



Memo

City Manager's Office

TO: Mayor and Ames City Council

FROM: Steven L. Schainker, City Manager

DATE: October 21, 2011

SUBJECT: Development Process Survey Results

One of the top goals of the City Council is to FURTHER STREAMLINE AND IMPROVE GOVERNMENT PROCESSES. The objective of this goal is to promote Ames as a welcoming place to do business by embracing a “Can Do” attitude. Towards this end, I was assigned by the City Council at your goal-setting session to recommend techniques for improving feedback regarding City development-related approval processes.

Seeking customer input has long been a priority for City staff. Historically we have utilized a number of different feedback tools to gain customer input into how we can improve our development services. For years a survey was mailed to development customers after their projects were completed. Over the past two years a series of morning meetings were held with developers and consultants. In both of these cases, we have discovered that the input has decreased over time; although we still used all feedback to evaluate our services. More recently, postcard surveys have been handed to customers as they leave our Development Review Committee (DRC) meetings. Finally, with our new Business Development Coordinator on board, Seana Perkins is now following up personally with every customer to seek timely, development-specific feedback. We anticipate that these personal contacts will be the most effective means of gaining constructive customer feedback and to help us continue to improve our services.

In addition to the personal follow-up by Seana, we have developed a new on-line Development Process Survey. To increase the likelihood of return, our customers will be asked to respond only once per year even if they have interacted with staff on numerous occasions over the last twelve months. The responses will remain anonymous. The results of this initial survey, which are attached for your review, were analyzed by Seana. She will make the presentation regarding these results at the Council meeting.

I believe the utilization of this survey, while not a perfect tool to judge progress to accomplishing your goal, is helpful since many times the only feedback we personally receive are the negative comments. Overall, it appears that we received more positive comments than negative ones about our “Can Do” attitude. However, whether the responses from our customers were positive or not, there are a number of themes that are revealed in the survey that will help us realize your goal.

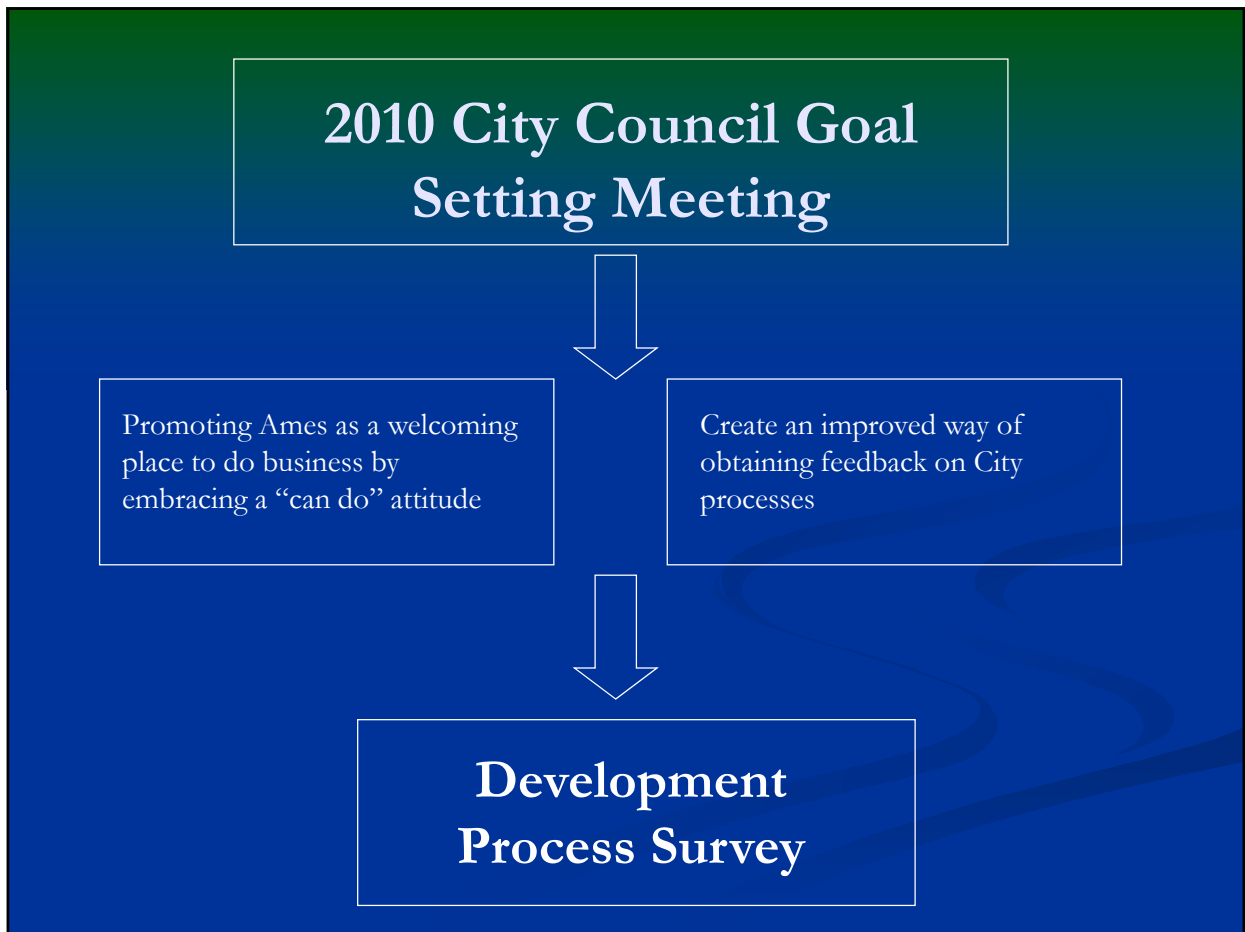
The following themes offer an opportunity to focus our attention on continued improvement:

- Maintain consistency among City staff members in regards to answering questions and Code interpretations
- Improve timeliness of inspections, responses to inquiries, and approval decisions
- Base decisions on the current code and not on personal preference or bias of a staff member
- Clearly communicate expectations to customers at the beginning of the approval process so they can be relied on without bringing up new requirements later in the process
- Display a “Can Do” attitude by helping to identify solutions that facilitate the project’s approval
- Develop clarity and flexibility in City policies, rules, and local ordinances and change those that work against our goals

Development Process Survey

Results Interpretation





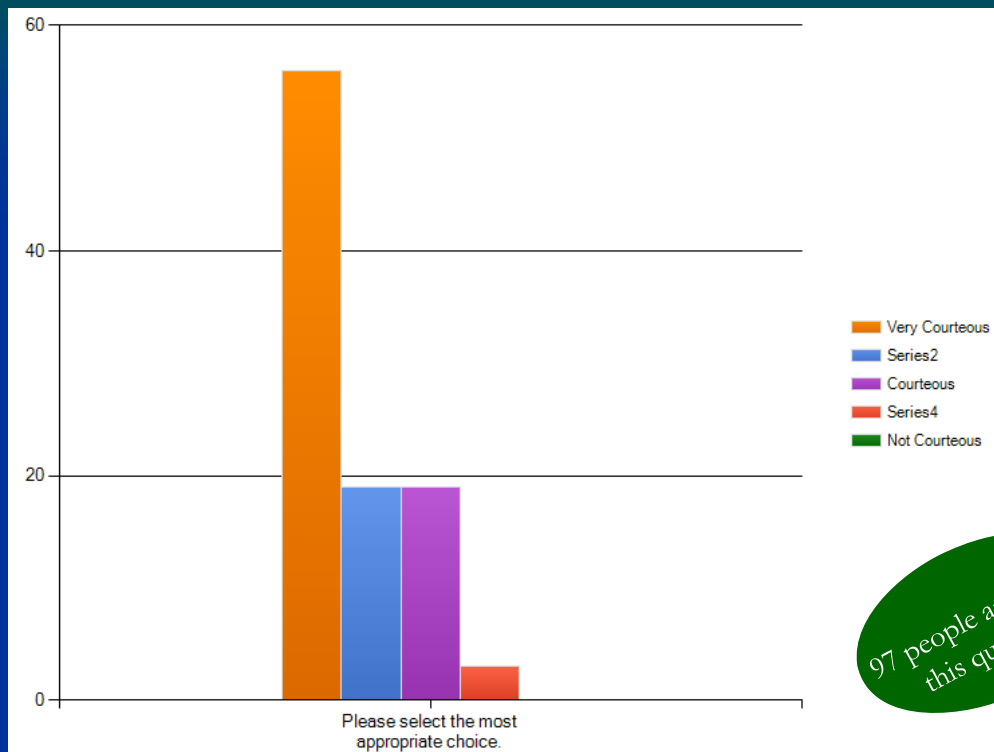
Response Summary

- 84 Planning Survey's E-mailed
- 437 Building Inspections Survey's E-mailed

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)? (Building Inspections or Planning)

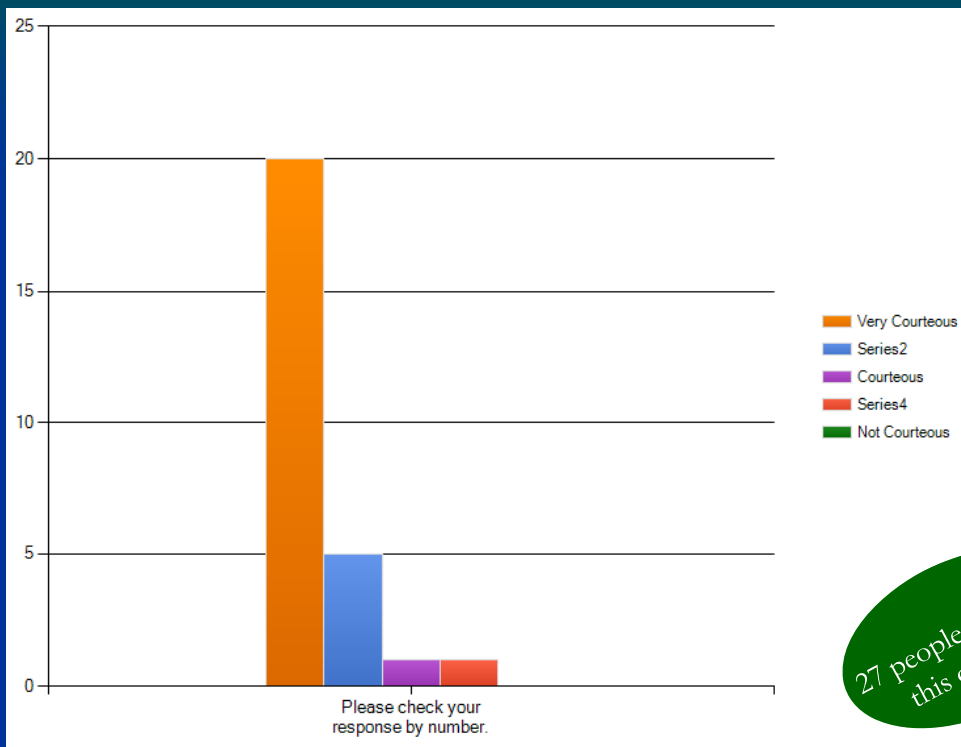
Answer Options	Percent of Total	Response Count
Building Inspections	24.0%	105
Planning	39.3%	33

