Planning & Development Department

FY 2013-14 Strategic Plan

Mission: Planning, Development and Preservation for a Better Phoenix

Introduction

The Planning & Development Department (P&D) guides the physical development of the city by preserving our historic sites, guiding land use, and ensuring the safe construction of buildings and infrastructure. A host of advisory and governing bodies of citizens as well as elected officials provide input and oversight as the city grows, needs arise and technology changes. The process is governed through development and enforcement of the city's General Plan, Zoning Ordinance (which includes the Historic Preservation Ordinance), Phoenix Building Construction Code, and other city codes and ordinances.

The City’s Strategic plan served as the basis for the department’s Plan, focusing on our mission to plan, develop and preserve for a better Phoenix. The City’s focus areas include:

- Economic Development & Education
- Financial Excellence
- Infrastructure
- Innovation & Efficiency
- Phoenix Team
- Public Safety
- Neighborhoods & Livability
- Sustainability
- Technology
- Social Services Delivery

Department Overview

In July 2010, P&D was created as the result of a consolidation plan approved by City Council. The plan involved consolidation of the Planning Department, Development Services Department, the Historic Preservation Office and Property Records (formerly under City Clerk). Coordination of planning and development processes has improved and staff continues to explore opportunities for streamlining processes and providing better customer services to residents and the development community.

P&D is comprised of three divisions; Historic Preservation, Planning, and Development.

The Historic Preservation Office (HPO) works to protect and enhance historic neighborhoods, buildings and sites in Phoenix. HPO works closely with the Historic Preservation Commission to identify and designate eligible properties and districts for listing on the Phoenix Historic Property Register. Protection is provided to designated properties through city review and approval of exterior alterations to buildings and demolition requests. HPO also conducts federal compliance reviews for multiple departments receiving federal funds to protect the city's historic resources. HPO also administers the Historic Preservation Bond fund that supports a number of financial assistance programs for historic properties. Rehabilitation training and educational activities are offered to heighten public awareness and appreciation for the community’s historic resources.

The Planning Division guides the physical development of the city. The Phoenix General Plan, updated and/or readopted every ten years by public vote, is the long-range growth strategy for the city which addresses issues such as land use, housing, neighborhoods, public facilities, natural resources, and
transportation. The Planning Division administers and updates the Zoning Ordinance, which contains regulations governing use and design characteristics of defined districts and special overlays. Rezoning requests, variances and use permits are processed by Planning Division staff.

The Development Division offers plan review, construction permits and inspections to ensure the safety of the city’s buildings and infrastructure. Plans are reviewed for compliance with the Zoning Ordinance, Zoning Stipulations, Phoenix Building Construction Code, and other related codes and ordinances. Plan review is accomplished by site, residential, and multi-disciplinary commercial teams. A Team Leader facilitates the review process by functioning as the central point of contact to resolve development issues. As each element of permitted construction is completed, inspection teams assure progress according to approved plans and all city codes, ordinances and requirements. Additionally, staff processes abandonments, lot divisions and dedications.

The Current Climate

The Planning & Development Department strives to maintain service levels in response to a rapidly expanding housing market while continuing to streamline and incorporate technical advancements as expected by our customers. Efforts such as implementation of Electronic Plan Review and Five Day Site Plan, and coordination of the Infill Development Project will speed development and improve customer service. Technological advancement such as replacement of the outdated business permitting system (KIVA) and upgrading the customer queuing system will enhance coordination between divisions and provide compatibility with Electronic Plan Review. The department will also focus on the future through projects such as the North Mountain Redevelopment Area, the General Plan Update and the ReinventPHX grant. The department remains committed to facilitating expeditious development in Phoenix while protecting the life, safety and welfare of the public.

Electronic Plan Review will provide the public with the option of electronic submission, review, tracking and permitting of building plans. A pilot began June 24, 2012 and full availability is planned by September 2013.

Five Day Site Plan Review will allow plan reviewers to quickly respond to site plan requests and it will greatly streamline previously time consuming coordination with other city departments. The department estimates that 90% of all site plans will be performed in five days or less following program implementation on July 1, 2013.

Staff and consultants required to begin replacement of the current outdated permitting system was approved by Council in April 2013. The project will replace the current system with one capable of integrating Electronic Plan Review, remote inspections, planning cases and historic preservation processes and permits. The integration will enhance communication between divisions regarding critical items such as zoning stipulations, historic preservation actions, and non-permitted construction violations. An upgrade to the current customer queuing system is also in progress.

