

# Appendix D: Focus Group Summary

## Purpose of the Focus Groups

Connecting directly with professionals engaged in the planning, building, and regulating of residential development was an important effort in the Local Residential Development Improvement (LRDPI) Study. One of the methods of direct engagement was conducting focus groups—small, intentional conversations with individuals involved in specific portions of the development review process. The project team hosted seven focus groups to gather perspectives from industry professionals involved in both the regulation and development of residential housing on how the development review process functions under varying conditions across the state.

Prior to the focus groups, the project team, which included the consultant team led by EConorthwest (with MIG, AKS, Salazar, and UO-IPRE) and staff from HAPO, DLCD, and BCD, prepared a memo summarizing preliminary barriers within the residential development review process. The summary included barriers identified across all housing types, phases of development, and geographies across the state. The memo drew on the project team's expertise, input from agency partners, and relevant research, and it organized the common development barriers into categories related to land use, public improvements, building review, and broader cross-cutting issues. The memo served as a foundation for focus group discussions.

Focus group discussions were structured to validate and refine these preliminary findings while also surfacing additional challenges and nuances based on participant experience. In addition, participants were asked to identify potential solutions, best practices, and examples that could inform further analysis. The project team took generalized notes, and participation in the focus groups remained confidential.

The outcomes of these discussions informed subsequent project tasks, including finalizing the identification of barriers, refining the development review process summary, and identifying case studies for further exploration.

## Recruitment of Participants

The project team recruited focus group participants using the project contact list as well as DLCD's and BCD's department-wide GovDelivery email lists. Both state agencies sent out an email blast through their GovDelivery lists, and the project team's consultant members forwarded the invitations to individual contacts. This approach was intended to broaden outreach and ensure that individuals beyond those already engaged in the project had the opportunity to participate.

Focus group topics and registration links were posted on the project website, allowing participants to self-select into sessions based on their experience and areas of expertise. Due to high interest and space constraints to keep discussions small, participation was limited to one focus group conversation per registrant and only one registrant per organization.



# Summary of Regulator Focus Groups

## Participant Groups

The focus groups were designed to engage two primary stakeholder groups involved in the residential development review process: regulators and developers.

For the purposes of this study:

- ◆ **Regulators** refer to public sector staff and officials responsible for reviewing, permitting, inspecting, and approving residential development. This includes planning, building, public works, and special district staff, as well as others involved in administering development regulations and infrastructure requirements.
- ◆ **Developers** refer to private sector development applicants and their development teams—those who are responsible for advancing residential projects through the development process. This includes developers of all housing types, as well as engineers, architects, and consultants to the development industry.

Engagement of both groups allowed the study to capture perspectives from those administering the development review process and those navigating it, providing a more comprehensive understanding of how the process functions across different contexts. This section summarizes the regulator focus groups. A corresponding summary of the developer focus groups is provided [here](#).

## Discussion Topics and Questions

### Topic Areas

The regulator focus group discussed key components of the residential development review process to ensure coverage of the full range of perspectives. Topic areas were selected to reflect both differences in jurisdictional capacity and the major stages of development review and unique housing types, allowing participants to speak to challenges and opportunities within their areas of expertise.

- ◆ Land Use
- ◆ Building
- ◆ Public Works and Special Districts
- ◆ Small Jurisdictions
- ◆ Manufactured/Modular/Factory-Produced Housing \*

*\* Note: This focus group was intended for both regulators and developers, however, the focus group was only attended by regulators and is therefore included in this focus group summary.*



## Discussion Questions

Within each topic area, participants were asked a consistent set of questions to facilitate comparison across groups in order to identify common themes and differences driven by local context, regulatory structure, and development conditions. Participants were asked the following questions:

- ◆ Where do you see opportunities to streamline the development review process to reduce burdens on staff or applicants?
- ◆ What challenges do you see to streamlining residential development reviews and approvals?
- ◆ What measures has your jurisdiction put in place to facilitate residential development review and permitting that have been most helpful?

These questions were designed to elicit both practical insights and strategic perspectives, with a focus on identifying actionable improvements, persistent barriers, and examples of effective practices that could inform broader application to the study.

## Roles, Organizations, and Regions Represented

A major goal of the focus groups was to capture a broad range of experiences, ensuring representation across diverse geographies, jurisdictions, and housing types. For the regulator focus groups, the project team was able to engage with individuals across diverse geographies and jurisdiction sizes to discuss barriers in permitting for all housing types.

In total, 56 individuals attended the regulator focus groups, split across topic areas as follows:

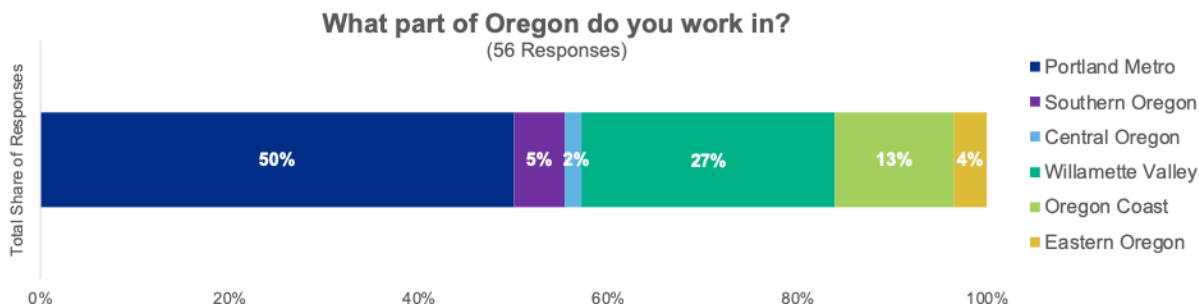
- ◆ Land Use: 17 participants
- ◆ Building: 10 participants
- ◆ Public Works and Special Districts: 15 participants
- ◆ Small Jurisdictions: 11 participants
- ◆ Manufactured/Modular/Factory-Produced Housing: 3 participants

The topic-specific focus groups were attended primarily by local jurisdiction staff responsible for key components of the development review process, including land use review, public works review, and building review. The Small Jurisdictions focus group included staff representing multiple departments within smaller jurisdictions, reflecting the more consolidated roles typical in those contexts. The Manufactured/Modular/Factory-Produced Housing focus group was intended to include both regulators and developers; however, attendance consisted only of regulators and is therefore included in this summary of regulator focus groups.

Among the 56 individuals who attended the regulator focus groups, the study's engagement reached all regional geographies in Oregon. As shown in **Exhibit 1**, half of respondents (50%, or 28 participants) reported working in the Portland Metro region, followed by 27% (15 participants) in the Willamette Valley. Representation from other regions included 13% (7 participants) from the Oregon Coast, 5% (3 participants) from Southern Oregon, 4% (2 participants) from Eastern Oregon, and 2% (1 participant) from Central Oregon.



