



CITY OF
Ames™

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MEMO

36

To: Honorable Mayor Ann Campbell and City Council

From: Tiffany Coleman, Business Development Coordinator

Date: April 4, 2014

Subject: 2013 Development Process Survey

Included in the Council packet are the results of the 2013 Development Process Survey. This survey has been conducted a total of three years. The purpose is to give customers of the Planning Department and Inspection Division the opportunity to provide feedback to the Council on the services they have received.

Enclosed for your review are both the results of the survey and a copy of the presentation slides I will use during my report at the City Council meeting.

Development Process Survey

2013 Results



Introduction

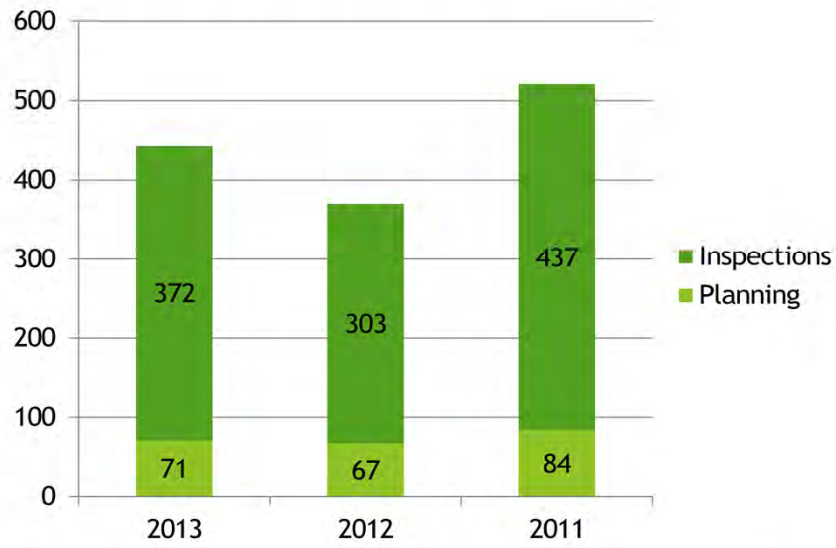
- ▶ Third time survey has been completed
- ▶ Results are very positive
- ▶ All results of the survey are contained in the Survey Monkey report
- ▶ Responses are anonymous
- ▶ Overview of process