The Infill Development Project will create a pilot area for removing infill development barriers and incorporating flexibility in the standard development requirements. The department formed two advisory committees of key stakeholders and conducted listening sessions with design professionals,
business owners and neighborhood leaders to gather input on how to streamline the infill development process and balance neighborhood concerns. These groups will be meeting regularly through the summer of 2013 with the intention of going back to City Council with recommendations (after appropriate boards and commissions) in the fall or winter.

The City Council approved designation of the North Mountain Redevelopment Area as set forth by A.R.S. 36-1470. There have been internal staff meetings from various city departments to identify potential resources or programs to assist the area. There has also been outreach to neighborhood associations and business alliances to discuss current issues and the future of the Redevelopment Area. Staff will incorporate feedback into an Area Plan that will be finalized through an interdepartmental effort and then presented to the City Council for adoption.

The Phoenix General Plan is the long-range guide for the city, addresses issues such as land use, housing, neighborhoods, public facilities, natural resources and transportation. Arizona State Statutes require that this plan be updated and/or readopted every ten years by a public vote. The current General Plan was last presented to the voters in 2002. The deadline for the current update is the end of 2015. The update process will be broken into three phases - Part I is Values & Vision; Part II is drafting the goals, policies and implementation actions; and Part III is updating the land use maps.

The department launched the Reinvent PHX program with grant funding received through a partnership between the City of Phoenix, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Arizona State University, St. Luke's Health Initiatives and several local non-profit organizations committed to the creation of a new, livable model for urban development. Extensive community outreach began in fall 2012 focused on rediscovering the unique identity and opportunities associated with each Transit District. Residents, property owners, business owners, and other stakeholders will be given the opportunity to reinforce what they value, and reshape what they envision by guiding future investment in economic development and infrastructure.

**Developing a Strategy for Success**

The Strategic Plan provides a framework to guide staff and ensure the most efficient and effective use of the public tax dollars. This document also assists staff by providing a vision for budgetary and operational decisions. Implementation of the Strategic Plan is linked with the Management Achievement Plan and this ensures there is staff input, measurable goals and that the plan is revised annually.

**Economic Development & Education**

Create and retain high-quality jobs by supporting the retention and expansion of key wealth-generating employers:

- Continually streamline planning and development processes to ensure businesses planning to expand or relocate to Phoenix can do so in a timely and cost effective manner.
- Utilize the Self-Certification Program to speed up and facilitate development.

**Foster an environment for entrepreneurial growth:**
• Implement policies that establish areas for employment growth and encourage the location of new employment in strategic growth areas, and establish support for infill development through the General Plan.

• Engage local businesses, creative entrepreneurs, incubators, and community organizations and help businesses overcome regulatory barriers for adaptive reuse through the Reinvent PHX grant.

Revitalize the urban areas of Phoenix:

• Promote adaptive reuse of existing structures through small business outreach and utilization of The Adaptive Reuse Program.

• Encourage adaptive reuse of historic structures through financial incentives or ordinance provisions.

• Utilize the General Plan to establish the Infill Incentive District which is aimed at creating incentives for developing the urban areas of Phoenix through redevelopment area programs and more flexible development standards. The General Plan's policy basis for enhancing the urban core of all the city's villages provided the foundation for the adoption of the Downtown Code.

• Enhance and improve the Downtown Code to ensure quality development in downtown Phoenix.

Expand the City’s revenue base:

• Encourage the revitalization of existing retail centers and neighborhood retail businesses by streamlining the development process specific to tenant improvements, remodels and site plan review.

• Utilize the General Plan Land Use Map to provide the strategic layout for commercial (revenue generating) property throughout the city.

Public Safety

Provide strong customer service internally and externally:

• Work closely with the Fire Department to streamline construction permits and inspection processes to maintain building safety and improve customer service.

• Streamline internal procedures where there is overlap with other departments to ensure the service is seamless to the customer.

• Maintain relationships with other City of Phoenix departments to ensure building safety items are reflected in shared plans and goals.

Financial Excellence

Provide capital and funding plans for critical infrastructure:

• Coordinate the Development Impact Fee Program, which provides financing for growth-related infrastructure within the areas designated for growth in the General Plan. This includes:
  o Collecting impact fees at the time building permits are issued and water/sewer connections are purchased.
• Distributing fees collected to the correct funds, to be used by other city departments for capital improvements.
• Negotiating and administering credit agreements, which allow for acceptance of critical infrastructure in lieu of paying impact fees (all or in part), in conjunction with other city departments.
• Working closely with Law, Fire, Police, Library, Street Transportation, Public Works and Water Services to create, amend, update, and interpret the Infrastructure Financing Plan, which governs the Development Impact Fee program and the use of impact fee funds.
• Working closely with Budget and Research to create and publish accurate monthly and annual reports regarding the Development Impact Fee program, as required by State statute.
  • Analyze the physical conditions of transit districts, engage the community to better understand needed infrastructure investments, and develop a public/private partnership infrastructure financing strategy (Reinvent PHX grant).

