

**Evaluation of the Dane County
Department of Planning and Development**



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Department of Planning and Development
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I. Executive Summary

As part of its annual rotation of department audits, the Dane County Board contracted with Virchow, Krause & Company, LLP, to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the Department of Planning and Development. This was designed to evaluate the department's overall mission and operations to build on its strengths and address challenges to becoming more efficient, effective and customer friendly.

With an operational budget of approximately \$3.0 million, the department has a broad scope of responsibility including management of land use planning, regulation of land use and related ordinances, oversight of community development block grant initiatives and funding, and maintenance of property and real estate records. In addition, the department currently has attached to it the community analysis and planning division (the former Regional Planning Commission).

The result of our analysis resulted in the following key findings:

- The department's perception among customers varies significantly dependent upon the specific division from which service is received;
- The zoning division is not currently using staff or automation effectively to be responsive to customers;
- The level of support required of staff to support committees distracts significantly from other assigned tasks;
- It is not possible to make direct comparisons of staffing levels, fees, etc. with other county planning departments given that another planning department operating under the same one-county regional planning model does not exist; nor is there another county with identical functional authority;
- Efficient systems to monitor and manage staff performance have not been established; and
- The outdated county ordinances relative to land use and regulation are not aligned with current development trends, customer needs, and ongoing comprehensive planning efforts.

To resolve the issues identified above, the report identifies 36 recommendations summarized as follows:

- The department has a significant number of opportunities to enhance department efficiency through use of automation, consideration of alternative staffing and customer service models, and training of department staff;
- The zoning division should explore opportunities to improve customer responsiveness through customer and "partner" education, increased use of self-help approaches, commitment to performance standards relative to customer response, and modified approaches to customer "triage;"
- Performance expectations and standards should be established and steps taken to ensure that staff scheduling supports consistent and acceptable customer access and information exchange. Resource allocation decisions should be aligned with these standards and with articulated department priorities; and
- Staff priorities should be intentionally defined and time commitments to certain tasks or responsibility areas aligned with these mutually agreed to priorities.

The findings and recommendations which follow are intended to provide specific details regarding the challenges faced by the department and potential solutions to resolve those challenges. We are confident that these recommendations will assist department leaders to continue their efforts to improve the services provided to the residents of Dane County.

II. Project Background

The Dane County Board contracted with Virchow, Krause & Company, LLP, to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the Department of Planning and Development's overall mission and operations to build on its strengths and address challenges to becoming more efficient, effective and customer friendly. Specifically, this report addresses the following objectives:

- Develop steps necessary to ensure that the strategic mission of the Department is articulated in a manner that is easily understood by all staff and stakeholders, and outline methods to link its budgets with strategic goals;
- Identify opportunities to enhance operational efficiency and customer responsiveness for all functions within the Department;
- Determine potential improvements to optimize available resources; and
- Assess the effectiveness of the current governance structure and highlight potential opportunities to mirror best practices.

The Dane County Department of Planning and Development was created with the purpose of community planning, regional growth management, and economic development. The Department was designed to be a user-friendly resource for county citizens to receive information, analysis and assistance regarding proposals for development in Dane County.

Given that the Department has a new director and anticipates engaging in strategic planning processes in the coming year, there was interest among County Board supervisors in a review of the mission and operations of the Department of Planning and Development, with a focus on helping the Department build on strengths and address challenges to become more efficient, effective, and customer-friendly.

III. Project Methodology

Our assessment included several components and was conducted using a variety of analytical techniques and approaches. Specifically, we:

- Facilitated an advisory group of key stakeholders to outline project approach and react to draft findings and recommendations;
- Reviewed background information about the County's planning and development functions, including financial, contract, staffing, operational, organizational, and program statistical information;
- Used information from program reports, previous analyses and other county-provided data to evaluate program effectiveness;
- Conducted interviews with a broad spectrum of individuals involved in the oversight, administration and delivery of the planning and development services to gain their insights about program effectiveness, strengths and shortcomings;
- Conducted stakeholder focus groups and a customer service survey to solicit input from external Department stakeholders;
- Contacted three Wisconsin and two Illinois counties to benchmark the Department's operations, using available information about organizational structure and staffing levels, use of technology, customer responsiveness, and fees for service; and
- Based on best practices and emerging trends in planning and development, developed recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of the County's current services and activities.

In addition to interviews with staff, our analysis included research about trends in comprehensive planning, land use decision-making, and document management systems.

The following report outlines our observations of key issues to be addressed and the recommended action to resolve each issue. The number of recommendations should not be interpreted as an indicator of the relative performance of the Department, because some recommendations are related to findings of strong performance or best practices, and therefore suggest the Department continue operations as currently implemented. Our review resulted in 36 recommendations which are designed to:

- Improve management of staff resources;
- Refocus the approach to customer service; and
- Enhance the ability of the Department to coordinate its activities with other units of government.

CUSTOMER SERVICE SURVEY

We conducted a stratified random survey of Zoning Division customers who had applied for a permit or a petition since January 2000. We chose a stratified approach to ensure that surveys were sent to customers who had submitted all types of permits for which the Department maintained automated records, including zoning permits, rezoning petitions, conditional use permits, erosion control/stormwater permits, filling and grading permits, and mineral extraction permits.

To identify our sample, we obtained a complete list of all customers in the Zoning Division's permit tracking database, and acquired customer contact information for erosion control/stormwater permits and for mineral extraction permits from two additional data sources that were maintained separately by Department staff. We sent out 405 surveys and received 54 responses, which represents a 13.3 percent response rate. Because the Department approves permits on a point-of-service basis before recording the information in the tracking database, nearly all the respondents indicated that their permits or applications had either been approved or approved with conditions. Because of the relatively low number of respondents and because most of the respondents received an ultimately positive outcome related to their application, there is sufficient reason to believe that our survey respondents are not representative of all customers who seek a permit or application from the Department. The Department does not track how many customers attempted to apply for a permit or petition but were denied at the customer service counter and never entered into the database.

For these reasons therefore, caution should be used in interpreting the results of this survey. We do not know, for example, what the results would have looked like had we sampled more customers who had their permits or petitions denied. Nevertheless, these survey results provide the only currently existing measure of customer satisfaction available to assess the quality of service provided by Department staff.

The survey was designed to measure customer satisfaction with the:

- Reasonableness of the fees charged;
- Efficiency of permitting as measured by overall length of the process;
- Accuracy of information provided by staff;
- Professional manner of staff;
- Clarity of application requirements; and
- Customer's experience in contacting the Department by telephone.

Survey responses in each of these areas are included as Appendix 1. Survey responses were incorporated into findings and recommendations as appropriate.

STAKEHOLDER FOCUS GROUPS

We invited representatives of Town governments, landowners, development professionals including real estate agents and attorneys, and representatives of public Interest and environmental groups to attend. These individuals had recent or regular interactions with the Dane County Department of Planning and Development. We facilitated two sessions, and participants were guaranteed anonymity for their responses.

The specific objectives of the Stakeholder focus groups:

- Gain insight into the perception of services rendered by the Department from the perspective of the various stakeholder groups;
- Identify potential opportunities for improvement in zoning workflow and customer service;
- Identify potential opportunities for improvement in planning support and customer service; and
- Discuss how to enhance the relative roles played by the various stakeholder groups in providing land use planning and regulatory oversight for the citizens of Dane County.

BENCHMARKING REVIEW

A benchmarking review of planning and development functions was performed as part of this study by comparing operational and organizational data of the Dane County Planning and Zoning Department to those of similar counties. Five counties were selected for comparison by the Department for use in this analysis based on:

- Population;
- Area in square miles;
- Number of housing units;
- Population density;
- Urban/rural composition; and
- Planning and zoning authority at the county level.

Reviewing these characteristics, it was apparent that no single county in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, or Illinois was a close match to Dane County across all or most of the characteristics. However, we recommended five counties that had at least some similarities to Dane County for selection to the benchmarking analysis. The five counties included:

- Lake County, IL;
- Marathon County, WI;
- Outagamie County, WI;
- Waukesha County, WI; and
- Winnebago County, IL.

The approach to comparative analysis in this study included data collection and comparison using a written questionnaire and direct telephone communication with the five counties to obtain information and make clarifications. In addition, internet web sites of the benchmark counties were reviewed for form and content, and documents (available via the web site or provided by the counties) were used to complete the questionnaires (e.g., fee schedules and output statistics).

The findings of the benchmarking review have been used to provide comparative information, and as one component in developing the recommendations in this report; however, several factors may affect the comparability of these data, such as:

- Organizational structure;
- Ordinances in place;
- Functionality of administrative systems;
- Integration of systems within and between county divisions and Departments;
- Scope of responsibility of individual divisions and Departments in each county; and
- Personnel matters.

As such, benchmarking results are not intended to serve as the sole or primary basis for making operational and organizational decisions; rather, these results should be considered together with other management variables. Further, we found that differences between the benchmark counties we reviewed and Dane County were significant, particularly as it related to organizational structure, and therefore to financial and activity statistics. No benchmark county provided all the functions that are performed by the Dane County Department of Planning and Development.

Benchmarking results are included as appropriate in individual findings and recommendations, and are summarized in Appendix 2 of this report.

IV. Department Mission

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The Department currently consists of five divisions, each with distinct primary functions that support the overall mission statement of the Department:

The Planning and Development Department is responsible for administering a centralized source of information, analysis, and assistance regarding proposals for development, for administering Dane County Zoning Regulations in the unincorporated portion of the County, administering County and State Regulations regarding the Division of land in the County, and maintaining property listings and other records for the County."

Source: 2005 Approved Dane County Budget

The five divisions of the Department of Planning and Development include:

- Planning;
- Community Development;
- Zoning and Plat Review;
- Records and Support; and
- Community Analysis and Planning.

Dane County residents strongly support the Department's overall mission to work cooperatively with local units of government to influence development in a way that reduces negative impacts on water, farmland, and other resources. The Steering Committee for the Dane County Comprehensive Plan hired a market research firm to complete an opinion poll of Dane County residents on a range of issues related to the mission of the Department.¹ However, there does not appear to be a consensus on the specific approach the County should take to accomplish this. The opinion poll data were released in July 2005, and present a picture of Dane County residents' opinions in a range of issue areas covered under the Department's mission statement, including:

- Housing;
- Economic development;
- Transportation;
- Agricultural, natural, and cultural resources;
- Land use;
- Intergovernmental cooperation; and
- Other issues related to comprehensive planning.

In each issue area, respondents were asked to rate a series of planning goals, and to identify the preferred role of County government in achieving these goals. The report was careful to identify and explain statistically significant differences in responses across survey subgroups, including differences in opinion of those living in cities, villages, and towns, and urban, suburban, and rural areas. According to the opinion poll data, Dane County residents believe the following:

- A majority (57%) of residents believe land use decisions should be made cooperatively by the County and local municipalities. Fewer residents believe that the local municipality should have the lead role (17%), and just 13% felt that County government should have the lead;

¹ "Comprehensive Planning Survey of Dane County Residents," Chamberlain Research Consultants, Madison WI, 6/9/05.

- A majority of residents (55%) rate planning for future growth as the most important planning goal, and this is true across all demographic subgroups;
- Rural residents want more attention placed on maintaining Dane County's rural character (54%) and on managing conflicting land interests (49%) than do urban (32% and 36%) or suburban residents (35% and 37%);
- Managing water resources is the second-most highly rated planning goal (54%), and this was true across all demographic subgroups. Residents rate protecting water resources more highly than wildlife resources, agricultural resources, historical and archaeological resources, or mineral resources;
- An overarching theme of survey responses was that government should steer new development away from any area that would negatively impact water, farmland, or other resources and toward existing developments. In all of these issue areas, all subgroups felt that more attention was needed, although there was disagreement on the best approach to take in achieving these goals;
- Specifically related to the role of County government in managing land use, the top two roles residents cited were to coordinate city, town, village, and county units of government (31%), and to tighten existing zoning codes and regulations (23%); and
- Specifically related to farmland preservation, residents' most highly-rated priorities for County government are: steer new housing development away from farms and toward urban/suburban areas (21%), tighten zoning regulations to limit non-farm development in productive farm areas (18%), and provide incentives to farmers to stay in farming (13%). Just 4% of the respondents indicated that the market should be allowed to decide development patterns.

PLANNING

The Planning Division is charged with assisting County residents, communities, and decision-makers in addressing comprehensive planning issues related to community and regional development, transportation, environmental resources, community services, housing, and economic development. Further, staff from the Planning Division provide technical assistance to the County on corporate planning for County government capital projects and infrastructure, and to assist with other divisions, including the Zoning Division.

The specific duties of the Planning Division include:

- Corporate planning and Inter-Departmental assistance including technical assistance to the Parks Department and Department of Administration on county land purchases; support to other Departments on planning-related issues; and policy analysis and assistance to the Lakes and Watershed Commission on stormwater, erosion control and shoreland management issues;
- Current Planning including Dane County Farmland Preservation Plan implementation, including preparation of staff reports for the Zoning and Land Regulation Committee and Town implementation assistance; and special short-term projects and/or support to other county committees and the county executive;
- Information, Outreach, and Assistance, including ongoing Town planning assistance; outreach sessions coordinated with the Dane County Towns Association; ongoing information and education to landowners; and public participation activities of the County Comprehensive Plan;
- Mid and Long-Range Planning, including work on the County Comprehensive Plan; assistance with Transfer of Development Rights and transportation studies; and

- Community Development Initiatives and InterDepartmental Assistance including assistance to the Better Urban Infill Development (BUILD) Program and special short-term projects related to housing and economic development, including administering the federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME programs.

ZONING AND PLAT REVIEW

The Zoning and Plat Review Division is charged with protecting and promoting the public health, safety and general welfare of Dane County by administering County Zoning, Environmental, and Land Division regulations in the unincorporated portion of Dane County: the areas outside the municipal boundaries of cities and villages. The Division reviews development activities within the unincorporated portion of Dane County through the administration of the Dane County Code. Staff in the Zoning and Plat Review Division have contact with members of the public on a daily basis.

The specific duties of the Zoning and Plat Review Division include:

- issuing permits and reviewing land divisions;
- enforcing applicable provisions of Wisconsin State Statutes and other county ordinances;
- providing accurate zoning information;
- eliminating unnecessary litigation through early identification of potential zoning violations;
- inspecting, monitoring compliance, and enforcing county shoreland, wetland, flood zone and erosion control ordinances; and
- providing information to attorneys, surveyors and the general public on subdivision plats and Certified Survey Maps.

RECORDS AND SUPPORT

The Records and Support Division is charged with maintaining the Real Estate Ownership Property List and Personal Property List for all of Dane County, except the City of Madison. The Division is also responsible for maintaining the records of the Dane County Surveyor's Office, including the Public Land Survey System information on tie sheets, Plats of Survey completed by private land surveyors, and geodetic control information on Dane County.

Specific duties of the Records and Support Division include:

- Working with local assessors and clerks to maintain a list of legal descriptions, ownership, property valuations and other items necessary to the proper functioning of the property tax system;
- Operating all aspects of the County Surveyor's Office; and
- Handling inquiries from the general public related to legal property descriptions;
- Maintaining the County's GIS parcel database; and
- Managing files for use by the private land surveyors of the County for general survey work; and
- Distributing information to firms and individuals which relate to property records and ownership through the sale of maps, computer printouts and digital data products.

COMMUNITY ANALYSIS AND PLANNING DIVISION

The Community Analysis and Planning Division (CAPD)—comprised of staff formerly part of the defunct Dane County Regional Planning Commission—is attached to the Department on a temporary basis until the ultimate status of their functions and staff role can be determined. The CAPD is charged with assisting Dane County residents, communities and decision-makers in addressing short-range and long-range comprehensive planning issues related to community and regional development, transportation, environmental resources, community services, and economic development.

Specific duties of the CAPD include:

- Performing water quality planning and review, including Urban Service Area amendments (review of proposed sewer system expansions on the periphery of developed areas);
- Serving as the designated clearinghouse for census data in the County; and
- Providing planning assistance to Dane County municipalities in both the unincorporated portion of the County as well as to Dane County villages and cities. Transportation planning is related to County projects and projects outside of the Metropolitan Planning Area.

