

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Jayne Miller, Community Services Administrator

DATE: June 18, 2007

SUBJECT: Resolution to Approve Ann Arbor Discovering Downtown Development Process Advisory Committee Recommendations

Attached for your review and approval is a resolution to approve recommendations for streamlining the development process developed by the A2D2 Steering Committee, the Development Process Advisory Committee and staff to implement the Downtown Development Strategies Final Report.

Background

On March 20, 2006, City Council approved the Implementation Plan for the Downtown Development Strategies Final Report and directed staff to begin work on priority elements of the plan.

On July 17, 2006, City Council approved the work plans for the following initiatives:

- Create special overlay zoning for the downtown that identifies areas of similar character
- Streamline the development proposal process (process mapping and technology improvements)
- Incorporate a set of essential design standards
- Pursue a comprehensive parking strategy for the downtown
- Work with the Historic District Commission to clarify criteria for development

In the development of the work plans, City Council requested that each project be completed by June 2007. The Council appointed advisory committees for each project in October 2006 to assist staff and the Steering Committee in developing these recommendations.

Advisory Committee Review Process

The Development Process Advisory Committee met on six separate occasions over a five month period beginning in November, 2006 to identify ways to continue streamlining the review and permitting process for downtown development. The advisory committee provided input on software implementation and the development review process by reviewing and discussing data and reports regarding process mapping and technology improvements.

Policy and Procedural Matters

Numerous issues were identified with regard to problems experienced by the development community on issues such as clarity on requirements, disconnects between service areas, lack of follow through and identification of appropriate contact persons. It was recognized that the primary issue stems from the overall complexity of the process combined with poor project management and limited accessibility to critical information in a timely manner.

Although changes have taken place over the past several years to improve the development process and enhance the availability of information, numerous legacy problems still exist which are the focus of the strategies being recommended by the committee.

Software Review

After nearly a year of diagnosing and mapping out the City's development process, over 100 disconnects were identified along with software needs to address and manage the process. As a result of this analysis, processes have been changed to address the disconnects that were identified. It was determined that software capable of managing complex processes, reviews and information which provided a workflow component was necessary. The City issued an RFP on September 29, 2006. The top three proposers were identified and an extensive review and interview process was undertaken. The reviewing group included representatives from the service areas involved in the review and approval process as well and significant involvement from ITSU.

Upon completion of the review of RFPs in January 2007, the top vendor was selected. The software selected provides, project management, permit tracking, land use and GIS functions as well as workflow management functions capable of informing reviewers and project managers when reviews are requested. The preferred software package allows for tracking of all functions of the development process and establishment of workflow associated with each step along the way. In addition, it provides direct customer access to information including project status, inspection results and ability to apply for and receive permits on-line. Additional features include integration with cashiering system, Interactive Voice Response (IVR) and wireless applications.

Recommendations

The Development Process Advisory Committee recommends that the City Council direct staff to purchase development process software with a workflow component capable of managing complex processes and reviews. In addition to the purchase and implementation of new software technologies, the committee also makes the following policy and procedural recommendations. These recommendations are fundamental to the success of any new technology improvements and should be incorporated into and supported by the workflow and project management component of the software program.