Provide accurate and reliable revenue and expenditure forecasting:

• Work closely with Budget and Research Department to development expenditure estimates through the city 3+9 and 7+5 budget processes.
• Ensure development expenditure estimates take into account that the Development Division is mandated to cover 100% of its costs.
• Ensure development fund balance is maintained to accommodate fluctuations in economy development activity.
• Strategically phase large expenses (information technology infrastructure, equipment and software) to ensure cost recovery and maintenance of fund balance.
• Prepare revenue estimates considering:
  • Prior and current year actual activity by discipline (i.e. commercial and residential plan review and residential inspections).
  • Information available on major future projects.
  • Legislation and other regulations that could impact development activity.
  • Economic conditions, market trends, local construction and real estate industry forecasts, and anecdotal information from developers and contractors.

Maintain a transparent financial environment, free of fraud, waste and abuse:

• Prepare monthly cost recovery reports by discipline.
• Prepare monthly financial status reports that compare monthly revenue collected in current and past fiscal year and show five year fund balance and five year total revenue history.
• Prepare and publish on internet monthly operational statistics report that includes department revenue and expenditures for the month, FY to date, projection for current FY and actuals from previous FY.
• Continually analyze fees and rates to ensure cost recovery.
• Provide activity level and financial updates to the Development Advisory Board.

Neighborhoods & Livability

Support neighborhood vitality through strong partnerships, collaborations and by leveraging resources:
• Utilize the General Plan Neighborhood Element to recommend ways to promote strong, healthy neighborhoods and to preserve their unique character. The element establishes several goal areas that address new neighborhood design, compatible neighborhood development, neighborhood organization, and neighborhood character and identity.
• Implement goals and policies in the General Plan related to preservation of historic resources.
• Engage neighborhood associations and coordinate interdepartmental planning efforts.

Provide a diverse range of housing opportunities and choices:
• Utilize The General Plan's Housing Element to recommend ways to improve housing quality, variety and affordability in Phoenix. Components of the element include goals associated with housing design, housing choice, special needs housing and fair housing.
• Update regulatory codes and provide incentives to encourage a greater variety of housing types.

Ensure residents have quality parks and open space:
• Utilize the General Plan's Open Space Element to establish goals for addressing the preservation of natural washes and protection of open space areas for public enjoyment.
• Analyze equitable access to recreation, auditing the quality of existing parks and create a public/private strategy for infrastructure financing.

Promote a strong arts and culture infrastructure:
• Collaborate with Art Link and the Office of Arts and Culture on strategies to activate vacant land with art events.

Infrastructure
Create and maintain intra-city transportation
• Create conceptual designs, supportive codes, and a public/private partnership financing strategy for multi-modal streets and canal paths.
• Implement policies outlined in the General Plan's Circulation Element to (1) increase the capacity of major streets and freeways, (2) expand bus and light rail service, and (3) expand pedestrian and bicycle access to transit facilities by adding paths and trails, shade trees, lighting and grade separated crossings.

Establish and enhance inter-city transportation:
• Participate in the Maricopa Association of Governments Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee.

Prioritize capital and funding plans for critical infrastructure:
• Utilize the General Plan's Cost of Development Element to address how the city requires development to pay its fair share for the cost of new capital facilities, such as water and sewer plants, parks and fire stations outside of the Infill Incentive Districts.

Construct and manage public facilities:
• Utilize the General Plan’s Public Services & Facilities Element to recommend programs for water and wastewater treatment, residential refuse collection and disposal, street maintenance and the provision of private utility services.
• Implement development plan review and inspection processes to ensure that only quality, safe, and code compliant public infrastructure is accepted on behalf of the city.

Social Services Delivery

Strengthen the safety net of social services available to protect those most vulnerable or in crisis:
• Work jointly with Human Services and other city departments to ensure residents’ basic needs are met when unsafe situations are present or a crisis occurs.

Consider low-income and at-risk individuals and families when deploying bond or grant funding:
• Disperse Historic Preservation bond funds for low income areas.

Build healthy, caring communities:
• Engage residents that are traditionally underrepresented in planning and decision-making and assess the impacts of urban development.

Sustainability

Enable Opportunities for environmental stewardship:
• Promote the Green Building Program.
• Promote adaptive reuse through the Office of Customer Advocacy.
• Participate in the Maricopa Association of Governments Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee.

