

CITY OF AMES



2016 Development Survey
Planning Department and Inspection Division

City Council Version

John Hall
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Purpose

The following report presents selected findings from an online survey of Planning Department and Inspection Division customers (n=55). The purpose of the survey was to evaluate the economic development process within the Planning Department and Inspection Division.

The results of the survey will be used to better understand the economic development process from the perspective of the inspection and planning customers based upon their most recent experience. The information will provide valuable insights that will help the Inspection Division and Planning Department implement process improvements to enhance the economic development experience for customers.

Methods

The electronic survey was developed by the City of Ames. The survey was developed using Survey Monkey and was fielded from January 13, 2017 to February 6, 2017.

The survey instrument was designed to evaluate customer satisfaction for both the Planning Department and Inspection Division related to the economic development process. Planning and Inspection customers within the last year (January 2016 – December 2016) were invited to complete the survey. A survey link and an email introducing the survey were distributed by the Mayor of the City of Ames to planning and inspection customers as identified in Table 1. The email introducing the survey identified the customer as either a Planning Department or Inspection Division customer within the last year (see Appendix A). The one customer identified as both planning and inspection customers were instructed to provide their overall impressions to the survey questions. A reminder email message was sent to all 352 customers two weeks after the initial email message to encourage those who have not yet responded to do so.

Table 1. Customer distribution of survey

Type of Customer	Number of Customers Contacted
Inspection Division Customer	307
Planning Department Customers	44
Combined Inspection and Planning Customers	1
TOTAL	352

Results

I. Respondent characteristics

Zip Code of business

Respondents were asked to identify the zip code where their business is located. A total of 53 respondents answered this question and two respondents skipped this question. Over half (62.26%) of the respondents reported that their business was located within the 50010 zip code.

Table 2. Zip Code distribution

Zip Code	Response Percentage	Response Number
50010	62.26%	33
50014	11.32%	6
Other	26.42%	14
Answered Question	53	
Skipped Question	2	

Respondents who answered other were asked to identify the zip code where their business is located. The responses are given below:

50201	50156	50039	50301
50317	53149	50248	50322
46131	50021	50023	
50124	50158	50201	

Department/Division primarily working with on proposal(s)/project(s)

Respondents were asked to identify which department or division they were primarily working with on their most recent proposal(s) and/or project(s). There were 55 responses to this question; 21 respondents identified the Planning Department, 34 respondents identified the Inspections Division and 0 respondents skipped this question.

Table 3. Primary department/division

Answer Choice	Response Percentage	Response Count
Planning	38.18%	21
Inspections	61.82%	34
Answered Question	55	
Skipped Question	0	

II. Inspection Division Results

Inspector’s Courteousness, Helpfulness and Professional Knowledge

Courteousness of inspection staff

Respondents were asked how they would describe the Inspection staff’s courteousness while assisting them with the proposal(s) and/or project(s). There were 28 responses to this question. The majority of respondents felt the inspection staff was very courteous (92.86%) and no individuals felt they were not courteous. There were a total of 27 respondents who skipped this question.

Table 5. Inspection staff member(s) courteousness while assisted with proposal(s) and/or project(s)

Answer Choice	Very Courteous	(no label)	Courteous	(no label)	Not Courteous	Total	Weighted Average
Response Percentage	92.86%	7.14%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100%	4.93
Response Count	26	2	0	0	0	28	
Answered Question				28			
Skipped Question				27			

Respondents were asked to explain their choice for selecting the inspection staff's courteousness while assisting them with the proposal(s) and/or project(s). The responses are given below:

They seem to be rushed and are not allowed enough time to get to every job on time.

Very easy to work with and enjoyed working with them.

Helpfulness of inspection staff

Respondents were asked how they would describe the inspection staff's helpfulness while assisting them with their proposal(s) and/or project(s). There were 29 responses to this question. The majority of respondents (24) felt the inspection staff was "very helpful" (82.76%) and no individuals felt they were "not helpful". There were a total of 26 respondents who skipped this question.

Table 6. Inspection staff member(s) helpfulness while assisted with proposal(s) and/or project(s)

Answer Choice	Very Helpful	(no label)	Helpful	(no label)	Not Helpful	Total	Weighted Average
Response Percentage	82.76%	6.90%	10.34%	0.00%	0.00%	100%	4.72
Response Count	24	2	3	0	0	29	
Answered Question				29			
Skipped Question				26			

Respondents were asked to explain their choice for selecting the inspection staff's helpfulness while assisting them with the proposal(s) and/or project(s). The responses are given below:

Staff need to be more flexible in timing inspection. A phone call from them when they are on their way to inspect would be very helpful as I would not have to have an employee set for 3 hours waiting on them

Helpful, not hindering. Willing to offer options, professional service.