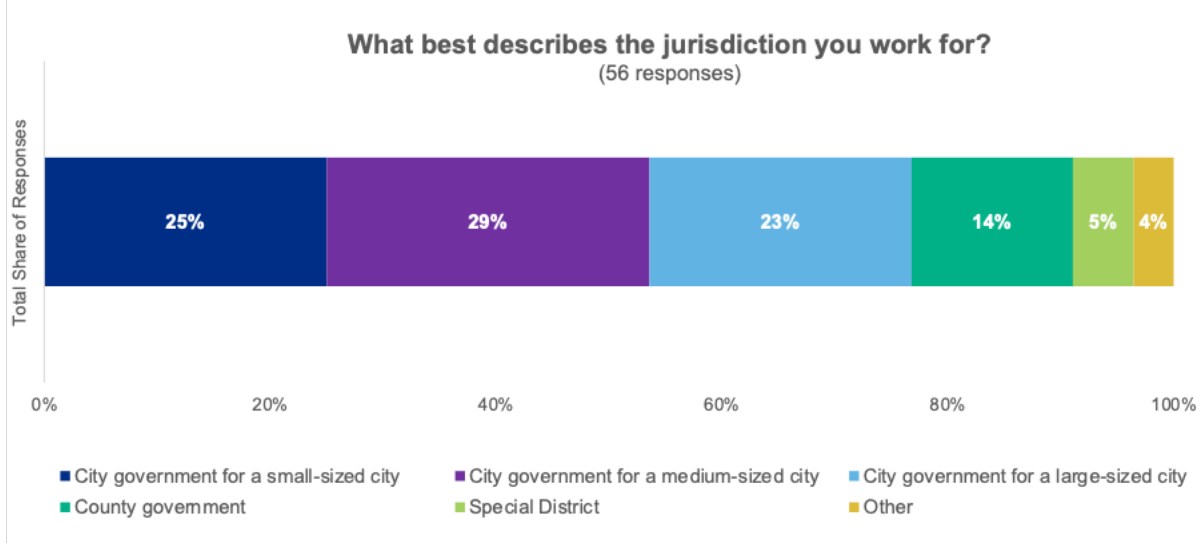
## Exhibit 1. Summary of Zoom Polling Results for 'What part of Oregon do you work in?' for Regulator Focus Groups



Source: EConorthwest

Participants reported working across a range of jurisdiction types, as shown in **Exhibit 2**. The largest share of respondents represented medium-sized city governments (29%, or 16 participants), followed by small cities (25%, or 14 participants) and large cities (23%, or 13 participants). County governments accounted for 14% (8 participants), while special districts and "Other" represented 5% (3 participants) and 4% (2 participants), respectively.

## Exhibit 2. Summary of Zoom Polling Results for 'What best describes the jurisdiction you work for?' for Regulator Focus Groups



Note: Those who reported "Other" included a privately contracted community development director for a small jurisdiction and a representative from a permitting software platform.

Source: EConorthwest



# Summary of Regulator Participant Feedback and Themes

## Organization of Findings

This section presents focus group findings in **two** formats: (1) a synthesis of key themes and (2) detailed, unattributed discussion notes. This structure is intended to both highlight the most salient takeaways and provide transparency into how these themes were developed based on participant feedback.

### SYNTHESIS OF KEY THEMES

This section summarizes the key themes identified across regulator focus groups. While perspectives varied by review function, jurisdiction size, and geography, participants consistently identified several common opportunities, barriers, and successful practices related to residential development review processes. Themes marked with an asterisk (\*) were also identified in developer focus groups.

#### **Communication, Coordination, and Customer Service\***

Participants frequently emphasized the importance of clear communication among applicants, reviewers, departments, and partner agencies. Discussions highlighted the value of early assistance, coordinated review processes, clear expectations, consistent terminology, and designated points of contact. Participants also noted that differences in communication practices and customer service approaches can contribute to varying applicant experiences across jurisdictions.

#### **Regulatory Complexity and Evolving Requirements\***

Participants consistently identified challenges associated with frequent legislative and regulatory changes, including ongoing updates to local codes, development standards, review procedures, and staff training. Participants also discussed challenges associated with implementing new housing legislation, navigating overlapping requirements, and maintaining consistent interpretations across departments and jurisdictions.

#### **Review Process Efficiency and Predictability\***

Many discussions focused on opportunities to improve the efficiency, transparency, and predictability of development review processes. Topics included concurrent review pathways, ministerial review processes, final plat recording requirements, permit sequencing, review timelines, and approaches to reducing unnecessary delays while maintaining regulatory objectives.

#### **Staffing, Capacity, and Training\***

Participants noted that staffing capacity, staff turnover, recruitment challenges, and training requirements influence review timelines and consistency. These challenges were particularly pronounced in smaller jurisdictions and specialized review functions, where limited staffing resources can affect responsiveness, continuity, and implementation of new regulatory requirements.

#### **Interagency Coordination and State–Local Partnerships\***

Participants frequently discussed the importance of coordination among local governments, special districts, utility providers, and state agencies. Common themes included alignment of review timelines,



coordination of infrastructure requirements, communication among reviewing entities, and opportunities to strengthen relationships and collaboration between local and state partners.

### **Development Context and Project Complexity\***

Participants observed that development review experiences often vary based on site conditions, housing type, project scale, infrastructure needs, and environmental constraints. Discussions highlighted challenges associated with development in urban growth boundary (UGB) expansion areas, sites subject to environmental regulations, middle housing implementation, and manufactured, modular, and factory-produced housing.

### **Successful Practices and Opportunities for Improvement\***

Across focus groups, participants identified several practices that can support more effective development review processes. Frequently cited examples included early assistance programs, clear and objective standards, pre-approved plans, coordinated review procedures, regular code maintenance, transparent permitting systems, cross-jurisdiction collaboration, and improved communication among applicants and reviewers.

## **Detailed Focus Group Notes by Topic Area**

The following section provides detailed, unattributed summaries of focus group discussions organized by focus group topic area and discussion question. The summaries capture the range of perspectives shared by participants regarding barriers, opportunities, and successful practices related to residential development review processes across Oregon.

These summaries are intended to provide additional context and transparency regarding the participant feedback that informed the key themes presented above. Comments have been summarized and anonymized to protect participant confidentiality and do not represent the views of any individual participant, organization, or jurisdiction.

### **FOCUS GROUP: LAND USE REGULATORS**

***Discussion Question 1:** Where do you see opportunities to streamline the development review process to reduce burdens on staff or applicants?*

**Projects would benefit from a project coordinator (or “project advocate”) on the jurisdiction side to see projects through all stages, start to finish.**

- **Planner/Large City/Willamette Valley:** Need for one contact for projects – cities are wanting to have this role – but staff capacity and funding are barriers to accomplishing this. However, cities are looking at ways to implement this at the request of developers.

**Use of ministerial review or building permit only reviews for projects that don’t require a separate land use process.**

- **Planner/Medium-Sized City/Portland Metro:** stated that allowing for applications to be processed (clear and objective) as ministerial has expedited the permitting process, by removing the public noticing and hearing requirements on projects that meet clear and objective standards, and shouldn’t be subject to public discretion.



- **Planner/Small City/Portland Metro:** Agree that individual housing applications should not go through public hearing.
- **Planner/Large City/Willamette Valley:** Reducing the land use review for projects that already include an up-front land use review (e.g., site plan review) that way there aren't any additional unnecessary reviews.
- **Planner/Large City/Willamette Valley:** Create more flexibility within the code (i.e. the "box") so folks don't need to get a variance or design review for something small, which ultimately results in less process.
- **Planner/Medium-Sized City/Portland Metro:** Stated that their jurisdiction is allowing middle housing development (without middle housing land division) to be processed through a building permit only to expedite the process. However, the public still tries to get involved in the permitting process even though there isn't a process for them to get involved.