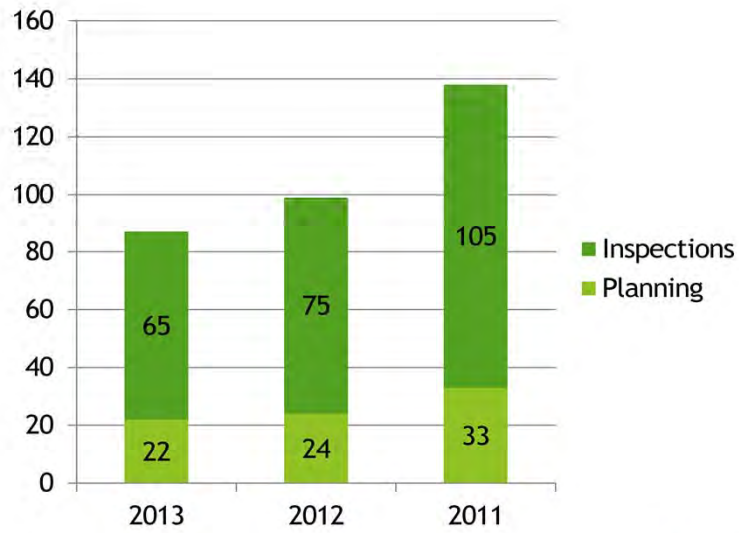
Overview



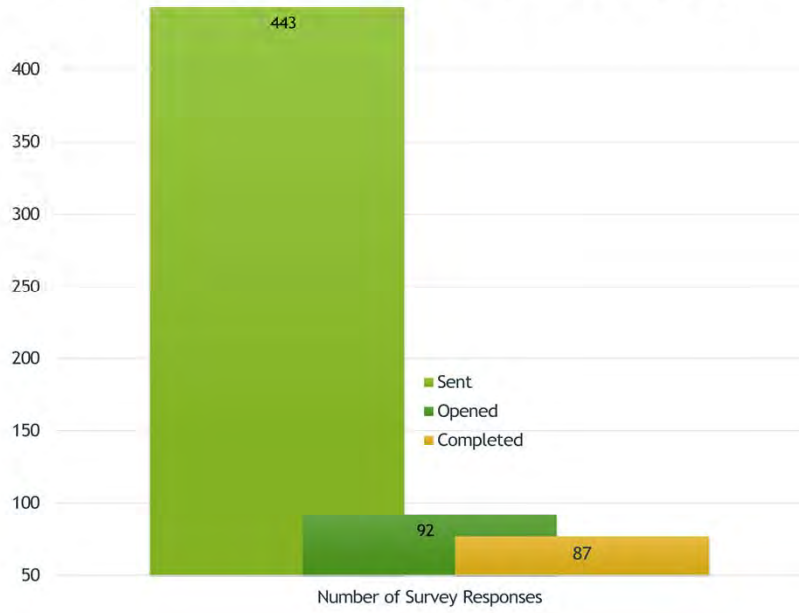
Surveys Sent Per Year



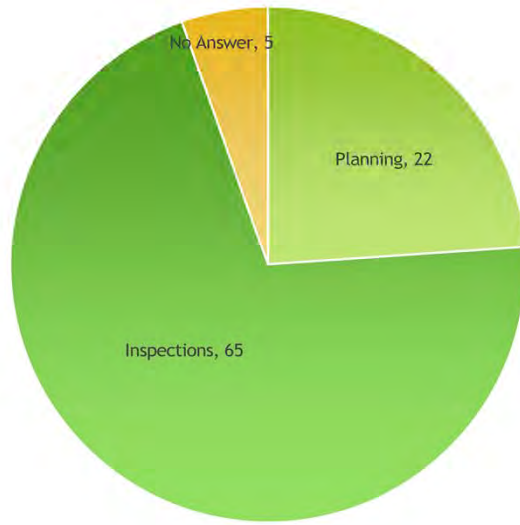
Survey Responses Per Year



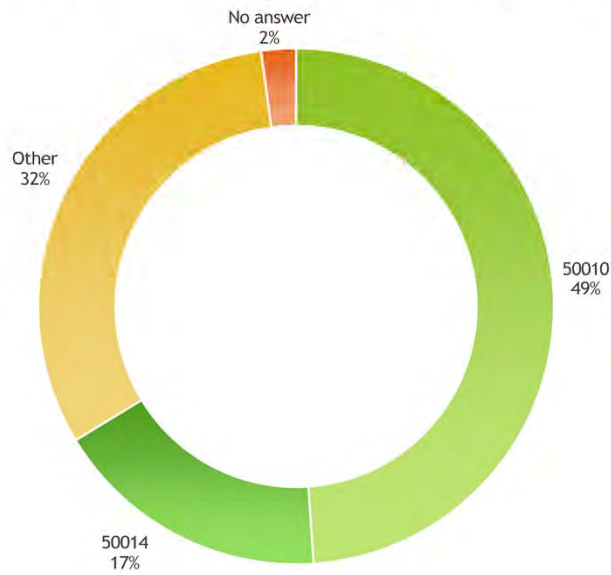
2013 Response Summary



Primary Department Interaction



Business Location by Zip Code

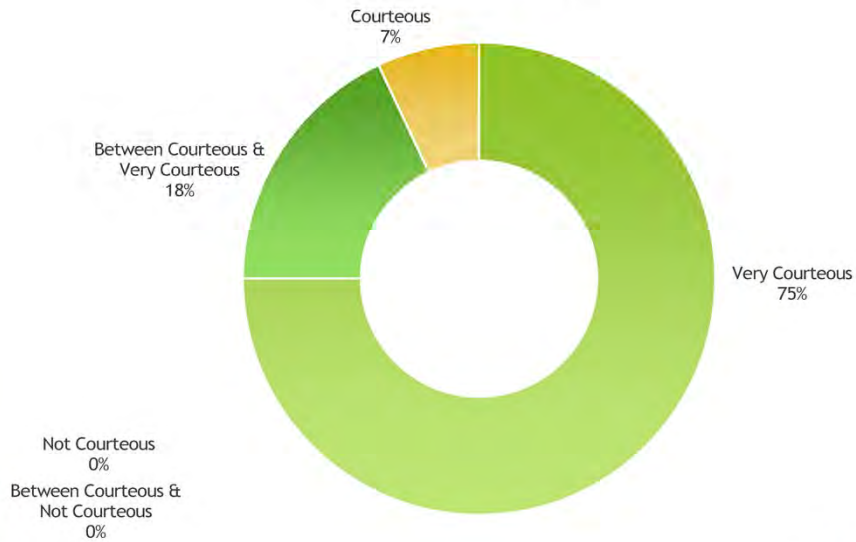


Inspection Division



Inspection Service Quality

Staff Courtesy



2012

74% Very Courteous

9% Between Courteous & Very Courteous

12% Courteous

5% Between Courteous & Not Courteous

2011

58% Very Courteous

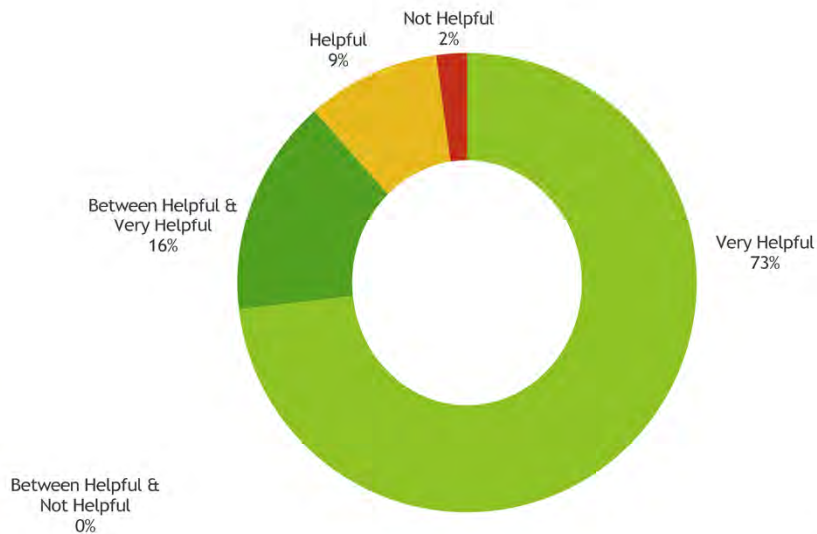
20% Between Courteous & Very Courteous

19% Courteous

3% Between Courteous & Not Courteous