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



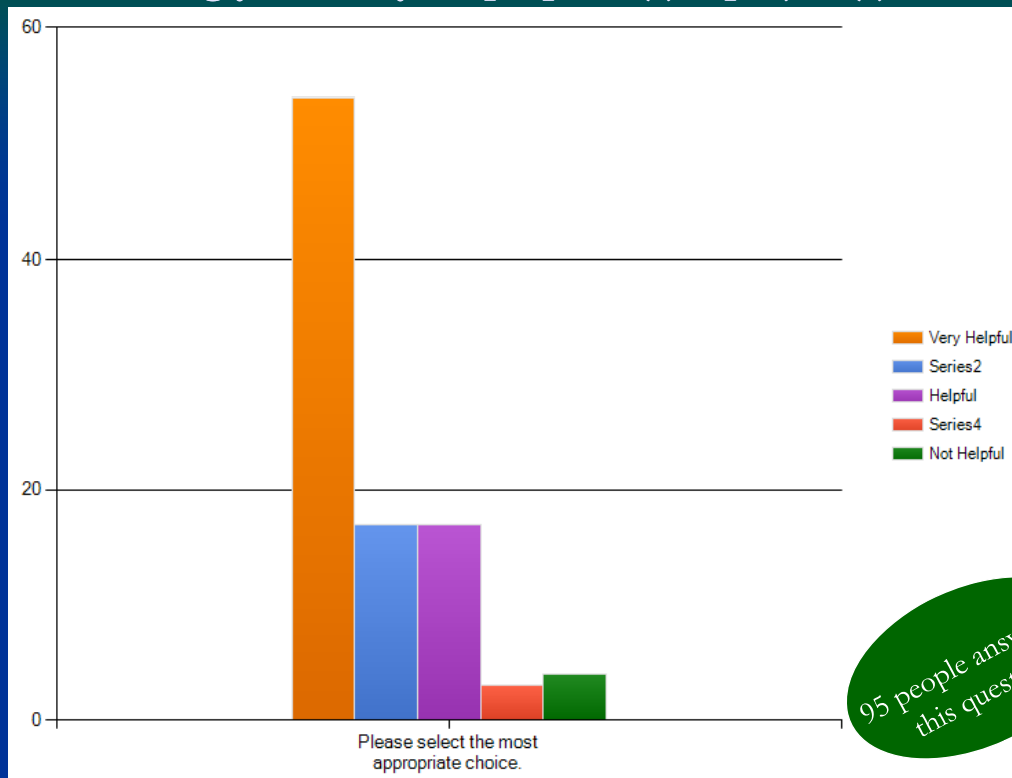
97 people answered this question

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

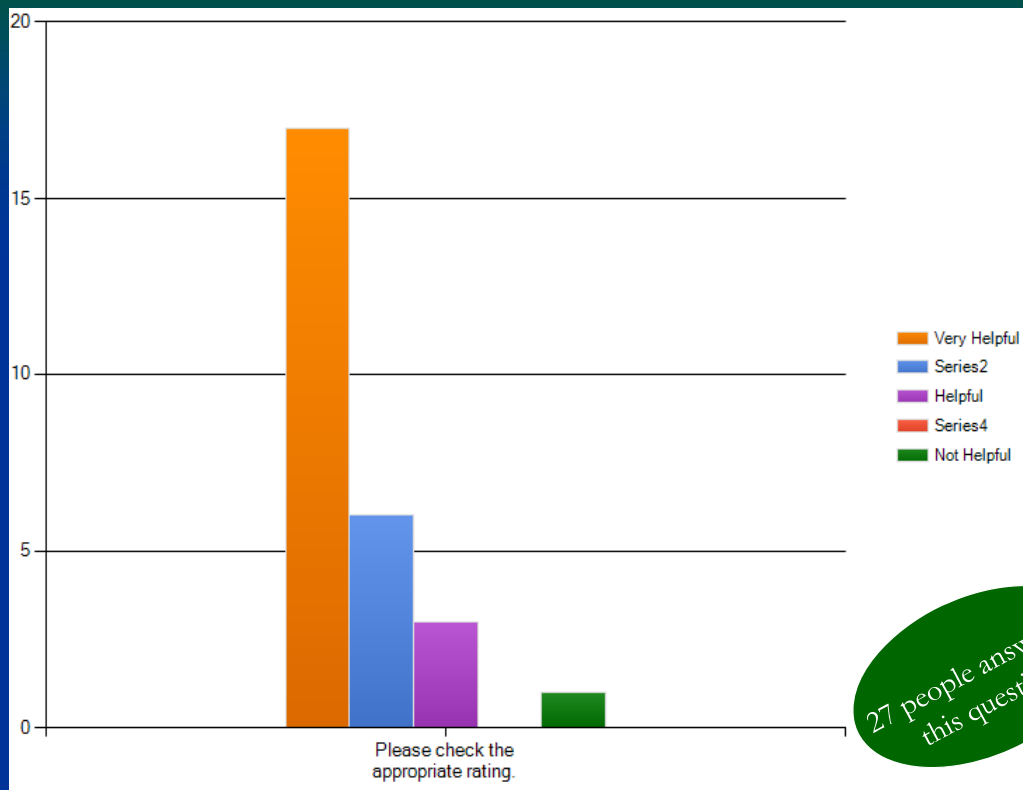


27 people answered this question

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

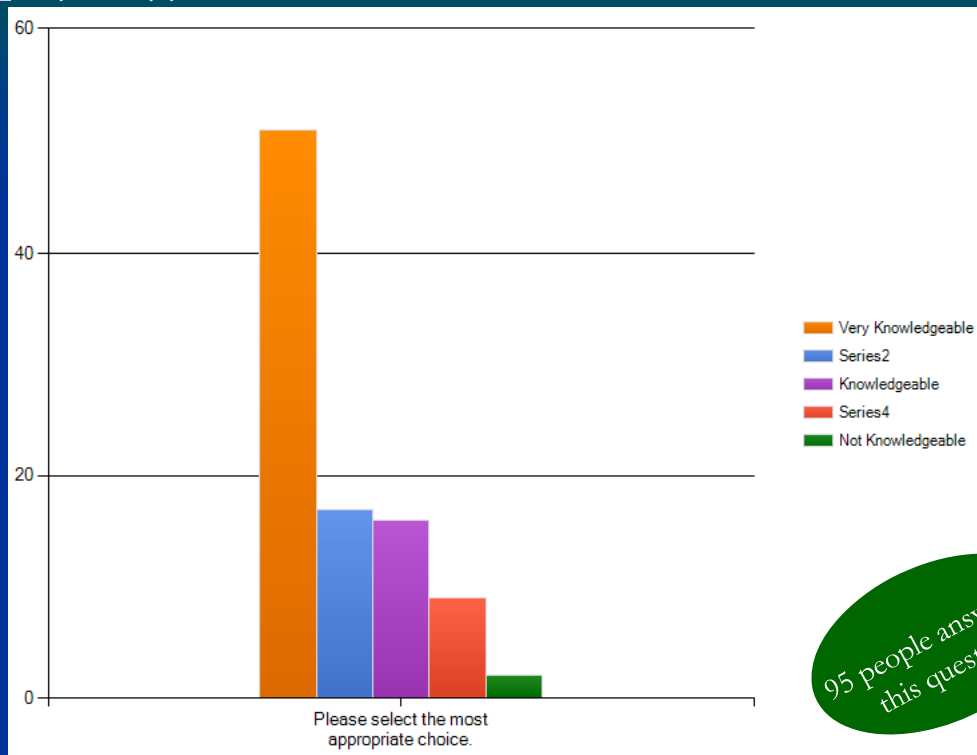


How would you describe the Planning staff's helpfulness while assisting you with your proposal(s)/project(s)?