V. Operational Efficiency

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In a time of increasing budgetary pressures on local units of government, including both County and municipalities, the question of operational efficiency is central to ensuring that the Department's missions can be achieved using the resources provided. We believe that the Department has a sufficient number of staff to accomplish most of the missions it is currently assigned, with the possible exception of adding clerical staff person to support efforts to improve customer service. However, there are opportunities to improve the productivity of staff through:

- Implementation of an automated document management and workflow tracking system to improve the Department's ability to ensure timely processing of customer service requests;
- Development of improved management information to allow better staffing resource prioritization and enhance employee morale by implementing effective measures for workload distribution;
- Enhancing self-service opportunities for some customers by allowing electronic access to and exchange of information; and
- Identification of and implementation of a new property listing system used to manage tax records.

Some of these opportunities, particularly the recommended document management and workflow tracking system, will involve significant additional up-front investment by the County in the short term but will have demonstrable return on investment through increased staff productivity and enhanced ability to handle increased workload and to provide quality service to customers. Other opportunities will require only the temporary reallocation of existing staffing resources.

Additionally, residents are consistently expecting higher levels of service as standards for customer service continue to become more rigorous in both the public and private sectors. Combined with the current sensitivity toward land use decisions, the Department should consider the following enhancements that address operational efficiency and customer service simultaneously:

- Enhancing the self-help capability of the Department's web site;
- Developing, measuring, and monitoring staff performance vis-à-vis customer service standards; and
- Revising the current approach to answering the telephone in the Zoning Division.

The 2005 adopted budget for the Department contains 37.3 FTE staff and \$3.0 million for operational divisions, and \$5.8 million in all, when Community Development Funds are considered. As shown in Figure 1, approximately half, or 49.4%, of expenditures for the Department's operational divisions are supported through the County's General Fund. The amounts listed under the Community Development Grants & Loans are primarily federal grant funds that are distributed to housing and economic development projects throughout the County. The Department also uses part of the federal grant funds as program revenue to support 3.5 FTE staff in the Community Development Division.

Figure 1				
2005 Department of Planning and Development Staffing and Approved Budget				
	FTE Staff	Budgeted Expenditures	Budgeted Revenue	General Fund Expenditures
<u>Operational Divisions</u>				
Zoning and Plat Review	10.80	769,110	792,050	-22,940
Planning	7.50	551,860	206,200	345,660
Community Development	3.50	288,500	288,500	0
Records and Support	8.75	\$725,493	\$123,580	\$601,913
Community Analysis & Planning	6.75	712,400	130,700	581,700
Subtotal	37.30	\$3,047,363	\$1,541,030	\$1,506,333
<u>Community Development Grants & Loans</u>				
CDBG Housing Fund	-	964,665	964,665	0
Commerce Revolving Loan Fund	-	865,000	867,000	-2,000
HOME Loan Fund	-	630,000	630,000	0
CDBG Business Loan Fund	-	310,000	310,000	0
Subtotal	0.0	\$2,769,665	\$2,771,665	-\$2,000
Total	37.30	\$5,817,028	\$4,312,695	\$1,504,333

Source: Dane County Department of Planning and Development.

When considering the operational divisions only, program revenues (mainly from fees and grants) have been very important to maintaining the activities of the Department. The more that program revenue can be used to defray Department expenditures, the less support is required from the General Fund. The General Fund consists of County property and sales taxes, and other revenues including shared revenue received from the State of Wisconsin. As shown in Figure 2, program revenues have equaled between 51.4 percent and 66.3 percent of Operational Division expenditures over the period of 2002 through 2004.

Figure 2				
Comparison of Expenditures and Revenues by Year				
Operational Divisions Only, 2002-2004 Actuals, 2005 Budget				
	2002	2003	2004	2005 (Budget)
Expenditures	\$3,428,240.29	\$3,258,436.07	\$3,036,773.07	\$3,047,363.00
Revenues	1,761,151.15	2,161,881.36	1,915,343.61	1,541,030.00
Revenues as a % of Expenditures	51.4%	66.3%	63.1%	50.6%

Source: Dane County Department of Planning and Development.

Each of the four divisions receives different types of program revenues that are associated with specific functions identified in each division's mission. For example, Records and Support is supported by program revenue from surveyor fees and microfiche sales of County land and property data. The Planning Division has received a majority of its program revenues through grant funds during this period, whereas the Zoning and Plat Review Division receives a significant amount of its program revenue from fees charged to County residents for various permits and petitions.

Finding #1: The Department's current fee structure appears to be appropriate, but better cost information is needed before any changes to the current fees should be considered. When governments collect user fees for services provided, the fee amounts should be set at an amount such that the total amount collected does not exceed the full cost (direct and indirect) of providing the service. A review of the most recent expenditure and revenue data in each division indicates that for the past three years, the Zoning and Plat Review Division has collected more in program revenues than it has recorded in direct expenditures. As shown in Figure 3, Zoning and Plat Review Division revenues represented 119.6% of direct expenditures. In 2004, almost all Zoning Division revenues came from fees. The exception was \$28,300 in revenues from another County Department for assistance from the Zoning Division related to groundwater quality.

Figure 3
Comparison of Direct Expenditures and Revenues by Operational Division
2004

<u>Operational Division</u>	Direct Expenditures	Revenues	Revenues as a Pct. of Direct Expenditures
Zoning and Plat Review	\$681,837.59	\$815,432.22	119.6%
Planning	713,856.58	429,280.46	60.1
Community Development	199,159.72	191,489.01	96.1
CAPD	801,441.80	387,174.04	48.3
Records and Support	640,477.38	91,967.88	14.4
Total	\$3,036,773.07	\$1,915,343.61	63.1%

Source: Dane County Department of Planning and Development.

However, expenditures recorded for the Division understate the County's full cost of supporting the zoning function. This is because they do not include expenditures recorded by other Department Divisions that commit staff resources to supporting the zoning function. Further, they do not include overhead (indirect) costs for items such as the County Board and the County Executive's Office, the Dane County Department of Administration, capital depreciation, and other indirect costs.

As part of this evaluation, we obtained time estimates for all Department staff spent in supporting committees and workgroups of the County Board. Using these data, we were able to estimate the proportion of staff time spent by staff from the Planning Division (excluding Community Development) and the Records and Support Division to support the Zoning and Land Regulation Committee of the County Board. As shown in Figure 4, estimated expenditures for staff from other Divisions in the Department to support the zoning function amounted to \$109,981.64 in 2004.

Figure 4			
Estimate of Direct Costs Incurred by Other Divisions to Support Zoning			
Based 2004 Expenditures			
<u>Operational Division</u>	Estimated FTE to Support Zoning	Zoning Support as a % of Division FTE	Estimated Costs
	Planning	1.3	
Records & Support	0.2	0.02%	14,509.86
Total	1.5		\$109,981.64

After adjusting for the costs shown in Figure 4, and for Zoning Division program revenues that were not generated by customer fees, it appears that direct costs for the zoning function were approximately in balance with the amount collected through fees for permits and petitions in 2004 and in 2003. As noted, however, indirect costs are not considered, and therefore fees do not cover the full costs of the zoning function. Nevertheless, because revenues and direct costs appear to be roughly in balance with one another, there is no clear justification to increase fees at the present time.

Further, the results of our customer service survey and stakeholder focus group sessions suggested that the current level of fees charged by the Zoning Division is neither too low nor too high, although some focus group participants and survey respondents felt strongly that fees are currently too high. As shown in Figure 5, Zoning Division customers who responded to our survey rated the reasonableness of permit and petition fees an average of 3.38 on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being "most reasonable."

Figure 5		
2005 Customer Service Survey		
Reasonableness Rating of Permit and Application Fees		
by Type of Customer		
	Respondents	Average Rating
First-time Customers	14	3.43
Repeat Customers	39	3.36
All Customers	53	3.38

Staff indicated that some fees, such as for zoning permits and density studies, have been increased in recent years after a long period when they had not been changed. Additionally, the Department is seeking an increase in fees for some permits processed by the Zoning Division under the upcoming 2006 Budget. However, these increases were not supported by any rigorous costing methodology to support the amount of the increase, except that current Dane County fee levels were compared to other Wisconsin counties. This is not a recommended practice for the County because of the danger that if fees are raised too much without consideration of actual costs, the potential exists for the County to charge more for services than it costs to provide them.

Our review of fee setting by other Counties indicates that other counties in Wisconsin and Illinois are currently following the best practice of using a cost-based approach to setting fees. For example, the following counties use a cost-based approach to setting their fees for zoning petitions, Conditional Use Permits, and Variance permits:

- The Winnebago County Regional Planning and Development Department;
- The Waukesha County Department of Parks and Land Use; and
- The Lake County, Illinois Planning, Building, and Development Department.

Recommendation #1: The County should ensure that fees for zoning permits and applications are tied to the fully-loaded costs of providing the service. This could be best accomplished by conducting a comprehensive cost study, including an indirect cost allocation component. Should the County implement a significant increase in fees in the 2006 Budget, the potential exists that the Zoning Division could begin collecting more in fees than it spends to process, review, and enforce permits. However, the amount of increase needed to balance Zoning Division revenues with expenditures will remain unknown until a comprehensive cost allocation study can be completed.

Finding #2: Beginning in 2005, the Department began tracking revenue from permits and applications by type. Prior to 2005, accounting data for revenue from most permits and fees were rolled up into a single budget line. The current approach is a best management practice because it will make cost studies related to specific permits and applications easier to do.

Recommendation #2: Continue to track revenue from permits and applications by type, in order to allow a future comprehensive cost study to be more easily completed.

PLANNING

Finding #3: The Division currently does not have a way to track staff time spent on all projects and activities. This means that there is no way to ensure that workload is distributed in the most efficient manner possible. Further, the Division is currently unable to provide accurate and comprehensive information to internal and external customers and staff related to staff resources tied to specific activities. Time recording systems are common in organizations with professional staff because of their usefulness in monitoring staff resource allocations, and because they can be implemented at low cost and require minimal staff time. For example, a time recording system for the Department could:

1. Identify the amount of time spent on specific tasks, including:
 - a. Supporting committees and workgroups;
 - b. Reviewing zoning petitions;
 - c. Completing density studies;
 - d. Preparing memoranda and white papers related to planning issues;
 - e. Providing planning consulting services and responding to information requests from Towns;
 - f. Providing assistance to zoning staff;
 - g. Responding to information requests from County residents;
 - h. Preparing committee agendas and minutes; and
 - i. Administrative tasks such as staff meetings, filing, and general office activities.
2. Ensure efficient workload distribution among planning staff;
3. Increase communication of Planning Division activities to internal and external customers and staff; and
4. Provide a basis for establishing cost-based fees for services where appropriate.

Recommendation #3: Implement a daily time recording and management system. The system need not be complicated or expensive, and could be built using existing applications such as Microsoft Excel or Microsoft Access. The time recording system, at a minimum, should allow tracking of the types of activities included in Finding #3, but could be more detailed, particularly in the area of identifying committees and workgroups and the types of activities associated with each (e.g., staff time preparing for meetings, meeting attendance, follow-up, etc.). Department supervisors should use the time recording system data to measure the extent to which Department activities are as efficiently distributed as possible and are directly supporting Department missions. Further, this information could be used to report to the Department of Administration and County Board when necessary.

Finding #4: Planners in the Planning Division are employed as in-house consultants on a range of development and zoning issues. A majority of the work products produced by these staff directly support the work of the Zoning Division, specifically the zoning petition review process of the Dane County Board's Zoning and Land Regulation Committee. In addition, staff reported that many of the customer contacts and Town staff contacts were related to zoning questions and were referred to Zoning Division staff if the planners did not know the answer. As shown in Figure 6, staff estimated that providing planning support to Towns was their seventh-most frequent activity on an annual basis. Because of the fact that the Department currently does not measure performance standards and has neither a time- nor a task-tracking system, workload statistics shown in Figure 6 are estimated annual average amounts.

Figure 6	
Estimated Number of Planning Division Deliverables and Tasks	
Senior Planners and Planners, Average Annual Production	
Work Product	Estimated Number of Deliverables
Zoning petition reviews	300
Responding to County resident questions	250
Density studies associated with zoning petitions	225
Responding to Town staff questions	200
Speculative density studies ²	100
Responding to Zoning staff questions	100
Town staff planning assistance and support	50
Other information requests	50
Preparation of agendas and minutes	40
Memoranda and White Papers	30
Website updates	30
Town Plan Reviews	5

Source: Dane County Department of Planning and Development.

In addition to requesting information and assistance from the Department on planning issues, for example Farmland Preservation Plans, a small number of Dane County municipalities have formalized a contractual relationship with the Department to provide comprehensive planning services. The Towns of Perry and York have paid for assistance from the Planning Division to develop their comprehensive plans, in addition to planning-related consulting work performed for Villages and smaller Cities by staff in CAPD, including the Village of Rockdale.

² Speculative density studies are density studies that are not associated with a zoning petition. They are often requested by customers who are attempting to determine the feasibility or value of a project prior to formally submitting a zoning petition.

As noted, grants and other revenue sources account for 60.1 percent of the most recent approved budget for the Planning Division. This means that a significant proportion of the Division's budget is supported through the General Fund. There are opportunities in the mid- and long-term for the Division to increase the amount of program revenue it captures by increasing the amount of planning-related consulting work it performs under contract for Dane County municipalities, similar to the type of work done for the Towns of Perry and York. Other types of deliverables represent potentially chargeable work for the Division, such as developing planning-related Memoranda and White Papers for Towns, Town Plan reviews, and assisting with drafting Town Action Reports. In addition to the potential for additional program revenue, this practice would bring with it several pros and cons, including:

Pros:

- Reduced reliance on the General Fund to support the Planning Division;
- Increased quality control over Town plans and activities; and
- Potentially lower expenditures for planning consultant services incurred by Towns because the Department could charge for services at cost.

Cons:

- Without sufficient safeguards, a perceived conflict of interest could arise because staff would be developing Town Plans that are later approved by the same County Board committees that serve as regulatory oversight bodies for the Department;
- Increased staff time would need to be re-allocated from other activities; and
- Some Town staff would initially resist the idea of paying for planning-related consulting services from the County that they currently receive at no cost to them.

Our review of practices in other Counties indicates that, while not common, charging municipalities for planning services is currently being done in Wisconsin and Illinois. Specifically:

- The Marathon County Department of Conservation, Planning, and Zoning charges a set fee for certain types of transportation planning activities that is split among participating municipalities;
- The Waukesha County Department of Parks and Land Use charges municipalities a fully-loaded hourly rate for planning services; and
- The Lake County, Illinois Planning, Building, and Development Department charges municipalities a nominal fee for certain types of planning services.

Recommendation #4: The Department should increase the amount of planning-related fee-for-service consulting work it performs under contract for Dane County municipalities. Some Division activities are not appropriate or practical to be supported through a fee-for-service system, such as reviewing zoning petitions where a fee has already been charged or responding to phone calls and emails from County residents or Town staff seeking basic information. Initially using the time-tracking system noted in Recommendation #3, and eventually cost data from the comprehensive cost study noted in Recommendation #1, the Department should develop a fully-loaded hourly rate for services to ensure that Towns are only being charged for the Department's actual costs. This will only be feasible if Recommendation #35 is implemented.

ZONING

Finding #5: The Zoning Division uses an automated telephone system that does not allow direct access to a staff person. The results of staff interviews, stakeholder group discussions, and customer surveys indicate that the Division does not manage incoming telephone calls from customers adequately. Specifically, customers are frequently unable to reach the appropriate contact using the Division's phone tree system. For example, the results of a customer service survey conducted as part of this review show that 27 percent of survey respondents who had tried to contact the Division by telephone had to leave a voice message, but Division staff did not return their call. See Appendix 1 for additional survey results.

Further, staff indicate that customers often select phone tree incorrectly, which results in professional staff screening and transferring calls to other inspectors (despite the intent of the phone system to automate this process). It was reported that three transfers was not unusual to get to the correct staff person.

A cross-section of interviewees indicates that service would be improved if customers were able to contact a staff person directly to make an initial inquiry. Many customer calls, however, are to make basic zoning inquiries, and do not require a technical response or contact with an inspector.