Inspection Service Quality

Staff Helpfulness



2012

67% Very Helpful

17% Between Helpful & Very Helpful

13% Helpful

3% Between Helpful & Not Helpful

2011

57% Very Helpful

18% Between Helpful & Very Helpful

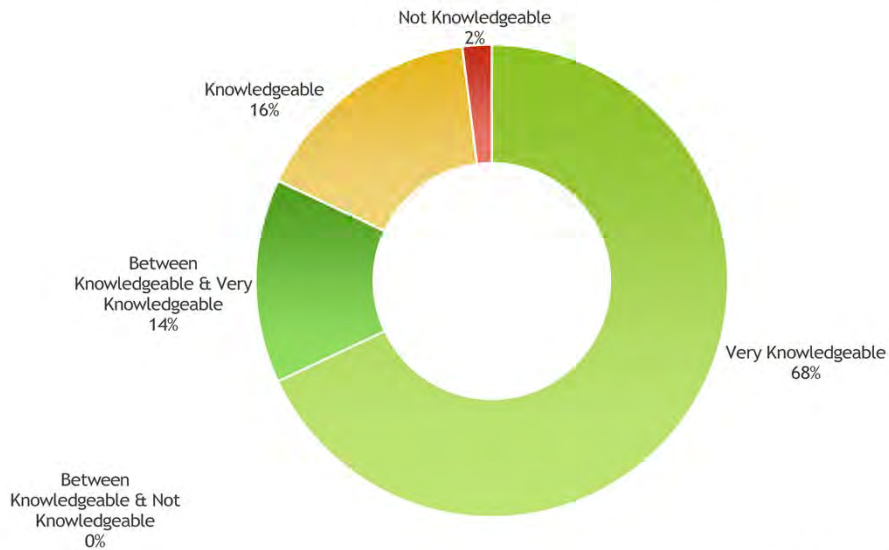
18% Helpful

3% Between Helpful & Not Helpful

4% Not Helpful

Inspection Service Quality

Staff Knowledge



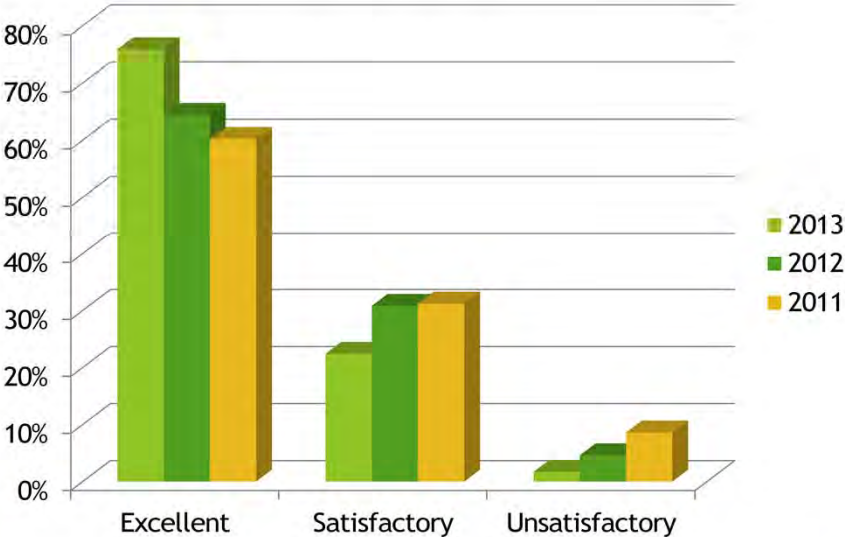
2012

- 67% Very Knowledgeable
- 17% Between Knowledgeable & Very Knowledgeable
- 14% Knowledgeable
- 2% Between Knowledgeable & Not Knowledgeable

2011

- 54% Very Knowledgeable
- 18% Between Knowledgeable & Very Knowledgeable
- 17% Knowledgeable
- 9% Between Knowledgeable & Not Knowledgeable
- 2% Not Knowledgeable