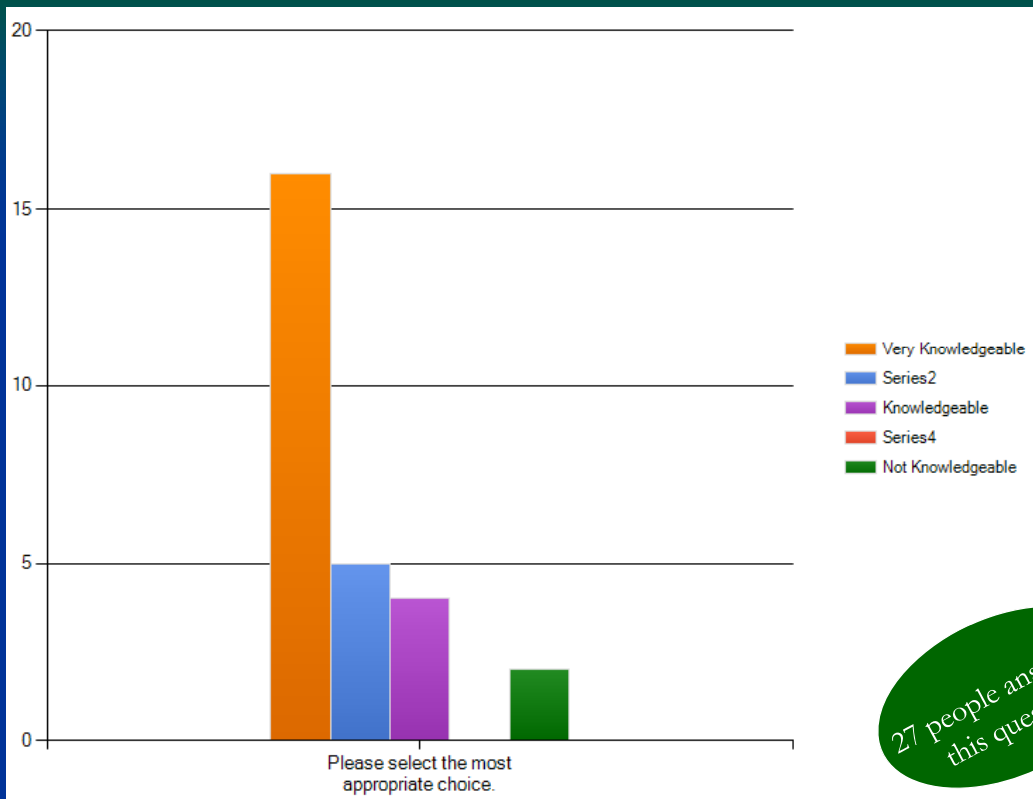


27 people answered this question

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

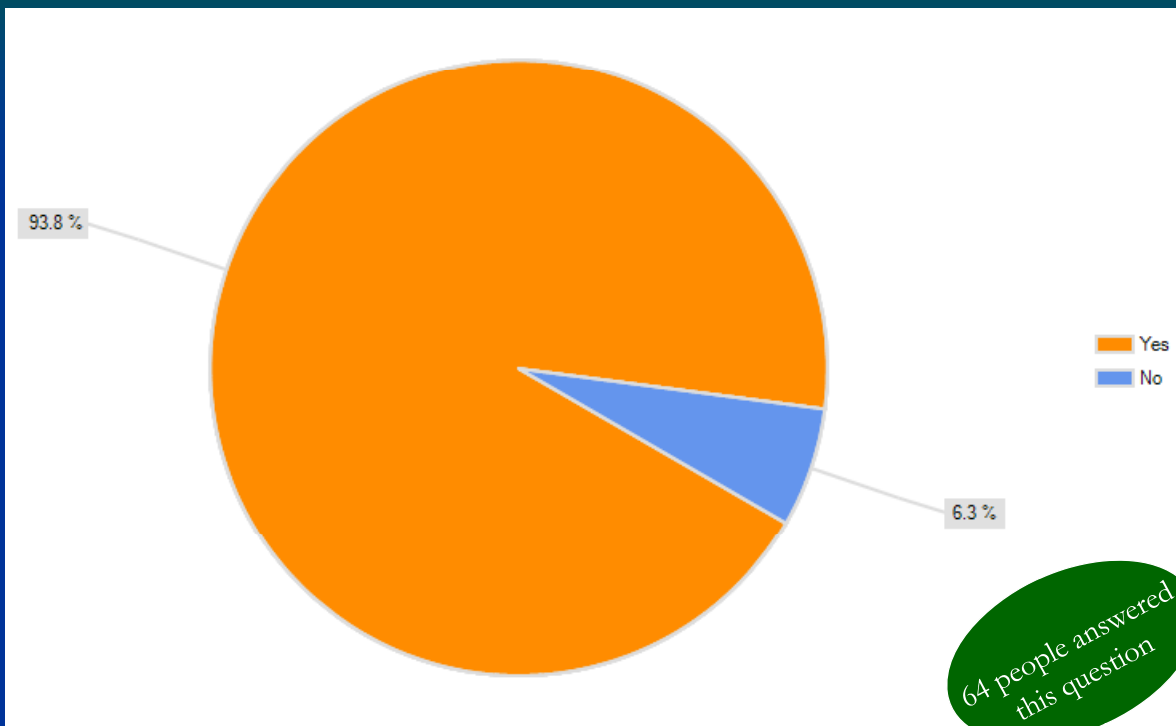


How would you describe the Planning staff's professional knowledge while assisting you with your proposal(s) / project(s)?

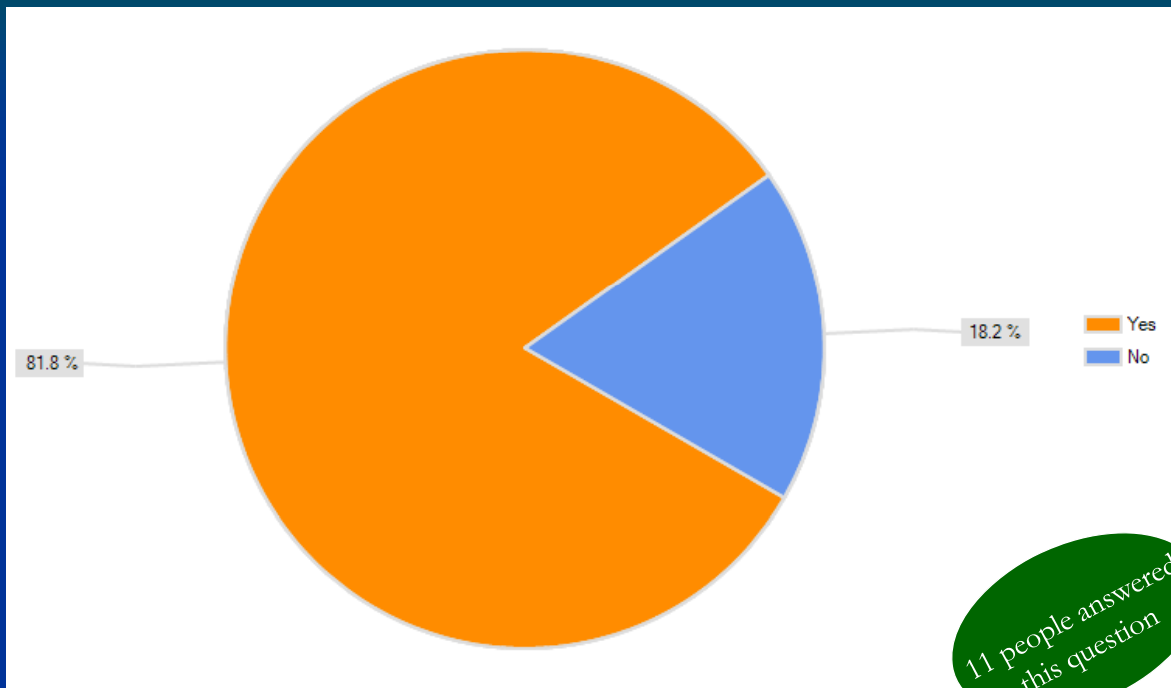


27 people answered this question

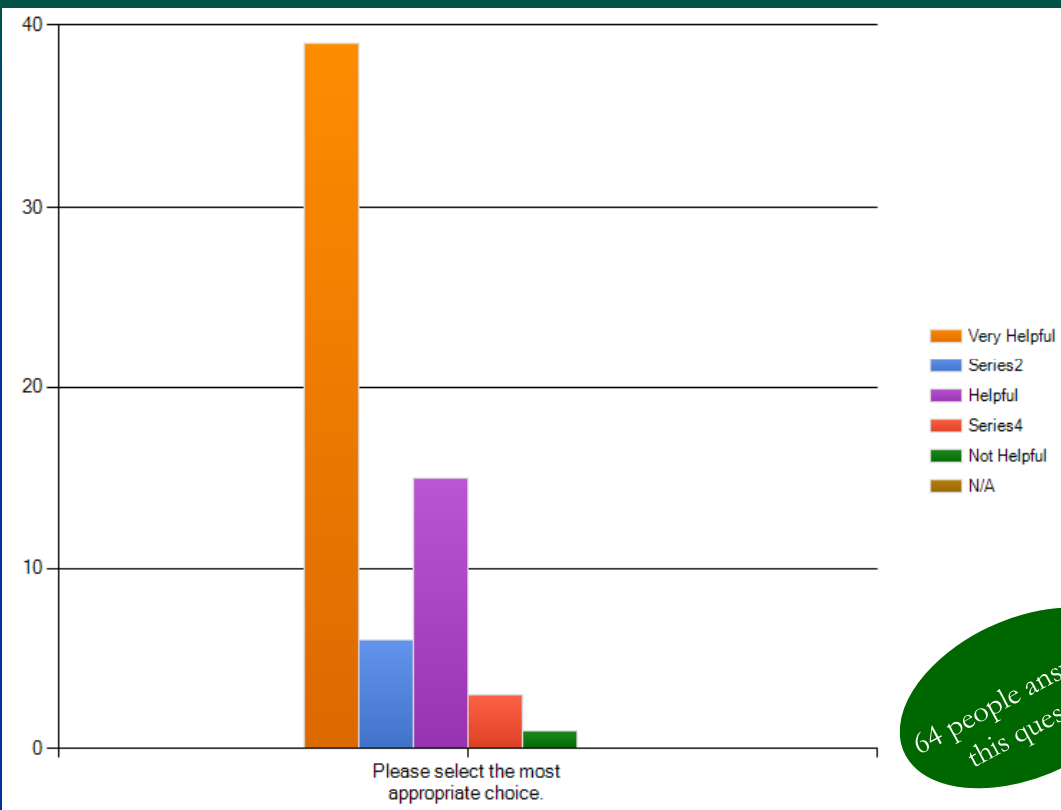
Were you met with a "welcoming" attitude by our front counter staff? (Building Inspections)



Were you met with a "welcoming" attitude by our front counter staff? (Planning)

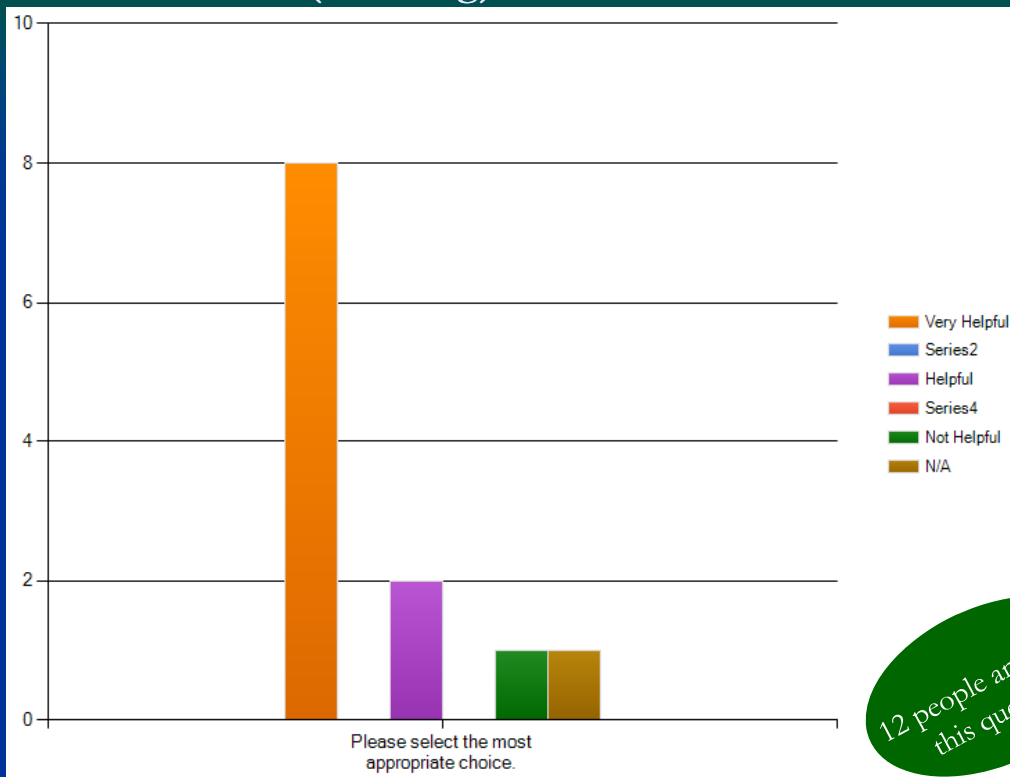


How would you describe the helpfulness of our front counter staff? (Building Inspections)