Recommendation #5: In order to provide customers with an initial point of contact and to increase the amount of time for professional staff to complete their duties, the Division should schedule clerical staff to respond to incoming phone calls on the Department's general phone number throughout the day. Clerical staff should be given responsibility to "triage" incoming calls, and should be trained as necessary to answer routine questions and transfer calls to the appropriate inspector or other professional staff based upon the customer's initial inquiry. In order to provide accurate and consistent responses to customer inquiries, clerical staff should be provided with responses to commonly asked questions, for example, via a standard operating procedures manual, a check list summary of zoning and permit requirements or question and answer list (FAQs).

The Division should no longer rely on the phone tree system as a primary method for answering incoming telephone calls. Clerical staff should be responsible for answering all incoming telephone calls, using voice mail for telephone calls on the general number only on an exception basis.

Finding #6: Zoning inspectors are assigned to customer counter duty using a rotating schedule developed by the Zoning Administrator. Inspectors on counter duty are responsible for responding to the requests of walk-in customers and callers on the Division's general telephone number for an entire day. Since several walk-in customers may need assistance at the same time, there are four tiers of counter duty. For example, the inspector scheduled as #1 responds first, the inspector scheduled as #2 responds second, etc. Information collected through interviews indicates that inspectors generally dislike counter duty. Further, there is a concern that some inspectors avoid counter duty by, for example, calling in sick on the day they are scheduled to be the primary staff person at the counter, or by not retrieving messages left on the general number voice mail system. Information collected through the customer survey and stakeholder groups indicates that customer service varies significantly based on the specific inspector consulted at the Division's counter.

Recommendation #6: Management should identify the reasons why inspectors dislike counter duty, for example, through an employee opinion survey. The survey should be designed to determine the areas in which change will have the greatest impact, and should provide an opportunity for inspectors to offer suggestions for improvement. For example, management should try to gauge the following:

- What training has been provided to improve customer service techniques, knowledge of zoning requirements, and consistency of answers provided at the desk?
- How do inspectors rate the physical requirements of working at the counter? Are conditions physically comfortable? What improvements do employees suggest?
- What is inspectors' perception of counter duty? Do they sense a lack of prestige or professional image when assigned to county duty? What changes would remedy any negative perceptions?
- How do inspectors feel about the length of counter duty assignments? Are alternative schedules preferred?
- How do inspectors feel about frequent customer contact as a requirement of performing counter duty? Was customer contact and counter duty understood as a requirement of the position when they came to the Division? What changes could improve interactions with customers at the counter?
- Does counter duty distract inspectors for other job-related responsibilities? What accommodations could be made for those assigned counter duty to do other work during periods of low walk-in and telephone call volume?

In the short term (before survey development, distribution, and analysis is completed), the Division should test scheduling alternatives for counter duty, such as four-hour versus full-day shifts. Although the overall time each inspector is assigned to county duty will remain the same in the course of a month, shorter shifts may be more desirable.

In addition, the Zoning Administrator should instruct those who are assigned to counter duty to use a "triage" approach for managing high volumes of walk-in customers and customer calls. Specifically, clerical staff should respond to basic questions and refer technical inquiries to the appropriate inspector. Similarly, zoning inspectors who are assigned as inspector of the day on counter duty should refer customer inquiries to other inspectors when appropriate, for example, when questions are related to an area in which another inspector has greater expertise than the inspector of the day. The inspector of the day should schedule appointments with customers whose requests are complex, and are anticipated to require more than one half hour of consultation.

The Zoning Administrator should also develop performance metrics for consultations with customers, specifically to track the amount of time zoning inspectors work with customers on each type of permit or related issue. Performance measures should be used to identify processes that may need streamlining or improved public education, as well as to identify performance differences between staff members.

Finding #7: Enforcement of zoning ordinances could be improved, both in terms of consistency of enforcement and in terms of ultimate disposition of citations. The Zoning Division does not currently have a written policy related to enforcement of zoning code violations. However, the Division's current standard practice is to send violators a warning letter with a 30-day grace period to correct an identified violation. Once 20 days of the 30-day grace period have elapsed, the violator receives a reminder letter with the date and penalty specified. If the 30 days elapse and the problem has not been corrected, or if violator cannot demonstrate concrete progress towards correcting the violation, the Division issues a citation with an associated fine, and the case is referred to Dane County Corporation Counsel.

If the case is scheduled for a hearing before a Circuit Court judge, and if the violator is found guilty, a summons and complaint is issued by the Corporation Counsel seeking a remedy. This is essentially a civil lawsuit. However, staff acknowledge inconsistency in enforcement among inspectors; specifically some inspectors issue extensions more readily than others do. According to staff, Dane County Corporation counsel was taking a cue from the lack of consistent approach by inspectors by assigning a lower priority to zoning enforcement cases, and was agreeing to settle with violators at very small penalty amounts.

Recommendation #7: If the Department and Corporation Counsel work together to improve consistency and disposition of enforcement cases, it will potentially generate a sentinel effect that encourages violators to comply with the Department's grace period and reduce the number of citations issued. To increase consistency of enforcement and to ultimately reduce the need for citations related to zoning ordinance violations, the Department should:

- Each quarter, monitor the number of extensions granted by individual zoning inspectors to ensure that enforcement is consistent;
- Acquire a handheld digital video camera to be used in the field to visually record violations. This approach will encourage violators to comply with ordinance requirements and avoid facing visual evidence in court;
- Working with Corporation Counsel, promptly complete written procedures regarding formal notification of ordinance violations;
- Implement a zero-tolerance policy such that if the grace period is ignored and a citation is issued, the citation fine should be non-negotiable, and violators would then be allowed to negotiate the remedy only, or face court;
- Involve Circuit Court Judges in this effort by advising them of the change in approach and alerting them they will initially be seeing more zoning enforcement cases being brought before them, with the goal being ultimately to reduce the caseload through more consistent enforcement.

Finding #8a: The Division's permit tracking system is outdated, and does not have the management tools and reporting capabilities necessary to monitor operations and staff workload and performance adequately. For example, the system cannot generate reports showing inspections that must be completed. The Division has begun to review options for replacing the current system; however, implementation has not been scheduled. A vendor (the same vendor of the current system) was recently selected for replacing the permit tracking system through a noncompetitive process.

Finding #8b: The Division uses a paper filing system for permits. Information collected in this review indicates that it is not uncommon for permit information to be misplaced and delayed within the Division during processing. Stakeholders indicate that local projects are hindered as a result of the Division's inability to manage permit paperwork.

Finding #8c: Purchasing and implementing a comprehensive document management system that includes a permit tracking feature will represent a significant up-front investment. The County currently operates in a tight fiscal environment. Large expenditures for new computer systems that enhance the Department's ability to manage activities—as opposed to the necessary purchase of a system to manage a program or function that does not currently exist—may not be viewed as having a sufficiently high priority for funding through the general levy.

Recommendation #8: The Zoning Administrator and Assistant Zoning Administrator should acquire a new permit tracking system as part of a comprehensive document management system, and make implementation a high priority. The Division should work with the selected vendor to develop system specifications and expedite its implementation. In addition to basic features of a permit tracking system (e.g., customer name, property identification details, date of application, etc), specifications should include:

- Reporting tools that allow the user to easily identify and report on the status of permits, specifically whether inspections are completed, or due/past due. This feature should also allow the user to analyze information in a variety of ways, e.g., by inspector, age, location, and permit type;
- Automated notification to inspectors and management indicating due and past due inspections, e.g., via email;
- Adequate space for staff to include case notes and updates;
- Ability to transfer assignment for a case to another staff person and provide notification to that staff person and the Zoning Administrator;
- Seamless interfacing ability between summary information and complete records so that “drill down” access is available from summary reports or screens;
- Ability to tally the number of permits issued and their status (e.g., total, by type, and by location);
- A workflow system that allows the employee(s) working at the customer counter to assign cases to a staff member and alerts that staff member of each assignment, e.g., when a walk-in customer does not have all of the required information to submit a permit application, the case should be assigned to an inspector in order to provide continuity in completing the next steps of the application process;
- Document imaging ability that provides quick, electronic retrieval of all required documentation related to a specific permit and to customer files overall; and
- Document integration with the County’s GIS system.

The Zoning Administrator should generate summary reports on a monthly basis, and use the information to evaluate staff workload, performance and project status. For example, assuming that other responsibilities are equal between inspectors, the number of assigned inspections within a specified time period should be relatively equal for all inspectors. This will also allow the Zoning Administrator to create standards such as the length of time allowed for permit review or inspections.

The workflow system should be used to monitor cases without exception. Inspectors should be held responsible for ensuring that permit processing is completed in a timely fashion.

There are options available to purchase and implement a comprehensive document management system that can reduce or eliminate the amount of resources needed from the general fund in any given year, including:

- Consider a gradual rollout of identified functions over a period of several years, in order to stagger development costs;
- Because a comprehensive document management system represents an improvement to the service potential of the Department's automated management systems rather than the simple replacement of the current permit tracking database, consider treating the system as a capital improvement;

- Because of the role that such a system would play in supporting land use decisions, consider using comprehensive planning grant funds to pay for part or all of the system: under s.16.965(2), Wis. Stats., state law appears to expressly authorize this use for comprehensive planning grant funds; and/or
- Consider defraying some or all of the development costs by increasing fees for permits and applications to recover the cost of depreciation for the system over a set number of years.

Finding #9: Professional level staff express a preference for scheduling appointments with customers versus receiving walk-in customers and resolving issues by telephone. The Department does not have a policy requiring customers to schedule appointments to discuss applications and related issues; however, it is a best practice in planning and zoning agencies to prepare informational packets for applicants, and to schedule pre-application meetings with customers to discuss the process, timeline, and required information.

Recommendation #9: The Zoning Administrator and Assistant Zoning Administrator should work with zoning inspectors to identify application types and related procedures that typically require significant explanation and review, e.g., consultations with customers that take more than one half hour. For these types of applications, the Zoning Administrator should develop and communicate a Department policy that requires customers to schedule an appointment with the appropriate staff member to ensure that application requirements and the entire process is understood by the customer. An application packet should be developed to be provided to customers at initial meetings or mailed out before meetings are held with customers. Applications that typically require less assistance from inspectors should continue to be handled on a walk-in or telephone call basis.

Finding #10: Staff interviews suggest that field inspections are not completed timely because there are not enough vehicles available for inspectors to go into the field. The Department has had one vehicle until this year, when a second vehicle was added. As described in finding #3, the permit tracking system does not have the ability to report on inspections, therefore, the number of inspections to be completed by the Division is unknown at this time.

Recommendation #10: As described in Recommendation #3, specifications for the new permit tracking system should include management tools and reporting capabilities. Specifically, the system should be designed to generate reports that show summary records for outstanding and completed inspections. The Zoning Administrator should use this information to analyze the Division's vehicle requirements. Specifically, the Zoning Administrator should:

- Estimate the average number of inspections that must be completed per month;
- Estimate the average number of inspections to be completed by each inspector per month;
- Establish time guidelines for completing an inspection on-site (e.g., drive-by inspections are expected for certain permits, while a 20-minute inspection is appropriate for other types);
- Create a rotating field and vehicle use schedule for inspectors;
- Encourage staff to schedule field inspections efficiently, particularly to conduct inspections of properties in close proximity to each other, as feasible; and
- Monitor field inspection travel and productivity to ensure that inspectors are maximizing time in the field, i.e., using the time guidelines described above and assuming that inspections are scheduled as efficiently as possible based on location, travel and the number of inspections completed should account for all scheduled inspection time out of the office.

Finding #11: The Department needs to correct the practice of zoning inspectors calling in sick to avoid customer service counter duty on their days scheduled. Sick leave should be used only for bona fide illness of employees or close relatives, subject to the terms of the employee's collective bargaining agreement. During our interviews, we learned that some Zoning Division inspectors call in sick on those work days on which they are assigned primary counter duty. While we were not able to directly confirm this using payroll data, our analysis of staff time availability suggests that a review of sick leave policies and usage by Zoning Division staff is called for. As shown in Figure 7, Zoning Division staff took significantly more sick leave, on average, when compared to staff in the Planning and Records and Support Divisions during a three-year period.

Figure 7				
Available Time Analysis				
Three-Year Average Available Productive Time used by Division, 2002-2004				
Full-time Staff Employed During the Entire Year				
Total Work Hours/FTE	2,080			
		Average Work Hours		
		Planning	Records and Support	Zoning and Plat Review
Less:				
2002-04 Avg. Sick Leave Taken		71.39	59.76	105.43
2002-04 Avg. Vacation Time Taken		130.67	161.60	145.83
2002-04 Avg. Holiday Time Taken		37.64	37.02	40.40
2002-04 Avg. Wellness Days Taken		1.45	0.42	2.43
Total Average Unavailable Work Time		169.76	199.04	188.67
Average Available Time per Year		1,910.24	1,880.96	1,891.33
Percentage of Total Work Hours		91.8%	90.4%	90.9%

Source: Dane County Highline Personality System Report.

Recommendation #11: The Department should review sick leave policies and usage in the Zoning Division. Specifically, the Department should identify employees that call in sick to avoid customer service counter duty by comparing the counter schedule to sick leave usage patterns. Those employees that are found to exhibit a pattern that suggests sick leave abuse should be required to provide documentation of illness, or other steps as allowed under the terms of the collective bargaining agreement should be taken as necessary to correct the problem.

Finding #12: Customers indicated through stakeholder groups and survey responses that there is a lack of consistency in information provided to customers among Division inspectors and management.

Recommendation #12: Division management should develop a standard operating procedures manual, distribute it to all employees, and conduct training sessions to ensure all employees are on the same page. As part of this process, the Division should identify common areas where employees have differing interpretations, and determine a standard to be followed by the entire Division. The Zoning Administrator should emphasize the importance of providing information consistently and timely.

Finding #13: The Division has one plat review officer. The employee in this position is highly tenured, with approximately forty years of experience in the Division. Staff have not been cross trained and no succession planning has occurred in order to ensure that the responsibilities of this position will be performed adequately, and without interruption, upon retirement of the incumbent.

Recommendation #13: The Division should begin succession planning for the plat review officer position immediately. At a minimum, succession planning should include cross- training of staff or even double-filling the position temporarily. Department managers should work closely with the incumbent to identify the position's scope of responsibility, and to determine what level of staff will be necessary to perform the responsibilities of the position in the future. The current plat review officer should be assigned responsibility for documenting policies and procedures and reference materials related to the position, and to provide training to staff identified to perform the position's responsibilities in the future.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Finding #14: The Community Development Division is not significantly integrated into the activities of the rest of the Department, and effectively operates as a distinct Department. For example, Community Development has their own operating budget lines in addition to separate revenue and expenditure accounts for the CDBG Business Loan Fund, the CDBG Housing Fund, the HOME Loan Fund, and the Commerce Revolving Loan Fund. Further, these staff are physically located on a separate floor of the City County building away from the rest of the Department.

However, the Division is not completely separate from the rest of the Department. The Community Development staff interact most often with Planning Division staff assigned to the Comprehensive Planning Housing and Economic Development Workgroup. A Records and Support program assistant is assigned on a 50 percent basis between Records and Support and Community Development, and the unit also occasionally uses land information products from Records and Support as well. Although the current Department Director has introduced the practice of holding bi-weekly meetings with Community Development staff in order to stay current with the activities of the unit, this has not resulted in increased integration with the rest of the Department. However, greater integration may not result in improved operational efficiency because the unit's primary function—specifically to award and monitor the use of federal grant funds—is currently distinct from the functions of other Divisions.

Recommendation #14: The current organizational placement of Community Development staff neither hinders nor assists the unit in carrying out its function. However, the mission of the Community Development Division mirrors that of the Planning and Zoning Divisions. Therefore, in order to provide the opportunity for the Community Development Division to become more closely integrated into the rest of the Department, the Department should retain the current organizational placement.

Finding #15: As noted above, the Community Development unit is located on a different floor in the City-County Building from the rest of the Department, and interact most frequently with staff from the Records and Support Division. This results in staff having to travel to a different part of the building to perform their duties and to attend weekly meetings. While this likely does not result in a significant loss of staff time, having the Community Development staff co-located with the rest of the Department would be more desirable than the current situation.