Inspection Division Overall Rating

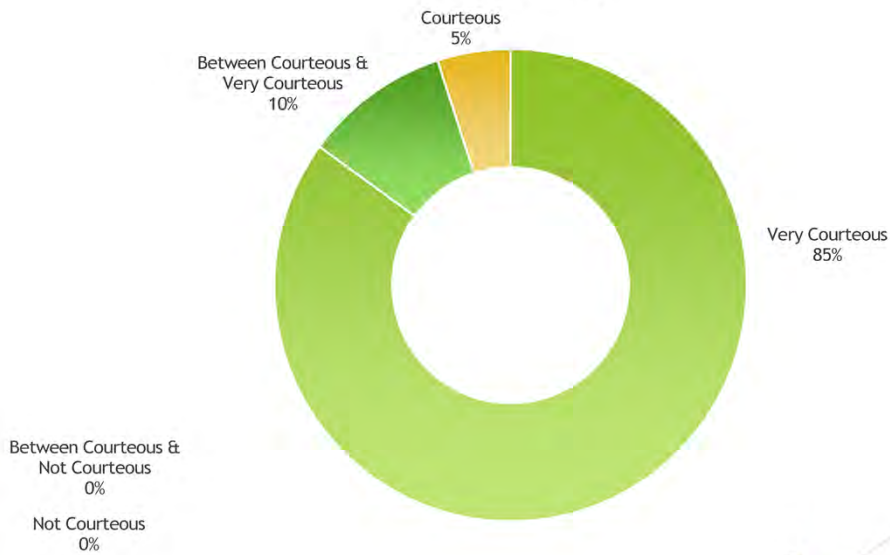


Planning Division



Planning Service Quality

Staff Courtesy



2012

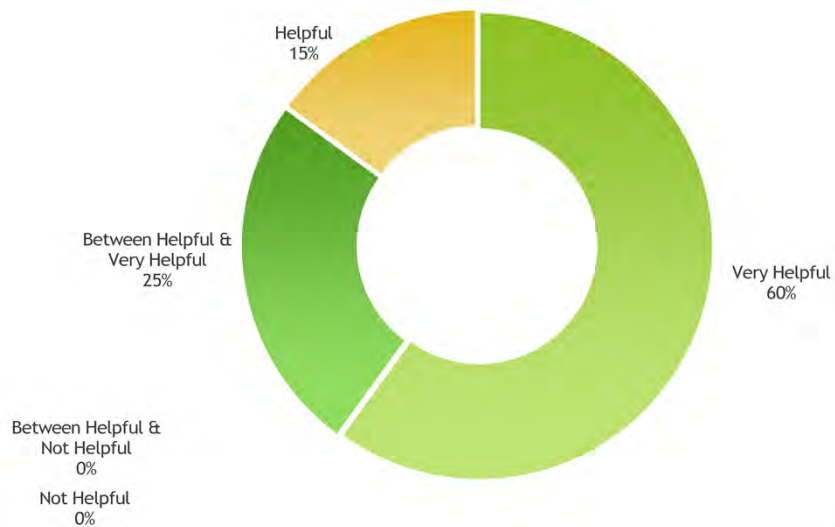
- 57% Very Courteous
- 19% Between Courteous & Very Courteous
- 24% Courteous
- 0% Between Courteous & Not Courteous

2011

- 74% Very Courteous
- 18% Between Courteous & Very Courteous
- 4% Courteous
- 4% Between Courteous & Not Courteous

Planning Service Quality

Staff Helpfulness



2012

29% Very Helpful

38% Between Helpful & Very Helpful

19% Helpful

14% Between Helpful & Not Helpful

2011

63% Very Helpful

22% Between Helpful & Very Helpful

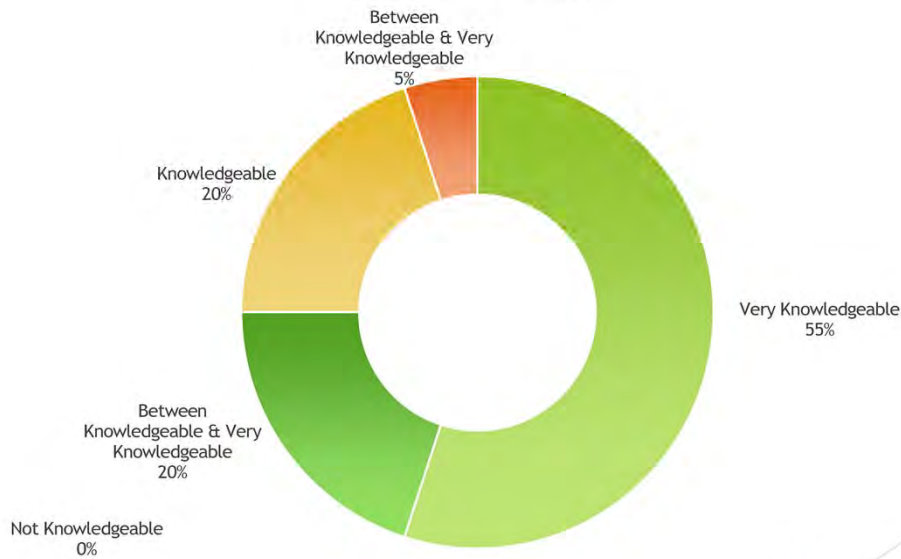
11% Helpful

0% Between Helpful & Not Helpful

4% Not Helpful

Planning Service Quality

Staff Knowledge



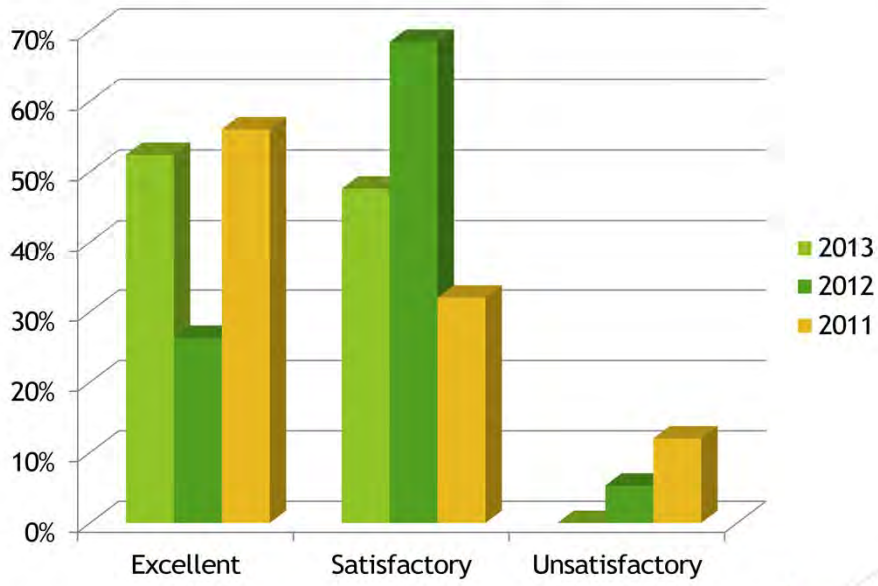
2012

- 29% Very Knowledgeable
- 29% Between Knowledgeable & Very Knowledgeable
- 33% Knowledgeable
- 9% Between Knowledgeable & Not Knowledgeable