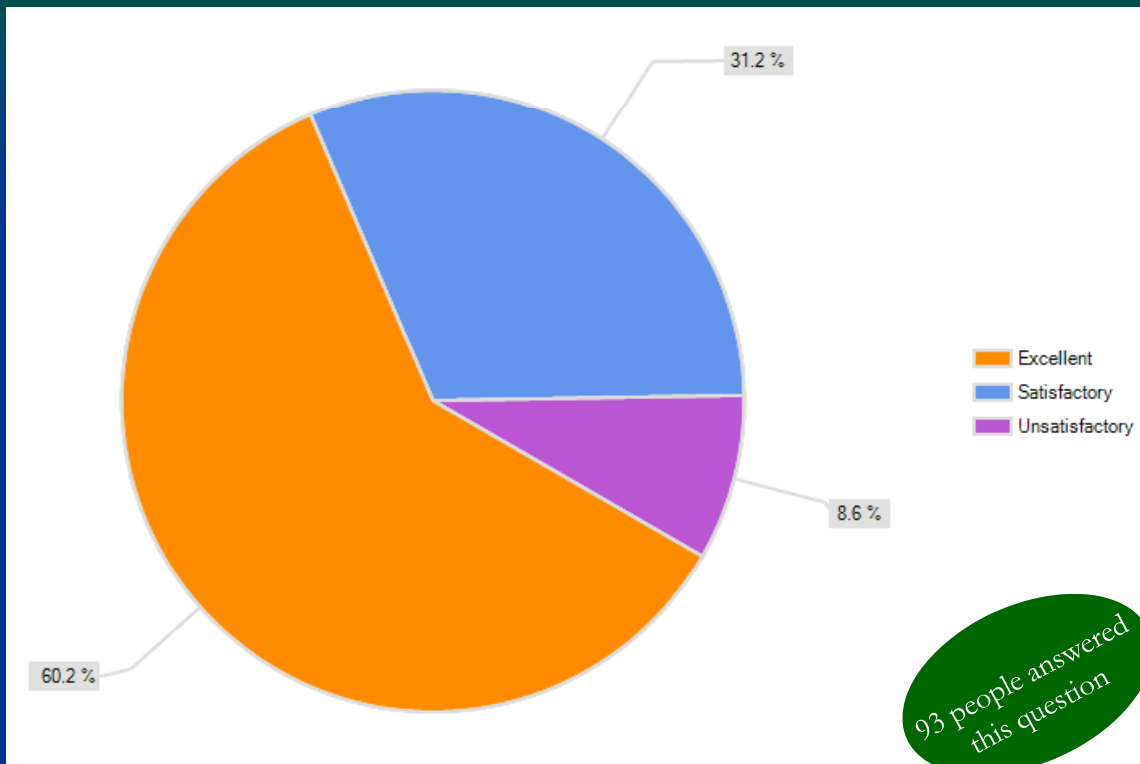
64 people answered this question

How would you describe the helpfulness of the City staff's front counter staff? (Planning)

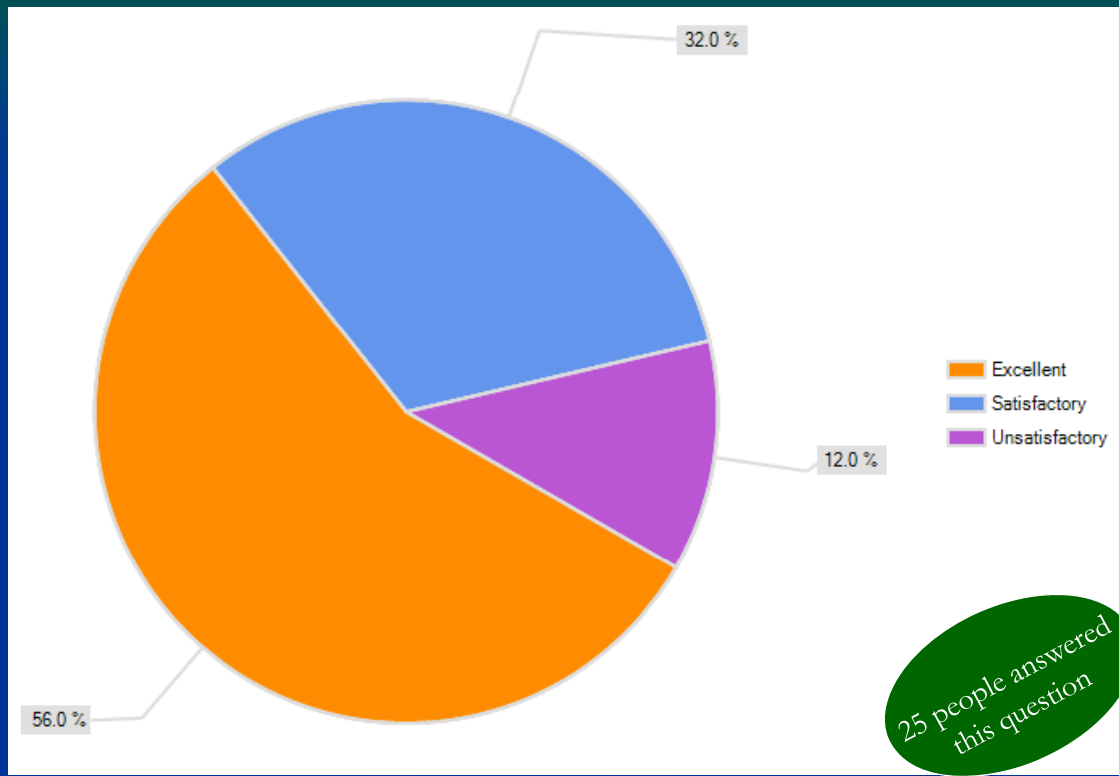


12 people answered this question

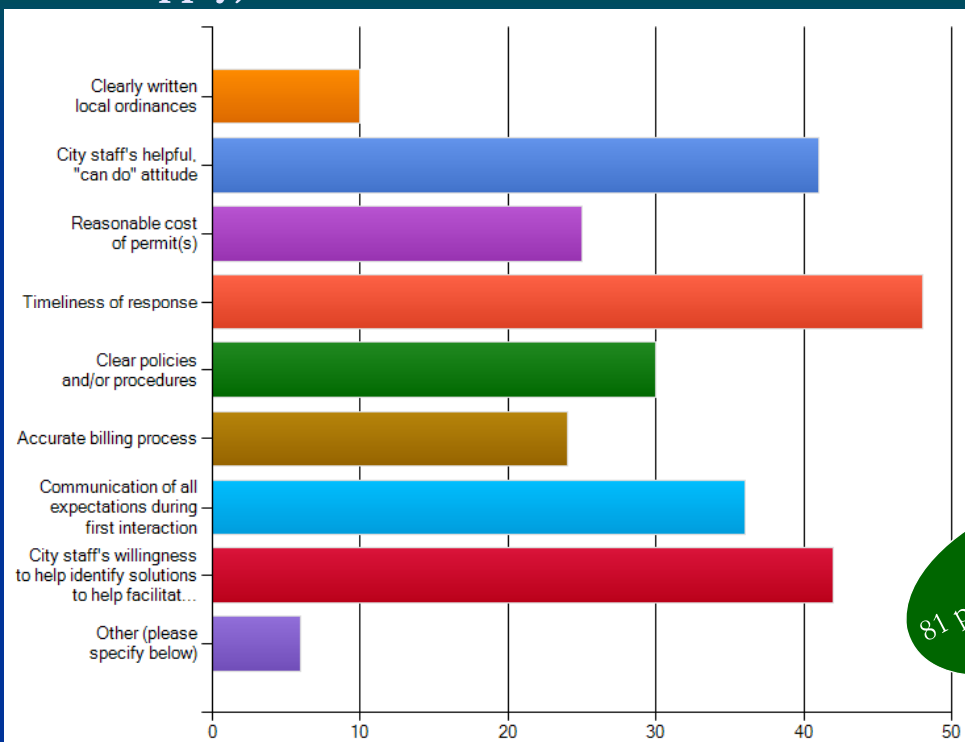
Overall, how would you describe your experience with the Inspection Division?



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

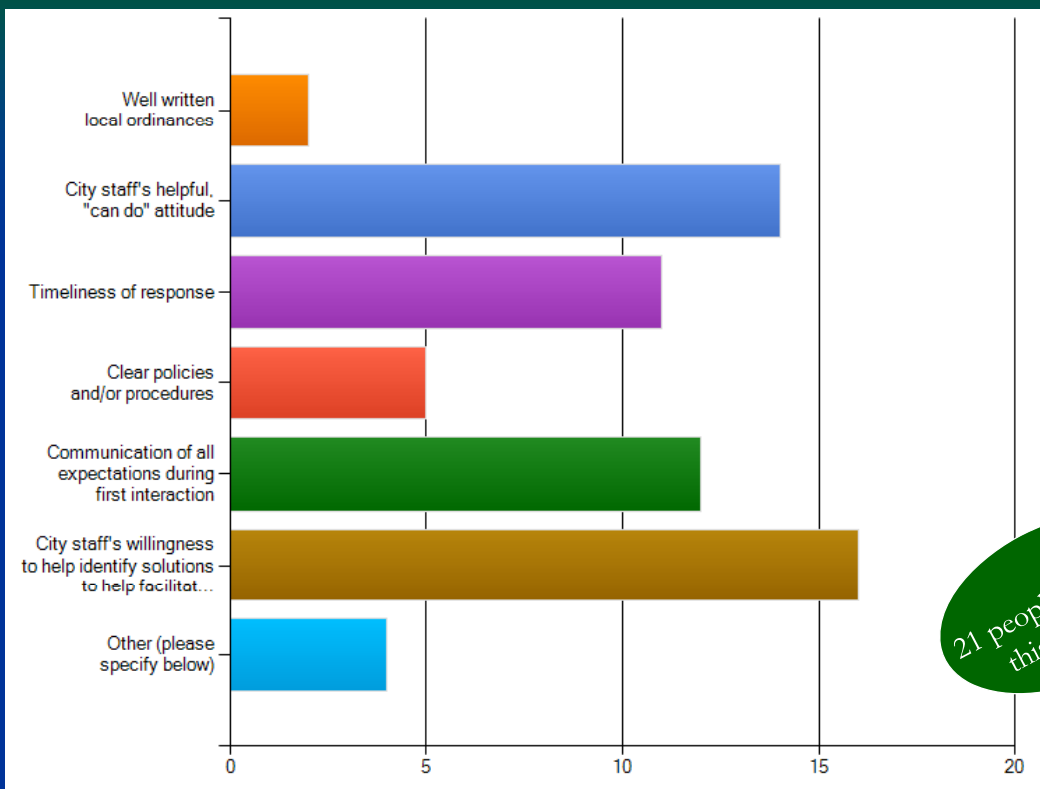


Which of the following contributed to your satisfaction level with the City of Ames' Inspection Division? (please select all that apply)