Recommendation #15: In addition to the review of space needs noted in Recommendation #6, the Department should review the feasibility of co-locating the Community Development staff with other Department Divisions. This would likely increase the communication between Community Development staff and staff in other Divisions, thereby creating the potential for more integration of Community Development activities and information with other Divisions.

RECORDS AND SUPPORT

Finding #16: Adjustments to tax assessment data for some Dane County municipalities are provided to the Records and Support Division in manual format, which creates an additional data entry task for the Division. The Records and Support Division prepares tax rolls for all Dane County municipalities with the exception of the City of Madison. County residents can contest the outcome of their annual assessment before the Board of Review in their municipality, which can result in an adjusted assessment that must be entered into the Department's tax system. Assessor data from the Towns of Dunn and Westport and the Villages of Waunakee, McFarland, and Mt. Horeb are sent in hard copy. All other municipalities provide their adjustments in electronic format.

Recommendation #16: Require the municipalities currently sending their Board of Review adjustments in hard copy to switch to an electronic format to make the adjustment process more efficient.

Finding #17: The system used by Records and Support to record certain types of tax information for businesses does not allow electronic files to be imported, and therefore creates an additional data entry task for the Division. Currently, the Division must manually enter tax information related to business assets that certain types of business must pay taxes on, including marinas, rental agencies, child care centers, and other businesses. Additionally, the system does not dynamically update current address information and customer contact information for the previous year is frozen at year end, which means that a percentage of delinquent tax notices are being sent to the wrong address.

Recommendation #17: A new property listing software application is currently being tested by a consortium of northern Wisconsin counties. The Department should review the experience of these counties and determine whether the new system represents opportunities for more efficient processing of tax data.

VI. Customer Responsiveness

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

A key expected outcome of this evaluation was to develop practical recommendations to improve customer service by the Department. Indeed, we found during our interviews, focus group sessions, and from the customer service survey that customer service is an area that is both a high priority for customers and also is an area of significant concern.

Using the results of our customer service survey, we were able to measure the level of satisfaction with the quality of customer service provided by the Department, specifically by staff in the Zoning and Planning Divisions. As shown in the Figure 8 below, the Department received a "C" as the overall grade for customer service. While the Department did not receive high marks for any of the identified dimensions of customer service, Department staff overall received the best marks for treating customers with courtesy and listening to the customer's issues. Professional staff manner, clarity of requirements, consistent and accurate information, and prompt service at the desk all received lower scores. Survey respondents felt that the duration of the whole process—from initial application to ultimate disposition—was poor.

Figure 8 Customer Service Report Card Zoning and Planning Divisions		
Customer Service Category	Raw Score	Grade
I was treated with courtesy	0.742	BC
Staff listened to my issues	0.723	BC
Staff were professional	0.712	C
Clarity of application requirements	0.692	C
I got the right answer the 1st time	0.685	C
I got consistent information	0.658	C
I was helped at the desk promptly	0.638	D
Duration of the whole process	0.577	F
Cumulative Score	0.678	C

Because of the possibility that unsuccessful outcomes could have negatively influenced ratings for customers, we reviewed outcomes to determine how many respondents had their application or petition ultimately denied. Of the 52 customers that rated their experiences at the customer service desk:

- 41 had their permit or application approved;
- 8 were approved with conditions; and
- 1 was denied, and 2 were still pending.

Department customers are currently not able to perform any significant "self-service," such as being able to access plain-English descriptions related to Zoning or other Division processes and requirements or read Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ), download permit applications or other forms, or keep abreast of public hearing times and locations. Through our focus group sessions and by a review of the Department's current internet presence, we believe that improvements to the Department's web site should be made a top priority. Additionally, we noted in the survey and through our focus group sessions that many customers have negative experiences in trying to reach staff via telephone. Because of the lack of information on the web site and difficulty reaching a staff person via telephone, customers must visit the offices in person to get information from staff.

PLANNING

Finding #18: The Department's internet web site needs significant revision. Specifically, the current web site allows customers no opportunity to help themselves in answering questions about the process or permit requirements, identifying the location of committee hearings, or even downloading the permit applications.

Our review of web sites in other counties revealed that, while on-line completion of permit applications has not been accomplished in any of the counties we contacted, two of the five do at least allow customers to download and print application forms on-line, including:

- The Winnebago County Regional Planning and Development Department; and
- The Lake County, Illinois Planning, Building, and Development Department.

Recommendation #18: Ideally, the Department's web site would provide customers with the ability to partially complete their applications and pay their fees on-line using a secure connection. In improving the customer's ability to begin the application process on a self-service basis, to paying fees, and to answer basic questions about requirements and the process, customer service will be enhanced and staff will have to field fewer questions at the customer service counter.

Until a secure on-line forms software platform can be implemented that will allow customers to complete all or most of their application on-line, the web site should allow customers to:

- Download and print all current zoning permits and applications;
- On the same page as the downloadable permits or application, the customer should be able to view or download a plain English FAQ for each type of permit or application that explains: how to complete the application properly, the fees, what to expect and what to bring when coming to the zoning counter, and a summary description and timeline of the process associated with that particular type of permit or application; and
- On the same page as the forms and the FAQ, the customer should see the relevant committee notices on the web site that include the date of the next meeting, a link to the agenda, the location of the meeting, and a link to a City of Madison parking map.

ZONING

Finding #19: The consistency of answers provided to customers by Zoning and Planning Division staff needs improvement. The results of our stakeholder focus group sessions, our interviews with Department staff and internal and external customers, and our customer service survey all suggested that consistency of answers provided by staff, particularly Zoning Division staff, is an area of concern and steps should be taken to ensure that consistency is improved. As shown in Figure 9, Zoning Division customers who responded to our survey rated the consistency of answers received at 3.29 on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest score.

Figure 9		
2005 Customer Service Survey		
Consistency of Answers Received from Zoning and Planning Staff by Type of Customer		
	Respondents	Average Rating
First-time Customers	13	3.54
Repeat Customers	39	3.21
All Customers	52	3.29

Inconsistency of interpretation appears to be caused by three factors, including:

- According to staff, Dane County zoning ordinances are complicated, out-of-date, and often require interpretation given the varied nature of customers' questions regarding their projects and proposals;
- A range of staff in the Zoning Division are assigned to answer customers' questions about their projects and are regularly called upon to interpret and apply the zoning ordinances, but there are differences in the way individual staff interpret the zoning ordinances;
- Average training expenditures in 2004 per staff person were \$142 in the Records & Support Division, \$133 in the Planning Division, and \$62 in the Zoning staff Division; and
- Expenditures for training zoning staff fell by 65.7 percent between 2001 and 2004, as shown in Figure 10, below:

Figure 10					
Department of Planning and Development Total Training Expenditures					
2001-2004					
Division	2001	2002	2003	2004	Pct. Change 2001-04
Planning	\$2,128.50	\$70.00	\$1,163.00	\$1,000.00	-53.0%
Records & Support	3,010.55	1,280.56	1,333.60	1,239.99	-58.8
Zoning	1,951.80	681.98	597.57	670.00	-65.7
Total	\$7,090.85	\$2,032.54	\$3,094.17	\$2,909.99	-59.0%

Source: Dane County Department of Planning and Development.

In our experience, this combination of factors can create the potential for inconsistency, unless steps are taken to correct it. Improving consistency of answers is vital to the efficiency, the organizational effectiveness, and, perhaps most of all, the customer responsiveness of the Department.

Recommendation #19: Improving consistency of answers provided to customers is challenging, but can be accomplished by the following:

- A. Increase the level of staff training, both externally and internally provided;
- B. Hold staff focus sessions that identify the most challenging and common issues related to the zoning ordinances requiring interpretation. These sessions should be led by staff with the goal of developing a common approach to interpretation, and should occur often enough to reflect changes to the zoning ordinances and in the pattern of customer requests. Because customers occasionally call Planning Division staff in attempt to get a favorable interpretation when one is not forthcoming from Zoning staff, Planning Division staff should be included in these focus sessions; and
- C. Create an ordinance interpretation file that is indexed to the zoning ordinances. Require staff to write a brief memo to this file whenever they provide an interpretation of zoning ordinances that was challenging to complete or represented a potentially novel situation. This will provide staff with a readily-available permanent reference that will improve consistency of interpretation and will preserve institutional knowledge in the event of staff turnover. Initially, staff will have to write a significant number of memos, but the amount of work required should decrease over time as the file expands to cover more situations.

Finding #20: We learned in our focus groups that Town staff may be increasingly inclined to view Extra-Territorial Zoning as a method to avoid the County Zoning process. Extra-Territorial Zoning is a process, allowed under Wisconsin Statutes, under which development projects in unincorporated areas of a County that are within three miles of a Village or City municipal boundary can be approved by that municipality's zoning department, rather than by the County. While we were not able to identify how many times this has occurred, Extra-territorial Zoning effectively removes approval authority for some development projects from the County. Focus group participants believe that the primary reason some Towns are considering encouraging Extra-Territorial Zoning with neighboring villages or cities is that they have not been able to receive satisfactory levels of customer service from Zoning Division staff. According to participants, this is because of the Zoning staff's approach to customer service, the lack of consistency and quality of interpretation and accuracy of answers provided, and in the sense that the approval process for certain types of projects is too long.

Recommendation #20: If Towns begin using Extra-territorial Zoning as a method to avoid the County Zoning process because of customer service issues, it will be an indication that the Department has failed in part of its mission to serve as a resource for its customers. There is little the Department can do to prevent Towns from seeking out Extra-Territorial Zoning agreements with adjoining cities and villages in the short term. However, by addressing the root causes of Town dissatisfaction, specifically by providing consistent quality service, and by increasing the amount of services provided by Planning Division staff to Towns, the Department may be able to limit the amount of projects that are approved through Extra-Territorial Zoning in the future.

Finding #21: The current location of the Department in the City County building in downtown Madison is inconvenient for many customers and therefore may contribute to increased frustration with the level of customer service. We learned in our interviews with staff and in our focus groups that there is considerable unpredictability regarding the amount of time a customer can expect to spend at the customer service desk. Further, some customers may not be familiar with parking options in the neighborhood of the City County Building.

Recommendation #21: The Department should improve the amount of training and support provided to Town staff related to zoning issues and more closely integrate Town staff with Zoning Division functions. Specifically, the Department should consider:

- Inviting Town staff to participate in internal focus sessions as listed in Recommendation #19b;
- Providing specific training to Town staff on permit and petition process timelines and requirements;
- Establishing a hotline for use by Town staff to resolve issues and answer questions; and
- Establishing a workgroup to review the types of applications that could be accepted by Town staff, and the feasibility of working cooperatively with Town staff in the zoning permit and petition process.

If the Department were to successfully work more cooperatively with Town staff, customers may eventually be able to conduct certain types of business at Town Halls rather than having to drive downtown.

RECORDS AND SUPPORT

Finding #22: Records and Support staff have not been able to provide land information assistance to Towns because the Land Information Office (LIO) has requested that Records and Support not distribute digital land information to Towns. Staff in LIO would prefer to have all data distribution occur from their office. In part because of their role in providing vital tax information to municipalities throughout the County, staff in the Records and Support Division have good working relationships with Town staff. Understandably, Town staff may turn to Records and Support staff when they are seeking to obtain digital land information from the County.

There are several advantages of having enterprise Geographic Information Systems (GIS), which involves a centralized unit that maintains and distributes geographic data for use by all other units within the organization. Enterprise GIS, therefore, is primarily about controlling accuracy and increasing availability of information in a cost effective way for a large number of users. Maintaining an enterprise approach to GIS functions is a best practice for the following reasons:

- Enterprise GIS reduces duplication of effort in system development, inventory and mapping of data points, and the appearance of "program silo" mapping solutions and databases that represent an inefficient use of scarce County resources; and
- Because physical location is an important element of several county services, including public safety, natural resources and parks, economic development, permitting, and other services, enterprise GIS offers the possibility to support a centralized "knowledge base" approach to land information management.

However, one of the key measures of success for enterprise GIS units is the extent to which their services are provided in a seamless and transparent way to customers. In the end it does not matter which Department provides the requested assistance as long as it is accurate, timely, and meets the needs of the customer. The customer should not, therefore, receive a lower standard of service because of internal disagreements between Departments over who should be providing the service.

In our focus group sessions, we heard few complaints from Town staff related to the customer service provided by the Records and Support Division. This makes it difficult to assess the effect of this issue on Department customers. Nevertheless, in our interviews we learned that this was an area of concern, and accordingly should be promptly addressed.

Recommendation #22: The Department and LIO staff should agree to formal procedures on responding to requests for digital land information from Town staff, or any other type of customer, that:

- Minimize wait time for the customer; and
- Maximize accuracy of usefulness of the data.

The Department and LIO should together review the number and type of Town requests for digital land information data that are received by the Records and Support Division to develop these procedures.

VII. Organizational Effectiveness

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

A key expected outcome of this evaluation of the Department of Planning and Development is to develop steps necessary to ensure that the strategic mission of the Department is articulated in a manner that is easily understood by all staff and stakeholders, and to outline methods to link resource allocations directly to strategic goals. Unfortunately, the Department does not have any formal outcome measures that would allow evaluation of progress towards achieving its various missions. Additionally, we found that employee performance standards were informal in nature and statistics were not kept related to these standards. However, we were able to obtain workload statistics (i.e. measures of activities rather than outcomes) that provide some indication of the types of activities that each Division is involved in.

As shown in Figure 10, the amount of permits and applications process by Zoning Division staff have remained fairly constant, with the exception of a significant increase in the number of erosion control/stormwater permits, which was correlated with the creation of the County's stormwater ordinance.

Activity	2002	2003	2004	Pct. Change 2002-04
Zoning permits	1,540	1,682	1,492	-3.1%
Conditional use permits	52	60	70	34.6%
Rezoning petitions	284	257	288	1.4%
Erosion Control/Stormwater permits	70	263	441	530.0%
Farm plan reviews	22	23	10	-54.5%
Variances	51	65	53	3.9%

Source: Department of Planning and Development

As shown in Figure 11, output data from the Records and Support Division indicate that activity has generally fluctuated over the past three years. While the number of non-certified surveys has increased by 27.8 percent, other types of activities have not shown a clear trend.

Activity	2002	2003	2004	Pct. Change 2002-04
Parcel numbers created	3,522	5,501	4,213	19.6%
Ownership transfers	11,735	13,301	12,808	9.1%
Parcel numbers retired	1,607	1,451	1,508	-6.2%
Certified surveys recorded	353	319	329	-6.8%
Plats recorded	40	62	45	12.5%
Other surveys recorded	1,303	1,103	1,665	27.8%

Source: Department of Planning and Development

Workload statistics for Community Development staff are discussed in Finding #30. Estimated Workload statistics for the Planning Division were presented in Figure 6. Workload statistics were not available from the Community Analysis and Planning Division.

PLANNING

Finding #23: The Planning Division currently does not have a supervisor or lead worker to prioritize tasks and to provide day-to-day oversight of Division activities. Although the Department Director was formerly assigned as a senior planner and still has some planning duties, he is not able to function as both Department Director and Planning Division supervisor because of his responsibilities to other units in the Department and to various committees and workgroups.

Recommendation #23: Designate a Planning Division supervisor or lead worker to prioritize tasks for staff and provide day-to-day oversight of Division activities. The supervisor should monitor the amount of time spent by planning staff on various activities, ensure efficient workload distribution, prepare summaries of Planning Division activities as needed, and periodically review the Planning Division fee structure to ensure that fees are based on actual costs.

Finding #24: Because of the informal nature of Planning Division employee performance standards and the lack of a task-tracking system, we were not able to directly measure the organizational effectiveness of Planning Division staff. Performance standards are useful both in assessing individual employee performance and development needs and in providing a yardstick for the organization as a whole. Informal performance standards currently in place for the Division include:

- Phone calls and emails returned within 24-48 hours;
- Zoning committee staff reports completed 1 week in advance of committee meeting;
- Speculative density studies completed within 3-6 weeks of submittal;
- Town plan amendment review completed within 4-6 weeks of submittal; and
- Information requests completed within 1-2 weeks of request.