**Opportunities may exist to tailor the length and complexity of staff reports to the level of review and risk, improving efficiency without compromising decision quality.**

- **Planner/Large City/Central Oregon:** City staff stated that they don't send many things to hearings and do mostly administrative applications. In project cases where the applicant is the only party that has standing to appeal, staff may be able to shorten their staff report findings to be briefer. Written decisions can be 60–90 pages long. Staff could be briefer and not make it bulletproof (if possible).

**Use of pre-approved plans can help expedite review timelines and provide greater certainty for applicants.**

- **Planner/Large City/Willamette Valley:** Pre-approved plans are great and help streamline the process.

**Jurisdictions should provide more clarity on engineering requirements to reduce applicant confusion.**

- **Planner/Medium-Sized City/Portland Metro:** Primarily have issues on the engineering side. Applicants don't seem to have trouble with zoning stuff, like setbacks and height - they can design that just fine, but they get caught up in engineering and public works. Where to connect to sanitary sewer? What does a stormwater connection look like? Mainly held up on the developer side.
- **Planner/Small City/Portland Metro:** Appears that the developers don't know where the connections are, or they design their projects poorly for the (slopes, etc. - example was trying to connect to a pipe that was uphill and would fight gravity)
  - Or sometimes it's a paralysis of choice - on infill there are lots of options that make a lot of iteration or too many choices.

**Offer early assistance that is accessible, free or low cost, well-coordinated, clearly communicated, and cross-departmental.**

- **Planning Director/Small City/Portland Metro:** Incomplete application submittals are very frustrating for reviewers. Could the City provide more examples to applicants? Is it a



communication issues with staff and applicants? Frustrating for applicants too. Believes it is a major problem, particularly in cities with older infrastructure requiring more considerations.

- **Planner/Large City/Willamette Valley:** Internal coordination on requirements for a project prior to going back to the applicant: Hit them early - we don't want to have people go back and forth with a lot of comments, but we catch things often in those meetings, that makes it worthwhile.
- **Planner/Multiple Cities/Statewide:** We have applicants provide Service Provider Letters. Staff put the applicant in contact with the person for the utility that needs the review. Local jurisdictions don't have any involvement with the review.

***Discussion Question 2:** What challenges do you see to streamlining residential development reviews and approvals?*

**Staff-level discretionary reviews can put staff in a difficult position.**

- **Planner/Small City/Portland Metro:** City used to be a lot more flexible - less and less possible in light of new legislation: Forced into more "clear and objective" standards. More applicants are choosing a discretionary path - "We fear this will ultimately cause more appeals". Unless you make a total free-for-all, this will continue to be a challenge.
- **Planner/Medium-Sized City/Portland Metro:** But some applications like PUDs can help a developer to propose development that is outside the code, gain a lot of flexibility, and be able to deal with complexity of their site conditions.
  - Developers can "sell a project" to public bodies, but putting it all on staff to exercise discretion with PUDs makes it harder for both parties.
- **Planner/Small City/Portland Metro:** City staff like clear and objective standards because they streamline the vast majority of housing applications. However, discretion works in favor of the developer in complex development situations.

**Frequent and evolving state requirements require ongoing updates to local development standards, processes, and staff training.**

- **Planner/Large City/Portland Metro:** Process requirements are changing so rapidly. Neither developers nor city staff can keep up with it - she's making current code changes but is aware of a current/pending bill that would change what she's currently doing - same ORS. It might be different between when they inquire and actually apply.
- **Planner/Small City/Portland Metro:** Applicants have more options/pathways than staff can keep up with.
- **Planner/Large City/Portland Metro:** Code complexity - ability to train people, staff and developers to navigate all of the options that are available to them. Options are good, but it can also create unnecessary complexity or confusion - there is a balance. The state has mandated that cities provide so many options, which is great, but too much is too much. Something changes, staff gets trained, then something changes again, and then folks are at square one again.



- **Planner/Large City/Portland Metro:** Developers now have more options than 8 years ago:
  - The number of options compounds with all these processes
  - Creates a false sense of flexibility
  - Would be great to be able to build without worrying about "labeling," but have to report to state
  - Sometimes there is confusion about definitions. What's a detached duplex? Two SFDs on the same lot. What's a cottage cluster?
- **Planner/Large City/Portland Metro:** Pace of legislative change and tracking bills. Is the dedicated staff person at the City whose sole job is to maintain the code. It is a lot to maintain our code. Changes keep happening. Not all cities have that type of staff capacity!
- **Planner/Small City/Portland Metro:** Sometimes changes happen the same day while having conversations with developers:
  - In pre-application meetings, staff will say what is currently allowed but can't guarantee how it'll end up, given pending changes since pre-apps are vested.
  - We don't know how code updates will go.
  - We have to take to planning commission next month and don't know how it will look.
  - Not all jurisdictions have the ability/capacity to pay attention to legislation.
- **Planner/Small City/Portland Metro:** Updating code to keep on pace with the legislation is huge - not all cities have capacity.
- **Planner/Small City/Portland Metro:** We are not any better positioned to understand what the legislature was thinking if it is not stated clearly in statute.
- **Planner/Small City/Portland Metro:** City used to be a lot more flexible - less and less possible in light of new legislation:
- **Planner/Small City/Portland Metro:** Forced into more "clear and objective" standards. More applicants are choosing a discretionary path - "We fear this will ultimately cause more appeals." Unless you make a total free-for-all, this will continue to be a challenge.
- **Contract Planner/Small City/Willamette Valley:** How efficient meetings are scheduled with staff and results/feedback on application. Working with staff to set standard conditions of approval and expectations. Template approvals like design standards could be helpful. Local jurisdictions don't have staff to make sure code is up to date with state law. Staff trying to be up to date on code, and the general public seeing contradictions.
- **Planner/Small City/Portland Metro:** The client often wants to use the city like a consultant to tell them what to do, but the city doesn't care - just checks what they receive - and that sometimes comes back as if the developer thinks they are putting up barriers. The onus is on the developer to figure it out. Particular issue for smaller infill developers - they don't know what they can do. "People are coming to us to solve the development for them," but we can't tell them what to do.



Leads to friction as our inability to provide service to the applicant. Viewed as a barrier to development.

**Removal of opportunities for notice, hearings, and comment periods results in concerns and opposition being expressed in other ways/venues.**

- **Planner/Small City/Oregon Coast:** Backlash on subdivisions; big developments coming into neighborhoods.
- **Planner/Small City/Oregon Coast:** Haven't experienced middle housing land division (MHL) yet in North Bend, but partitions and subdivisions get lots of backlash from neighbors. Not happy with big developments. Lots of feedback in the public hearing. Lots of calls, people want to speak. Call repeatedly. Takes a lot of staff time. Removing hearing may change workload but is important for people to feel heard.

**Extended and more complex development review processes are often necessary for sites subject to environmental regulations.**

- **Planner/Small City/Oregon Coast:** Natural hazards - have floodplain all over. Have to go through floodplain permit, mitigation. FEMA.