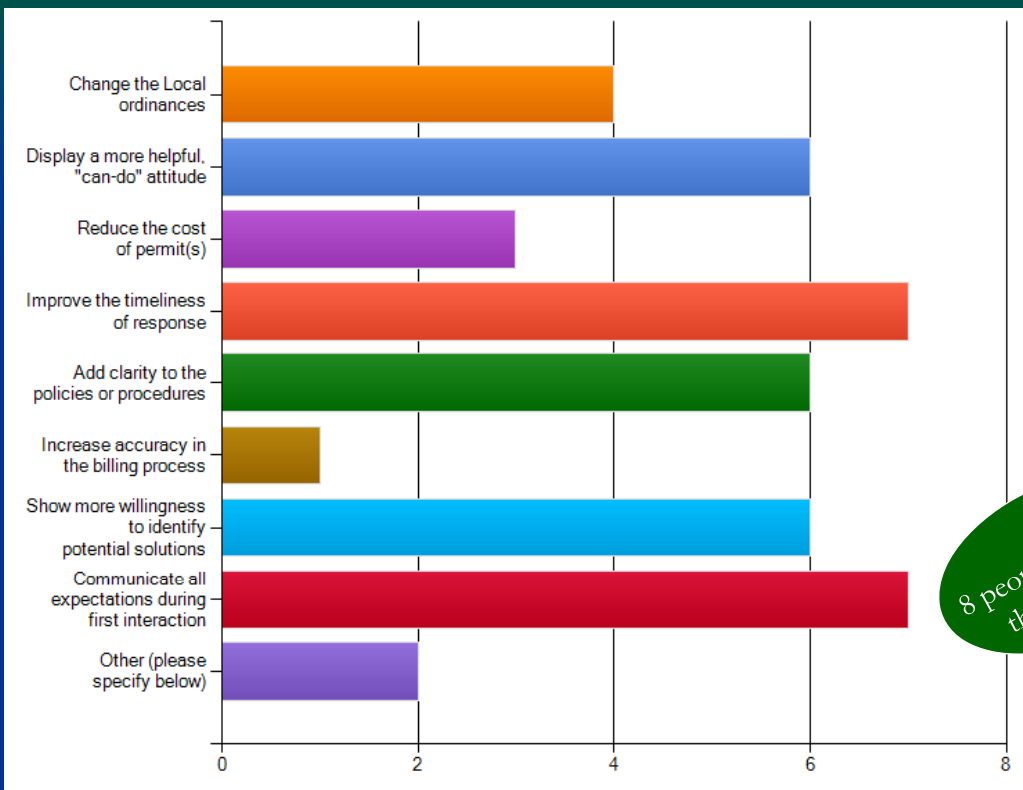
81 people answered this question

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



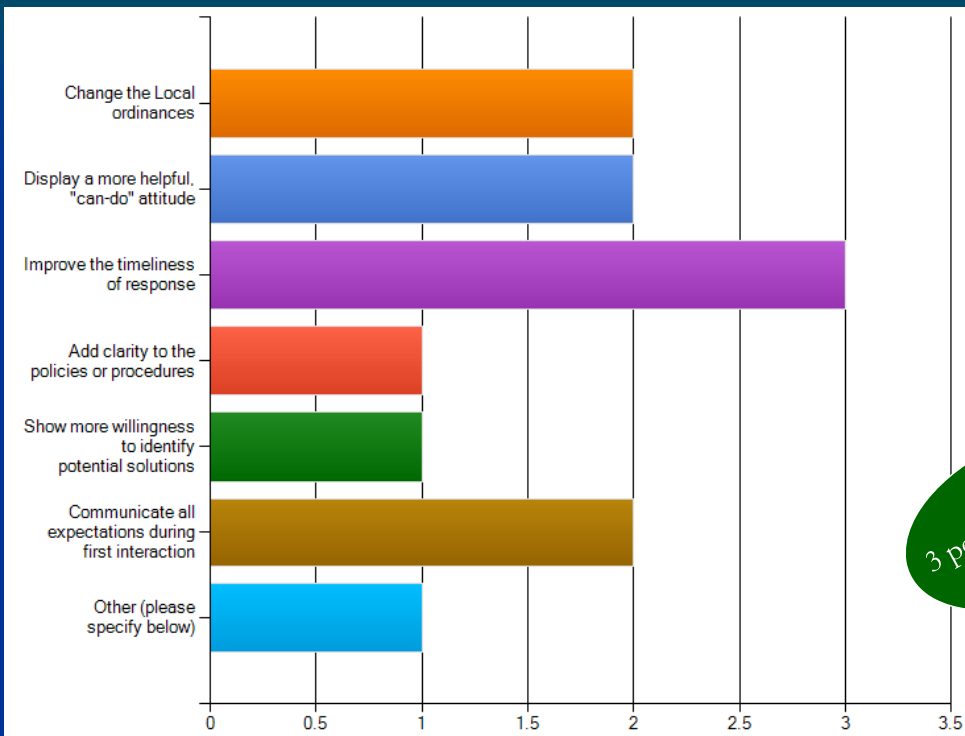
21 people answered this question

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



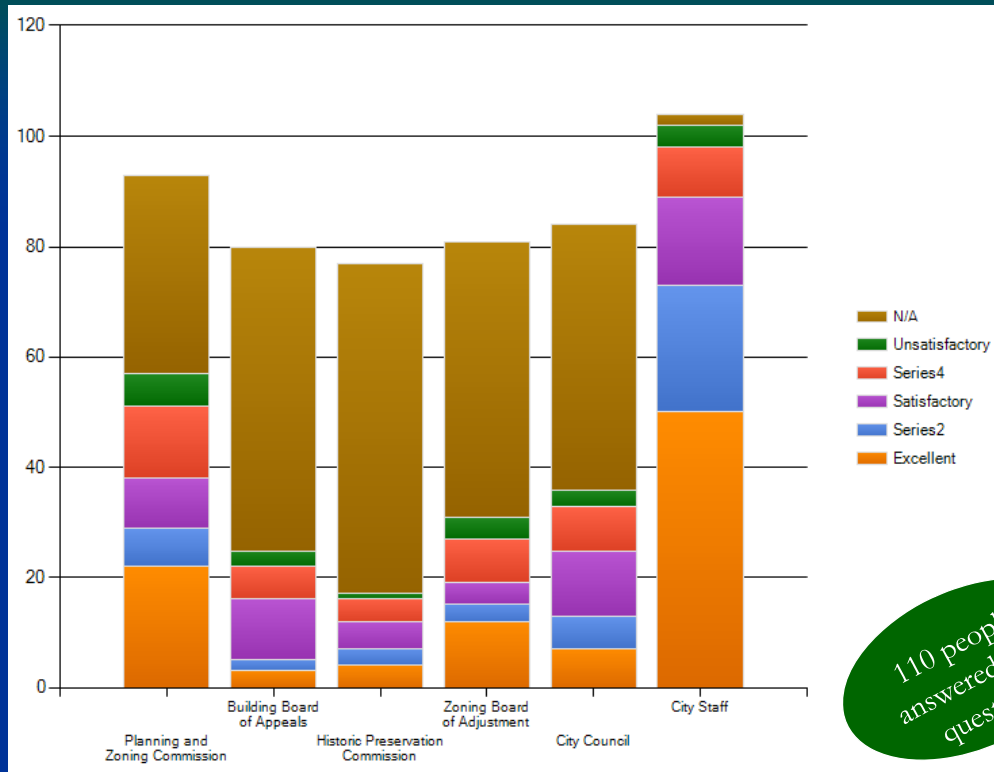
8 people answered this question

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



3 people answered this question

A Council goal is for the City of 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?



110 people answered this question

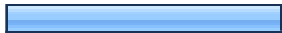
Continuous Improvement Themes

- Maintain consistency among City staff members in regards to answering questions and Code interpretations
- Improve timeliness of inspections, responses to inquiries, and approval decisions
- Base decisions on the current code and not on personal preference or bias of a staff member
- Clearly communicate expectations to customers at the beginning of the approval process so they can be relied on without bringing up new requirements later in the process.
- Display a “Can Do” attitude by helping to identify solutions that facilitate the project’s approval
- Develop clarity and flexibility in City policies, rules, and local ordinances and change those that work against our goals.











Questions?

1. 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.)		23.9%	33
Building Inspections (includes: building, electrical, plumbing, mechanical and construction plans review)		76.1%	105
		answered question	138

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

		Response Percent	Response Count
David Brown (Building Official)		20.6%	20
Bruce Kincaid (Inspections Supervisor)		17.5%	17
Craig Hageman (Building)		44.3%	43
Mike Makelbust (Plumbing)		34.0%	33
Nick Patterson (Electrical)		26.8%	26
Scott Ripperger (Plans)		21.6%	21
Unknown		15.5%	15
Other (please type name below)		8.2%	8
		answered question	97
		skipped question	8

3. 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	Response Count
Please select the most appropriate choice.	57.7% (56)	19.6% (19)	19.6% (19)	3.1% (3)	0.0% (0)	4.32	97
						Use this space to explain your choice	18
						answered question	97
						skipped question	8



4. 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	Response Count
Please select the most appropriate choice.	56.8% (54)	17.9% (17)	17.9% (17)	3.2% (3)	4.2% (4)	4.20	95
						Use this space to explain your choice	16
						answered question	95
						skipped question	10

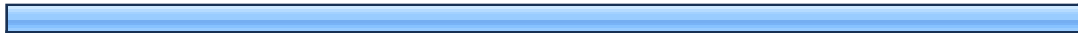

5. How would you describe the Inspection staff's professional knowledge while assisting you with your proposal(s)/project (s)?

	Very Knowledgeable	Knowledgeable	Not Knowledgeable	Rating Average	Response Count		
Please select the most appropriate choice.	53.7% (51)	17.9% (17)	16.8% (16)	9.5% (9)	2.1% (2)	4.12	95
	Use this space to explain your choice						13
	answered question						95
	skipped question						10

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

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		67.0%	65
No		33.0%	32
	answered question		97
	skipped question		8

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

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		93.8%	60
No		6.3%	4

Use this space to explain your choice

8

answered question

64

skipped question

1

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

	Very Helpful	Helpful	Not Helpful	N/A	Rating Average	Response Count		
Please select the most appropriate choice.	60.9% (39)	9.4% (6)	23.4% (15)	4.7% (3)	1.6% (1)	0.0% (0)	4.23	64

Use this space to explain your choice

4

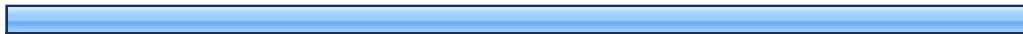




answered question

64

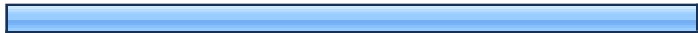


skipped question

1





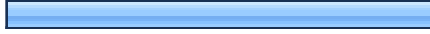




9. Which of the following best describes the final outcome of your proposal(s)/project(s)? (please select all that apply)

		Response Percent	Response Count
Approved by City staff		89.0%	81
Approved by Building Board of Appeals		4.4%	4
Approved by City Council		2.2%	2
Denied by City staff		2.2%	2
Denied by Building Board of Appeals		0.0%	0
Denied by City Council		0.0%	0
Other (please specify below)		6.6%	6
		answered question	91
		skipped question	14

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

		Response Percent	Response Count
Excellent		60.2%	56
Satisfactory		31.2%	29
Unsatisfactory		8.6%	8
		answered question	93
		skipped question	12

11. 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		12.3%	10
City staff's helpful, "can do" attitude		50.6%	41
Reasonable cost of permit(s)		30.9%	25
Timeliness of response		59.3%	48
Clear policies and/or procedures		37.0%	30
Accurate billing process		29.6%	24
Communication of all expectations during first interaction		44.4%	36
City staff's willingness to help identify solutions to help facilitate your project		51.9%	42
Other (please specify below)		7.4%	6
		answered question	81
		skipped question	4

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

	Response Count
	16
answered question	16
skipped question	69








13. 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		50.0%	4
Display a more helpful, "can-do" attitude		75.0%	6
Reduce the cost of permit(s)		37.5%	3
Improve the timeliness of response		87.5%	7
Add clarity to the policies or procedures		75.0%	6
Increase accuracy in the billing process		12.5%	1
Show more willingness to identify potential solutions		75.0%	6
Communicate all expectations during first interaction		87.5%	7
Other (please specify below)		25.0%	2
		answered question	8
		skipped question	0

14. How can we improve your next overall experience?

	Response Count
	6
answered question	6
skipped question	2



15. 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%	8
Jeff Benson		32.1%	9
Charlie Kuester		46.4%	13
Sam Perry		28.6%	8
Steve Osguthorpe		17.9%	5
Cindy Hollar		14.3%	4
Unknown		3.6%	1
Other (please type name below)		0.0%	0
		answered question	28
		skipped question	5

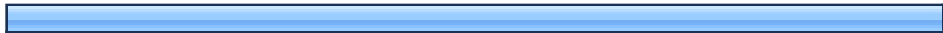

18. How would you describe the Planning staff's professional knowledge while assisting you with your proposal(s)/project (s)?

