

CITY OF BLACK DIAMOND PERMIT CENTER CUSTOMER SERVICE 2012 SURVEY RESULTS

Summary of Survey Process

At the request of the City Council, a customer service survey was developed to collect feedback on our Permit Center department performance. After reviewing similar survey types from seven other jurisdictions, a survey was developed to fit our specific needs. A draft of the survey was distributed to the Administration and the Planning and Community Services Committee of the City Council. With a few minor adjustments, the survey was approved for distribution.

The permit center customer service survey was mailed out on 8/1/12. We requested that surveys be returned to the City by 8/15/12. This allowed customers two weeks to complete the survey. A postage paid envelope was included with each survey as incentive to mail the survey back to us.

Our mailing list was developed by selecting contractors, architects, engineers or homeowners that had applied for permits between 7/1/10 and 7/1/12 (a 2 year period). We sent out 72 surveys total. Four of those were returned with bad mailing addresses. We received 13 responses which is 18% of the total mailing and 19% of the survey pool.

Type of Customers

Of our thirteen respondents, the majority of them were Homeowners or Contractors or a combination of both roles. We also had one response from an architect and one from a permit agent. As expected, the majority of the project experience was in residential new construction or remodels. There was one response from a commercial owner/contractor. Of the building permits issued over this 2 year period, only 11% were permits for commercial work.

Overall, the City has a very low volume of construction work occurring. In our survey group, 13 of the 72 applicants who were sent the survey were strictly mechanical or plumbing contractors. These jobs are typically very short and many of the permits do not require plan review. Of our responses received, two of them indicated they had only pulled plumbing or mechanical permits. Additionally, 13 of the 72 applicants were required to pull permits either due to code violations, performing work without permits or emergency repair. When applicants are forced to apply for permits in response to these situations, the permitting process is often viewed negatively by the applicant.

Construction Requirements

Black Diamond is a unique town, in that there are a lot of natural resources present throughout the City that often effect construction. Since the town was heavily mined at one time, there are coal mine hazard issues underlying the majority of the developable land. This often requires City staff to require Coal Hazard Assessment and Soils Reports per the Sensitive Area Ordinance. The City also has extensive wetlands and a large shoreline along Lake Sawyer that can require other additional studies or permits. We also have some fire flow issues through much of the City. Typically what this equates to for the customer is additional costs and time. While our permit fees are fairly low compared to surrounding jurisdictions, there are very few "easy" lots in Black Diamond. Due to our low volume of work, significant staff time is spent working with applicants on our unique requirements.

Results

For a more detailed accounting of the survey results, please see the attached charts. The survey questions were mostly positive statements about different areas of responsibility during the permitting process. We asked the applicant to rate these statements from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. Below is an overall rating of the different areas of responsibility, but please realize this is a compilation of 5-10 statements. The attached charts show individual item responses.

Overall customers are satisfied with Permit Center Staff permit processing and customer service:

68% Strongly Agree
11% Somewhat Agree
5% Somewhat Disagree
10% Strongly Disagree
5% Doesn't Apply *

Overall customers are satisfied with Plan Reviewers performance of reviews and customer service:

43% Strongly Agree
4% Somewhat Agree
4% Somewhat Disagree
18% Strongly Disagree
31% Doesn't Apply *

Overall customers are satisfied with Inspectors performance of inspections and customer service:

58% Strongly Agree
2% Somewhat Agree
2% Somewhat Disagree
10% Strongly Disagree
28% Doesn't Apply *

Overall customers are satisfied with customer service they received from the department:

37% Strongly Agree
6% Somewhat Agree
12% Somewhat Disagree
8% Strongly Disagree
37% Doesn't Apply *

Staff Positions were individually scored, please see the attached chart. The combined rating for all positions was:

41% Excellent
14% Good
4% Fair
4% Poor
37% No experience w/ staff *

*There are situations where the survey respondent may not have had any experience with certain staff or services. For instance, an architect will have no interaction with the Inspector. A plumbing contractor may not deal with a plan reviewer. In such cases, the respondent marked "Doesn't Apply" on the survey.