**Development in recently expanded UGB areas often involves added complexity, which can affect permitting and review processes.**

- **Planner/Small City/Portland Metro:** A lot of our development is in urban growth areas, which are more complex.

**Middle Housing and MHL: The added flexibility and configuration options are creating confusion and complexity for applicants.**

- **Planner/Small City/Portland Metro:** Challenge with middle housing, for applicants familiar with requirements they move quickly. But others might have a division approved, but when they do building permits realizing they can't actually build there (due to utilities, etc.). With MHL approvals, the addition of new units is the trigger for dedication. Navigating modifications. Integration of PGE standards was the hiccup.
- **Planner/Large City/Central Oregon:** Allowing middle housing divisions occurs ahead of state legislation. Have to now anticipate a variety of buildings placed on lots, but not sure where they are located. Quadplex, lot coverage maximums, and site plan standards. Applicants draw where they think units go. The back fourth lot might not be developable, pedestrian access, utilities, necessary lot coverage.

**Inconsistent application quality and varying applicant experience can result in incomplete submittals and iterative review cycles.**

- **Planner/Small City/Portland Metro:** Not every development team has professional staff, requiring multiple rounds of review.
- **Planner/Small City/Portland Metro:** Some applicants are not acting in good faith - we see that more lately. Stubborn applicants can slow the process down.



**Discussion Question 3:** *What measures has your jurisdiction put in place to facilitate residential development review and permitting that have been most helpful?*

**Offer early assistance that is accessible, free or low cost, well-coordinated, clearly communicated, and cross-departmental.**

- **Planner/Large City/Central Oregon:** Thorough, free pre-applications. Puts out guides, FAQs on standards and keeps them up to date on state law. Has one staff that works solely on code updates - first time I've had that. Helpful to translate state bills into common language people can understand. Mostly engineering, building, and fire departments.
- **Planner/Small City/Portland Metro:** We give out a detailed site plan and required report checklist at pre-apps to try to clarify what is required with a land use application. I think this is a good best practice for cities that don't yet do so.
- **Planner/Large City/Portland Metro:** Hard to pinpoint what works and doesn't work for projects on a general scale, but try to provide what is and isn't applicable in a checklist to applicants early in the process.
- **Planner/Large City/Willamette Valley:** Early assistance appointment - cost and time seem a barrier to folks utilizing that option. Have to charge for cost recovery on staff.
- **Planner/Small City/Oregon Coast:** City has a couple things that they have offered, like an informal pre-application process for smaller questions that don't require the process and provide written comment.
- **Planner/Small City/Portland Metro:** We have been successful in getting the right people in the room early on:
  - Coordinate very closely with engineering and building team early on in the review process
  - Generally easier in smaller cities, but can help move the process along during reviews.
- **Planner/Large City/Willamette Valley:** Implemented a "Development bulletin" - technical changes and repository that is up on the City website for public review.
- **Planner/Small City/Oregon Coast:** In land use planning, we haven't done much. We are working on new permit software that allows applicants to check requirements on zoning, setback requirements. Urban form, input address, and get those requirements. Permit process, software cloud permit where they can apply for a permit and know what zone they are in and requirements.

**Regular cleanup of code inconsistencies and frequent internal coordination on code interpretation, including changes to ensure consistency across reviewers, improve clarity and consistency in development review.**

- **Planner/Large City/Willamette Valley:** Staff documents interpretation of code that is decided on to ensure it is a resource to reference when needed. Also consider it when doing code updates.



- **Planner/Small City/Willamette Valley:** Continuous improvement to code – catch things that are barriers and amend the code through yearly code cleanups.
- **Planner/Multiple Cities/Statewide:** Aside from all of the state requirement changes/updates and smaller jurisdictions that have 1 staff member, code interpretation isn't a problem. But larger have weekly/monthly interpretation meetings to ensure consistency.

**Implementation of clear and objective standards is helping to expedite permitting timelines by enabling more applications to be processed ministerially and reducing discretionary review.**

- **Planner/Small City/Portland Metro:** Our reviews of what needs to be done are usually pretty quick. Not super discretionary.



## FOCUS GROUP: PUBLIC WORKS AND SPECIAL DISTRICTS

*Discussion Question 1: Where do you see opportunities to streamline the development review process to reduce burdens on staff or applicants?*

**Offer early assistance that is accessible, free or low cost, well-coordinated, clearly communicated, and cross-departmental.**

- **Planner/County Government/Oregon Coast:** Leaning into pre-applications and making sure to give as much information up front as possible. But the preliminary plans only tell a reviewer so much.
- **Engineer/Medium-Sized City/Southern Oregon:** The more applicants can provide up front, even at a conceptual level, the more specific comments the reviewing jurisdiction can provide. Understand that it comes at an additional cost to developers, but feel as though it is worth it in the long run.
- **Engineer/Medium-Sized City/Southern Oregon:** Have a meeting with the applicant and all reviewing parties after the first round of review to ensure that comments made sense and the applicant understood what was needed moving forward. This process happens for land use processes but could expand to engineering permits. Clarity in comments really helps.
- **Engineer/Medium-Sized/Portland Metro:** The amount of detail at the conceptual is important - more effort needs to be made up front at the land use permit. Rather than requiring 30% of the work, 60% of documents could be more helpful later in the process.
- **Engineer/Medium-Sized/Portland Metro:** While it may be overwhelming for applicants to get so many comments up front, the city would rather provide too many than too few.
- **Engineer/Special District Agency/Portland Metro:** Better communication that happens early and often.

**Lack of clear direction on public works requirements can create challenges, highlighting the need for more explicit citation and communication of applicable standards.**

- **Engineer/Large City/Portland Metro:** Cite it and write it (more intentional code enforcement).

**Improving clarity around proportional infrastructure requirements can support more predictable cost-sharing and help maintain the feasibility of housing development.**

- **Engineer/Medium-Sized City/Southern Oregon:** Legislating for certain outcomes can make sense and also bring up more questions. For example, anything more than three units requires full engineering requirements, full street improvement: curb, gutter, and sidewalk. Disproportionate impacts of requirements as a result of new development and relationship to proportionality on engineering requirements. What is the fair share for the City, and what is the fair share for the developer? What is more reasonable to help get the public infrastructure but not discourage housing from being built?

**Expand opportunities for concurrent review pathways to reduce delays associated with sequential permit approvals.**



- **Engineer/Special District Agency/Portland Metro:** Concurrent reviews – a recorded plat is required to get an address before a building permit review, but why does this have to be sequential?

**Revise requirements for public improvement completion for final plat recording. Allow for sequencing of lot level improvements.**

- **Engineer/County Government/Willamette Valley:** Revisit state building code on requiring public improvements being complete before a Certificate of Occupancy is issued.
- **Planner/Large City/Portland Metro:** Can a building permit be held up until the public works permitting is complete? Some cities push for public works permits to be issued prior to building permit issuance.
- **Engineer/Large City/Portland Metro:** Sequence lot-level improvements. Allowing for sequencing may support completion because the biggest hurdle may be stormwater and green infrastructure or using a downstream pond for permanent detention.

**Other mentions** not related to discussion questions:

- **Engineer/Small City/Portland Metro:** Would be interesting to see if this study delineates between greenfield and infill development in providing or updating infrastructure and if that has an impact on anything.

