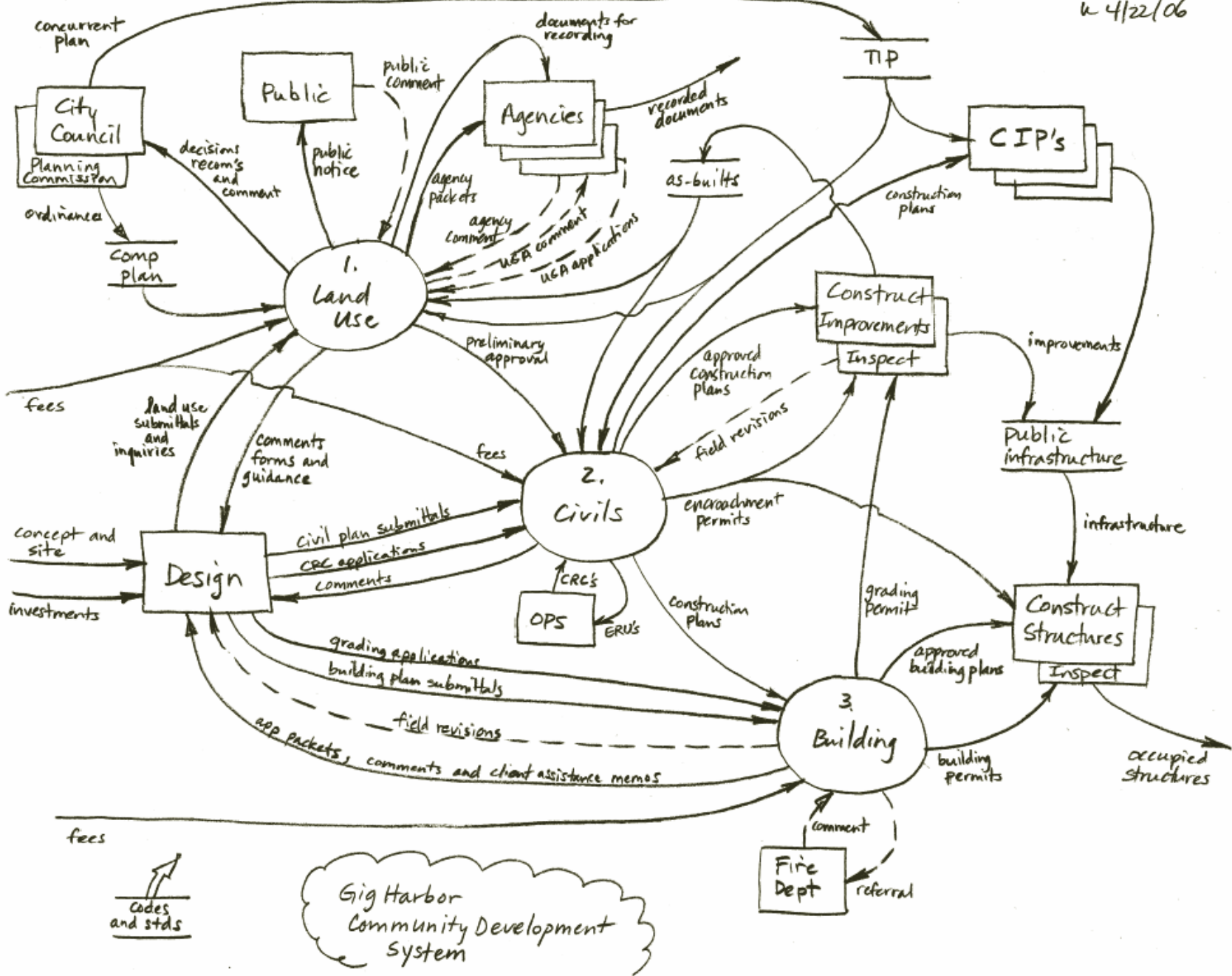
- In urban areas it's generally *engineering*
 - Municipal system integration
 - Source of many resubmittals
 - Stormwater and traffic solutions
 - Very hard to scale engineering capacity
- In rural areas there is more variety
 - Environmental health approvals
 - Critical area reviews
 - Urban growth services
- It's rarely the plans examiner review

The Constraint



- Process improvements
 - Most effective ones boost the Constraint
 - Consider less efficient steps if it helps the Constraint
- Test dept improvements for Constraint impact
- Align review priorities weekly (with Constraint)
- Seek ways for others to perform Constraint tasks
 - Completeness tests at intake are an example
 - Be liberal starting PE reviews even if it may change
 - Inspections (also calibrate inspection capacity)

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Mentoring and Workload Distribution

- Mentoring
 - Your most senior staff should be assigned the least number of cases (to work themselves)
 - Rather, senior staff should mentor others
 - Develops a stronger, more lasting team, creates more assignment options, and boosts skill sets
- Workload distribution
 - Avoid teams of one where possible (no statistics)
 - UGAs often lead to teams of one in county organizations
 - Use queues to pull work to reviewer desks (instead of pushing work to them)



PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
 1800 Continental Place • Mount Vernon, WA 98273
 Inspections 360.336.9306 • Office 360.336.9410 • Fax 360.336.9416

Residential Building Permit Submittal Checklist

Application will expire 6 mo from this date:

Approved before building permit application:

- Lot Certification** (See enclosed information)
 - Approved Lot Certification, previously recorded; **OR**,
 - Approved Lot Certification or RUE. PDS will submit it for recording; **OR**,
 - The lot has an existing residence. Lot cert is not required for accessory buildings.
- Critical Areas Review**
 - Completed staff report or Recorded *Protected Critical Area* site plan.