Professional knowledge of inspection staff

Respondents were asked how they would describe the inspection staff’s professional knowledge while assisting them with their proposal(s) and/or project(s). There were 29 responses to this question. The majority of respondents felt the inspection staff was very knowledgeable (72.41%) or knowledgeable (13.79%) whereas no one felt the inspection staffs was not knowledgeable (0%). There were a total of 26 respondents who skipped this question.

Table 7. Inspection staff member(s) professional knowledge while assisted with proposal(s) and/or project(s)

Answer Choice	Very Know-ledgeable	(no label)	Know-ledgeable	(no label)	Not Know-ledgeable	Total	Weighted Average
Response Percentage	72.41%	13.79%	13.79%	0.00%	0.00%	100%	4.59
Response Count	21	4	4	0	0	29	
Answered Question				29			
Skipped Question				26			

Respondents were asked to explain their choice for selecting the inspection staff’s professional knowledge while assisting them with the proposal(s) and/or project(s). The responses are given below:

The headroom clearance on a canvas awning with signage has now changed from 8’ to 10’?

No issues, helped the process, didn’t hurt it.

Front Counter Staff’s interaction/welcoming attitude and helpfulness

Interaction with front counter staff at City Hall

Respondents were asked if they had interaction with the front counter staff at City Hall. There were a total of 29 responses to this question. Less than half of the respondents (41.38%) reported “yes” to having interaction with the front counter staff at City Hall There were a total of 26 respondents who skipped this question.

Table 8. Interaction with the front counter staff at City Hall

Answer Choice	Response Percentage	Response Count
Yes	41.38%	12
No	58.62%	17
Answered Question		29
Skipped Question		26

Welcoming attitude by front counter staff

Respondents were asked if they were met with a “welcoming” attitude by the front counter staff. There were a total of 11 responses to this question. The overwhelming response was “yes” (100.00%) and no

respondents responded “no” that they were not met with a “welcoming” attitude by the front counter staff. There were a total of 44 respondents who skipped this question.

Table 9. Met with a “welcoming” attitude by the front counter staff

Answer Choice	Response Percentage	Response Count
Yes	100.00%	11
No	0.00%	0
Answered Question		11
Skipped Question		44

Respondents were asked to explain their choice for selecting if they were met with a “welcoming” attitude by the front counter staff. The responses are given below:

They are always good to interact with.

Helpfulness of front counter staff

Respondents were asked how they would describe the helpfulness of the front counter staff. There were a total of 12 responses to this question. The majority (9) rated the front counter staff as “very helpful” (75.00%) and no respondents rated the front counter staff as “not helpful” (0.00%). There were a total of 43 respondents who skipped this question.

Table 10. Front counter staff’s helpfulness

Answer Choice	Very Helpful	(no label)	Helpful	(no label)	Not Helpful	Total	Weighted Average
Response Percentage	75.00%	16.67%	8.33%	0.00%	0.00%	100%	4.67
Response Count	9	2	1	0	0	12	
Answered Question				12			
Skipped Question				43			

Respondents were asked to explain their choice for selecting the front counter staff’s helpfulness. There were no responses provided.

Outcome of proposal(s)/project(s)

Final outcome of proposal(s)/project(s)

Respondents were asked to describe the final outcome of their proposal(s)/project(s). A total of 26 respondents answered this question. The majority of the respondents indicated that their proposal(s)/project(s) were approved by City Staff (96.15%). There were a total of 29 respondents who skipped this question.

Table 11. Outcome of proposal(s)/project(s)

Answer Choices	Response Percentage	Response Count
Approved by City staff	96.15%	25
Approved by Building Board of Appeals	3.85%	1
Approved by City Council	0.00%	0
Denied by City staff	0.00%	0
Denied by Building Board of Appeals	0.00%	0
Denied by City Council	0.00%	0
Other (please specify below)	0.00%	0
Answered Question	26	
Skipped Question	29	

Respondents who selected “other” were asked to specify the final outcome of their proposal(s) and/or project(s). There were no responses provided.

Experience with the Inspection Division

Overall experience

Respondents were asked to describe their overall experience with the Inspection Division. There were a total of 29 responses to this question. The majority of the respondents described their overall experience with the Inspection Division as “excellent” (72.41%), a small number described their experience with the Inspection Division as “satisfactory” (20.69%) and only two described their overall experience with the Inspection Division as “unsatisfactory” (6.90%). There were a total of 26 respondents who skipped this question.