***Discussion Question 2:** What challenges do you see to streamlining residential development reviews and approvals?*

**Conflicting standards and terminology across departments.**

- **Engineer/Large City/Portland Metro:** Different departments have different and conflicting requirements, and there isn't a clear avenue to resolve those issues when they happen.

**A lack of clarity and understanding of public works standards and requirements among applicants can lead to additional project costs.**

- **Engineer/County Government/Portland Metro:** Developments will need to meet water quality/quantity DEQ requirements for new streets. It adds to the cost of the project and also creates more small stormwater facilities, which are most costly to maintain.

**Sign-off/accountability and guarantees (e.g., bonds) for final construction and approval of public improvements.**

- **Planner/Large City/Portland Metro:** If a jurisdiction is chasing a bond from a developer who didn't finish improvements, the bond no longer covers the cost of the required improvement left. Since the bond is collected early in the building review cycle and that review can take a lot of time, the bond note is often not sufficient to cover the work anymore.
- **Engineer/County Government/Willamette Valley:** County holds bonds at 100% for urban projects and 125% for rural projects, paying prevailing wages. It doesn't cover what they'd



actually have to spend. Even the fee in lieu is 150% of the estimate, with 50% meant to cover administrative costs on engineering permitting, but it would still always be below the actual costs.

- **Engineer/Special District Agency/Portland Metro:** It's difficult to get a clear path from small jurisdictions. In working with some, they've issued permits before things had been connected (toilets to sewer service, for example).
- **Engineer/Medium-Sized City/Southern Oregon:** City will not comment on anything outside of the first review, unless it is a brand-new addition to the project. They have seen a decrease in their timeline reviews by implementing this practice.
- **Engineer/Large City/Portland Metro:** Developer is often different from builder. The developer just wants to get in and out, so there needs to be an accountability measure for metering out lot releases for different criteria that affect different entities. Can you hold back some approvals while allowing some lot sales to move forward?
- **Engineer/Special District Agency/Portland Metro:** Clarify service letter guarantees for water to make sure everything is checked off.
- **Engineer/County Government/Willamette Valley:** State building code and infrastructure reviews don't always go together, and sometimes the developer sells the building before they've completed all the required frontages. A building official can't withhold a Certificate of Occupancy (not contingent on public works review being complete), and the county ends up chasing the developers while the homeowner is stuck in the middle (and may already live there).

#### **Stable staffing capacity presents a challenge to providing quality and consistent reviews.**

- **All:** Staffing capacity makes it hard to keep up with reviews. Development is getting more complicated because developable land has mostly been improved.
- **Planner/County Government/Oregon Coast:** Stable staffing capacity presents a challenge to providing quality and consistent reviews.
- **Engineer/Special District Agency/Portland Metro:** Companies doing some engineering reviews for small cities need to get involved really early and work closely with city partners.

#### **Timing of public works review compared to other reviews.**

- **Engineer/Large City/Portland Metro:** We have had challenges with some City departments not reviewing the public works plans and then requiring changes to them in the building permit review.
- **Planner/County Government/Oregon Coast:** Seeing plans at different phases of development presents a challenge in communicating with applicants who are upset about not having received information earlier.

#### **Frequent and evolving state requirements require ongoing updates to local development standards, processes, and staff training.**

- **Planner/County Government/Oregon Coast:** Keeping up with legislative changes to permitting.
- **Engineer/Small City/Portland Metro:** A 2019 bill to expedite building reviews has actually slowed down the process, requiring cities to not review plans concurrently. SB 974 is effective



July 1, 2026, and requires a 120-day review timeline for engineering plans without holding external agencies to the same timeline. What is a delay, and does it fall outside of best practice management?

**Final plat recording can serve as a primary bottleneck in the permitting process, slowing permit issuance due to procedural, technological, and sequencing constraints.**

- **Engineer/Large City/Willamette Valley:** Largest delay in the whole process is recording a plat, which slows the number of permits that can be approved.
- **Engineer/Special District Agency/Portland Metro:** Requiring wet signatures on mylars seems unnecessary and like digital signatures would be easier.
- **Engineer/Large City/Willamette Valley:** City allows final plat pre-submittal as soon as public improvement plans are submitted, secure, and approved, but developers aren't sending them in ahead of time.
- **Engineer/Large City/Willamette Valley:** Surveyor may not want to go out to project until all major improvements are made.

**Customer service is shaped by local practice, resulting in varying applicant experiences across jurisdictions; cross-jurisdiction communication may help reduce these differences.**

- **Planner/Small City/Portland Metro:** You need good communication, which is hard to legislate, but I think it's easier for local managers to hold staff accountable to specific outcomes.
- **Planner/Small City/Portland Metro:** "Good communication isn't something you can solve with a house bill." There should be more communication between jurisdictions for folks to learn from shared challenges and successes.

**Inconsistent application quality and varying applicant experience can result in incomplete submittals and iterative review cycles.**

- **All:** Developers' quality of work also makes it hard to provide better service.

**Development in recently expanded UGB areas often involves added complexity, which can affect permitting and review processes.**

- **All:** Development in UGBs tends to result in more complex permitting processes and requirements.

**Discussion Question 3:** *What measures has your jurisdiction put in place to facilitate residential development review and permitting that have been most helpful?*

**Clear guidelines on required public improvements/proportionality.**

- **Planner/Small City/Portland Metro:** City made an across-the-board assumption of public improvements valuation as it relates to middle housing and single-unit development. Exactions and the proportionality alignment have resulted in more development and assurance when going through the development process. The city decided 10% met proportionality that they already did for single-unit housing, and they added middle housing to this determination. That



shared proportionality allowed the city to focus on what is actually important in middle housing reviews so that anything above 10% is up to the City to address.

#### **Using ProjectDox, given its ability to provide transparency into status of reviews.**

- **Engineer/Small City/Portland Metro:** Using ProjectDox has allowed applicants to see comments in real time without waiting for all reviews to be done. It is important to have software tied to reviewer needs rather than contractor.
- **Engineer/Medium-Sized City/Southern Oregon:** City uses ProjectDox for building permits and public improvement plans.

#### **Setting local review timeline goals and having structured communication during review.**

- **Engineer/Medium-Sized City/Southern Oregon:** Our biggest improvements occurred when the City Council gave specific goals for review timelines.
- **Engineer/Medium-Sized City/Portland Metro:** Allowing time for meetings during the plan review process.
- **Engineer/Small City/Portland Metro:** Meeting after the first round of reviews helps with communication.

#### **Improving processes and systems around assigning site addresses.**

**Engineer/Small City/Portland Metro:** Once a project starts, GIS does addressing so they can prepare in advance of getting plat recorded. There is a small risk if an address is created and the project doesn't go to completion, and they are working through how to address this problem.

- **Engineer/Large City/Willamette Valley:** City is trying to do temporary addresses for up to four permits before addressing and public improvements are finalized. There is a limit to the number of units allowed on a single unit without subdividing. Sometimes these permits do sit through an entire fiscal year, so fees change over time or a permit expires.

#### **Update bonding requirements to better align risk, timing, and project delivery.**

- **Engineer/Large City/Portland Metro:** City allows for 95% completion but holds a bond on the public works improvements. Performance bond is 100% of public improvements provided by the applicant, while maintenance bond is 10%.
- **Engineer/Large City/Willamette Valley:** Requires 200% tangible security for street signs and manhole lid. Also, a no-build improvement agreement (no improvements until substantially complete).