2011

- 59% Very Knowledgeable
- 19% Between Knowledgeable & Very Knowledgeable
- 15% Knowledgeable
- 0% Between Knowledgeable & Not Knowledgeable
- 7% Not Knowledgeable

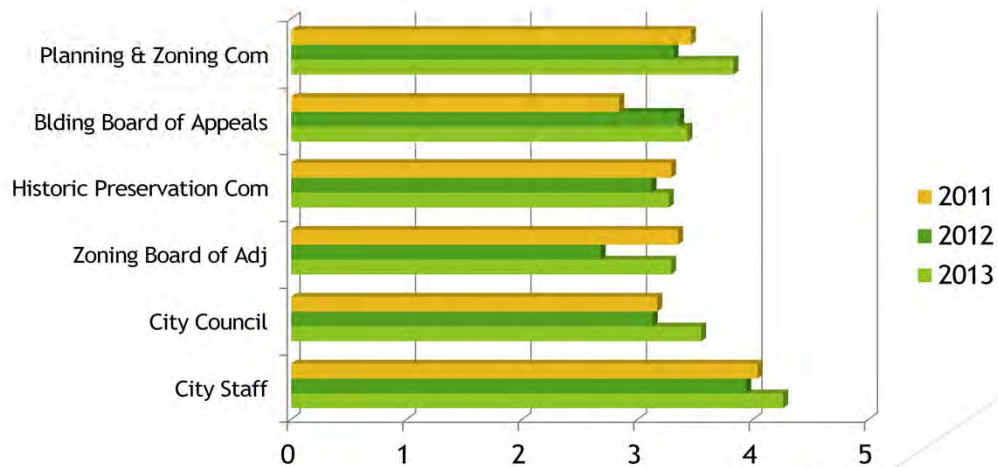
Planning Division Overall Rating



Overall Rating of City



How well did we accomplish a “can-do” attitude and promote Ames as a welcoming place to do business?
(Rating Scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being a high or good rating.)






Closing

- ▶ Improvement each year
- ▶ Fewer surveys completed each year
- ▶ Already very high marks for staff

Thank You
Questions





1. Please let us know what zip code your business is located in.

		Response Percent	Response Count
50010		50.0%	45
50014		17.8%	16
Other (please specify)		32.2%	29
answered question			90
skipped question			2











Other Zip Codes

43081	50131	50309
50009	50156	50310
50014	50161	50313
50023	50244	50322
50028	50247	50322
50039	50248	50322
50105	50266	50322
50111	50273	50613
50111	50309	64055
50125	50309	

2. You were selected to receive this survey due to your recent interaction with the City of Ames. Which of the following departments were you primarily working with on your project (s)?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Planning (e.g., site plan review, subdivisions, variances, special use permits, historic preservation, etc.)		25.3%	22
Inspections (includes: building, electrical, plumbing, mechanical and construction plans review)		74.7%	65
		answered question	87
		skipped question	5

3. Which Inspection staff member(s) assisted you with your most recent proposal(s)/project(s)? (please select all that apply)

		Response Percent	Response Count
Seana Perkins (Building Official)		7.0%	4
Bruce Kinkaid (Plumbing)		28.1%	16
Craig Hageman (Building)		26.3%	15
Adam Ostert (Building)		22.8%	13
Mike Makelbust (Plumbing)		36.8%	21
Nick Patterson (Electrical)		35.1%	20
Scott Ripperger (Plans)		21.1%	12
Tom Henriksen (Fire)		12.3%	7
Unknown		8.8%	5
Other (please type name below)		12.3%	7
		answered question	57
		skipped question	35

Other Staff Listed

Holly McDonald	rental inspectors
Freeman, Jillyn and	Sara Van Meeteren
Imhoff	sara van meeteren
Natalie Herrington	Sue Fiala

4. How would you describe the Inspection staff's courteousness while assisting you with your proposal(s)/project(s)?

	Very Courteous		Courteous		Not Courteous	Rating Average	Rating Count
Please select the most appropriate choice.	75.0% (42)	17.9% (10)	7.1% (4)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	4.68	56

Use this space to explain your choice

8

answered question

56

skipped question

36

Comments

- Na
- BOTH ARE WILLING TO EXPLAIN ITEMS EITHER GOOD OR BAD
- the guys were great and helpful
- Personable
- They were both extremely courteous and helpful
- Gives thorough inspections and is professional about it. Able to make alternative decisions for difficult to accomplish projects.
- always willing to listen to my concerns
- In my communications [the staff member] was helpful and always responsive via telephone and E-mail.

5. How would you describe the Inspection staff's helpfulness while assisting you with your proposal(s)/project(s)?

	Very Helpful	Helpful	Not Helpful	Rating Average	Rating Count		
Please select the most appropriate choice.	73.2% (41)	16.1% (9)	8.9% (5)	0.0% (0)	1.8% (1)	4.59	56

Use this space to explain your choice 6

answered question	6
skipped question	36

Comments

- Na
- [Staff member] worked with me to be sure I knew what had to be done.
- ALWAYS HAVE TIME TO ANSWER QUESTIONS
- They were both extremely courteous and helpful
- Always is able to assist with any questions.
- willing to help but never available before 9:00 am I understand that there is a daily staff meeting from 7:30 to 9:00 am. Unwilling to schedule an inspection at a specific time even when the time is the inspector's choice.

6. How would you describe the Inspection staff's professional knowledge while assisting you with your proposal(s)/project (s)?