Department customers that participated in the stakeholder focus group sessions typically rated Planning Division staff as being good or excellent in terms of responsiveness. Our interviews with planning staff indicated that they are aware of the need to balance timeliness, accuracy, and customer service with the need to ensure that applicable statutes, ordinances and regulations are being complied with.

Recommendation #24: The Department should formalize employee performance standards and include them in annual employee performance evaluations to ensure that all staff are working toward a high standard of customer service. While we heard very few concerns about the effectiveness or professionalism of the planning staff, formalizing performance standards, including them as part of annual employee evaluations, and measuring progress in meeting standards via a task-tracking system for certain types of Division work products would:

- Provide the County Board, the County Executive and Department management with easy-to-understand performance standards to better assess the organizational effectiveness and value-added contributions of the work being performed by Planning Division staff; and
- Assist in efficiently distributing workload and identifying bottlenecks associated with specific work products.

Finding #25: Absent both a time- and task-tracking system, it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of the current approach to assigning workload among planners. Task-tracking systems are intended to tie allocation of staff resources to performance goals. This can be particularly helpful as it relates to work products that are deliverable items and that do not currently have formal timelines. For example, the timeline for review of Town plan amendments is governed by Chapter 91, Wis. Stats. "Farmland Preservation." On the other hand, expectations for timely completion of speculative density studies is governed by the informal performance standard listed above. Absent both a time- and task-tracking system, it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of the current approach to assigning workload among planners.

Prior to the promotion of the current Department Director from his former position as a Senior Planner, the four senior planners were assigned on a geographic quadrant basis. In addition, each planner specialized in one or more certain activities, such as:

- Coordinating zoning petition reviews;
- Mineral extraction permits;
- Natural resources issues;
- Cell phone towers;
- Serving as the Department's primary budget analyst; and
- Preparing density studies.

Currently, in the absence of a supervisor or lead worker, it is not clear whether planner work assignments are governed by a geographic approach or by specialization in specific functions or issue areas. Instead, the process has been described as ad-hoc and based on staff consensus during regular staff meetings. This approach is not desirable because it prevents a systematic approach to workload allocation and resource prioritization.

There are advantages and disadvantages to assigning workload on a geographic basis. One advantage is enhanced familiarity with the Town ordinances and plans in their assigned quadrant. A disadvantage is that workload may not be distributed equally among planners since development does not occur evenly across quadrants. We learned in our focus group sessions that Town staff typically prefer to have a planner assigned to their municipality (i.e., assigning planners on a geographic basis), because it creates the opportunity to develop staff knowledge of local conditions and closer working relationships between Department and Town staff.

Recommendation #25: Once a supervisor or lead worker has been appointed for the Division as suggested in Recommendation #23 and the Division has implemented performance standards and, at a minimum, a time-tracking system, the workload of planners should be measured and assessed to determine whether workload assignments need to be adjusted.

Finding #26: The Planning Division does not perform any significant planning activities for the County as an internal corporate planning unit. However, many capital projects require specific skill sets and expertise that may be impractical to maintain on an ongoing basis within the Division. The County's current approach to planning for capital projects is to hire an outside consultant with significant experience in the needed area. This allows the County to tailor the planning skills needed to the requirements of the project.

Recommendation #26: Recognize in the Division's mission statement that corporate planning is a less significant priority than other functions, and continue the current practice of hiring outside consultants with significant experience in the area of expertise required for the specific project.

Finding #27: Historically, the Department has not adopted a strategic approach to developing its budget requests that link available resources to the missions of each Division. Rather, in recent years the process has been to start with a budget reduction amount and work backward from there. The absence of outcome measures for the Department further compounds the problem, because the Department does not have reliable mission-driven data that can allow it to prioritize resources across missions. In addition to their usefulness in staff management and evaluation, as noted in Recommendation #24, developing performance standards and outcome measures is also a best practice to assist staff in designing a budget request that builds upon success and identifies deficiencies in meeting the Department's missions.

Recommendation #27: Develop outcome measures, including but not limited to workload statistics similar to those identified in Finding #24, such as measuring customer satisfaction by providing point-of-service survey cards at the zoning service counter. Use both outcome measures and employee performance standards to assist the Department in developing budgets that link available resources to missions. As part of its budget process, the Department should hold an internal focus group session or sessions, led by staff, that identify a small number of easy-to-understand **measures. These metrics ideally should:**

- Bear a direct relationship to the Department's missions;
- Be easily measurable;
- Include workload statistics, employee performance standards, and outcome measures, but not rely on workload or employee performance alone to gauge success; and
- Be communicated to the public via the Department's web site to help fulfill the Department's mission to perform outreach and information to the County's residents regarding planning-related issues.

For example, we learned in our interviews with Department staff that there is currently a backlog of field inspections waiting to be completed by Zoning Inspectors. However, the Department was not able to provide us with statistics related to this backlog. The number and age of outstanding inspections would be a useful performance standard to evaluate and manage the activities of Zoning Inspectors, as well as a potential indicator of staffing workload for budgetary purposes.

As noted, we surveyed individuals who had submitted an application for a zoning permit or petition related to their experiences, and found that there was room for considerable improvement in the Department's customer service approach. Not only would customer feedback assist the Department in managing its operations, tracking customer satisfaction may also raise the level of consciousness among staff that excellent customer service is vital to the ongoing success of the Department.

ZONING

Finding #28: Zoning inspectors are assigned to one of four geographic quadrants in the County for the purpose of performing inspections. One advantage of assigning inspections in this way is that inspectors become familiar with the Town ordinances and plans in their assigned quadrant. A disadvantage is that workload may not be distributed equally among inspectors since development does not occur evenly across quadrants. The Zoning Administrator reports that the current permit tracking system does not have reporting capability that would show the number of inspections assigned to individual inspectors, however, the Zoning Administrator and inspectors report that inspection workload is currently unequal.

Recommendation #28: The Division should continue to assign inspection responsibility using geographic quadrants in order to maintain inspectors' familiarity with specific areas in the County. However, the Zoning Administrator should review the number of inspections assigned to each inspector on a monthly basis, and redraw quadrants boundaries as needed to distribute workload evenly among inspectors. Since the current permit tracking system does not allow inspection status reporting, the Zoning Administrator should develop a temporary tool (e.g., a spreadsheet) for tracking inspections, and require inspectors to update the information as inspections are assigned. In developing the new permit tracking system, the Zoning Administrator should ensure that specifications include inspection status reporting capability that allows management to monitor the workload of each inspector.

Finding #29: The incumbent Zoning Administrator and Acting Assistant Zoning Administrator work schedules that result in them not being regularly available during standard business hours. Information collected in this review indicates that management is not available to customers and staff when needed during the Division's office hours as a result of these schedules. Since the responsibilities of these positions include significant customer contact and complex issue resolution within strict timeframes, customers expect employees in supervisory positions to be available during normal business hours.

Recommendation #29: Customer contact responsibilities of the Zoning Administrator and Assistant Zoning Administrator should be emphasized by the Director, and meeting customer service expectations for availability should be used as criteria in annual performance evaluations. Based on the customer contact requirements of these positions, the Department should align supervisory staff work schedules with normal business hours. The Assistant Zoning Administrator position should be full time during the period in which significant operational changes are made (i.e., as a result of this study).

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Finding #30: The Community Development function has been very successful in obtaining participation by a majority of Dane County municipalities in the program. In 2005, 52 of the County's 61 municipalities participated in the Dane County Urban County Consortium. This is an increase of 9 municipalities since the programs' inception in 1998. In the course of our interviews with staff and internal and external customers, we found a generally high level of satisfaction with the effectiveness of this unit.

The 2004 funding priorities for this program are contained in the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report to the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development. In 2004, approximately \$2 million in federal dollars were distributed to participating County agencies, non-profit organizations, and participating municipalities. The unit's priorities were funded according to the following percentages:

- Housing Ownership: 40%
- Economic Development Activities: 30%
- Public Services: 14%
- Administration: 10%
- Housing Rehabilitation: 06%

Recommendation #30: Because of the Community Development staff's continued success in obtaining federal funding and in maintaining a high level of participation by Dane County municipalities, we recommend that the unit continue to follow its current approach to funding projects.

RECORDS AND SUPPORT

Finding #31: Consideration is currently being given to merging the Land information Office (LIO), which is responsible for Countywide Geographic information Systems (GIS) into the Department. Currently, the LIO serves a range of County Departments in an enterprise role in delivering GIS products and services, specifically creating, obtaining, and maintaining the development of digital GIS map layers. The Departments currently using the map layers maintained by the LIO include the Department of Planning and Development, the Register of Deeds, the Land and Water Resources Department, the Sheriff's Department, and the Office of the County Clerk, among others. The LIO is currently funded through program revenue.

If the LIO is merged into the Department of Planning and Development, the County is running the risk of losing the benefits of enterprise GIS because LIO staff may be asked to increase their support to activities that are specific to the Department's focus on the unincorporated areas of the County. Under the current organizational placement, the LIO is allowed to prioritize its resources to meet the needs of the County as a whole.

Recommendation #31: The County should maintain the LIO in its current organizational placement in order to preserve its role as the enterprise GIS unit for the County. The County should carefully weigh the tradeoff between increasing the amount of program revenue available to the Department if LIO is merged into the Records and Support Division against the risk of losing the advantages of enterprise GIS.

Finding #32: The ongoing vacancy of the County Surveyor position has created several negative effects. After the Department unexpectedly lost the most recent incumbent in this position, the Department has chosen to hold the position vacant for budgetary reasons. Staff in the Records and Support Division have been successful in maintaining the work flow previously overseen by the County Surveyor, specifically by ensuring that recently completed plats and certified survey maps are being processed into the Division's parcel mapping system when they are received. However, in part because of the number of surveying firms working in the County, dozens of conflicts arise each year in the surveys sent in to the Records and Support Division. Since there is no County Surveyor, the Department does not have the authority to require surveying firms to go back and fix the errors. Additionally:

- In the past, the County Surveyor acted as a mediator and resource for conflict resolution between property owners, and supported other County staff such as the Sheriff's Department when responding to calls related to property boundary disputes;
- The Department is currently paying staff from another County to review the methodology of certain types of surveys;
- Although staff do their best to resolve most survey discrepancies, some errors are not corrected, leading to property listings that are incorrect;
- There is no professional oversight available to perform quality assurance on survey work currently recorded by Records and Support staff;
- There is no County Surveyor available to complete surveys ordered by a court or by the County, as required by s. 59.45(1)(a)1, Wis. Stats.,
- There is no ongoing program to relocate survey monuments that have been lost, which makes it more difficult for surveying firms to complete their work in the field; and
- Changes requested by the LIO to the format of the parcel map database have not been made because there is no County Surveyor available to provide approval.

The Department is currently recruiting for the County Surveyor position, although no decision on filling the position is expected to be made in the immediate future. The Department expects that the new County Surveyor will take on some of the duties and responsibilities currently assigned to the plat review officer.

Recommendation #32: For the purpose of ensuring quality control over surveys processed by the Department, fill the County Surveyor position as soon as possible. Prior to filling the position, the Director of Planning should ensure that the role of this position is clearly defined and that responsibilities are directly aligned with the issues described above. Wisconsin Statutes are not explicit regarding whether a County must have a County Surveyor, although it appears implied by the duties listed in statutes that the County Surveyor position should be filled.

Finding #33: The Division has not yet made comprehensive survey records electronically available to surveying firms. Currently, the Division scans and indexes plats and certified survey maps and other surveys into an imaging database. Survey records are imaged within two weeks of delivery to the Division, which is an improvement over past processes that resulted in a typical gap of up to three months. However, the Department has not yet imaged surveys prior to the year 2000, although plats and certified survey maps have all been entered into the system. Surveyors who wish to access electronic survey records must come to the Division's office and to search records on-site.

Recommendation #33: To fulfill the Division's mission of managing records for use by private land surveyors in a more effective way, the Division should consider hiring temporary staff to eliminate the backlog of older survey records and ensure that all survey records have been scanned into the imaging database. Further, survey records should be made available on-line as soon as possible to enhance the ability of private surveyors to easily search and access survey records.

VIII. Governance

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

A principal question to be answered by this evaluation is the extent to which oversight bodies affect the workload and priorities of the Department. The Department is, in the final analysis, a unit of the executive branch of County Government and therefore the County Executive has a vital role in setting priorities and resources to achieve the Department's missions. However, under Wisconsin Statutes and local ordinance, the various committees and subcommittees of the County Board play a key oversight and approval role related to planning, zoning, and economic development. Related to this question is the extent to which the Dane County Code of Ordinances affects the operational efficiency and organizational effectiveness of the Department.

Finding #34: The Dane County Code of Ordinances related to zoning and planning has not been systematically reviewed since it was established in the 1950's. Further, only a modest number of zoning- and planning-related ordinance amendments and resolutions have been before the Dane County Board between the 2001-02 and current session, and these have been of limited scope. As shown in Figure 12, most of the 41 resolutions and amendments since 2001-02 have been related to updates of the Dane County Farmland Preservation Plan or to organizational or funding changes.

Changes Related to	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	Total
Dane County Code of Ordinances Change	3		1	3	7
Dane County Farmland Preservation Plan Update	2	11	1	4	18
Organizational or Funding Change	1	3	5	7	16
Total	6	14	7	14	41

Source: Dane County Department of Planning and Development.

During this period, there were 7 Ordinance amendments, including:

- 2004-05—Sub. 1 to Ordinance Amendment 18, relating to providing agricultural-based entertainment in A-1 exclusive agriculture zoning;
- 2004-05—Ordinance Amendment 11, related to creating an adult entertainment overlay district;
- 2004-05—Sub. 1 to Ordinance Amendment 1, relating to County Board Rule changes for Chapter 7;
- 2003-04—Ordinance Amendment 7, related to allowing minor structures in shoreland setback area;
- 2001-02—Ordinance Amendment 1, relating to setback requirements for fuel tanks at marinas;
- 2001-02—Ordinance Amendment 2, relating to creation of an erosion control & stormwater ordinance; and
- 2001-02—Ordinance Amendment 31, relating to technical amendments to agricultural exclusive zoning.

Some participants in our focus group sessions contend that the Dane County zoning ordinances are out-of-date and have not been systematically reviewed for a significant number of years. Further, Department staff acknowledge that there has been no systematic review of the zoning ordinances since the ordinances were established in the 1950's. However, an in-depth legal review of the ordinances was not part of the scope of this study, and we were unable to identify any specific negative effects of out-of-date zoning ordinances in our interviews with staff, internal and external customers, or in our focus groups. Further, as the legislative body for the County, the County Board has an ongoing opportunity to revise and amend the Code of Ordinances whenever it deems it necessary.

Zoning ordinances are tools for implementing local and regional planning policy decisions. Therefore, best practice planning and zoning agencies review and update zoning ordinances periodically to ensure that they are current and consistent with local and regional planning efforts and the region's master plan. Maintaining an up-to-date zoning code is a best practice because it contributes to the organizational effectiveness of the Department by eliminating ambiguous sections that require extensive interpretation by staff and by reflecting current development issues facing their customers. While desirable from a best practices standpoint, a systematic review and update of the zoning ordinances would be difficult to accomplish because members of the County Board and Dane County residents hold widely divergent visions of what the ordinances should ultimately look like.

Recommendation #34: The County Board should carefully consider the benefits and drawbacks of a comprehensive revision of zoning ordinances written in plain English, including:

- Improving the ability of customers to understand the requirements and reduce customer uncertainty;
- Enhancing consistency of interpretation by Zoning Division staff by reducing ambiguity and directly addressing modern development issues; and
- Providing a link between current comprehensive planning efforts and ordinance enforcement.