Table 12. Overall experience with Inspection Division

Answer Choices	Responses Percentage	Response Count
Excellent	72.41%	21
Satisfactory	20.69%	6
Unsatisfactory	6.90%	2
Answered Question	29	
Skipped Question	26	

Satisfaction level with Inspection Division

Respondents were asked to select (all that apply) from a list which contributed to their satisfaction level with the Inspection Division. A total of 20 respondents answered this question; many respondents selected multiple items for this question. The responses to this question are provided below in Table 13. There were a total of 35 respondents who skipped this question.

Table 13. Contributions to satisfaction with Inspection Division

Answer Choices	Response Percentage	Response Count
Clearly written local ordinances	20.00%	4
City staff's helpful attitude	85.00%	17
Reasonable cost of permit(s)	35.00%	7
Timeliness of response	70.00%	14
Clear policies and/or procedures	30.00%	6
Accurate billing process	30.00%	6
Early communication of expectations	15.00%	3
City staff's willingness to help identify solutions to help facilitate your project	60.00%	12
Other (please specify below)	5.00%	1
Answered Question	20	
Skipped Question	35	

Respondents who selected “other” were asked to specify what contributed to their satisfaction level with the City of Ames Inspection Division. The responses are given below:

Did have an issue with plans that were reviewed but during construction changes had to be made to accommodate something that should have been caught on review.

Comments or Suggestions for Improvements of Inspection Division

Comments or Suggestion to improve next overall experience with Inspection Division

Respondents were asked to share their comments or suggestions to help the Inspection Division improve their next overall experience. There were a total of 7 responses to this question and 110 respondents skipped this question. The responses are given below:

Need more inspectors.

Online permit application would save time

Improve Satisfaction with Inspection Division

Next respondents were asked to select all that apply from a list of options that could help improve their satisfaction level with the Inspection Division. A total of 6 respondents answered this question; many respondents selected multiple answers for this question and 49 respondents skipped this question (See Table 14).

Table 14. Item that could help improve satisfaction with Inspection Division

Answer Choices	Responses Percentage	Response Count
Change the local ordinances	33.33%	2
Display a more helpful attitude	16.67%	1
Reduce the cost of permit(s)	33.33%	2
Improve the timeliness of response	16.67%	1
Add clarity to the policies or procedures	16.67%	1
Increase accuracy in the billing process	0.00%	0
Show more willingness to identify potential solutions	16.67%	1
Early communications of expectations	0.00%	0
Other (please specify below)	33.33%	2
Answered Question	6	
Skipped Question	49	

Respondents who selected “other” were asked to specify what could help improve their satisfaction level with the Inspection Division. The response is given below:

Need to call contractor when heading for inspection. Be more flexible inspection times. Not to be inconsiderate to contractor time which is also important.

Suggestions for improvements of Inspection Division

Respondents were asked to share their comments as to how the Inspection Division can improve their next overall experience. There were a total of 0 responses to this question and 55 respondents skipped this question. There were no responses provided.

III. Planning Department Results

Planner's Courteousness, Helpfulness and Professional Knowledge

Courteousness of planning staff

Respondents were asked how they would describe the planning staff's courteousness while assisting them with the proposal(s) and/or project(s). There were 17 responses to this question. Nearly a majority of respondents felt the planning staff was very courteous (47.06%). There were a total of 38 respondents who skipped this question.

Table 16. Planning staff member(s) courteousness while assisted with proposal(s) and/or project(s)

Answer Choice	Very Courteous	(no label)	Courteous	(no label)	Not Courteous	Total	Weighted Average
Response Percentage	47.06%	29.41%	17.65%	5.88%	0.00%	100%	4.18
Response Count	8	5	3	1	0	17	
Answered Question				17			
Skipped Question				38			

Respondents were asked to explain their choice for selecting the planning staff's courteousness while assisting them with the proposal(s) and/or project(s). The responses are given below:

Answered questions and was available when needed

Always seemed respectful of my time and concerns

Helpfulness of planning staff

Respondents were asked how they would describe the planning staff's helpfulness while assisting them with their proposal(s) and/or project(s). There were 17 responses to this question. There were a total of 38 respondents who skipped this question.

Table 17. Planning staff member(s) helpfulness while assisted with proposal(s) and/or project(s)

Answer Choice	Very Helpful	(no label)	Helpful-	(no label)	Not Helpful	Total	Weighted Average
Response Percentage	41.18%	23.53%	17.65%	17.65%	0.00%	100%	3.88
Response Count	7	4	3	3	0	17	
Answered Question				17			
Skipped Question				38			

Respondents were asked to explain their choice for selecting the planning staff's helpfulness while assisting them with the proposal(s) and/or project(s). The responses are given below:

Staff was able to offer comments on how to improve our project and make it code compliant.