#### **Enable a more efficient final plat process through exceptions to prerecording improvement requirements and support for completing public improvements.**

- **Engineer/Large City/Portland Metro:** During COVID-19 pandemic, the city built supply chain issues into process so they allow for 5-10% of work to be deferred. The city requires the final plat to be recorded before the applicant can submit permits. Streetlights were a major issue, so they allowed for an exception.



- **Engineer/Large City/Willamette Valley:** City adopted stormwater “per square foot” planting and maintenance fee to help with the final stormwater facility items in subdivisions when contractors are struggling to finish things in the timeline for pulling building permits.
- **Engineer/Small City/Portland Metro:** The city requires a public works permit to be issued before a building permit is issued (land use -> public works -> building permit). Sign-off does not happen until public works is done concurrently with the building permit, and then final building inspection happens after engineering staff sign off on public improvements. Even so, don't encourage early final plat and deem incomplete until all utilities are in place. This process is discussed at pre-application, so if the application doesn't do that, they may face delays. This process helps mitigate issues in the process, and if there are misalignments, there are major consequences. They provide an initial review but don't approve until all utilities are in place because storm lines may change and they don't want to fully approve it before ready. These comments are for non-subdivision processes.
- **Engineer/Large City/Willamette Valley:** In opposition to above, releasing (approving) permits before public works is complete relieves pressure from elected officials. If there is a complete house waiting for an electrical pole, why would they hold a permit up?
- **Engineer/Large City/Willamette Valley:** City audited its own permits from the past four months - 42% were approved in the first round within 10 days, then they have to sit for six months for the plat to be recorded. Because finishing touches on the infrastructure are taking so long, it saves a lot of time.
- **Engineer/County Government/Willamette Valley:** County partnered with a city where part of infrastructure improvements was in right-of-way. Up to a certain point, the county allows it to move forward so long as it's no more than 6 months until infrastructure is completed; otherwise, it's liquidated to align with legal requirements. It helps with larger developers but is hard for small ones.
- **Engineer/Large City/Portland Metro:** City will go in and plant for the developer.
- **Inspector/Small City/Willamette Valley:** Only reviewer of subdivision permits, which inherently speeds up reviews.

#### Other mentions not related to discussion questions:

- **Engineer/Medium-Sized City/Portland Metro:** Because of previous legal cases, the city is shy about requiring frontage improvements.



## FOCUS GROUP: BUILDING REGULATORS

*Discussion Question 1: Where do you see opportunities to streamline the development review process to reduce burdens on staff or applicants?*

**Offer early assistance that is accessible, free or low cost, well-coordinated, clearly communicated, and cross-departmental.**

- **Building Official/Large City/Portland Metro:** Prescreening and pre-submittal measures to get applications through the door in a better spot to move them forward. Understand which applications are frequently marked as incomplete, and revise checklists to address omissions.
- **Building Official/Large City/Portland Metro:** Communicate better with permit technicians on specificities of where things get confusing and errors happen.
- **Building Official/Small City/Oregon Coast:** Applicants want one piece of paper with all the information; however, it can be overwhelming.
- **Building Official/Small City/Portland Metro:** Identify incomplete applications first. When permit technicians ask for clarification and don't get a response, they kick the can down the road to the plans examiner, who deals with incompleteness. It's easier to discuss applications with staff in smaller jurisdictions.
- **Building Official/Large City/Portland Metro:** Improve website resources and be open to assisting with issues. A building evaluation support agreement could help with inspections and plan review across jurisdictions.
- **Building Official/County Government/Portland Metro:** Update intake information to provide more fields to ensure nothing is missed at prescreen.
- **Building Official/Small City/Oregon Coast:** Creating templates for all the permits required per type helps clarity and intake.
- **Building Official/Small City/Oregon Coast:** Match application requirements to type of development at intake level to make sure processes can be streamlined.
- **Building Official/County Government/Portland Metro:** Support permit technicians to review foundation, cross section, trusses, and energy code elements of submittals, as well as page layout. A checklist may be complete, but it doesn't mean that an application is done right.
- **Building Official/Small City/Portland Metro:** Understand that it's frustrating to get comments about an application being incomplete on a first submittal. But when it's not addressed after permit technicians call it out, plans examiners will not catch all required elements to address until second or third review.
- **Fire Marshal/Fire District/Willamette Valley:** Fire district is available for consultation on pre-apps and is timely with their subsequent reviews.
- **Fire Marshal/Large City/Portland Metro:** Permit manager (planner? examiner?) can deem everything complete so that all reviews do not start until it's seen as complete.
- **Building Official/Small City/Oregon Coast:** Regarding reviewer requests for additional information, we have found that a single list of additional information is a must. When an



applicant receives multiple requests with separate lists, they quickly become frustrated and often lose focus. The city has combined all that they can, but there are projects that require multiple permit applications. The issue can be if a reviewer has a larger workload or absent, then the applicant may have to wait a fairly long time before they hear any response.

- **Building Official/Small City/Portland Metro:** Ensuring property owners without contractors have proper information and collective building checklists supports clarity. Submitters can take more ownership of ensuring checklists are fully complete.
- **Building Official/Small City/Oregon Coast:** Have different expectations and communication patterns for contractors and property owners. Contractors who have worked across state do not require many submittals, while property owners may require 5–6 submittals.
- **Building Official/Large City/Willamette Valley:** Structural changes can take more time to develop and get through than a zoning requirement, and contractors want to figure it out as soon as possible.

#### **Consistent terminology and definition across departments.**

- **Building Official/Large City/Willamette Valley:** Consistent language and terminology across all departments. How things are defined should be consistent. Balancing staff capacity can help pair less experienced staff with more experienced staff. Identify departments with less collective experience and capacity, as reviews will be completed sooner by others.
- **Building Official/Small City/Portland Metro:** Local- and state-level coordination between planning, fire, and building in methods and terminology.
- **Building Official/Small City/Portland Metro:** Clarify definitions of building code, especially with middle housing. Often there are required correction letters for duplexes and townhomes to get enough information to complete a review for fire and safety.
  - Out of 500 reviews in the last three years, only 47% of residential applicants could be approved on the first review. 53% required two reviews. Even with intake checklists, developers of all sizes did not provide clear information, as it could take two weeks for building officials to review an application and catch incomplete information.
- **Building Official/Small City/Portland Metro:** Having set criteria at the state level would be helpful for delineating between types of buildings and how code applies. Regarding planning and building, for example, there are unsettled definitions for commercial, duplexes, etc. Local officials can further define categories and adopt what serves the community.
- **Building Official/County Government/Portland Metro:** Commercial code summaries need a more thorough prescreen for what needs to be on the plans.

#### **Use of pre-approved plans can help expedite review timelines and provide greater certainty for applicants.**

- **Building Official/Large City/Portland Metro:** Pre-approved plans are available and the ability to apply to go that route with middle housing types can also qualify. One barrier to getting



something approved and reusing the certified house plans is that zoning code may conflict, where a plan has to be identical.