	Very Knowledgeable	Knowledgeable	Not Knowledgeable	Rating Average	Response Count		
Please select the most appropriate choice.	59.3% (16)	18.5% (5)	14.8% (4)	0.0% (0)	7.4% (2)	4.22	27
Use this space to explain your choice							2
answered question							27
skipped question							6

19. Did your issue require you to have interaction with counter help at City Hall?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes 	42.9%	12
No 	57.1%	16
answered question		28
skipped question		5

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

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		81.8%	9
No		18.2%	2

Use this space to explain your choice 3

answered question	11
skipped question	1










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

	Very Helpful	Helpful	Not Helpful	N/A	Rating Average	Response Count		
Please select the most appropriate choice.	66.7% (8)	0.0% (0)	16.7% (2)	0.0% (0)	8.3% (1)	8.3% (1)	4.27	12

Use this space to explain your choice 2

answered question	12
skipped question	0

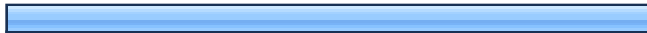


22. What type of application did you submit? (please select all that apply)

		Response Percent	Response Count
Certificate of Appropriateness (historic preservation)		8.7%	2
Major Site Plan or Planned Residential Development (PRD) Plan		17.4%	4
Special Use Permit		21.7%	5
Minor Site Plan		34.8%	8
Preliminary or Final Plat		21.7%	5
Flood Plain Development Permit		17.4%	4
Rezoning		13.0%	3
Land Use Policy Plan change		8.7%	2
Other (please specify below)		21.7%	5
		answered question	23
		skipped question	10

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

		Response Percent	Response Count
Approved by City staff		40.9%	9
Approved by the Zoning Board of Adjustment		22.7%	5
Approved by the Historic Preservation Commission		4.5%	1
Approved by City Council		31.8%	7
Denied by City staff		0.0%	0
Denied by the Zoning Board of Adjustment		0.0%	0
Denied by the Historic Preservation Commission		0.0%	0
Denied by City Council		0.0%	0
		answered question	22
		skipped question	11

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

		Response Percent	Response Count
Excellent		56.0%	14
Satisfactory		32.0%	8
Unsatisfactory		12.0%	3
		answered question	25
		skipped question	8








25. 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		9.5%	2
City staff's helpful, "can do" attitude		66.7%	14
Timeliness of response		52.4%	11
Clear policies and/or procedures		23.8%	5
Communication of all expectations during first interaction		57.1%	12
City staff's willingness to help identify solutions to help facilitate your project		76.2%	16
Other (please specify below)		19.0%	4
		answered question	21
		skipped question	1

26. How can we improve your next overall experience?

	Response Count
	5
answered question	5
skipped question	17




27. 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		66.7%	2
Display a more helpful, "can-do" attitude		66.7%	2
Improve the timeliness of response		100.0%	3
Add clarity to the policies or procedures		33.3%	1
Show more willingness to identify potential solutions		33.3%	1
Communicate all expectations during first interaction		66.7%	2
Other (please specify below)		33.3%	1
		answered question	3
		skipped question	0

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

	Response Count
	2
answered question	2
skipped question	1

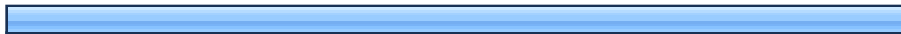

29. Did you find the Application/Developer Packet useful, clear, and understandable?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		70.8%	17
No		4.2%	1
N/A		25.0%	6

Use this space to explain your choice 1

answered question	24
skipped question	9

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

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		78.3%	18
No		21.7%	5
Use this space to explain your choice			7
answered question			23
skipped question			10

31. 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	Response Count
Planning and Zoning Commission	23.7% (22)	7.5% (7)	9.7% (9)	14.0% (13)	6.5% (6)	38.7% (36)	3.46	93	
Building Board of Appeals	3.8% (3)	2.5% (2)	13.8% (11)	7.5% (6)	3.8% (3)	68.8% (55)	2.84	80	
Historic Preservation Commission	5.2% (4)	3.9% (3)	6.5% (5)	5.2% (4)	1.3% (1)	77.9% (60)	3.29	77	
Zoning Board of Adjustment	14.8% (12)	3.7% (3)	4.9% (4)	9.9% (8)	4.9% (4)	61.7% (50)	3.35	81	
City Council	8.3% (7)	7.1% (6)	14.3% (12)	9.5% (8)	3.6% (3)	57.1% (48)	3.17	84	
City Staff	48.1% (50)	22.1% (23)	15.4% (16)	8.7% (9)	3.8% (4)	1.9% (2)	4.04	104	
answered question								110	
skipped question								28	

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

	Response Count
	27
answered question	27
skipped question	111

Page 2, Q2. Which Inspection staff member(s) assisted you with your most recent proposal(s)/project(s)? (please select all that apply)

1	Tom Henderson (fire)	Sep 26, 2011 11:45 AM
2	Office staff, inspections dept.	Sep 13, 2011 6:53 PM
3	Heather Cromie-Roche	Sep 9, 2011 4:24 PM
4	Tom Henriksen	Sep 9, 2011 1:15 PM
5	Mechanical Inspections	Sep 9, 2011 11:14 AM
6	Natalie Harrington	Sep 9, 2011 10:10 AM
7	since sump pump line - likely plumbing but not certain	Sep 8, 2011 10:25 PM
8	Tom Henrickson	Sep 8, 2011 4:18 PM

Page 3, Q3. How would you describe the Inspection staff's courtesousness while assisting you with your proposal(s)/project(s)?

1	Very nice person to work with	Sep 27, 2011 5:44 PM
2	They are very well informed on codes. The get back to you very quickly. They are top notch inspectors	Sep 27, 2011 12:36 PM
3	Always proffesional and fair	Sep 26, 2011 10:54 AM
4	Everybody was extremely helpful.	Sep 26, 2011 10:44 AM
5	Best staff ever!	Sep 13, 2011 6:53 PM
6	A staff member always calls me back when I leave a voice mail and is very courteous and polite.	Sep 11, 2011 9:27 PM
7	He carries himself with an arrogance that is hard to work with.	Sep 11, 2011 9:11 PM
8	I was treated with the same respect that I treated Staff with.	Sep 10, 2011 7:35 PM
9	They are interest in doing things right and willing to listen to our ideas	Sep 9, 2011 4:15 PM
10	Very professional	Sep 9, 2011 11:14 AM
11	It has gotten better--phone calls and messages in the past have not been promptly returned. It is difficult to get a hold of a contact after 4 pm.	Sep 9, 2011 10:10 AM
12	This staff member has always been very courteous and professional in my dealings with him.	Sep 9, 2011 9:18 AM
13	Always professional	Sep 8, 2011 9:45 PM
14	a quick reveiw was done with the permit being issued.	Sep 8, 2011 8:39 PM
15	It's like calling Mediacom, we will get to you between 12 and 5, please be home.	Sep 8, 2011 6:22 PM
16	They were prof	Sep 8, 2011 5:57 PM
17	This staff member is courteous to your face, but vindictive and rude when he thinks you are not looking. He further is very unorganized and fails to get back to people as promised.	Sep 8, 2011 4:17 PM
18	I cannot compliment the City of Ames enough. Everyone on staff was wonderful to work with and very appreciative of our investment in the community and told me so on many occasions.	Sep 8, 2011 4:10 PM

Page 3, Q4. How would you describe the Inspection staff's helpfulness while assisting you with your proposal(s)/project(s)?

1	always there to help you right away	Sep 27, 2011 5:44 PM
2	Always returns calls to answer questions	Sep 26, 2011 10:54 AM
3	They took the extra time to make everything as easy as possible.	Sep 26, 2011 10:44 AM
4	do not respond to calls during buisness hrs.	Sep 25, 2011 11:58 AM
5	Special scheduling requests were handled easy-peasy!	Sep 13, 2011 6:53 PM
6	This staff member always does his best to describe an answer to question and to help me through to a solution.	Sep 11, 2011 9:27 PM
7	He will not respond to e-mail queries with legitimate questions.	Sep 11, 2011 9:11 PM
8	The project was a bit of a rush and staff helped it along!	Sep 10, 2011 7:35 PM
9	Normally perform work in Des Moines. They were very helpful in planning the project.	Sep 9, 2011 11:14 AM
10	Code is often read...but not interpreted by the city official.	Sep 9, 2011 10:10 AM
11	On occasion, I have called a staff member to look at a project before I started with it to get his input. He has been very helpful in discussing a number of different ways to achieve a safe and effective outcome.	Sep 9, 2011 9:18 AM
12	This staff member helped us get a permit quickly because the investor was requiring it. He went above and beyond to help us and I felt like he was actually part of the project team because he was trying so hard to make this project (Eastwood Apartments) come to fruition.	Sep 9, 2011 7:55 AM
13	Staff always willing to help me plan project to meet code.	Sep 8, 2011 9:45 PM
14	This staff's willingness to listen and consider alternative points of view is exceptional.	Sep 8, 2011 9:12 PM
15	gave a very good explanation with what was required.	Sep 8, 2011 8:39 PM
16	Has is own agenda and does not seem to care a hoot about anyone else.	Sep 8, 2011 4:17 PM

Page 4, Q5. How would you describe the Inspection staff's professional knowledge while assisting you with your proposal(s)/project(s)?

1	never had a problem	Sep 27, 2011 5:44 PM
2	Knows the code and city regulations very well and is not afraid to ask for an opinion	Sep 26, 2011 10:54 AM
3	No complaints	Sep 26, 2011 10:44 AM
4	This staff member and I discussed several solutions to a difficult code compliance problem and worked out a solution together. Unbelievable!	Sep 13, 2011 6:53 PM
5	We do not receive consistent answers. The code is so cumbersome that it would be difficult for anyone to apply consistently.	Sep 13, 2011 1:38 PM
6	He is pretty green to be in this position. He gets bogged down in details and misses big items.	Sep 11, 2011 9:11 PM
7	They had great knowledge and interpretation of the code.	Sep 9, 2011 11:14 AM
8	There has been turnover so long term or continual projects require educating city staff on reasoning and interpretation that happened prior to the new staff	Sep 9, 2011 10:10 AM
9	I am finding an increasing amount of erroneous requirements which are attributed to the Code but which are not in the Code.	Sep 9, 2011 9:47 AM
10	It is obvious that this staff member has "done his homework". He is very knowledgeable with every issue of City and National Electrical Codes.	Sep 9, 2011 9:18 AM
11	This staff's knowledge exceeds typical municipal inspection departments. They are extremely code compliant.	Sep 8, 2011 9:12 PM
12	what codes were required	Sep 8, 2011 8:39 PM
13	The rental inspection staff is relatively kind, but not at all competent for the professional areas in which they work. They have a very low understanding of the actual mechanics of buildings, take many photos to "research later" and make ridiculous demands.	Sep 8, 2011 4:17 PM

Page 5, Q7. Were you met with a "welcoming" attitude by our front counter staff?