Helpful, yet indicated inability to provide flexibility based on ordinance language despite attenuating circumstances

Responsive and clear on requirements

Professional knowledge of planning staff

Respondents were asked how they would describe the planning staff’s professional knowledge while assisting them with their proposal(s) and/or project(s). There were 17 responses to this question. There were a total of 38 respondents who skipped this question.

Table 18. Planning staff member(s) professional knowledge while assisted with proposal(s) and/or project(s)

Answer Choice	Very Knowledgeable	(no label)	Knowledgeable	(no label)	Not Knowledgeable	Total	Weighted Average
Response Percentage	35.29%	17.65%	29.41%	17.65%	0.00%	100%	3.71
Response Count	6	3	5	3	0	17	
Answered Question				17			
Skipped Question				38			

Respondents were asked to explain their choice for selecting the planning staff’s professional knowledge while assisting them with the proposal(s) and/or project(s). The responses are given below:

For the most part, staff appears to have a decent grasp of the appropriate sections of City Code, but there have been instances where there has been an unwillingness to make a decision without passing the situation by Kelly first; leading to lag time between review and approvals. This has been particularly true when faced with unique situations where following code to the ‘t’ may not result in an appropriate, or maintainable long term solution.

I found no gaps in understanding the systems (PV) I was seeking to implement

Front Counter Staff’s interaction/welcoming attitude and helpfulness

Interaction with front counter staff at City Hall

Respondents were asked if they had interaction with the front counter staff at City Hall. There were a total of 19 responses to this question. Over half of the respondents (57.89%) reported “yes” to having interaction with the front counter staff at City Hall. There were a total of 36 respondents who skipped this question.

Table 19. Interaction with the front counter staff at City Hall

Answer Choice	Response Percentage	Response Count
Yes	57.89%	11
No	42.11%	8
Answered Question		19
Skipped Question		36

Welcoming attitude of front counter staff

Respondents were asked if they were met with a “welcoming” attitude by the front counter staff. There were a total of 10 responses to this question. The overwhelming response was “yes” (100%). There were a total of 45 respondents who skipped this question.

Table 20. Met with a “welcoming” attitude by the front counter staff

Answer Choice	Response Percentage	Response Count
Yes	100%	10
No	0%	0
Answered Question		10
Skipped Question		45

Respondents were asked to explain their choice for selecting if they were met with a “welcoming” attitude by the front counter staff. The responses are given below:

No waiting and follow-up to get to the right staff for responses

Always seemed fine in the little interaction we had. Courteous and welcoming.

Helpfulness of front counter staff

Respondents were asked how they would describe the helpfulness of the front counter staff. There were a total of 10 responses to this question. There were a total of 45 respondents who skipped this question.

Table 21. Front counter staff’s helpfulness

Answer Choice	Very Helpful	(no label)	Helpful	(no label)	Not Helpful	Total	Weighted Average
Response Percentage	40.00%	60.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100%	4.40
Response Count	4	6	0	0	0	10	
Answered Question				10			
Skipped Question				45			

Respondents were asked to explain their choice for selecting the front counter staff’s helpfulness. The responses are given below:

Always very friendly and helpful!

See previous

Type of proposal(s)/project(s)

Respondents were asked to select the type of application they submitted. A total of 17 respondents answered this question; many respondents selected multiple types of applications. The responses are provided below in Table 22. There were a total of 38 respondents who skipped this question.

Table 22. Type of application submitted

Answer Choices	Response Percentage	Response Count
Certificate of Appropriateness (historic preservation)	5.88%	1
Major Site Plan or Planned Residential Development	41.18%	7
Special Use Permit	29.41%	5
Minor Site Plan	70.59%	12
Preliminary or Final Plat	58.82%	10
Flood Plain Development Permit	29.41%	5
Rezoning	41.18%	7
Land Use Policy Plan Change	41.18%	7
Other (please specify below)	17.65	3
Answered Question	17	
Skipped Question	38	

Respondents who selected “other” were asked to identify the type of application they submitted. The responses are given below:

AUFP Text/Map Amendments

Appeal to ZBA

Interconnection agreement, inspection and approval of PV solar array

Outcome of proposal(s)/project(s)

Final outcome of proposal(s)/project(s)

Respondents were asked to describe the final outcome of their proposal(s)/project(s). There were a total of 17 responses to this question. The majority of the respondents indicated that their

proposal(s)/project(s) were approved by City Staff (52.94%). There were a total of 38 respondents who skipped this question.