	Very Knowledgeable		Knowledgeable		Not Knowledgeable	Rating Average	Rating Count
Please select the most appropriate choice.	67.9% (38)	14.3% (8)	16.1% (9)	0.0% (0)	1.8% (1)	4.46	56

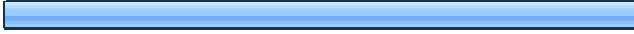
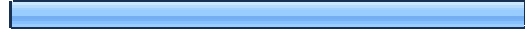
Use this space to explain your choice 3

answered question	56
skipped question	36


Comments

- We work with many inspection departments in various cities in central Iowa. Ames' plumbing inspection department is second to none. It puts meaning and purpose back into our profession. Thank you.
- THEY CAN REFERENCE TO CODE BOOK IF I HAVE QUESTIONS
- They helped me so that I could understand what Ames needed.

7. Did your project(s) require you to have interaction with counter staff at City Hall?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		55.2%	32
No		44.8%	26
		answered question	58
		skipped question	34

8. Were you met with a "welcoming" attitude by our front counter staff?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		100.0%	32
No		0.0%	0

Use this space to explain your choice 4

answered question	32
skipped question	60

Comments

- ALWAYS HAPPY
- They were busy yet made sure to apologize for the wait. I like that, the made me feel my time was valuable to.
- It is a pleasure to walk in
- Refreshing compared to other cities. We work all across the state

9. How would you describe the helpfulness of our front counter staff?

	Very Helpful	Helpful	Not Helpful	N/A	Rating Average	Rating Count		
Please select the most appropriate choice.	74.2% (23)	12.9% (4)	12.9% (4)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	4.61	31

Use this space to explain your choice

1

answered question

31

skipped question

61

Comments

- Even looks over applications for errors

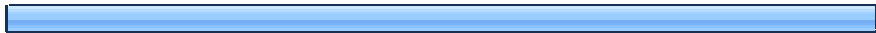


10. Which of the following best describes the final outcome of your proposal(s)/project(s)? (please select all that apply)

		Response Percent	Response Count
Approved by City staff		96.1%	49
Approved by Building Board of Appeals		0.0%	0
Approved by City Council		5.9%	3
Denied by City staff		2.0%	1
Denied by Building Board of Appeals		0.0%	0
Denied by City Council		0.0%	0
Other (please specify below)		2.0%	1
answered question			51
skipped question			41





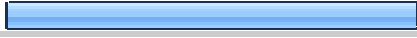




Comments

- Refusal to act on and enforce occupancy code by [staff member]

11. Overall, how would you describe your experience with the Inspection Division?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Excellent		75.9%	44
Satisfactory		22.4%	13
Unsatisfactory		1.7%	1
		answered question	58
		skipped question	34

12. Which of the following contributed to your satisfaction level with the City of Ames' Inspection Division? (please select all that apply)

		Response Percent	Response Count
Clearly written local ordinances		13.2%	7
City staff's helpful, "can do" attitude		54.7%	29
Reasonable cost of permit(s)		26.4%	14
Timeliness of response		69.8%	37
Clear policies and/or procedures		35.8%	19
Accurate billing process		26.4%	14
Early communication of expectations		20.8%	11
City staff's willingness to help identify solutions to help facilitate your project		60.4%	32
Other (please specify below)		9.4%	5
		answered question	53
		skipped question	39

Comments

- Jobsite explanation and copies of written code compliance
- Refusal to act on violations in the occupancy code, such as in no permit to occupy contributed to our dissatisfaction
- home owners say permit cost are to high
- Staff's use of email communications and email for permit submittal
- [Staff member] is knowledgeable and helpful. [Staff member] are also doing a nice job. [Staff member] is professional and helpful.

13. What comments or suggestions could you share to help us improve your next overall experience?

	Response Count
	11
answered question	11
skipped question	81

Comments

- none
- Building permits fine, legal advise to home owners not good, allowing occupancy codes to be disregarded terrible.
- none
- I have had problems with the [staff member doing inspections], what [person] communicates to you in person and what [person] sends in writing are completey different, [person] takes to much of you time telling you about [the person] and [the person] is not sincere, All the others in the inspection division are helpful awesome and repectful
- It would be nice to be able to schedule set times for inspections instead of morning or afternoon
- Inspection Dept and end users could benefit from permit and scheduling software.
- The commercial inspector came out on a residential job, was unclear as to what codes applied, but a timely inspection. I have no complaints.
- The city staff is great. They are always friendly and accommodating. The cost of an electrical permit is off balance. For a new house it runs between 1 and 2 percent of the total project cost. For a small project it can run up over %50 of the total cost. This causes small projects to be awarded to contractors who will do the work without getting a permit. The billing process needs help. The prices are unclear or undefined. The invoices come back with a different fee then indicated on the permit application every time. The invoices are mailed out on paper. Of the 10 venders that I do the most business with the city is 1 of 2 that still only uses paper and does not have an online interface to check invoice status and pay bills. The terms of payment are not standard and do not comply with Iowa's CHAPTER 537 CONSUMER CREDIT CODE and maybe they don't have to because you are a government entity but it would be really nice if the your bill will fall into a regular bill pay cycle that a business has.
- Satisfied for now.
- There has never been an error on billing. The cost of permits is too high. The cost is so high that permits are avoided. Staff is willing to suggest alternatives when my plans are not acceptable. When new codes are adopted or when the fees for permits are changed there is no announcement of the changes. Easy to understand language in ordinances. "fees are doubled" rather than "fees will be applied at two times the normal rate. There are written policies available that explain all the permit and inspection procedures. These are also available on the city internet page. Always willing to take calls if available and call back if not able to answer right away.
- Notification of increases in permit fees (not many people read the legal section of the newspaper) In someone's absence have another staff person or persons be able to fill in, which would prevent permits being delayed, especially for extended absences (a week or more)