Finding #35: Providing support to the various committees and commissions related to planning and zoning is one of the most important functions of Department staff. We were unable to directly measure the amount of staff time spent on committee support because, as noted, the Department does not currently have a time tracking system. Nevertheless, we surveyed staff to obtain the estimated the average amount of time spent per month on these activities, as shown in Figure 13. Excluding time reported for initiatives of the County Executive and time spent on contracts with municipalities to perform comprehensive planning services, 20 Department staff estimated they spend 1,011 hours per month on committee support as follows:

Figure 13
Estimated Committee Support Staff Time
Average Number of Hours per Month

Committee Name	Division					Grand Total
	Director	Planning	Community Development	Records & Support	Zoning & Plat Review	
ZLR Committee	9	172		18	186	385
Subcommittee on Mineral Extraction		30			9	39
Policy Committee	1				13	14
Comprehensive Plan Grant Steering	2	10				11
ZLR Subtotal	11	212	-	18	208	449
Comprehensive Planning Steering TUCF Workgroup ³	3	76	2	10		91
HED Workgroup ⁴		57				57
Economic Development Subgroup		42	10	1		53
Housing Subgroup		48				48
ANCR Workgroup ⁵		48				48
Ordinance Review Subcommittee		36				36
Comprehensive Planning Subtotal	3	307	12	11	28	361
Dane County Board	8	1			28	37
Local Food Policy Advisory Committee		36				36
BUILD Committee		14	17			31
Board of Adjustment					28	28
TDR Committee ⁶		19				19
Lakes & Watershed Commission		12			3	15
Council of Governments Committee	8	3				11
CDBG Commission			9			9
Land Information Office Committee	5			4		9
Revolving Loan Fund Committee			7			7
Other Committees Subtotal	21	85	33	4	59	202
Grand Total	35	604	45	33	295	1,011

As noted, Planning Division staff are available for 1,910.24 hours per year after adjusting for various types of leave. Using this measure of available time, the estimated amount of staff time associated with committee support represents 6.4 FTE. This staffing figure would be still higher if planning-related activities for initiatives of the County Executive—such as Attain Dane—were to be included. These staff hours represent a very large investment in County resources. For example, the estimated annual cost to the County to provide staff to the Local Food Policy Advisory Committee alone was an estimated \$12,783.

³ Transportation, Utilities, and Community Facilities Workgroup

⁴ Housing and Economic Development Workgroup

⁵ Agriculture, Natural and Cultural Resources Work Group

⁶ Transfer of Development Rights Committee

Because of the significant amount of staff time associated with committee support, they are less able to work on certain aspects of the Department's mission. During our interviews, staff identified several missions that they felt deserved more time, including:

- Completing more information, outreach and assistance activities for landowners and Towns;
- Providing increased consulting assistance on Town plans and ordinances;
- Performing corporate planning for the County;
- Taking a more strategic approach to preparing the Department's budget; and
- Developing outcome measures and identifying methods of enhancing the operational efficiency and organizational effectiveness of the Department.

Recommendation #35: Committee support activities represent one of the most important functions of the Department. However, there are several Department missions that are currently not as strongly supported by staff because of the amount of time spent on committee support. Therefore, if the County Board wishes to improve the Department's capability to achieve improved outcomes for these specific missions, it should review the staff time required and determine whether it wishes to:

- Reduce the scope of the Department's missions;
- Accept the trade-off between committee support and staff's ability to support those missions that are less strongly supported;
- Reducing staff time spent on committee support to increase the time available for other missions; or
- Increasing the level of authorized staffing to allow the Department to do both.

Finding #36: The ultimate status of the Community Analysis and Planning Division and the functions it performs is currently unclear. Department staff and community leaders are participating in a working group related to the proposed Council of Governments. This proposal however will require a change to Wisconsin Statutes to implement. While the working group appears to have some legislative support, there are outstanding questions related to the funding mechanism for the proposal.

Our review of the functions currently performed by CAPD indicate that there is currently no operational duplication of function with other Divisions. However, there is clear overlap in the missions for CAPD and the Planning Division. Specifically, this duplication exists in the CAPD mission to provide planning assistance to Dane County municipalities in both the unincorporated portion of the County as well as to Dane County villages and cities. In the past, the CAPD has performed similar services in providing planning-related assistance to municipalities to the services the Planning Division has provided to the Towns of Perry and York. While the type of municipality served is distinct, the general nature of the services provided was not. Other specific missions of CAPD are unique to that Division due to its history as the former Regional Planning Commission.

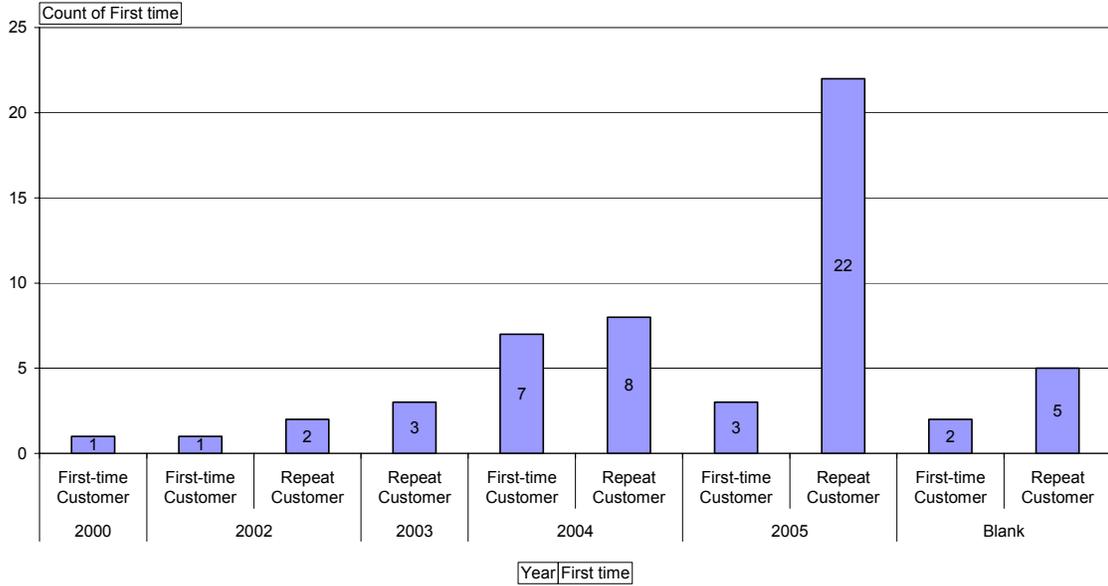
Recommendation #36: Through input on the Council of Governments workgroup, the Department should make every effort to ensure that the final mix of functions to be performed by CAPD does not duplicate current and recommended activities of the Planning Division. Specifically, the Department should ensure that the Council of Governments does not in the future enter into contracts with Towns to provide consulting services. Additionally, the Department should closely monitor the outcome of the Council of Government proposal to identify if any current missions performed by CAPD are not assigned to the successor agency. Subject to the requirements of Wisconsin Statutes, the Department should then refer the issue to the County Board to decide whether these functions should be carried out by the Department.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

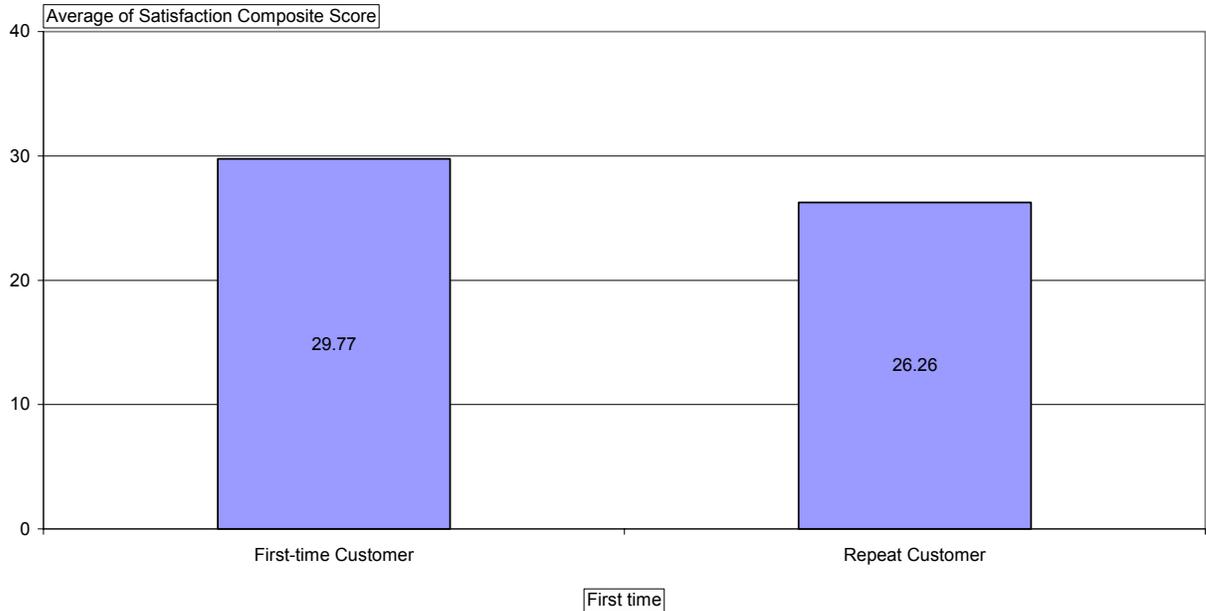
Customer Service Survey Responses

Dane County Department of Planning and Development
 2005 Customer Service Survey Respondent Characteristics
 Year of Most Recent Permit or Application
 First-time Customers vs. Repeat Customers, n=54



Dane County Department of Planning and Development
 2005 Customer Service Survey
 Customer Service Score, First-time versus Repeat Customers

Cumulative Customer Service Score: Responsiveness, Accuracy, Professionalism, Clarity, n=52



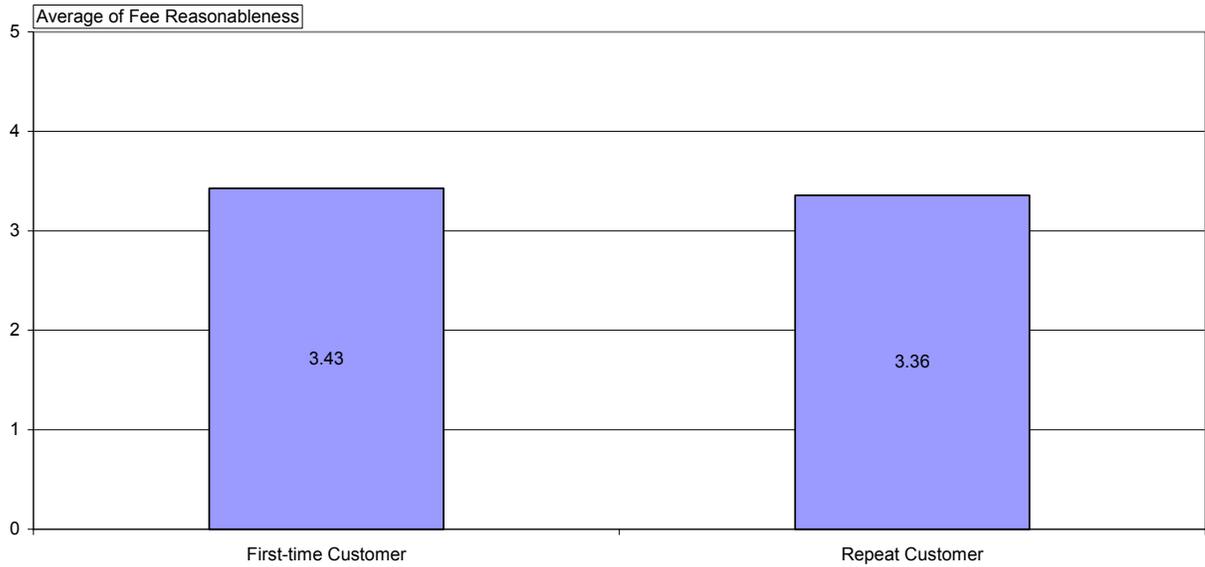
Note: Maximum score = 40

Appendix 1

Customer Service Survey Responses

Dane County Department of Planning and Development
2005 Customer Service Survey
Customer Service Score, Reasonableness of Fee, First-time Customer vs. Repeat Customer

"Question 3 - Reasonableness of the fee"

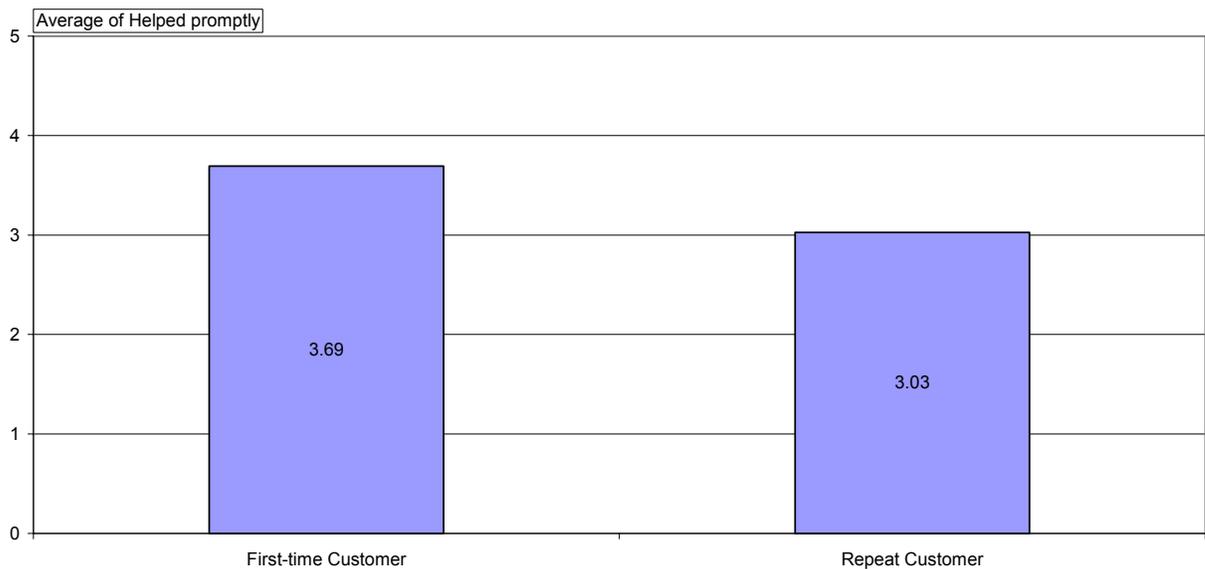


First time

Note: Maximum score = 5

Dane County Department of Planning and Development
2005 Customer Service Survey
Customer Service Score, First-time versus Repeat Customers

"Question 6a - Responsiveness of staff - I was helped at the desk promptly", n=52



First time

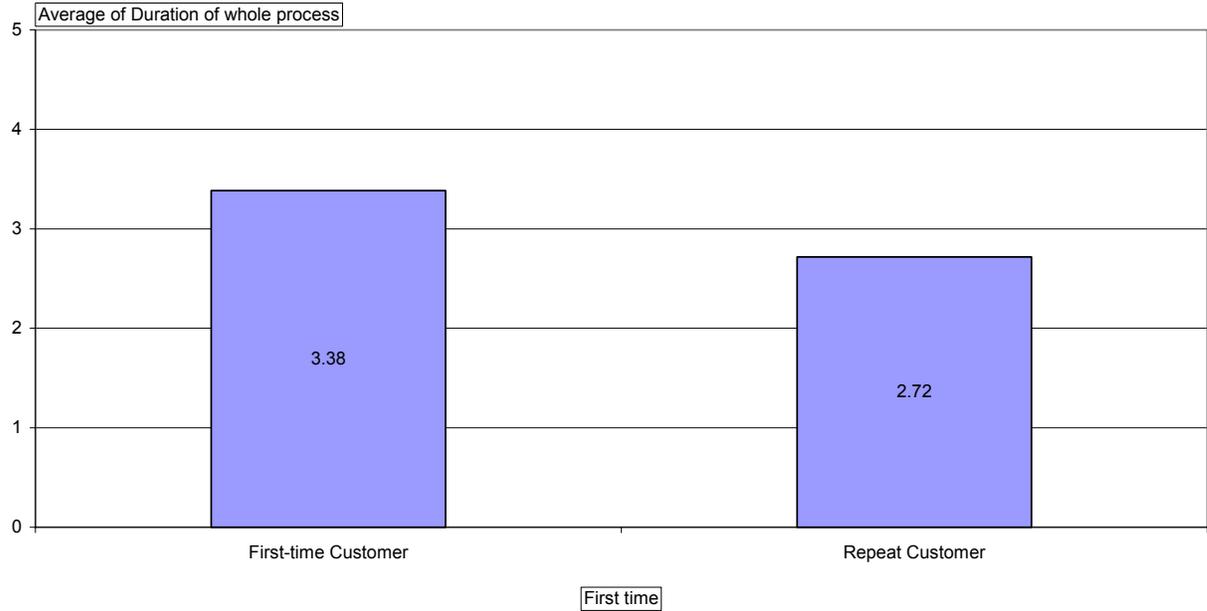
Note: Maximum score = 5

Appendix 1

Customer Service Survey Responses

Dane County Department of Planning and Development
2005 Customer Service Survey
Customer Service Score, First-time versus Repeat Customers