Table 23. Outcome of proposal(s)/project(s)

Answer Choices	Response Percentage	Response Count
Approved by City staff	52.94%	9
Approved by Zoning Board of Adjustments	0.00%	0
Approved by the Historic Preservation Commission	0.00%	0
Approved by City Council	41.18%	7
Denied by City staff	5.88%	1
Denied by Zoning Board of Adjustments	0.00%	0
Denied by Historic Preservation Commission	0.00%	0
Denied by City Council	0.00%	0
Answered Question	17	
Skipped Question	38	

Experience with the Planning Department

Respondents were asked to describe their experience with the Planning Department. There were a total of 19 responses to this question. The responses are provided below in Table 24. There were a total of 36 respondents who skipped this question.

Table 24. Overall experience with Planning Department

Answer Choices	Responses Percentage	Response Count
Excellent	36.84%	7
Satisfactory	31.58%	6
Unsatisfactory	31.58%	6
Answered Question	19	
Skipped Question	36	

Contributed to satisfaction with Planning Department

Respondents were asked to select from a list which contributed to their satisfaction level with the Planning Department. A total of 10 respondents answered this question; many respondents selected multiple answers for this question. The responses to this question are provided below in Table 25. There were a total of 45 respondents who skipped this question.

Table 25. Contributions to satisfaction with Planning Department

Answer Choices	Response Percentage	Response Count
Well written local ordinances	20.00%	2
City staff's helpful "can do" attitude	50.00%	5
Timeliness of response	80.00%	8
Clear policies and/or procedures	40.00%	4
Early communication of expectations	20.00%	2
City staff's willingness to help identify solutions to help facilitate your project	50.00%	5
Other (please specify below)	10.00%	1
Answered Question	10	
Skipped Question	45	

Respondents who selected "other" were asked to specify what contributed to their satisfaction level with the Planning Department. The responses are given below:

Ames planning and development process is 10 times more difficult than any other city in central Iowa.

Comments or Suggestions for Improvements of Planning Department

Improve next overall experience with Planning Department

Respondents were asked to share their comments as to how the Planning Department can improve their next overall experience. There were a total of 4 responses to this question and 51 respondents skipped this question. The responses are given below:

Honestly, if I ever have a question, all I do is call one of the departments and I get help right away.

Very little uniformity in how codes are interpreted. It's a "crap shoot" to know what the requirements will be based on who the planner is. It would be nice to have the planners working from the same set of rules.

Eliminate conflicts in the City's goals for sustainable community, e.g.: I paid \$150 and delayed implementation of my new solar system to get zoning approval for a flat roof installation that is less conspicuous than if I had followed current rules and installed on my sloped roof.

Streamline the planning and development process

Improve Satisfaction with Planning Department

Respondents were asked to select all that apply from a list of options that could help improve their satisfaction level with the Planning Department. A total of 5 respondents answered this question; many respondents selected multiple answers for this question. The responses to this question are provided below in Table 26. There were a total of 50 respondents who skipped this question.

Table 26. Contributions to satisfaction with Planning Department

Answer Choices	Response Percentage	Response Count
Change the local ordinances	60.00%	3
Display a more helpful, “can-do” attitude	60.00%	3
Improve the timeliness of response	60.00%	3
Add clarity to the policies or procedures	60.00%	3
Show more willingness to identify potential solutions	80.00%	4
Early communication of expectations	80.00%	4
Other (please specify below)	40.00%	2
Answered Question	5	
Skipped Question	50	

Respondents who selected “other” were asked to specify what could help improve their satisfaction level with the Planning Department. The responses are given below:

Staff is somewhat reluctant to think ‘outside the box’ in terms of appropriate solutions within auspices of the code and within available space. This is partially a result of code interpretation. Some staff feel more comfortable with decision making than others. There seems to be a tendency for most staff to want to run decisions by Kelly rather than making them during a project review conversation – adding time to deliberation on an answer.

Staff is far too black and white on code, and when there is a grey area, they tend to error toward a solution that is not helpful to the developer, even when it has zero affect on the city. Obviously, codes are there for a reason, but when the city can help out a developer they need to do a better job of doing so. Also, the approval process is just insanely long in comparison to other jurisdictions... it’s almost a joke when going to other markets when we tell them we’ve build in Ames. The knee jerk reaction is immediately, “oh, well this will be a piece of cake for you.” If you want projects to want to come to Ames, you have to change that reputation, or people will just give up and build in nearby Ankeny and Des Moines.