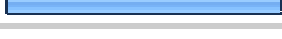


14. Which of the following could help improve your satisfaction level with our Inspection Division? (please select all that apply)

		Response Percent	Response Count
Change the Local ordinances		0.0%	0
Display a more helpful, "can-do" attitude		100.0%	1
Reduce the cost of permit(s)		0.0%	0
Improve the timeliness of response		100.0%	1
Add clarity to the policies or procedures		0.0%	0
Increase accuracy in the billing process		0.0%	0
Show more willingness to identify potential solutions		0.0%	0
Early communications of expectations		0.0%	0
Other (please specify below)		0.0%	0
		answered question	1
		skipped question	91

15. How can we improve your next overall experience?

	Response Count
	0
answered question	0
skipped question	92

16. Which Planning staff member(s) assisted you with your most recent proposal(s)/project(s)? (please select all that apply)

		Response Percent	Response Count
Ray Anderson		28.6%	6
Jeff Benson		38.1%	8
Charlie Kuester		66.7%	14
Kelly Diekmann		4.8%	1
Lorrie Banks		4.8%	1
Karen Marren		19.0%	4
Bob Kindred		23.8%	5
Unknown		4.8%	1
Other (please type name below)		4.8%	1
		answered question	21
		skipped question	71

17. How would you describe the Planning staff's courteousness while assisting you with your proposal(s)/project(s)?

	Very Courteous		Courteous		Not Courteous	Rating Average	Rating Count
Please check your response by number.	85.0% (17)	10.0% (2)	5.0% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	4.80	20

Use this space to explain your choice

3

answered question

20

skipped question

72

Comments

- Very Courteous-Couldn't click on choice
- [Staff member]., in particular, is very good about returning phone calls timely and responding to his email. Very responsive. [Staff member] does a good job as well. [Staff member] is not reliable in terms of being responsive -- there were times that I did not receive a call back or any acknowledgment.
- Mainly dealt with [staff member]. Easily accessible and nice to speak with on the phone. Seemed ready to help.

18. How would you describe the Planning staff's helpfulness while assisting you with your proposal(s)/project(s)?

	Very Helpful		Helpful		Not Helpful	Rating Average	Rating Count
Please check the appropriate rating.	60.0% (12)	25.0% (5)	15.0% (3)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	4.45	20

Use this space to explain your choice

3

answered question

20

skipped question

72

Comments

- Very Helpful-Couldn't click on choice
- The timeliness on replying to an e-mail or returning a phone call message was longer than anticipated.
- I have had both good and bad experiences. Generally, [staff member] and [staff member] are helpful -- even if they don't give you the answers you want to hear. [Staff member] is far less helpful and responsive.



19. How would you describe the Planning staff's professional knowledge while assisting you with your proposal(s)/project (s)?

	Very Knowledgeable	Knowledgeable	Not Knowledgeable	Rating Average	Rating Count		
Please select the most appropriate choice.	55.0% (11)	20.0% (4)	20.0% (4)	5.0% (1)	0.0% (0)	4.25	20
Use this space to explain your choice							2
answered question							20
skipped question							72



Comments

- Very Knowledgeable-Couldn't click on choice
- The City Code is the major problem. Planning Staff clearly has more rules (ordinances) that they can reasonably keep track of. City Code should be simplified.

20. Did your issue require you to have interaction with counter staff at City Hall?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		61.9%	13
No		38.1%	8
answered question			21
skipped question			71

21. Were you met with a "welcoming" attitude by our front counter staff?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		92.3%	12
No		7.7%	1

Use this space to explain your choice

1

answered question

13

skipped question

79










Comments

- Always have been friendly.

22. How would you describe the helpfulness of the City staff's front counter staff?

	Very Helpful	Helpful	Not Helpful	N/A	Rating Average	Rating Count		
Please select the most appropriate choice.	66.7% (8)	16.7% (2)	8.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	8.3% (1)	4.64	12
						Use this space to explain your choice		1
						answered question		12
						skipped question		80
<u>Comments</u>								
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very Helpful 							

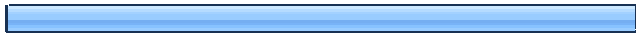




23. What type of application did you submit? (please select all that apply)

		Response Percent	Response Count
Certificate of Appropriateness (historic preservation)		14.3%	3
Major Site Plan or Planned Residential Development (PRD) Plan		14.3%	3
Special Use Permit		28.6%	6
Minor Site Plan		33.3%	7
Preliminary or Final Plat		23.8%	5
Flood Plain Development Permit		9.5%	2
Rezoning		14.3%	3
Land Use Policy Plan change		14.3%	3
Other (please specify below)		9.5%	2
		answered question	21
		skipped question	71

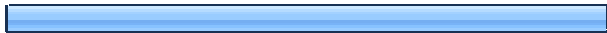

Comments

- Minor Exception, Tax Abatement Application (URZ)
- variance

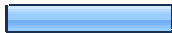





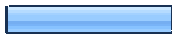
24. Which of the following best describes the final outcome of your proposal(s)/project(s)?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Approved by City staff		55.0%	11
Approved by the Zoning Board of Adjustment		5.0%	1
Approved by the Historic Preservation Commission		5.0%	1
Approved by City Council		30.0%	6
Denied by City staff		0.0%	0
Denied by the Zoning Board of Adjustment		5.0%	1
Denied by the Historic Preservation Commission		0.0%	0
Denied by City Council		0.0%	0
		answered question	20
		skipped question	72