Accepted by: _____

Applicant: _____

Permit Number: _____

Notes/Zoning: _____

Submitted before or with a building permit application:

- Water**
 - Drilled Well Evaluation Number _____; **OR**,
 - Community/Public Well, approved by County Health Department; **OR**,
 - Public Connection: Provide a letter of availability or a connection receipt. (PUD, LaConner and Anacortes only)
- Septic Design**
 - Septic Permit Number _____; **OR**,
 - Public Sewer: Provide a letter of availability or a connection receipt.
- Site Plan** Provide 2 copies.
See the enclosed example. Site plan must include all 12 items to be complete.
- Drainage Plan** Provide 1 copy.
See the enclosed example. Site plan must include all 12 items to be complete.
- Access Permit Application**
 - Existing - Permit Number _____; **OR**,
 - Private Road (No permit required); **OR**,
 - State Road (permit from DOT); **OR**,
 - County Road (Permit required).
- Address Application**
- Building Permit Application and Fees**
Completed and signed.
- Construction Plans: 2 Complete Sets and 1 Extra Floor Plan**
Plans must be drawn to comply with the 2003 IBC or IRC, must be site and building specific and **MUST** include all of the following:
 - Foundation Plan
 - Roof Framing Plan
 - Cross-Section
 - Floor Plan
 - Floor Framing Plan
 - Elevations
- Manufactured Homes**
 - All: One copy of the floor plan.
 - New homes: Installation instructions (2 Sets).
 - Used: Model year of the home: _____. Homes older than 1977 require a Safety Inspection by the Department of Labor & Industries.
- Energy Code Compliance Worksheet**
For heated buildings other than manufactured homes.
- Shoreline Information, for parcels within 200' of a shoreline**
 - Show the distance of the structure to the Ordinary High Water Mark. (OHWM)
 - Itemize site coverage within 200' of the OHWM. Details are on the attachment.
 - Show adjacent houses within 300' of side property lines. Indicate their distance to the OHWM. This can be done on a separate page if necessary.
 - Construction Plan Cross-Section must indicate the height of the structure above existing grade.

Timing of Approvals

- Water
- Septic system
- Planning
- Environmental
- Public works
- Plat approvals
- Coming soon: WRIA

Passive Notification

- Held for planning
- Held for water, ...
- The building permit is the control point
 - Reviews often proceed while holds are resolved
 - Including the plans examiner check
 - But, we don't issue bldg permits until holds are cleared
- But how does bldg know when it's OK to issue?
 - Generally it's an active process (someone has to check)
 - Sometimes the applicant embarrasses us with a call
 - The best tracking systems prompt us passively (it tells us)

Decorum

- We need courtesy on all sides of the counter
- Useful to adopt a decorum policy
 - Tools to stop a disintegrating interaction
- It's not OK to berate staff
 - Breeds caution (efficiency falls like a rock)
 - Reports and documentation grow thicker
 - Lose great personnel
- E-mail anger: forward instead of reply

Mission Statement

“Compliant development, courteously,
collaboratively and efficiently”

- Have a look at your mission statement
 - Does it reflect the values of your community?
- Everyone on the team should know it
 - It should guide decisions

All-Hands Meetings

- Many jurisdictions never meet as a team
 - Quarterly is a good frequency
 - An hour in the morning or afternoon
 - Close the counter (or a skeleton crew)
- Talk about overall performance, goals, vision
- Have your techs suggest improvements
- Feature a specific area or topic
- Build community
- Managers: leverage these sessions

Innovation

- Building depts are often on the forefront
 - Online permitting (even inter-jurisdictional)
 - Expanded use of technicians, permit centers
 - Informational handouts
 - Collaborative interpretation of codes (like WABO)
 - Combination fire/building reviewers
- Continue this great innovation
- Watch for sub optimization (of the Constraint)
- Manage the impact of the Constraint on your staff

Conclusions

- Several techniques can improve performance
 - Within the building permit review process
 - In the broader system context
- Building departments are natural innovators
 - Many system improvements begin here
 - Best impact if designed to the broader constraint
- Begins with an assessment of how your departments are operating today and the needs of your jurisdiction
- Top 2
 - Make the most of your intake
 - Make the most of your permit technicians

The Latimore Company

- Thank you for this opportunity to share these common challenges and effective techniques with you today. Thank you WABO.
- The mission of The Latimore Company is predictability, efficiency and collaboration of the development permit process
- We would like to help your jurisdiction too. Please give us a call at 888-650-2999. Or e-mail us at klatimore@thelatimoreco.com

Have a safe trip home. ☺