Comments or Suggestions for improvements of Planning Department

Respondents were asked to share their comments or suggestions as to how the Planning Department can improve their next overall experience. There were a total of 3 responses to this question and 52 respondents skipped this question. The responses are given below:

My previous experiences have not necessarily been unsatisfactory as much as the results of the process have leaned in a direction that is drastically different than our client initially wanted. This is partially resulting from code and also partially as a result of staff interactions within the Planning Department.

During any reviews for developments City staff need to provide a full list of comments during DRC review. They are consistently adding comments up to 2 weeks after the DRC meeting. This makes completing a project very difficult. I can understand on a very large project but on a simple complex project the comments should be able to be done in one shot. On several projects comments were added because the staff left they would be a nice addition, but they are not required by code. If staff wants them then add them to the code so all development are required to do it.

It isn't the city vs. the developer, we're on the same team. Our success is your success, both financially and from a community standpoint. The more costs that are put on the developers, the more your citizens will be paying for said developer's services. There's something to be said for having high building standards, and for making everyone play by the same rules, but certain measures are just ridiculous and add cost for no reason. Water quality measures and your testing methods for example: all of your water runs into the Boone River, which runs through almost exclusively farm ground... You're making sure your water is clean before it runs into what is essentially a river of farm chemicals and topsoil runoff. Seems ridiculous to me. Also, sometimes, when the situation is unique, it's okay to make exceptions to the code, and to work with a developer to make a project work for both of us. My general point here is, I have developed in plenty of markets, but I have never ever seen such exhaustive attempts to apply ridiculous and frivolous codes. Also, run your plans through the approval process concurrently, and merge some of your readings. No one needs to have it come back before a board of council more than once, let alone three times spread out of 6 weeks, it's a waste of everyone's time.

Application Packet

Respondents were asked if the application packet was useful, clear, and understandable. There were a total of 16 responses to this question. The majority (81.25%) responded “yes” the application packet was useful, clear, and understandable. There were a total of 39 respondents who skipped this question.

Table 27. Application packet useful, clear, and understandable

Answer Choice	Response Percentage	Response Count
Yes	81.25%	13
No	12.50%	2
N/A	6.25%	1
Answered Question	16	
Skipped Question	39	

Respondents were asked to explain their choice for selecting if they found the application packet useful, clear, and understandable. The responses are given below:

The packet – yes, knowing that there would be differences with interpreting the code is usually where any frustration occurs.

On the Final Plat application there is a box regarding any further requirements from the City Engineer but sometimes that isn't complete prior to filing. That might be a change to make or at least put a separate box for “approval contingent” or something to that effect.

Application Packet is full of useless information

The application packets are extreme overkill. There are so many questions that often times are not applicable. Compared to other municipalities we work within, Ames absolutely requires the most paperwork.

Project follow the processing schedule

Respondents were asked if the project followed the processing schedule that was included in the Planning Application packet. There were a total of 15 responses to this question. The majority of respondents (80.00%) responded “yes” their project followed the processing schedule that was included in the Planning Application. There were a total 40 respondents who skipped this question.

Table 28. Project followed the processing schedule that was included in the Planning Application

Answer Choice	Response Percentage	Response Count
Yes	80.00%	12
No	20.00%	3
Answered Question		15
Skipped Question		40

Respondents were asked to explain their choice for selecting if their project followed the processing schedule that was included in the Planning Application. The responses are given below:

For the most part, though was delayed based on internal review and timeliness of response review.