- **Building Official/County Government/Portland Metro:** Looking to create a base of available master plans for areas that are semiflat (<4' slope) so that review can focus on zoning. It can really help for bigger developments.

#### **State support for local jurisdictions through training and review support of national standards.**

- **Building Official/Small City/Portland Metro:** The State of Oregon Building Code Division could offer training more frequently, shorten the sessions, and support afterward for going through certifications.
- **Building Official/Small City/Portland Metro:** State could review national standards to reduce local burden on how to make reviews more streamlined and could allow local governments to do training and testing.

#### **Create a process for internal evaluation of development review timelines.**

- **Building Official/Large City/Willamette Valley:** Evaluate timelines to see how much time is spent on application on jurisdiction vs. applicant.

***Discussion Question 2:** What challenges do you see to streamlining residential development reviews and approvals?*

#### **Lack of alignment between zoning code and building code definitions and measurements.**

- **Building Official/Large City/Willamette Valley:** Terminology inconsistencies across departments causes interdepartmental review challenges—multiunit is defined one way for planning and another for building. For example, town houses can be built using the residential code instead of the structural code. In one instance, land use was impacted and it resulted in additional fees to the applicant because the requirements across departments were inherently different.
- **Fire Marshal/Large City/Portland Metro:** Identify designs that do not meet fire code or fire access in appeals, and those revisions can change layout of the entire project. Because of parallel path reviews, fire might be approved, but then it could change the waterline. There may be a need to get the ladder truck into a driveway or to get a ladder to a structure because of strong access requirements. The building code isn't in-depth enough to explain setbacks or frontage for fire access, and these parallel paths can get confusing for applicants and have conflicting building and fire standards. These conflicts happen between middle housing and other types.

#### **Issues raised on later reviews.**

- **Building Official/Small City/Portland Metro:** Evolving applications make it hard to catch everything on a first submittal. Even though policy and training try to avoid revisiting things from the first submittal that need to change, it happens.
- **Building Official/County Government/Portland Metro:** Fire district can cause challenges regarding the inability to access sprinklers. Building official and fire meet often to work through



these challenges when needed. Planning reviews if you can build it, and the building department reviews how you build it. Can't get building approval on something that may not even be allowed.

- **Building Official/Large City/Willamette Valley:** Master planning has been abused, and folks have reservations around taking that avenue. Really depends on the developer who is using it because if it needs a revision, the submittal goes back to the starting line.

**Increasing development activity, combined with limited reviewer capacity and significant training requirements, can strain permitting systems and extend review timelines.**

- **Fire Marshal/Large City/Portland Metro:** There is a scarcity in fire department reviewers for residential permits and land use cases. With the increase in middle housing applications, the task list has grown substantially and reviewers are behind. Fire reviews can slow processes down, especially if an application is incomplete and isn't caught until months later.
- **Building Official/Small City/Portland Metro:** There is a fee for services in the building division. If there is a lot of development, the department is unable to hire someone from a temporary agency following employee turnover. Certifications for being a building official can take up to 26 weeks for combination plan reviews.
- **Building Official/Small City/Portland Metro:** Time commitment for certification on electrical and residential structure review training takes a lot of time and often has delays.
- **Building Official/Small City/Portland Metro:** Training is expensive for staff when it's not required by law.
- **Building Official/County Government/Portland Metro:** For unincorporated areas, the cities are doing land use review, and the county is handling building code review. Developers want speed but often submit sloppy plans, which results in longer timelines. When a city with little development experiences an increase, it's hard for staff to respond to the uptick in activity.

**Inspection timing/capacity.**

- **Building Official/Small City/Portland Metro:** The city tries to have inspectors follow county inspectors for training, but the HR department requires that inspectors commute separately.

**Increasing complexity in energy code requirements is adding time to permit review processes, as more detailed standards require additional documentation, specialized knowledge, and expanded staff training capacity.**

- **Building Official/County Government/Portland Metro:** ORSC and OSSC requirements have increased dramatically, including the energy code (ASHRAE)—it is much more complex, and it adds to review timelines and limited staff exposure and capacity. The energy code in particular burns timelines on reviews. Plans examiners need additional training to understand mechanical systems in residential reviews as well as commercial.
- **Building Official/Small City/Portland Metro:** Communicating new information that needs to be included in checklists that wasn't always there. For example, energy efficiency standards.



**Middle Housing and MHL: The added flexibility and configuration options are creating confusion and complexity for applicants.**

- **Fire Marshal/Large City/Portland Metro:** New types of easements and maintenance agreements, like shared utilities and having to go through legal processes with unique configurations, have slowed the process. Middle housing increases have caused some new delays, with agreements in the past not being reusable.
- **Building Official/Small City/Portland Metro:** Developers who have done single-unit construction sometimes struggle to catch up to commercial requirements in denser developments.

**Sites with environmental constraints.**

- **Building Official/County Government/Portland Metro:** Areas that are now buildable in suburbs have complicated plan reviews because of engineering on steep slopes.

***Discussion Question 3:** What measures has your jurisdiction put in place to facilitate residential development review and permitting that have been most helpful?*

**Cross-jurisdiction collaboration and coordination through regular meetings, local agreements for staff support, and intergovernmental communication platforms to share resources.**

- **Building Official/Large City/Portland Metro:** Jurisdictions trying to stay united where building officials have regular meetings open to the public.
- **Building Official/County Government/Portland Metro:** Intergovernmental communications and subsequent reviews, as well as having all reviewers on the same platform and on the same timelines, are key—this county is working on putting that through now.
- **Building Official/County Government/Portland Metro:** Local staff are trying to stay connected and work together. Whether internally or externally. This works, in addition to making sure that issues are resolved and jurisdictions can learn from each other.
- **Building Official/County Government/Portland Metro:** In this same way, jurisdictions are entering into local agreements to share staff capacity with jurisdictions that have less staff capacity.
- **Building Official/Large City/Willamette Valley:** Because electronic permitting is less personal, different reviewers have different tones and the comments conflict with each other. This city is hoping to streamline this process and has weekly meetings to ensure that comments are consistent and any discrepancies are worked out. Development services with all managers also meet and talk about reviewing inconsistencies altogether.
- **Fire Marshal/Fire District/Willamette Valley:** Fire district can contract for small cities nearby without the capacity for certain fire-related reviews.
- **Building Official/Small City/Portland Metro:** Intergovernmental agreements see jurisdictions borrowing staff where the city pays a jurisdiction for support. For example, this city relies on the county for utility, residential, and electrical reviews because the code is complex.



- **Building Official/Small City/Oregon Coast:** Officials between jurisdictions meet every month or two.

**Offer early assistance that is accessible, free or low cost, well-coordinated, clearly communicated, and cross-departmental.**

- **Building Official/Large City/Willamette Valley:** Prescreening and pre-submittal measures to get applications through the door in a better spot to move them forward. The city doesn't leave the prescreen to permit techs; instead, they are assigned to each department that would get a review. *"The more prepared you are for plan review, the better off you are."*
- **Building Official/Small City/Oregon Coast:** Updating GIS mapping with environmental layers has helped identify potential permitting barriers.
- **Building Official/County Government/Portland Metro:** Sharing information and reviews on cloud has helped resolve some IT issues and communication barriers.
- **Fire Marshal/Fire District/Willamette Valley:** Getting involved in planning meetings where fire district comments are relevant.
- **Building Official/Small City/Portland Metro:** Building officials go to development review team meetings every week with other departments and attend pre-application meetings with developers. The goal is to let them know of any red flags while they're at the idea phase.

