

What kind of community do you want that would make your business successful?

Supportive, encouraging

Community should try to make it happen “not stand in the way” “

Be a team not an adversary; we are partners

Inspectors need to trust architects/engineers

Need better explanation of rules and regulations/process and procedures imposed on developers/builders; lay rules right out with clear explanation (i.e. water turned off for 30 days = abandoned house)

Would be nice if inspectors did a cost/benefit analysis on changes needed

Need to have transparency regarding who is making the decisions

Need answers from Inspections dept. where rules are found

Need quality staff, personalities, more exercise of reasonable discretion

Front line staff at in dept. need better attitude and better understanding of code

Given what you just said, what are the 2-3 most important issues or concerns? Why?

Changes required by inspectors even after plans have been approved - why? How is that possible? Can inspector rely on engineered plans (some engineers don't know the codes)?

Too much review of plans in the field instead of beforehand. More time should be spent on plan review in the beginning of the process.

Inspection department needs to work with you not against you all the time. Seems like they immediate go right to the violation instead of working with you.

GR has a good system to look at; BC has worse inspection dept. in 150 mile radius

BC needs more inspectors

No qualified people running dept.

The system of applying for and obtaining permits is unwieldy, and scheduling the inspections even more so. We contractors pay a \$50 administration fee on every permit, but are still required to do all the administrative work of scheduling with the customer.

Contractors have to hold an entire day to ensure they are there for an inspection instead of given a specific time for an inspection; wastes time Contractors are giving Battle Creek a bad reputation by telling prospects that Battle Creek is not the place to build/locate a new project

Too much black/white, and not enough exercise of discretion by inspectors (need to offer more than one option to correct), too much enforcement of code at highest/strictest level (1 inspector in particular)

What do you think is keeping us from the progress we want?

Inspectors are frustrated

Staff has had time to fix system and hasn't done so

It's not fair or sustainable for contractors to be taxed with administering the inspection "appointments", and then being fined because people need to work instead of staying home all day. When we call for inspection, we're to know what day is good for the customer. After determining if that will work for the City, we're then expected to contact the customer again to let them know that day will work. On the morning of the inspection, if we need to narrow it down to morning or afternoon, we or our customers can then call to find out. This lack of consideration for people's time, regardless of the cause, is unacceptable and causes adversarial feelings. In the event that people are unwilling or unable to wait all day, the inspector stops by and then bills us contractors for a \$50 lockout fee.

Too tied up in minutiae, not enough focus on bigger issues

Dept. behind in technology (should be able to email inspection results; applications on line; too much reliance on fax)

Interpretation of code should involve a dialogue between engineer/architect and inspector

Need clearer application of codes and clearer interpretation

The system of inspections is the issue

When “safety inspections” are performed on vacant/abandoned properties, unreasonable violations are cited, which are related to safety of the house; these ignorant requirements and expenses keeps investors and families from bringing important value to the city.

When you think about what we’ve talked about, what are the kinds of things that could be done that would make a difference?

Independent review by City Manager of other inspection depts. in other cities, don’t take staff along

Grand Rapids has a very well-run and efficient inspection division that has been recommended to Battle Creek for years. The minimum permit fee is 50% less at \$67, and everything is electronic. Apply for the permit online, and pay online. Contractors emails them when the job is complete, and they schedule the appointment time, not day. They help their schedule by requiring two working days for inspections. They show up for their appointment time, or call if they’re going to be late, and they post everything electronically. Contact Lou Canfield, Development Center Coordinator at 616-456-4123 to find out how they do it.

In other words, they run it like the business that it is, and they are considerate of the customers’ time, both homeowner and contractor.

Hire a private inspection firm/don’t hire a private inspection firm (mixed responses)

City needs to enforce requirements that architects/engineers seal plans appropriately; it seems that some unqualified architects/engineers are sealing projects

Question about whether Supervisor has authority to overturn decision of chief building authority

Expedite processes but in a way that still ensures safety

More education is needed (realtors, land bank), i.e. pre-inspection through title company

Encourage development of abandoned houses by not charging for permits/inspections; BC needs to encourage rehab of houses or tear them down; what is the future focus?

Need more simultaneous review of various components, instead of sequential review; holds up the process

If we came back together in 6 months or a year, what might you see which would tell you that the things we talked about tonight were starting to happen?

New staff, new supervisor, new leadership in inspection dept. with mandatory experience in building

More pro-business attitude

Responsive customer service

Front line staff would've gone through a customer service workshop

Inspections would be asked to give input about the process

Timely plan review to facilitate building process; 2 week turn around; feasibility process at beginning of project

More staff, more inspectors, better/faster customer service

More contractor input in selecting staff

More access to inspectors, rather than a one hour window to contact them during the day, access to cell numbers too

A chief building official would be hired

Better communication

More use of technology i.e. submit plan electronically, online permits and approval process

More courtesy to homeowners during inspections