1	Front counter staff is always helpful.	Sep 26, 2011 11:43 AM
2	unable to answer simple questions .Are my mesagges really getting passed on??	Sep 25, 2011 12:01 PM
3	It was like everyone had their coffee BEFORE work-- they were ready to go!	Sep 13, 2011 6:54 PM
4	Very helpful. I never feel like I am taking up their time or I am an imposition. Very professional.	Sep 11, 2011 9:28 PM
5	The counter staff is always pleasant and helpful	Sep 11, 2011 9:11 PM
6	Your staff is always pleasant. Very cheerful and welcoming.	Sep 9, 2011 9:23 AM
7	It was during the flood and doing clean up.we decided to close off a garage door to save energy. they were very helpful with the permit as a last minuet decision.	Sep 8, 2011 8:57 PM
8	delayed in responding - acknowledgement	Sep 8, 2011 8:09 PM

Page 5, Q8. How would you describe the helpfulness of our front counter staff?

1	Very helpful, willing to get the information I needed by seeking others if they didn't know.	Sep 27, 2011 12:39 PM
2	They are quick to leave a message for the staff person but don't want to try to answer waht possibly could be an easy question.	Sep 9, 2011 10:12 AM
3	Any time I've had a question, your staff has been able to give me a complete and precise answer.	Sep 9, 2011 9:23 AM
4	see above commit	Sep 8, 2011 8:57 PM

Page 6, Q9. Which of the following best describes the final outcome of your proposal(s)/project(s)? (please select all that apply)

1	no jobs inspected in the last year that I recall	Sep 26, 2011 3:13 PM
2	Unknown at this time	Sep 9, 2011 4:25 PM
3	Approved by Fire Department	Sep 9, 2011 1:16 PM
4	Not sure. I just fill out the permits.	Sep 9, 2011 9:35 AM
5	N/A	Sep 8, 2011 4:26 PM
6	Still waiting for responses on almost all items	Sep 8, 2011 4:17 PM

Page 8, Q11. Which of the following contributed to your satisfaction level with the City of Ames' Inspection Division? (please select all that apply)

1	none of the above	Sep 28, 2011 3:47 PM
2	Everyone is willing to discuss my needs and work with me towards a solution.	Sep 13, 2011 7:00 PM
3	None have been consistently applied.	Sep 13, 2011 1:46 PM
4	The cost of the permits seem somewhat high to me.	Sep 11, 2011 9:30 PM
5	Usually the permit is approved, which is why I answered satisfactory. Based on the list above I probably would have answered unsatisfactory	Sep 9, 2011 10:20 AM
6	please remember that the work was done following the flood and the the staff was very busy yet took the time to be helpful	Sep 8, 2011 8:58 PM

Page 9, Q12. What comments or suggestions could you share to help us improve your next overall experience?

1	Are all forms/apps on line?	Sep 26, 2011 7:41 PM
2	Fees are getting expensive	Sep 26, 2011 3:16 PM
3	I don't like the fact that the inspectors on that south 16th project were waiting on them hand & foot just because they were out of town contractors. They don't hold our hands, but expect us to know the codes. If they can't hire local contractors that are familiar with the wants & ways of the city of ames, then they shouldn't be working here	Sep 26, 2011 11:50 AM
4	More specific line item charges on permit forms.	Sep 26, 2011 11:03 AM
5	Everything was fine	Sep 26, 2011 10:56 AM
6	This staff member is a little tough on some of the plumbing issues, to a point that sometimes is excessive. The building inspectors I work with are all very very helpful and easy to work with. This staff other member is great	Sep 14, 2011 8:10 AM
7	Maybe you guys could install the water heater too? Seriously, don't change anything. Keep up the good work!	Sep 13, 2011 7:00 PM
8	Keep up the good work.	Sep 11, 2011 9:30 PM
9	I can see that your staff is working hard to organize the information within the planning division. I feel that I have been getting emails in a timely fashion for items such as office closings, ordinance changes, etc. However, most of the information I have received does not pertain to our line of construction. I would like more information and a contact person for plan review, installation and scheduling inspections for fire sprinkler systems within the city.	Sep 9, 2011 4:34 PM
10	By improving on the list above--I don't know that I ever experience a "can-do" attitude or a willingness to help. Notifying contractors when permits will increase instead of surprising them on a bill. Staff should not complain about how over worked they are.	Sep 9, 2011 10:20 AM
11	I believe if the inspectors would stick to the actual Code more and not add things like inspecting pipe runs(HVAC) which are not talked about in the Code and are used to only generate more money for the City.	Sep 9, 2011 9:50 AM
12	Continue to have a "Pro-Development" attitude and help the design and build team work through issues that could delay or eliminate the project. Continue to ensure that the system is not designed to put out-of-town contractors at a disadvantage.	Sep 9, 2011 7:59 AM
13	Previous inspection dept administrations allowed the customer to set a specific time for an inspection. Typically 8:30AM and 1:30PM were set aside for dedicated time slots. Two slots a day, first come, if taken, select another day. Seem to work well for busy people.	Sep 9, 2011 5:45 AM

Page 9, Q12. What comments or suggestions could you share to help us improve your next overall experience?

14	Consistency of code compliance	Sep 8, 2011 9:18 PM
15	check on the project with folow up everyt 3 months if there has not been any contact.	Sep 8, 2011 8:58 PM
16	Although my experience was not negative in anyway, one suggestion would be a pre-planning meeting or whatever you would want to call it to get all of the people in one room from the City to explain all expectations and provide a face with the voice on the phone or behind the email. would not have to be lengthy, just maybe an hour to introduce and go through each of the Citys departments expectations and requirements of the proposed or approved project.	Sep 8, 2011 4:13 PM

Page 10, Q13. Which of the following could help improve your satisfaction level with our Inspection Division? (please select all that apply)

1	to give an example: i called for a water inspection,had to wait two hours for inspection, staff shows up ,approves water heater,then starts looking in house for pre-existing violations that no longer met TODAYs code but did when originally installed. Things such as this really gives the city a black eye by the owner and myself.The current staff is being too aggressive, almost to the point of bullying the contractors and building owner. There is a huge contrast in ames inspection division and other communties inspection departments. with the current staff, in my oppinion, this division has turned into a negative aspect of the city rather than a helpful and caring unit.	Sep 26, 2011 1:02 PM
2	New computer software for more accurate reports.	Sep 8, 2011 4:19 PM

Page 11, Q14. How can we improve your next overall experience?

1	i would say at this point, so much negative has been created by myself and others,dismiss the current staff member and get a new staff member who is in-touch with the community and makes oneself available to the community for progressing the tarnished image to a positive image.	Sep 26, 2011 1:02 PM
2	will staff work with you on issues not my way or the highway attitude	Sep 25, 2011 12:06 PM
3	The inspectors should keep personal biases completely out of the view of customers. I have had two clients that have made comments that they have felt that 'the inspector didn't seem to like you guys'. This does not apply to our field staff but certainly to certain people in our office. This is completely unacceptable and will not be tolerated.	Sep 11, 2011 9:16 PM
4	Stop spouting code and find a way to help within the guidelines of the policy. Have someone who can fill in for staff during an absence. Telling a contractor they have to wait because so-and -so is on vacation for 2 weeks is unacceptable...or would be in private industry. It would be nice if someone could answer questions up to 5 p.m.	Sep 9, 2011 10:24 AM
5	there need to be more flexiblty in code matters and inspection times	Sep 9, 2011 6:59 AM
6	Consider going to a different system. Consider asking Des Moines, Ankeny, and all other surrounding communities how they handle inspections. In comparison, the Ames situation is embarrassing.	Sep 8, 2011 4:19 PM

Page 13, Q16. How would you describe the Planning staff's courteousness while assisting you with your proposal(s)/project(s)?

1	Our interactions are fairly informal and excessive courtesy would be uncalled for and unwelcome.	Sep 26, 2011 11:38 AM
2	This staff member was very knowledgeable and friendly. He definitely gives off a vibe of wanting to help you get things done.	Sep 26, 2011 11:09 AM
3	This staff member was our primary contact and was excellent to interact with. I develop 8 apartment projects a year and I can easily say he was the most competent and cordial planner I have dealt with in a long time.	Sep 15, 2011 5:14 PM
4	This staff member was very helpful and courteous. I never felt the issues were one sided.	Sep 13, 2011 8:46 PM
5	Very professional	Sep 9, 2011 8:23 AM
6	Very kind, knowledgeable, and helpful.	Sep 8, 2011 8:26 PM
7	This staff member was very easy to work with and quick to give me information I didn't even know I needed.	Sep 8, 2011 7:56 PM
8	Staff is always courteous, but I do think that they fairly frequently take too much time responding.	Sep 8, 2011 4:15 PM

Page 13, Q17. How would you describe the Planning staff's helpfulness while assisting you with your proposal(s)/project(s)?

1	They were very helpful in explaining policy and possibilities but the often severe limitations of policy do not help the project happen.	Sep 26, 2011 11:38 AM
2	This staff member was helpful, the process however was far from helpful or nessecarry	Sep 26, 2011 10:45 AM
3	See other note.	Sep 15, 2011 5:14 PM
4	This staff member made sure I understood all aspects of the process and what was required, and when.	Sep 13, 2011 8:46 PM
5	. I was passed from one to another. I received a different answer each time. This cost me several weeks of delay.	Sep 12, 2011 11:15 AM
6	This staff member was my primary contact. He was absolutely perfect in terms of keeping up to date on the progress of my application, providing insight on the process and helping me understand the next steps. I cannot express how valuable his skill was.	Sep 9, 2011 9:12 AM
7	See above	Sep 8, 2011 7:56 PM
8	I have worked with many cities and planning staffs and have found this staff member to be the most available, engaging, knowledgable and helpful staff person than all I have worked with....a breath of fresh air.	Sep 8, 2011 4:16 PM
9	Helpful, but all too willing to adopt the most extreme (and oftentimes ridiculous) view on Code interpretation. There seems to be an interest in finding the "roadblock" in the City Code. Additionally, there is too much tendency to create new law to deal with the latest problem or perceived abuse. Little flexibility is shown.	Sep 8, 2011 4:15 PM

Page 14, Q18. How would you describe the Planning staff's professional knowledge while assisting you with your proposal(s)/project(s)?

1	See other note.	Sep 15, 2011 5:14 PM
2	I had an unusual circumstance and when the persons helping me didn't know, they made sure to find out and then get back to me with the information.	Sep 8, 2011 4:08 PM

Page 15, Q20. Were you met with a "welcoming" attitude by our front counter staff?

1	One was very helpful the other not so much (don't know her name)	Sep 26, 2011 10:49 AM
2	Very friendly.	Sep 15, 2011 5:15 PM
3	Front counter staff is uniformly excellent.	Sep 8, 2011 4:15 PM

Page 15, Q21. How would you describe the helpfulness of the City staff's front counter staff?