Not a major development

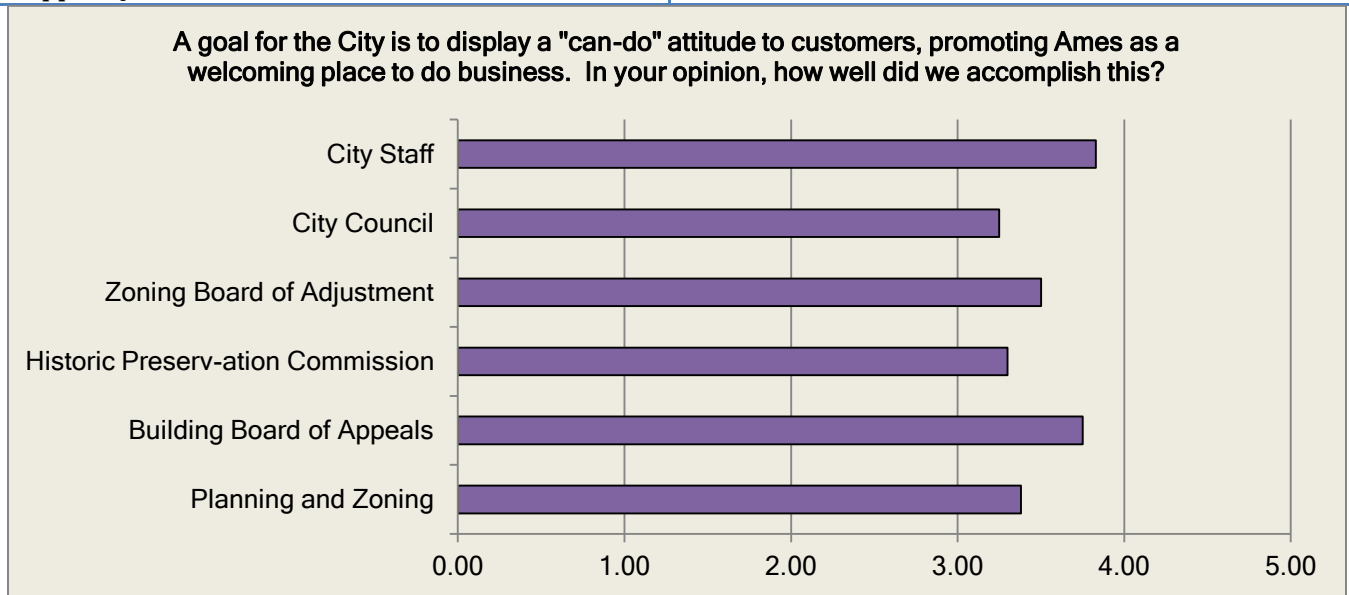
Too often, it is expressed to us that we will reach the “next level” when Staff feels “the application is ready.” This is often times delayed due to additional comments created after the initial or second submittals, almost suggesting that the documents were not reviewed thoroughly the first time around by Staff. In some cases, there may also be minor comments that have not been satisfactorily addressed by Staff, requiring an additional submittal prior to proceeding to the next level (P/Z, BOA, etc.) – most communities will allow the application to proceed to the next level with approval contingent on satisfactorily addressing the outstanding minor comments.

City displayed a “can-do” attitude

Respondents were given a list of six items (See Table 29) and asked to rate (Excellent to Unsatisfactory) their opinion to the following question: *A goal of the City is 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 goal?* There were a total of 41 responses to this question and 14 respondents skipped this question.

Table 29. Accomplishment of “can-do” attitude to customers, promoting Ames as a welcoming place to do business

Answer Choices	Excellent	(no label)	Satisfactory	(no label)	Unsatisfactory	N/A	Total	Weighted Average
Planning and Zoning	13.89%/5	16.67%/6	19.44%/7	13.89%/5	2.78%/1	33.33%/12	36	3.38
Building Board of Appeals	6.67%/2	10.00%/3	6.67%/2	3.33%/1	0.00%/0	73.33%/22	30	3.75
Historic Preservation Commission	10.00%/3	6.67%/2	6.67%/2	3.33%/1	6.67%/2	66.67%/20	30	3.30
Zoning Board of Adjustment	9.09%/3	18.18%/6	12.12%/4	6.06%/2	3.03%/1	51.52%/17	33	3.50
City Council	10.00%/3	20.00%/6	16.67%/5	16.67%/5	3.33%/1	33.33%/10	30	3.25
City Staff	34.21%/13	26.32%/10	18.42%/7	7.89%/3	5.26%/2	7.89%/3	38	3.83
Answered Question				41				
Skipped Question				14				



Respondents were asked to provide suggestions for how the City of Ames can better display a “can-do” attitude. The responses are given below:

With the review meetings I’ve attended, both with staff as well as the groups mentioned above there is a certain level that needs to be maintained to meet the criteria desired by Ames. However, this criteria is sometimes unrealistic in specific situations and may not even be what it was originally intended to be based on interpretation and growth (especially if staff that developed it are no longer here or the public is looking for something different). Typically when I’ve seen push back on things it has been with interpretation or willingness of the city to embrace change.

If you want development and growth in the City there are not many steps for a project to get completed. If the City has hired the planners then why does the Council have to approve so much? Let the planners do their job and streamline the development process.

See #16 response: there are conflicts to be worked out in planning and zoning regulations

I believe Ames is continually looking striving for "CAN-DO". We are not there yet, but we are certainly in the right direction. Thank you for commitment to people truly invest millions into this great town. Allow free enterprise to take risk in investing in Ames, don't slow it down, but find ways to get things here.