Types of Permits Applicants Obtained	Qty
Residential - Plumbing/Mechanical	2
Residential - Addition or Remodel	7
Residential - New Construction	5
Commercial - Tenant Improvement	1
Commercial - Plumbing/Mechanical	1
Public Works -ROW, Utilities	1

Role in the Project	Qty
Architect/Designer	1
Engineer	0
Contractor	5
Owner	8
Other	1

Required Reports/Permits	Qty
Coal Mine Hazard Assessment	2
Soils Report	4
Structural Calcs	8
Fire Permits	1

Outside Agency Permits Req'd	Qty
KC Septic Approval	0
Covington Water Certificate	1
Electrical Permit - L&I	2
Health Permit	0
HPA - Fish & Wildlife	1

PERMIT CENTER	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Doesn't Apply
When I come into the Permit Center, I am greeted and helped promptly	10	2		1	
Permit Center Staff gave me complete and consistent answers regarding my project	10	1	1	1	
City Staff coordinates well amongst themselves to ensure my project goes smoothly through the process	9	1		2	1
Permit Center staff responds to phone calls and emails within one business day	9	1	1	2	
Permit Center staff makes themselves available to me to respond to questions/concerns on my project	8	3	1	1	
Permit Center staff provides suggestions that are helpful in moving my project along	9		1	2	1
The turn around times set by the City for plan review are reasonable	7	3	1		2
The review process is generally completed by the date estimated by the Permit Center staff	9	1		1	2
The permit Center Staff makes an effort to understand my needs as a builder/contractor/owner	9	1	1	2	
Totals	80	13	6	12	6
Percentage	68.38%	11.11%	5.13%	10.26%	5.13%

PLAN REVIEW	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Doesn't Apply
Plans Examiners respond to phone calls and emails in a timely manner	5	2	1	1	4
Plans Examiners make themselves available to me to respond to questions/concerns on my project	6		1	2	4
Plans Examiners provide alternatives or suggestions to me that are helpful in moving my project along	5	1		3	4
The number of plan rechecks I've had to do has been reasonable	6			3	4
The plans examiners make an effort to understand my needs as a builder/contractor	6			3	4
The plans examiners make an effort to help property owners understand the applicable building codes.	6		1	2	4
Totals	34	3	3	14	24
Percentage	43.59%	3.85%	3.85%	17.95%	30.77%

INSPECTIONS	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Doesn't Apply
Inspectors are courteous and helpful	7			2	4
Correction notices are clear and concise	7		1	1	4
Inspectors are able to accurately answer all my questions	7			2	4
Public Works staff are helpful and responsive	9	1			3
Totals	30	1	1	5	15
Percentage	57.69%	1.92%	1.92%	9.62%	28.85%

Inspection Scheduling Method	Qty
City's Inspection Phone Line	4
Online	4
In Person/At Counter	5
Email	

Scheduling Process	Qty
Very Satisfied	9
Somewhat Satisfied	1
Somewhat Dissatisfied	1
Very Dissatisfied	

GENERAL CUSTOMER SERVICE	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Doesn't Apply
The City does an adequate job balancing the interests of developers/builders with the interests of the neighborhood and the safety of the building owner who will be affected by the project	4	1	2		5
The seems to care about its builders/contractors as customers	6	1	2	1	3
The City acknowledges when a mistake has been made	4	1		2	5
If a mistake is made, the City does its best to fix the mistake	4		2	1	5
Totals	18	3	6	4	18
Percentage	36.73%	6.12%	12.24%	8.16%	36.73%

STAFF RATING	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No Experience
Permit Technician	7	4	1		1
Building Official	6	1		2	4
Plans Examiner/Inspector	6	1	1	2	3
Planner	5	2	1		5
Public Works Inspector/Reviewer	5	1	1		6
Fire Marshal	4	2			7
Natural Resources	4	1			8
Totals	37	12	4	4	34
Percentage	40.66%	13.19%	4.40%	4.40%	37.36%

How does BD rate comparably?	Better	Worse	No Difference	Unknown
King County	6	1	2	2
Covington			5	6
Enumclaw	1	2	3	5
Maple Valley		2	1	8
Total	7	5	11	21
Percentage	15.91%	11.36%	25.00%	47.73%

	Yes	No
Would you be willing to pay additional fees for expedited review by an outside consultant?	54.55%	45.45%

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
How important is it to you that the City has regular Building Department staff hours and inspections?	7	3	1