25. Overall, were you satisfied with your experience with the Planning Division?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Excellent		52.4%	11
Satisfactory		47.6%	10
Unsatisfactory		0.0%	0
		answered question	21
		skipped question	71

26. Which of the following contributed to your satisfaction level with our Planning Division? (please select all that apply)

		Response Percent	Response Count
Well written local ordinances		14.3%	3
City staff's helpful, "can do" attitude		38.1%	8
Timeliness of response		66.7%	14
Clear policies and/or procedures		33.3%	7
Early communication of expectations		52.4%	11
City staff's willingness to help identify solutions to help facilitate your project		52.4%	11
Other (please specify below)		14.3%	3
		answered question	21
		skipped question	71

Comments

- City staff was very approachable and easy to communicate with.
- Failure of [Legal Department] to lead or counsel the Planning Division resulting in a Planning Division "run amok."
- it is sometimes necessary to be very persistent to keep things moving or to find solutions

27. How can we improve your next overall experience?

	Response Count
	4
answered question	4
skipped question	88

Comments

- Create an easier variance process.
- It is a major issue that [a department] defers to the Planning Staff in the interpretation of ordinances. [Staff member] is detached, and unable to lead the Planning Staff in interpreting City Ordinances. This leads to a Planning Staff left with far too much discretion and, apparently, lawsuits against the City along with pushing people to a point where a threat of legal action is necessary
- Planning needs to allow up-lighting for american flags with a light amount that will actually light the flag. I'm embarrassed as an American by your ordinance regarding up-lighting for American flags.
- Can't think of anything!

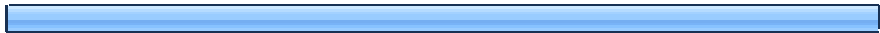
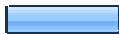

28. Which of the following could help improve your satisfaction level with the City's Planning Division? (please select all that apply)

	Response Percent	Response Count
Change the Local ordinances	0.0%	0
Display a more helpful, "can-do" attitude	0.0%	0
Improve the timeliness of response	0.0%	0
Add clarity to the policies or procedures	0.0%	0
Show more willingness to identify potential solutions	0.0%	0
Early communication of expectations	0.0%	0
Other (please specify below)	0.0%	0
	answered question	0
	skipped question	92

29. What comments or suggestions could you share to help us improve your next overall experience?

	Response Count
	0
answered question	0
skipped question	92

30. Did you find the Application Packet useful, clear, and understandable?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		76.2%	16
No		9.5%	2
N/A		14.3%	3

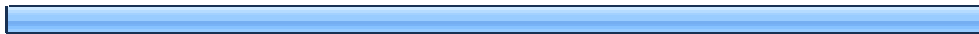

Use this space to explain your choice 2

answered question	21
skipped question	71

Comments

- Yes, however it would be nice to expand on the checklist if the DRC runs into typical comments after their initial reviews. The fewer re-submittals, the better. Also, flexibility using 30x42 drawings is more beneficial for projects involving architecture. Architecturally led project mainly use 30x42 drawings. Conflicts between drawings can arise if transferring information from 24x36 to 30x42. I understand there are City filing issues, but potential conflicts would seem to be more important.
- I would propose that the packet lists parking stall dimensions clearly and/or specify what city code section to refer to.

31. Did your project follow the processing schedule that was included in the Planning Application packet for the project?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		85.0%	17
No		15.0%	3

Use this space to explain your choice 1

answered question	20
skipped question	72

Comments

- staff approval

32. A Council goal is for the City to display a "can-do" attitude to customers, promoting Ames as a welcoming place to do business. In your opinion, how well did we accomplish this?

	Excellent		Satisfactory		Unsatisfactory	N/A	Rating Average	Rating Count
Planning and Zoning Commission	25.9% (15)	8.6% (5)	19.0% (11)	3.4% (2)	3.4% (2)	39.7% (23)	3.83	58
Building Board of Appeals	4.2% (2)	2.1% (1)	6.3% (3)	0.0% (0)	2.1% (1)	85.4% (41)	3.43	48
Historic Preservation Commission	5.9% (3)	2.0% (1)	7.8% (4)	3.9% (2)	2.0% (1)	78.4% (40)	3.27	51
Zoning Board of Adjustment	4.0% (2)	8.0% (4)	10.0% (5)	4.0% (2)	2.0% (1)	72.0% (36)	3.29	50
City Council	9.6% (5)	11.5% (6)	15.4% (8)	3.8% (2)	1.9% (1)	57.7% (30)	3.55	52
City Staff	48.5% (33)	26.5% (18)	19.1% (13)	0.0% (0)	1.5% (1)	4.4% (3)	4.26	68
							answered question	71
							skipped question	21

33. Please provide us with any suggestions for how we can best display a "can-do" attitude.

	Response Count
	8
answered question	8
skipped question	84

Comments

- CONSISTENCY...above resistance. Consistency is a great substitute for 'politics'
- Couldn't click on choice - City Staff performed excellently.
- realize that we are all trying to accomplishing a providing good customer service
- Work with owners, developers, and design professionals to help alleviate roadblocks instead of creating them.
- I did not experience a "can do attitude" with [staff member], but I think I was asking for a difficult time line
- Dispense with the meaningless "can do" buzz phrase. Simplify the City Code -- starting with actual leadership coming from the City [Legal Dept] -- rather than having problems created by abundant, conflicting ordinances and inflexible interpretations adopted by members of the Planning Staff.
- be willing to let new business in town
- A "can-do " attitude is best shown by doing. Maybe a "we want to do" attitude would be becoming.