1	I only had one time that the help was helpful and courteous the other times the lady was not.	Sep 26, 2011 10:49 AM
2	Knowledgeable and courteous.	Sep 15, 2011 5:15 PM

Page 16, Q22. What type of application did you submit? (please select all that apply)

1	Plat of Survey	Sep 27, 2011 6:56 AM
2	investigation into possible development as well.	Sep 26, 2011 11:40 AM
3	Solar PV application	Sep 26, 2011 10:46 AM
4	Variance Request	Sep 8, 2011 4:18 PM
5	signage ordinance	Sep 8, 2011 4:12 PM

Page 19, Q25. Which of the following contributed to your satisfaction level with our Planning Division? (please select all that apply)

1	I was satisfied with the staff not the city which gets in its own way of success with its "better is the enemy of good" policies while cultivating the "do the least you have to because we've eaten up so much time and money" attitude, making you meet often arbitrary and irrelevant requirements. Many of the development policies go against the stated goals of the city. I wish they had a bigger, long term vision that policy fit within. How does a walkable/bike-able city work with oceans of unused parking for example? Or sustainability and impervious surfaces. Or high density urban with suburban landscaping requirements? Or diversity and innovation with compatibility. I wish Ames would look at some successful urban landscapes/environments/planning and copy them. Then maybe we could better afford the infrastructure and attract city oriented people here. Give the staff something to work with that can be modified and evolved to accommodate vibrant economically stimulating development.	Sep 26, 2011 12:01 PM
2	The staff was very helpful, however as the site plan review process moved from comments to getting the actual approval, things slowed down significantly. To use a football analogy, It felt like we were stuck at the one yard line for a very long time.	Sep 26, 2011 11:13 AM
3	Landscape ordinance for parking lots should be rewritten to reflect realities of requirements (not revoked or loosened, but made more practical)	Sep 9, 2011 9:14 AM
4	Responsive and balanced approach on the part of City staff to find the best possible solution to meet the needs of our client while protecting the interest of the City and general public.	Sep 8, 2011 4:19 PM

Page 20, Q26. How can we improve your next overall experience?

1	Loosen up the process to accommodate quality development. Give the planners more room for professional discretion so we can get a diverse and livable city. Stop worry so much about the i's being dotted and the t's being crossed when its the wrong word used in a bad sentence! The new apartments on 16th are a slum waiting to happen, but it meets code. South Duff is ugly, but it meets code and that is the gateway to our city. It looks like one huge used car lot. The planners can only use the tools and power you give them.	Sep 26, 2011 12:01 PM
2	Allow for the final permit issuance to happen more quickly.	Sep 26, 2011 11:13 AM
3	Our experience was excellent.	Sep 15, 2011 5:17 PM
4	My experiences with Planning have continued to improve, as (I feel) they have started to move more away from "what they would like to see" when reviewing applications, to more "what is required by code". In the past, their reviews sometimes included staffs' interpretation of what a project should be. I would much rather know exactly what the code requirements are and work with staff to find practical, workable solutions to our differences than argue about how a project should "look and feel".	Sep 9, 2011 10:49 AM
5	Staff is fine. Ames continues to need improvement in creating a "team" atmosphere, finding solutions instead of building walls, with economic development interests.	Sep 9, 2011 8:29 AM

Page 21, Q27. Which of the following could help improve your satisfaction level with the City's Planning Division? (please select all that apply)

1	Complete redesign of your solar language that does not required 9 months of permitting and thousands of dollars in UNNESSARRY engineering and permits.	Sep 26, 2011 10:48 AM
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Page 22, Q28. What comments or suggestions could you share to help us improve your next overall experience?

1	If you ever hope to help new businesses and job growth in your area. You will take a long hard look at your zoning policies and your obvious bias in energy production due to your so called public utility	Sep 26, 2011 10:48 AM
2	All other departments were very helpful and timely.	Sep 12, 2011 11:16 AM

Page 22, Q29. Did you find the Application/Developer Packet useful, clear, and understandable?

1	It explains very clearly why we can't create really quality development.	Sep 26, 2011 12:04 PM
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Page 23, Q30. Did your project follow the processing schedule that was included in the Planning Application packet for the project?

1	None of them get that far - the clients leave when they find out what a pain it is going to be and go somewhere else.	Sep 26, 2011 12:04 PM
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2	More or less, however the final review and approval took longer than the schedule shows.	Sep 26, 2011 11:14 AM
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3	It took 9 months to permit this project, 3,500 in engineering costs for a project that was less than 15,000. Explain that to me City of Ames?	Sep 26, 2011 10:49 AM
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4	I also came down and went through the application with the staff. They said it was complete and then the next week it was denied. I resubmitted and then lost several more days because they did not notify me it was approved.	Sep 12, 2011 11:19 AM
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5	I still prefer the "old" calendar Planning worked from, that didn't have so many if/then conditions. Under the old calendar it was much easier to identify submittal dates and subsequent review/approval dates.	Sep 9, 2011 10:49 AM
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6	Well, we had to go back a second time to get the okey-dokey, but they were great to work with.	Sep 8, 2011 8:00 PM
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7	But -- in every situation the maximum amount of permitted time under the schedule was taken. Things could get to council much more quickly.	Sep 8, 2011 4:18 PM
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Page 24, Q32. Please provide us with any suggestions for how we can best display a "can-do" attitude.

1	Hire the Ankeny or Johnston city manager	Sep 28, 2011 3:48 PM
2	hire staff who are knowledgeable but are willing to step into the grey zone, NOT what is purely black and white	Sep 26, 2011 1:05 PM
3	Some of the things I have had to do that were completely unnecessary in the process of realizing or attempting to realize a project makes me understand why developers build out in the country even though I don't agree with that in principle. Can you make it city policy that staff is not setting precedent when it makes a decision for a particular set of circumstances for a particular project? That decisions are project specific with in the general context of the code and just because it happens one place does not mean it can happen any where. Legally challenging I understand but will result in a much better city. As would review of past policy. Look at the K Mart and its ocean of parking and the weird football field of grass next to it. the epitome of sprawl and infrastructure burden - contact the owners tell them they can sell off parcels and develop it and around the parking lot. More revenue, less sprawl more attractive to bike and walk. Look for opportunities to grow a better city and tell people about them - proactive. Why aren't here more opportunities for small start up businesses? The size of Highland shoe repair or Troy's barber shop? Small business is the backbone of America's economy but the only people that can afford to build in Ames are developers and franchises because it costs so much up front (and then to maintain). Something is wrong with the Ames paradigm.	Sep 26, 2011 12:21 PM
4	Keep doing this type of thing! It's great to have the opportunity to voice my concerns.	Sep 26, 2011 11:45 AM
5	A positive attitude helps, however the high property taxes scare many business operators. We develop small retail projects across the country for national tenants and we haven't encountered taxes as high as we're seeing in Ames any place else.	Sep 26, 2011 11:16 AM
6	I have not yet had the opportunity to work with anybody but the inspections department. They do a good job making sure things are done properly	Sep 26, 2011 10:58 AM
7	I could give a flying [REDACTED] about your attitude, its your policies that fail. This is nothing new from our government and is the reason why we are in the current situation the United States finds itself in today. Obvious government monopolies and collusion of industry with government to stifle any competition. You should be ashamed.	Sep 26, 2011 10:50 AM
8	up front communications with issues	Sep 25, 2011 12:07 PM
9	Have staff in inspections host your next in-house customer relations training and you'll do well!	Sep 13, 2011 7:02 PM
10	Fire this staff member and hire someone who wants to help bring in business and help with the process.	Sep 12, 2011 8:02 AM
11	I have heard a number of threats from inspections in the last year. Rather than try to resolve the (perceived) problem, they have come out swinging with consequences that completely do not fit the situation. In actuality, there were no	Sep 11, 2011 9:18 PM

Page 24, Q32. Please provide us with any suggestions for how we can best display a "can-do" attitude.

	problems but the attitude remains.	
12	excellent except for planning and zoning staff who have a "can't do" attitude.	Sep 9, 2011 4:20 PM
13	at all times, staff was helpful and courteous. for a home-based buisness, there are always concerns/anxiety when you move to a new location, reapply and go thru the process again. that "unknown" factor was helped by the staff and process involved. i think the process is fine and necessary to separate business, from hobbies.	Sep 9, 2011 3:06 PM
14	Ames continues to have the reputation as being one of the most difficult Cities in Iowa to develop a project in. If the City's goal is to encourage development and growth, they need to demonstrate it by working with developers and design professionals to move projects forward. We shouldn't need to revise policy or code to approve projects that make sense, and that a majority of people want to see happen.	Sep 9, 2011 10:50 AM
15	It is regularly perceived that the City is fighting against small businesses and only wants Whit Collar jobs brought into the City. In living here and working for almost forty years, I find this perception to be justified.	Sep 9, 2011 9:52 AM
16	All city staff needs to have growth and a progressive approach to building and developement as it's main focus. They need to learn to have good judgement about watching for serious violations of codes and developement design criteria, and let common sense dictate how to apply the code in gray areas instead of using the worst case scenario as the driving factor in their rulings.	Sep 9, 2011 8:52 AM
17	Cost of permits is very high I believe, this promotes bi-pass of the inspection process, some tradesmen work exclusively outside the inspection process, also having to wait for inspectors or to return to the job to meet the inspector after work is complete and you are on your next job, this increases the cost of some jobs, which bewilders some customers, and they feel as if they are paying for dead time.	Sep 9, 2011 7:42 AM
18	work more with us instead of against us	Sep 9, 2011 7:03 AM
19	ZBA and Planning dept seem too rigid in their interpretations. I thought I had a very common sense request for a variance, which was denied. My experience felt like going before the Supreme Court, rather than staff helping me find a solution.	Sep 9, 2011 5:55 AM
20	City council should have allowed more time for working with incoming stores with malls & incentives - large dept stores will not make decisions in the short window the council provided for extra incentives - many more factors involved.	Sep 8, 2011 10:27 PM
21	Maintain a courteous and positive staff attitude. Promote SMILING! Ensure 100% code compliance for new construction and allow for leniency to original code compliance for existing structures, except where extreme health or safety violations exist. " Extreme" to be defined as ' life threatening'.	Sep 8, 2011 9:37 PM

Page 24, Q32. Please provide us with any suggestions for how we can best display a "can-do" attitude.

22	please Note: at the completion of the project I had a heart attake while still in ames. I am doing fine at this time. HOWEVER I,m doing fine because of your local police, and fire dept who responed to my 911 call and transported me to the ames hospitol. My thanks to them just as much as I thaank the city staff.	Sep 8, 2011 8:58 PM
23	I specifically wrote the mayor - Ann Campbell (twice, letter and email) about the STUPID process around allowing a business to operate out of a home (aka use a computer). I had to pay \$100, have a sign sit in my yard only to provoke the interest and displeasure of the neighborhood, and attend a hearing of sorts to: USE MY COMPUTER FOR BUSINESS PURPOSES IN MY HOME - EMAILS, RECORD KEEPING, ETC. This is ridiculous and puts me at a disadvantage for being one of probably less than 5% of Ames business owners who follow this rule. After writing the mayor, asking what I could to make Ames more welcoming to business, I heard nothing, then nothing, then nothing. No response. Thanks.	Sep 8, 2011 8:05 PM
24	Council - pro small business and big business attitude mindset - eliminate road blocks and unnecessary steps have growth. (We've stunted growth for too long, when we need to be growing our tax base) City Staff - Most are great but frustrating when the Can-do attitude is not present. A few bad apples can ruin an experience. Represent the City in positive light always and work towards positive solutions and fairness to all.	Sep 8, 2011 4:29 PM
25	Have a realistic view and approach. Much of this could be accomplished by hiring people who are competent, kind, and realistic.	Sep 8, 2011 4:24 PM
26	I appreciate the opportunity to communicate my experience. I commend the City of Ames as one of the most professional and efficient organization I have worked with.	Sep 8, 2011 4:22 PM
27	Keep the City Manager's office involved in Planning Staff meetings with customers. It improves the process dramatically.	Sep 8, 2011 4:19 PM