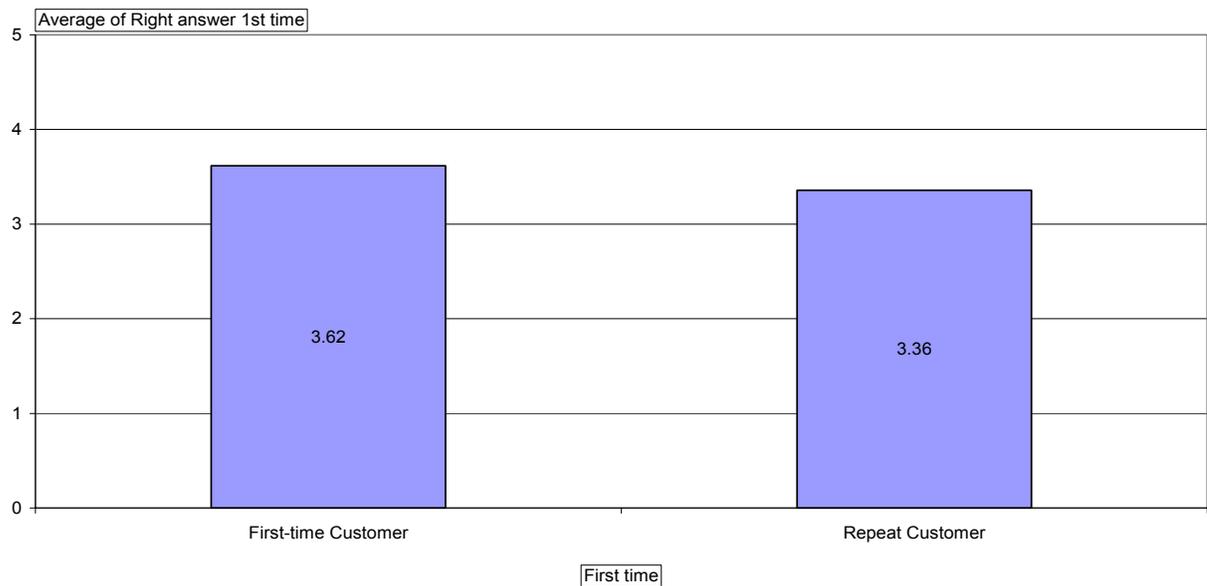
"Question 6b - Responsiveness of staff - Duration of the whole process", n=52



Note: Maximum score = 5

Dane County Department of Planning and Development
2005 Customer Service Survey
Customer Service Score, First-time versus Repeat Customers

"Question 6c - Accuracy - I got the Right answer the 1st time", n=52



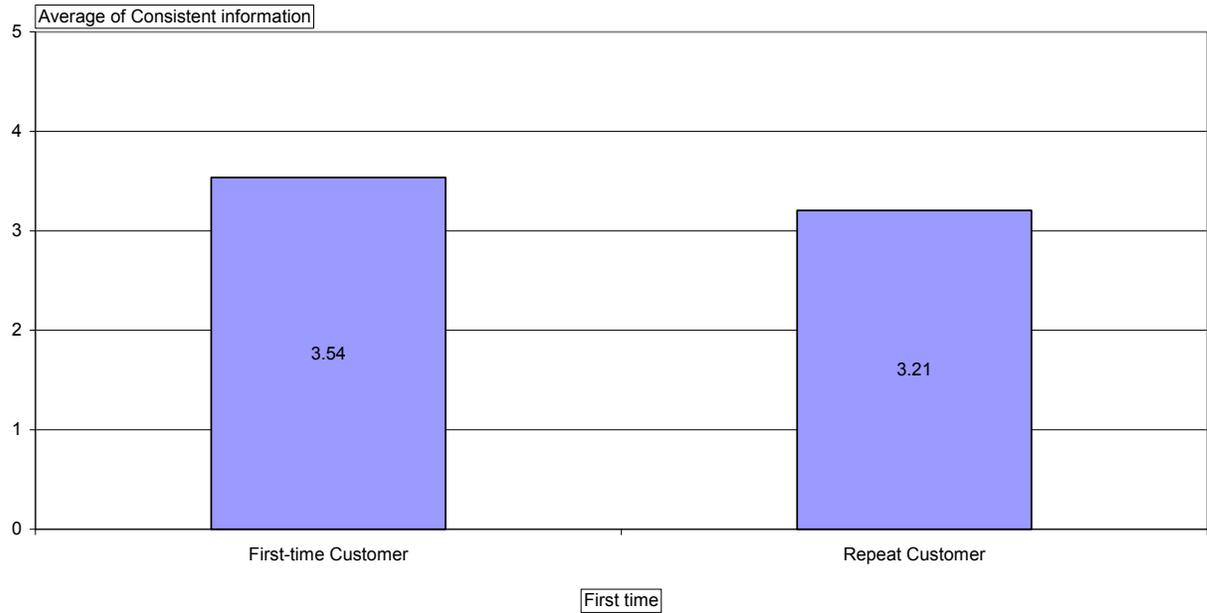
Note: Maximum score = 5

Appendix 1

Customer Service Survey Responses

Dane County Department of Planning and Development
2005 Customer Service Survey
Customer Service Score, First-time versus Repeat Customers

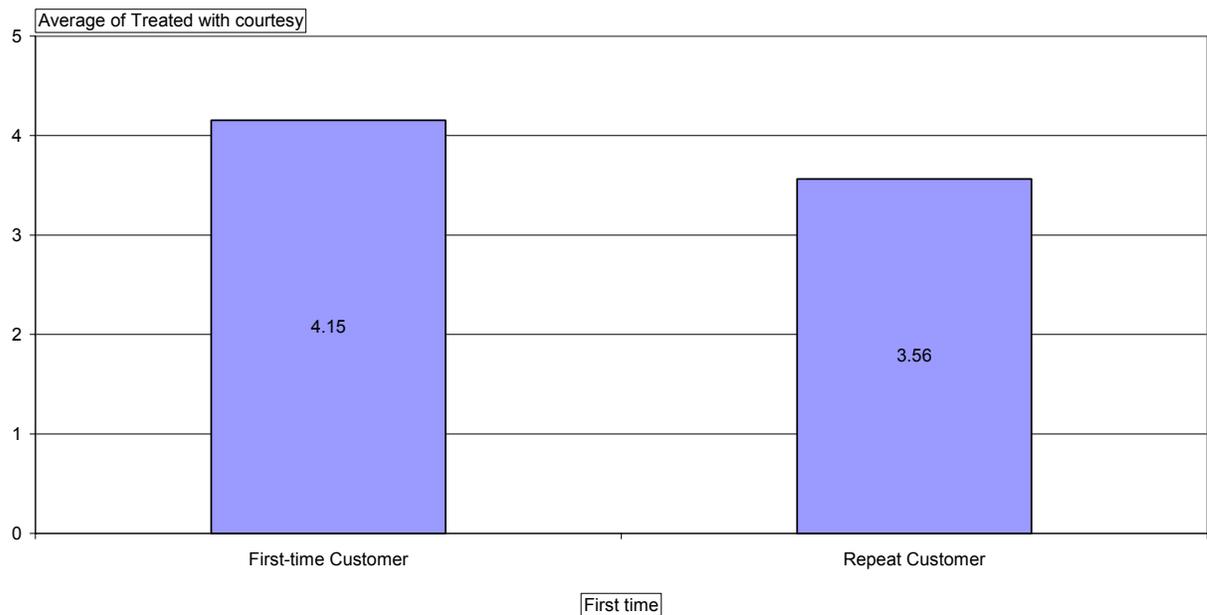
"Question 6d - Accuracy - I got consistent answers", n=52



Note: Maximum score = 5

Dane County Department of Planning and Development
2005 Customer Service Survey
Customer Service Score, First-time versus Repeat Customers

"Question 6e - Professional manner - I was treated with courtesy", n=52



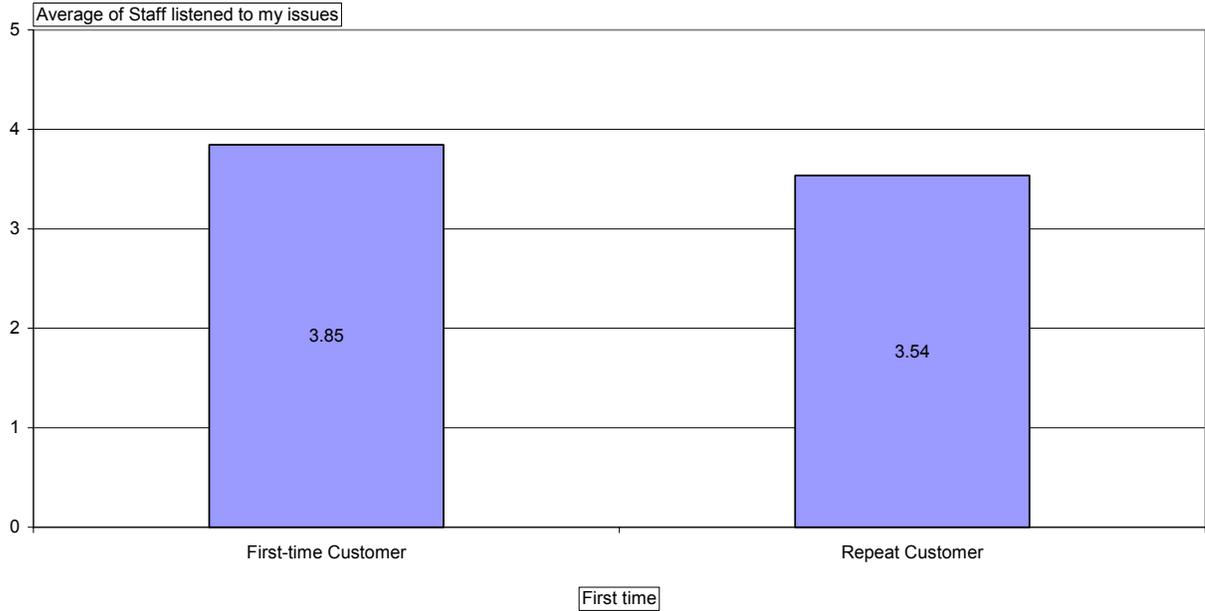
Note: Maximum score = 5

Appendix 1

Customer Service Survey Responses

Dane County Department of Planning and Development
2005 Customer Service Survey
Customer Service Score, First-time versus Repeat Customers

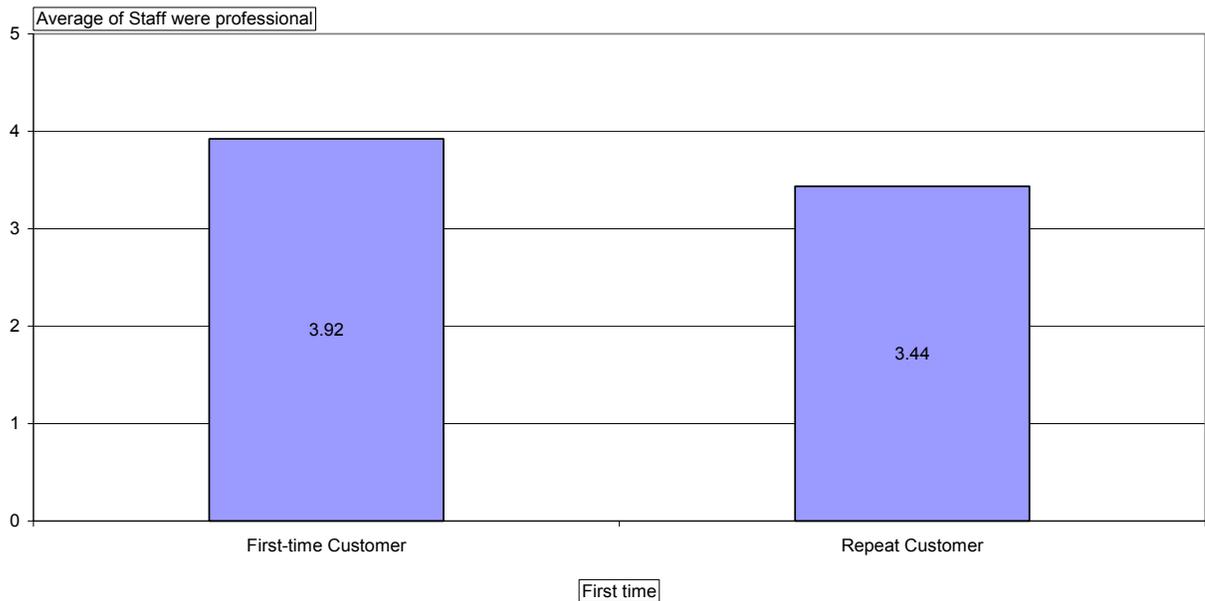
"Question 6f - Professional manner - Staff listened to my issues", n=52



Note: Maximum score = 5

Dane County Department of Planning and Development
2005 Customer Service Survey
Customer Service Score, First-time versus Repeat Customers

"Question 6g - Professional manner of staff - All staff were professional", n=52



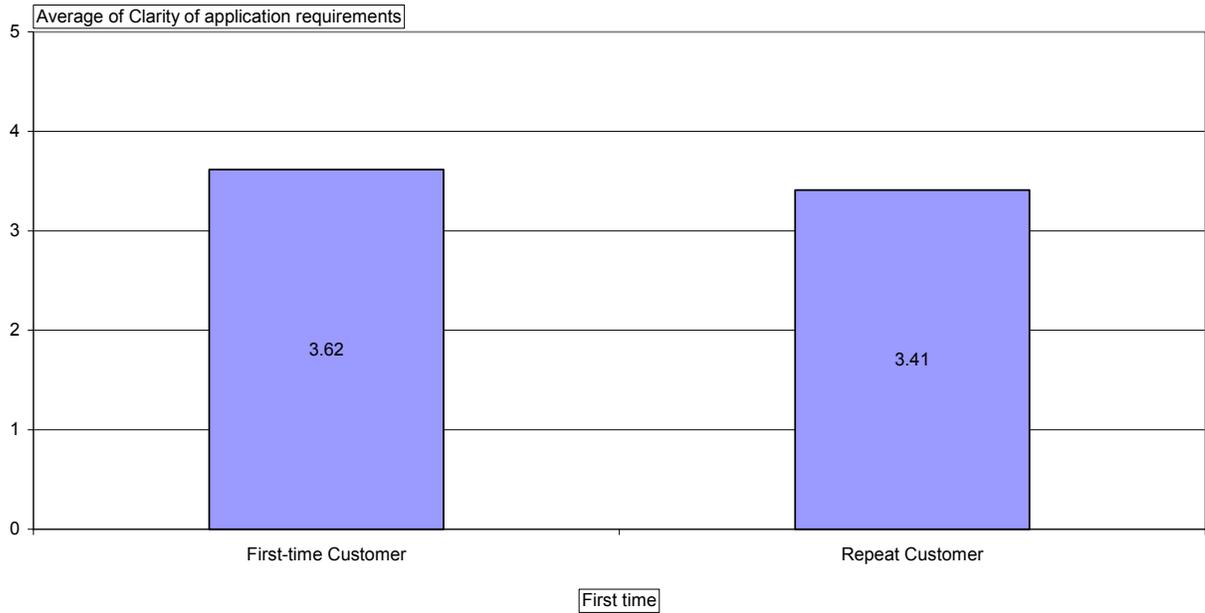
Note: Maximum score = 5

Appendix 1

Customer Service Survey Responses

Dane County Department of Planning and Development
2005 Customer Service Survey
Customer Service Score, First-time versus Repeat Customers

