

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

Where there is open dialogue with inspectors.

Where there is 24/7 access to inspection results and people know the information is available online and know where to access the information on the city website.

Information is immediately updated.

Where permit applicants know the codes/requirements before they apply for a permit.

Where more people were aware of the regulations, information was readily available to answer common questions.

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

There is a language barrier between the terminology in the code and the way people understand information (a need for code to be translated/interpreted into “easy speak”)

Need for better access to answer the public’s questions; need better communication about the regulations, codes, etc. with contractors, residents, etc.

Inspector workload interferes with the ability to provide customer service that meets the needs of the public

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

Lack of technology – not able to apply for permits online, can’t receive online payments, laptops are outdated, lots of issues with equipment not functioning properly so inspectors can’t access information in the field or it causes delays and backs up their schedules

Lack of staffing – inspectors have time constraints, need to streamline their responsibilities or re-structure their day to accommodate customer needs. Time constraints can negatively impact inspectors demeanor- they don’t always have time to explain and might feel pressured to keep calls short- “it’s in the code book.” Inspectors

come in blind every day. Could have 12 or 42 call by 4:50pm.

Inspectors day can get interrupted by being called to a drug bust.

Phone calls during their office hour can easily turn into 45 minute conversations, which forces them to risk being short, or late for inspections.

Three different ways to see a house, three different reports (building, electrical...). If one person did safety inspections for consistency, 2-6 weeks could be down to 1-2 weeks. Realtors complain about safety inspections not being uniform.

Staff gets a lot of “tell me how to do it” inquiries from the public but doesn’t have the expertise to answer general questions. Typically staff can assess if a permit is needed but can’t direct the individual on what is required to meet code, can only direct them to inspectors or the code book.

Home owners don’t always know they need a permit for a water heater. There isn’t a book that easily explains what you need a permit for. The book is too big and the ordinance is 7 pages. We almost need an extra person, like an interpreter to put code in plain speak.

Sometimes contractors are relying on inspectors to do their job. There are some that have a question and some that want you to do the work. Contractors do things differently- like how they handle a resident getting an inspection for a water heater.

General knowledge- residential and new business owners- you have to use a couple different departments when opening a business and not everyone realizes that. It’s a lot of information that maybe can’t be condensed to one page.

Every summer pools are a big thing. They require a permit and often times people get mad because the permit costs more than the pool.

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

More communication/awareness with the public about requirements- “these are *some* things you might need a permit for”; insert in water bills, specific communication to new homeowners on what inspections they may need, flyers posted at Lowe’s/Menards to remind people to check their local regulations to ensure compliance/permitting

requirements are met, more communication with NPCs, a community forum with multiple city departments available to talk to residents about season related issues (winter – snow removal, fall – burn permits, summer – pool permits, air conditioner permits, etc.). An “Ask the Inspector” Access Vision show?

Change in staffing capacity and/or office hours- structure of day. Could there be an office hours day for each inspector? One safety inspector for consistency? Could they start their day an hour earlier to have more time for calls and office work? Or an “interpreter” to translate code into “easy speak?”

Build trust between inspectors and contractors/residents – more cooperation toward a resolution, problem solving together

Shift in attitudes/mind sets of all parties

More communication between contractors and customers so that they know customers are to call the city to schedule an inspections (contractors do this differently). Seems like there’s a fear of communication

We have thought about a ride along to get a better idea of what they do out in the field and how we might be even more helpful.

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?

There would be less mean phone calls and complaints

Better technology, Nobis would be updated and consistently working

Inspector structure/schedules would have changed (office hours, staffing levels)

Inspectors would be accomplishing their workload without people crawling down their backs

Inspectors would have less time constraints

Inspectors would be less stressed

Contractors would give inspectors a chance

Questions/Comments

What's next? How will this information be used?

Know some people who have asked about being on the small group. How can they join?