

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

Where there are lots of opportunities for businesses to be successful

Where businesses want the community to be a better place and care about the City

Citizens have buy-in in the community

Where we're in it together

We're currently bringing in lots of businesses, especially to the Fort but it doesn't seem like the businesses are truly invested. They're hiring temporary employees rather than permanent employees.

Businesses that appeal to local people (types of shops, etc.)

Residents are invested in the community; they're in it for the long haul

Design and layout of the city is prohibitive; we're limited on space in the downtown, corridors are widely spaced out

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

Large number of inspections, the time it takes and the lack of manpower to deliver services

It's difficult to do next day inspections with limited staff. Three inspectors cover 4 trades (plumbing, mechanical, construction, electrical)

Inspectors have a lot on their plates, not just inspections. Other duties pull them away from focusing on inspections – safety inspections, fire investigations, liquor, used car licenses, testifying in court and more.

Scheduling inspections is difficult. Inspectors never know what they are walking into. One inspection could take 15 minutes, another could take 3 hours. This makes it difficult for inspectors to arrive at a specific time, as desired by contractors/residents/etc.

Turn around time is great (next day)- but we don't always have the capacity.

Lack of awareness/communication with/among contractors, residents, etc. regarding updated codes, when permits are necessary, etc.

Callers don't leave address when saying "I'm your inspection today." Don't realize how busy we are and that we have several. Would be helpful if callers knew where and how to find information.

Don't know what our schedule is going to be until the next day.

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

Inspectors are limited in what they can and can't do. They are restricted on how "creative" they can be with the code.

Lack of technology – Nobis (laptops used by inspectors in the field) are only updated when they sync them in the office, need to upgrade Nobis because they are slow and constantly crash in the field, can't submit electronic documents for permitting process.

Can't apply for permits online.

Inspectors are in their offices from 8-9 a.m. and 4-5 p.m. to schedule inspections, answer voicemails, complete paperwork, etc. The rest of the time from 9-4 p.m. is used for inspections. That's time for about 8 inspections. We're trying to do 15. Permit applicants don't have instant access to inspectors during the day. Some inspectors use their cell phones during the day to answer questions but can't always answer every call when with a customer.

Inspectors seems to be blamed for holding up progress; need to have a conversation with Battle Creek Unlimited and businesses about this so that all parties can work cooperatively.

There's a perception that inspectors want to find something wrong during an inspection. However, if inspectors find something wrong, it creates more work for them. They want contractors to be successful on the first inspection.

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

Increase staffing levels and capacity

Better technology

Shift the way Inspection days are scheduled – arrive at 7 a.m. to have more time to schedule, do paperwork, etc.

Get inspectors more involved in the pre-planning of projects with BCU, businesses, etc.

A shift in mindsets/attitudes

More support from upper management, it seems like complaints go to directly to supervisor/city manager; are supervisors/city manager asking “have you talked to the inspector about this?” or check-in with the inspector about the situation first. Make sure there is a clear chain of command.

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?

Inspectors would have more time to deliver services

There would be more inspectors or their workload would be less

Technology would be upgraded (new computer systems)- able to verify permits that may have been issue after upload, ability to access information out in the field as move throughout the day

There would be a dedicated place to do plan reviews, a quieter area with adequate storage for plans

Questions/Comments

Who selected the people for the small group? Is that group inclusive and are all voices being heard? Are we hearing what is working as well as what isn't (positive and negative perspectives)? Should contractors that pull the most permits be included in the small group meeting?

We go through this every time the city gets new management. However, this is the first time the city manager visited other communities to gather information.

Communication has been pretty good throughout the department but inspectors were uncertain and unclear about this process.

For more information regarding conversation notes contact:

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