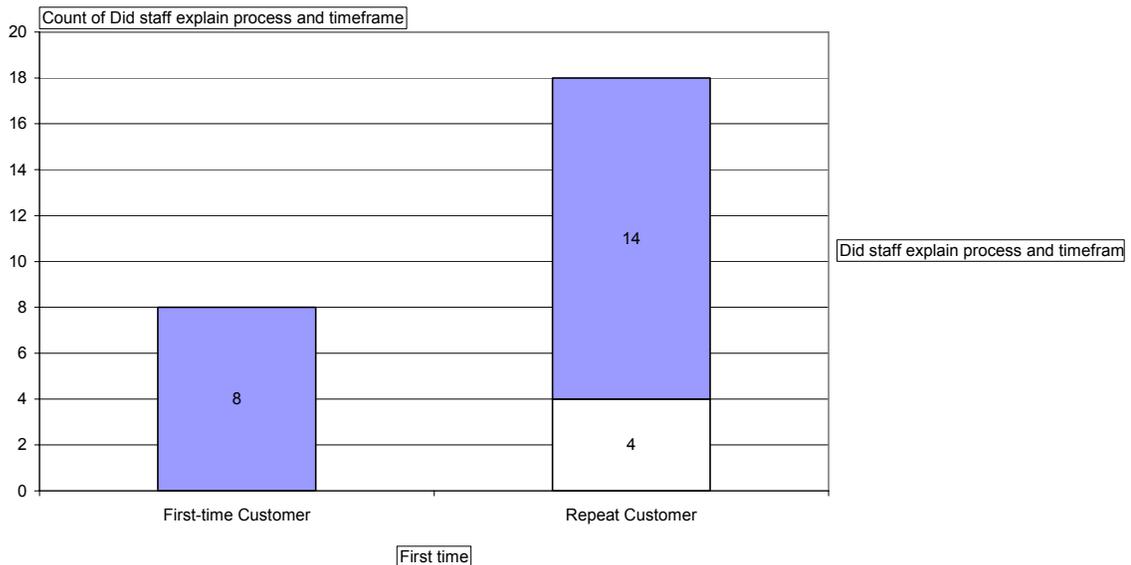
"Question 6h - Clarity of application requirements", n=52



Note: Maximum score = 5

Dane County Department of Planning and Development
2005 Customer Service Survey
Customer Service Score, First-time versus Repeat Customers

"Question 7 - Did staff clearly explain the process and timeframe, or provide literature that explained it?", n=26



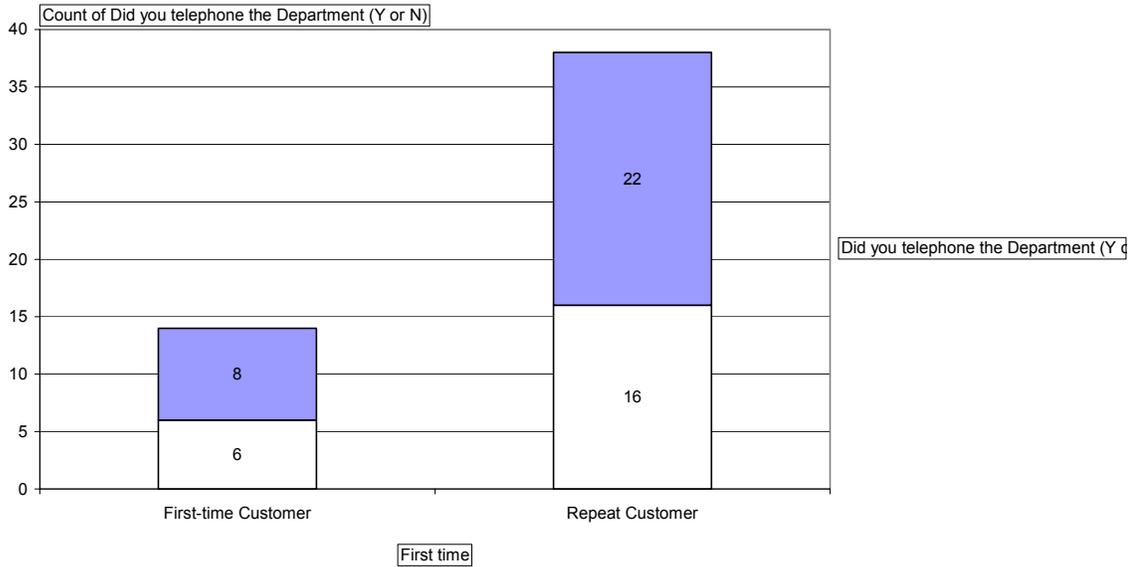
Key: Blue is Yes, white is No.

Appendix 1

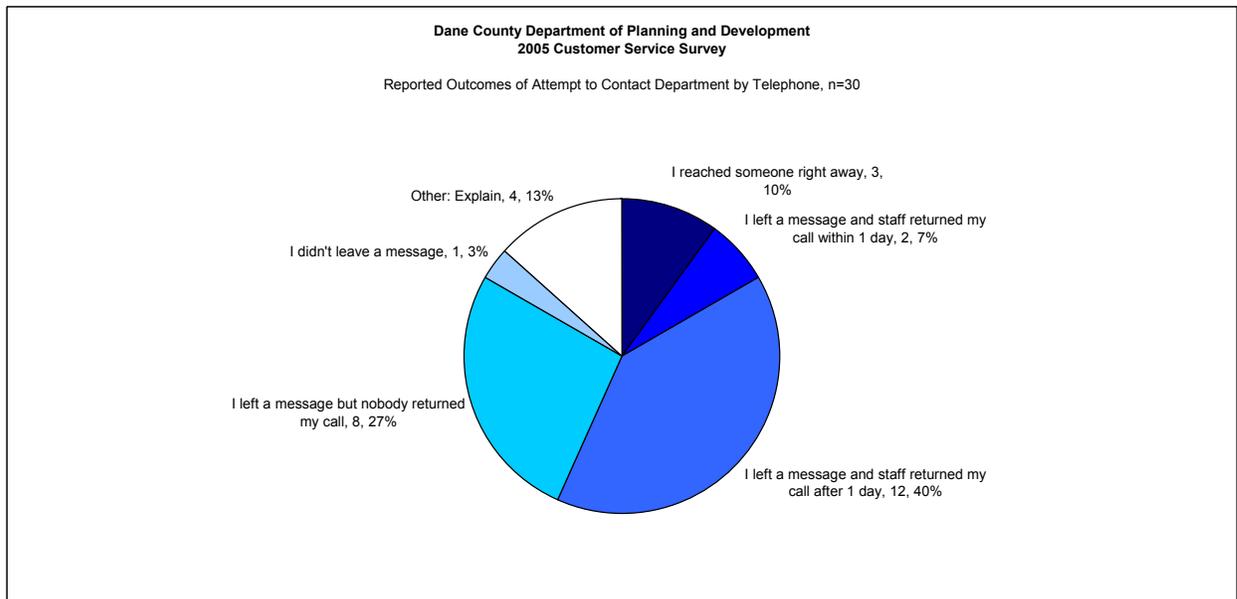
Customer Service Survey Responses

Dane County Department of Planning and Development
 2005 Customer Service Survey
 Customer Service Score, First-time versus Repeat Customers

"Question 8 - Did you telephone the zoning office to receive assistance or information?" n=52

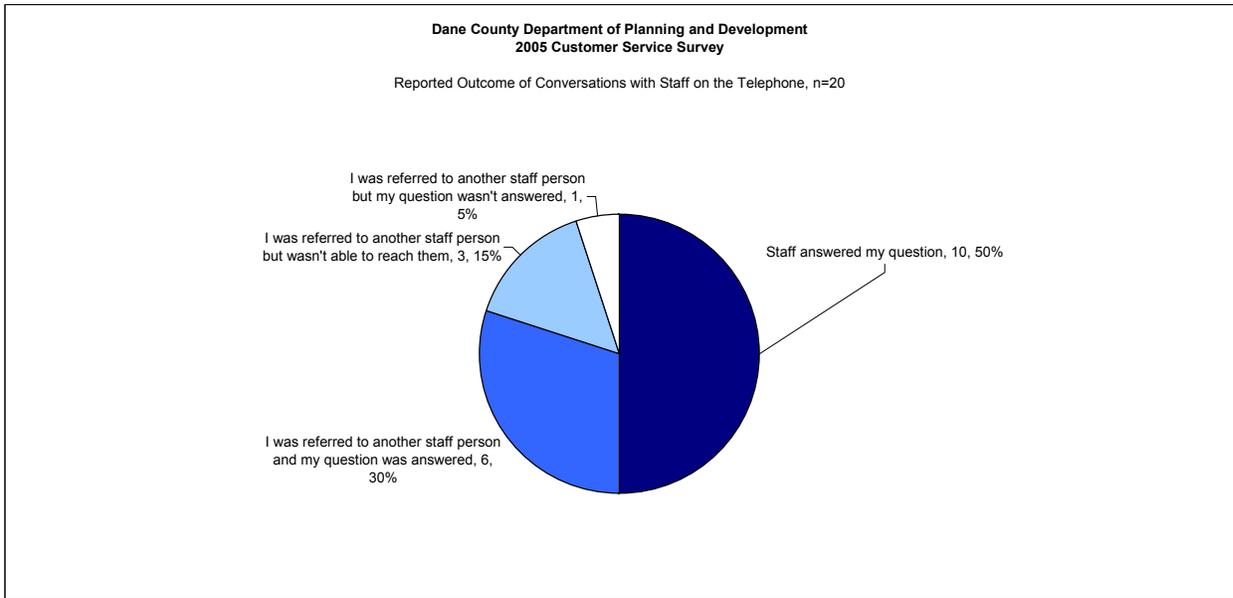


Key: Blue is Yes, white is No.



Appendix 1

Customer Service Survey Responses



Appendix 2

Benchmarking Summary

Question/Metric	Dane County		Lake County, IL		Marathon County, WI		Outagamie County, WI		Waukesha County, WI		Winnebago County, IL	
	Department	Jurisdiction served	Department	Jurisdiction served	Department	Jurisdiction served	Department	Jurisdiction served	Department	Jurisdiction served	Department	Jurisdiction served
Plat Reviews	Zoning	Unincorporated areas	Development Services	Unincorporated areas	Regulatory Services/Planning	All unincorporated areas of county	Zoning	Unincorporated areas	Planning and Zoning, and Public Works, Land Information, and Environmental also involved	Unincorporated and incorporated areas	Planning and Zoning	Unincorporated areas
Zoning Permits	Zoning	Unincorporated areas	Zoning permits are not issued, Development Services handles rezoning applications	Unincorporated areas	Regulatory Services	18 of 41 towns in county and all shoreland	Zoning	Unincorporated areas	Planning and Zoning	Towns only	Planning and Zoning	Unincorporated areas
Erosion Control/Stormwater	Zoning	Unincorporated areas	Environmental Engineering	Unincorporated areas	Regulatory Services	All shoreland	Zoning	Unincorporated areas	Land Resources	Towns, plus some cities and villages under contract	Highway Department	Unincorporated areas
CUPs	Zoning	Unincorporated areas	Development Services	Unincorporated areas	Board of Adjustments and Regulatory Services	18 of 41 towns in county and all shoreland	Zoning	Unincorporated areas	Planning and Zoning	Towns	Planning and Zoning Department	Unincorporated areas
Variances	Zoning	Unincorporated areas	Development Services	Unincorporated areas	Board of Adjustments and Regulatory Services	18 of 41 towns in county and all shoreland	Zoning	Unincorporated areas	Planning and Zoning	Towns	Planning and Zoning	Unincorporated areas
Comprehensive Planning	Planning	Countywide	Planning and Support Services	Unincorporated areas	Planning	County-wide, and for 54 of 60 individual municipalities in the county	Planning	Countywide[1]	Multiple departments, multiple jurisdictions	County-wide	Planning and Zoning	Unincorporated areas
Review of Land Use Plans	Planning	Unincorporated areas	Planning and Support Services	Unincorporated areas	Have not done much of this in the past, but anticipate more in the future. Would be performed with respect for		Planning	Countywide[2]	Planning and Zoning	On multi-jurisdictional basis, not county-wide	Planning and Zoning	Unincorporated areas
CDBG	Planning	Countywide	Community Development	Funds flow through the county, the county does not plan the projects	No CDBG	No CDBG	Planning	Countywide (a couple of municipalities receive their own CDBGs)	Executive's Office	All municipalities except for Chenequa and Oconomowoc Lake	County Board Office	Unincorporated and Incorporated areas[1]
Parcel Mapping	Records and Support	Countywide, except for the City of Madison	Mapping Department[1]	Unincorporated areas	Technical Services	County-wide	Planning	Countywide, except for the City of Appleton	Land Information	County-wide	Outsourced	Unincorporated areas

Appendix 2

Benchmarking Summary

Question/Metric	Dane County		Lake County, IL		Marathon County, WI		Outagamie County, WI		Waukesha County, WI		Winnebago County, IL	
Function	Department	Jurisdiction served	Department	Jurisdiction served	Department	Jurisdiction served	Department	Jurisdiction served	Department	Jurisdiction served	Department	Jurisdiction served
Property Listing	Records and Support	Countywide except the City of Madison	County Supervisor of Assessment	Countywide	Register of Deeds	County-wide	Treasurer	Countywide, except for the City of Appleton	Land Information, ROD	County-wide	Assessor's office	Countywide
Surveyor	Records and Support	Countywide	No surveying - customers obtain privately	No jurisdiction – customers obtain privately	Technical Services	Certified surveys and plat review county-wide	Zoning	Countywide	Contract with RPC	County-wide	Done privately (not outsourced, rather, customers seek privately)	NA
Urban Service Area Amendments	CAPD	Countywide	North Eastern Plan Commission (NEPC)	6 county metro areas	Planning	Metro area	East Central RPC primarily, Planning sits on review team	Urban service areas	RPC manages, Planning and Zoning reviews	Metro area	Separate agencies throughout county, e.g. Rock River Reclamation District	Based on district membership
Transportation planning (MPO)	Not provided by department, although planning provides some support	Multi-county	Division of Transportation	Countywide	Planning	Wausau Metro area and county-wide	ECPRC, Planning reviews and provides input	Urban areas	RPC, Planning and Zoning participates and Public Works reviews detail	County-wide (CTH)	Highway Department Rockford Area Transportation	Varies based on agency
Natural resource planning	Parks CAPD Planning	Countywide	Planning and Support Services, Stormwater Mgmt Commission	Countywide	Conservation/ Planning	County-wide	Planning and ECRPC	Countywide	RPC, Planning and Zoning, Parks, Land Resources, Environmental Health	County-wide	Nothing currently in place	Unincorporated
Census data clearinghouse	CAPD	Countywide	Planning and Support Services	Countywide	Planning	County-wide	Planning maintains county data, however RPC is designated clearinghouse	Countywide	Land Information, RPC	County-wide	Planning and Zoning[2]	Unincorporated areas

Footnotes

Lake County, IL:

[1] This is a separate department/not a part of Planning, Building and Development.

Outagamie County:

[1] All individual plans are reviewed and incorporated into the county plan.

[2] All individual plans are reviewed and incorporated into the county plan.

Winnebago County:

[1] CDBG funds received are for special projects related to water and sewer only. The County Board hires a consultant to administer the grant.

Dane County Department of Planning and Zoning Operational Review

Addendum to Final Report

Organizational Effectiveness

Finding #A1a: Over time, the division has accumulated a very large amount of records. Many of these records have been digitized recently, however, original records have not been destroyed or archived. The volume of records has crowded the division's office space, and information collected through this review suggests that limited storage for land records may cause damage to the records when they are used. The division is assigned additional storage space (shared with another agency) on-site, however, management reports that conditions may not be suitable for file storage, and that the specific arrangements for using the shared space are unclear.

Finding #A1b: The division does not have a record retention policy for land documents. Although records may not be removed from the office by customers, management is aware of off-site storage by staff due to space constraints of the division.

Recommendation #A: The division should develop, document, and implement a record retention policy for paper and digital files, including options for placing historical documents with appropriate governmental agencies (e.g., State Historical Society). When this retention policy has been implemented, the division should perform a space needs study. Document imaging should be completed, and archives should be consolidated in one location. No original records should be removed from the office.