Examples, Look at Ankeny and everything they have done in the last 20 years. Ames has a slow growth, low growth mentality, be open minded and find ways to get things moving. We've said "NO" to a lot of things in those years. We need more people living here.

Everyone on staff supports the "can-do" attitude. However, we get a "can-do" up front then get into the project and the actual answers, delivered in a positive attitude, are "can't-do" answers.

In some isolated incidents the total time can drag on due to the participation of various boards and their schedules.

There needs to be some kind of receipt either mailed or emailed to contractor when inspections are done

Process Improvements

Inspection Division

The Inspection Division customers provided a number of suggestions for improvements. Some possible process improvements suggested were:

- More flexible on inspection timing, while allowing sufficient time at each job
- Providing notice when an inspector is on their way to an inspection
- Need more inspectors
- Online permit applications would save time

Planning Department

The Planning Department customers provided a number of suggestions for improvements. Some possible process improvements suggested were:

- Have the planners working “from the same set of rules”
- Eliminate conflicts in City’s goals for sustainable community
- Streamline the planning and development process
- Think “outside the box” in terms of appropriate solutions within auspices of the code and within available space
- Provide a full list of comments during the DRC review and eliminate trailing comments
- Remove comments that are recommendations and not required by code
- Run plan approval process concurrently
- Merge readings by City Council

APPENDIX A: EMAIL MESSAGES SENT TO INSPECTION/PLANNING CUSTOMERS

THE FOLLOWING EMAIL IS USED FOR THE INSPECTION DIVISION CUSTOMERS [Total email 307]:

Dear Customer,

The City of Ames thanks you for your business! To support the City Council's goal of promoting economic development to create a stable and vibrant community, we need your feedback. Candid comments about the process can help us continue to maintain our high standards and progress in areas that need improvement.

As a customer of our Inspection Division in the last year, we would appreciate a few minutes of your time in answering an anonymous survey. If you have been involved in more than one project in the last year, please provide your overall impressions. The survey will allow space where you can provide more specifics examples.

Please click on the link below (or type the address into your browser), fill in your answers to the questions, and submit them electronically by February 3rd, 2017.

We appreciate your participation.

Ann H. Campbell, Mayor

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2016_Development_Process_Survey

THE FOLLOWING EMAIL IS USED FOR THE PLANNING AND HOUSING DEPARTMENT CUSTOMERS [Total email 44]:

Dear Customer,

The City of Ames thanks you for your business! To support the City Council's goal of promoting economic development to create a stable and vibrant community, we need your feedback. Candid comments about the process can help us continue to maintain our high standards and progress in areas that need improvement.

As a customer of our Planning & Housing Department in the last year, we would appreciate a few minutes of your time in answering an anonymous survey. If you have been involved in more than one project in the last year, please provide your overall impressions. The survey will allow space where you can provide more specifics examples.

Please click on the link below (or type the address into your browser), fill in your answers to the questions, and submit them electronically by February 3rd, 2017.

We appreciate your participation.

Ann H. Campbell, Mayor

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2016_Development_Process_Survey

THE FOLLOWING EMAIL IS USED FOR THE COMBINED PLANNING & HOUSING AND INSPECTION DIVISION CUSTOMERS [Total email 2]:

Dear Customer,

The City of Ames thanks you for your business! To support the City Council's goal of promoting economic development to create a stable and vibrant community, we need your feedback. Candid comments about the process can help us continue to maintain our high standards and progress in areas that need improvement.

As a customer of our Planning & Housing Department and our Inspection Division in the last year, we would appreciate a few minutes of your time in answering an anonymous survey. If you have been involved in more than one project in the last year, please provide your overall impressions. The survey will allow space where you can provide more specifics examples.

Please click on the link below (or type the address into your browser), fill in your answers to the questions, and submit them electronically by February 3rd, 2017.

We appreciate your participation.

Ann H. Campbell, Mayor

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2016_Development_Process_Survey

THE FOLLOWING REMINDER EMAIL MESSAGE WILL BE SENT TO ALL CUSTOMERS THAT RECEIVED THE ORIGINAL EMAIL MESSAGE [Total 487]

We value your feedback!

You should have received an email inviting you to participate in the City of Ames Planning & Housing Department/Inspection Division Survey.

If you have not already done so, please click the link below (or type the address into your browser) to complete the survey by this Friday, February 3rd.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2016_Development_Process_Survey

If you have already completed the survey, thank you for your participation and please disregard this email.

Your views and insights are critical to helping us provide better service to the citizens of Ames.

Thank you for completing the survey!

Ann H. Campbell, Mayor