Enhance sustainable land use and mobility practices:
• Promote mixed land use to achieve complete communities and encourage infill development.
• Utilize the General Plan Land Use Elements to promote the mixture of uses and the development of each of the village’s urban cores. The adoption of the Downtown Code further implements the General Plan’s policies for a mixture of uses and sustainability incentives.
• Create an attractive investment environment for Transit Oriented Development through the Reinvent PHX grant.

Innovation & Efficiency

Infuse a mindset focused on innovation and efficiency into the City of Phoenix organizational structure:
• Empower all supervisory staff to encourage and reward the creation of innovative ideas.
• Utilize the Employee Suggestion Program.
• Mentor and empower line staff to become problem solvers.
Establish and support city programs and mechanisms focused on developing and implementing tangible innovations throughout the organization:

- Implement Electronic Plan Review to achieve optimal efficiency and streamlined systems for plan submittal, review and issuing permits.
- Continue to develop and implement online capabilities to apply for Zoning Adjustments and to obtain permits.
- Continue to evaluate and rightsource services through the use of contracts to maximize plan review and inspection efficiency while maintaining the highest quality public service that is seamless to the customer.

Work continually toward elimination of barriers to innovation and efficiency.

- Identify unneeded requirements or obsolete expectations that unnecessarily slow down business processes and work to eliminate them.

Engage the Phoenix community in the city’s innovation and efficiency methodologies to facilitate citizen involvement, input, and awareness.

- Actively inform customers of innovation and efficiency efforts through available public communication methods and media.
- Expand the department’s use of social media.
- Utilize the following boards and commissions to engage the community and invite participation and input:
  - Development Advisory Board
  - Village Planning Committees
  - Planning Commission

Technology

Provide seamless customer service:

- Provide a consolidated department web page that is seamless to the customer.
- Utilize technology to enhance online services such as obtaining permits and zoning approvals.

Turn data into information through a web-enabled city:

- Investigate strategies to assist internal and external customers with access to data and web-based service.
- Identify common transactions and customer services within departmental business processes that can reasonably be developed into web-enabled services.
- Create a technology foundation to support web-enabled services.

Phoenix Team

Create development opportunities that enhance the City’s standing as a high-performing organization:

- Analyze and develop a reward and recognition program that supports the organization’s goal to attract and retain top talent.
• Establish methods for capturing organizational knowledge and expertise through workforce planning efforts.
• Recommend professional development and training opportunities that reflect the key values of the organization.

Mobilize and leverage community partnerships and volunteer programs to enhance programs and services:

• Partner with community organizations that are committed to building a sustainable city through the Reinvent PHX grant.
• Utilize Volunteer Phoenix website, social media and job fairs to recruit highly qualified interns and volunteers.
• Participate in development of volunteer management software to streamline and enhance the organization and utilization of boards and commissions, unpaid interns and volunteers.
• Partner with Mayor, City Council, Public Information Office, Village Planning Committees and other organizations to engage the community in the General Plan Update.
Fiscal Year 2013-2014 Commitments:

1. Provide exceptional customer service:
   - Establish a mechanism for ongoing feedback from customers
   - Conduct continuous customer service surveys
   - Utilize technology to improve customer service
   - Provide well trained and knowledgeable staff to our internal and external customers

2. Speed up and streamline the development process:
   - Implement Electronic Plan Review – September 2013
   - Implement Five Day Site Plan Review – July 2013
   - Coordinate the Infill Development Advisory Group
   - Administer the Adaptive Reuse Incentive Program
   - Upgrade the current customer queuing system
   - Acquire staff and consultants to begin replacement of the permitting system

3. Ensure compliance with permitting and inspection requirements of House Bill 2443 related to regulatory review:
   - Comply with requirements by September 13, 2013
   - Train existing staff
   - Educate customers of new requirements

4. Develop sustainable financial strategies:
   - Ensure permit fees are affordable and appropriate for the services received
   - Implement fee model that adequately recovers cost

5. Implement 2012 Phoenix Building Construction Code:
   - Effective date July 1, 2013
   - Train existing staff
   - Educate customer of new requirements

6. Implement the Historic Preservation Work Program

7. Develop North Mountain Redevelopment Area Plan:
   - Engage the community through outreach meetings to solicit ideas for Area Plan
   - Develop Area Plan through interdepartmental effort and present to City Council

8. Continue General Plan Update:
   - Engage the community through outreach meetings with the Mayor and City Council
   - Continue to utilize myplanphx.com as a community outreach tool
9. Implement the Reinvent Phoenix Grant

- Ensure compliance with HUD rules and guidelines
- Engage neighborhood and stakeholder groups through outreach meetings
- Complete design workshops for the Transit Districts
- Manage planning and design consultant, DPZ
- Award up to $500,000 in predevelopment funds through the RFP process
- Complete two TOD district plans