**Offering concurrent review pathways for projects on legally established lots with allowed uses can support more efficient permitting by minimizing sequential dependencies.**

- **Building Official/Small City/Portland Metro:** Offer concurrent reviews (can only be done on projects with allowed use on an established lot).

**Using ProjectDox, given its ability to provide transparency into status of reviews.**

- **Building Official/Large City/Portland Metro:** The electronic permitting software (ProjectDox) has fully visible reviews and comments as they come through so applicants are aware of what to expect. Comments are now visible even before all departments have signed off, which should help streamline. On the other hand, sometimes this information gets confusing for applicants trying to respond to comments before they're able to (all reviews need to be completed first).



## FOCUS GROUP: SMALL JURISDICTIONS

*Discussion Question 1: Where do you see opportunities to streamline the development review process to reduce burdens on staff or applicants?*

**Creating space for better partnership with state agency partners through regular coordination meetings.**

- **Community Development Director/Small City/Portland Metro:** Possible solutions with state agency involvement – more coordination up front – through pre-apps or other meeting types with State agency reviewers, aligning with local timelines or at least taking less time on reviews because local jurisdictions have already approved them.
- **Planner/Small City/Oregon Coast:** Build relationships with state agencies to have a contact to expedite reviews, and have those conversations (Region 2 – ODOT has great experiences with their contacts).
- **Planner/Small City/Oregon Coast:** ODOT reviews have improved over the years to expedite reviews.

**Opportunities to improve coordination and process efficiencies across county and partner agencies.**

- **Engineer/Special District Agency/Southern Oregon:** The ultimate decision ends with special district agency on stormwater decisions and works directly with DEQ and the County.
- **Engineer/Special District Agency/Southern Oregon:** 2-person team for the reviews. When the review is only from the special district, they try to get the review done on the same day. If it needs to YDO/DEQ (if it goes over 5 acres), the process takes longer and they want to give it more time.
  - Runs MS4 Permits too.
- **Building Plans Reviewer/County Government/Central Oregon:** Building review can only take 2 weeks to review building permits.
- **Building Plans Reviewer/County Government/Central Oregon:** County has authority over all the cities and unincorporated areas except for the tribal reservation. They should streamline their process.
- **Building Plans Reviewer/Small City/Willamette Valley:** Have a good rapport with the County, but if they're pressed, they won't withhold a Certificate of Occupancy for things like shrubs.
- **Building Review/County/Central Oregon:** Building review is the last step in the process. The county works with 7 planning depts. County is very proactive and is good at having clear standards.
  - Some of their smaller jurisdictions have few people (<1000) but are still incorporated; they won't unincorporate.
    - They don't have specific guidelines about their processes.
    - They get very political – old-timers and newcomers can clash.



- The more clarity from the state about what the code is and says is helpful - any more support is welcome.

**Allowing minor modifications to be addressed in the field for both state and local agency requirements, rather than requiring full resubmittal and review, can help avoid extended timelines for small adjustments.**

- **Community Development Director/Small City/Portland Metro:** Allowing things that are minor (i.e., inches on an ADA ramp with an ODOT review) to be handled in the field, rather than them going for 60/70-day reviews.

**Implementation of clear and objective standards is helping to expedite permitting timelines by enabling more applications to be processed ministerially and reducing discretionary review.**

- **Planner/Small City/Oregon Coast:** Going through a HAPO-funded code amendment to revise code provisions that are creating barriers to housing development to clear and objective standards.
  - More reviews and decisions are moving away from Planning Commission and City council decisions.
- **Planner/Small City/Oregon Coast:** Using clear and objective standards - these are fairly new to the county, but we are hopeful that people seem satisfied with the reduction in fees and streamlined process. But too soon to tell.
- **Planner/County Government/Willamette Valley:** HB 4037 has been enrolled and headed to government. Requires a clean and objective review path. Allows for a two-track system. Jurisdictions can also have a subjective review if the developer strays from clear and objective standards (but has to have higher density or better public benefits).
  - The County is working on resource mitigation as well as the adoption of clear and objective standards. Hoping that the planners and elected officials will be relieved of pressure and can focus on doing better work.
- **Planner/Small City/Portland Metro:** Clear and objective standards and public hearings mismatch - new legislation to fix that. Looking at alternatives for noticing.

**Establishing clear communication of future development projects with the public.**

- **Planner/Small City/Portland Metro:** Public-facing communication for projects, and other means to remove any uncertainty from the public, seems to be helpful.

**Consistent terminology and definition across departments.**

- **Building Plans Reviewer/County Government/Central Oregon:** Not seeing much confusion with ORSC and OSSC. But sometimes words mean different things - example: A City in the County found a loophole where the "top floor is an ADU" and it's not a "two-story building." This doesn't always align with the building code.



**Discussion Question 2:** *What challenges do you see to streamlining residential development reviews and approvals?*

**Establishing good relationships with state agency partnerships.**

- **Community Development Director/Small City/Portland Metro:** Struggling with partnership with state agency staff on reviews as it relates to projects along the state highway.
  - DEQ takes too long.
  - These two projects lost a funder because of state agency timelines. Both were residential projects.

**Recent state legislation (e.g., SB 974) has introduced more structured review timelines and sequencing requirements, which may be limiting the feasibility of concurrent review processes.**

- **Community Development Director/Small City/Portland Metro:** Concurrent review could take place prior to state legislation, which was the intent of the legislation; however, it's not feasible anymore (e.g., SB 974).

**Overlapping and sometimes conflicting regulatory requirements tied to site conditions, such as wetlands or archaeological resources, can create barriers by increasing review timelines and complexity.**

- **Planner/Small City/Oregon Coast:** Historical and Archaeological Resource zones review timelines increase timelines on other reviews.
- **City Manager/Small City/Willamette Valley:** The biggest conflicting standards issue in the valley is the wetlands, and conflicts with the state—they are always stricter.

**Removing opportunities for notice, hearings, and comment periods results in concerns and opposition being expressed in other ways/venues.**

- **Planner/Small City/Portland Metro:** Public participation and developers getting through the process, and what is enough notification to make people feel comfortable with a project to move forward. Clear and objective standards - if it's meeting requirements, there isn't a need for public involvement or notice. Public hearings and now this jurisdiction has neighborhood meetings for any residential project with over 50 units, to try and correct a project that received a lot of backlash from the public not feeling like they got enough notice for a project.
- **Planner/Small City/Portland Metro:** Public pushback on multiunit because of the increased density, and middle housing is less of an issue.

**Stable staffing capacity presents a challenge to provide quality and consistent reviews.**

- **Building Plans Reviewer/Small City/Willamette Valley:** Staff capacity and turnover is a huge issue. Hiring a replacement with no one to train them - their person is gone.
- **City Manager/Small City/Willamette Valley:** The City previously used contract engineers to review the plans for public improvements associated with developments:
  - Some smaller jurisdictions still do this; they either don't have the expertise or workload for an FTE.



- Consultants want to do their best work for you, but this isn't their regular world.
- It's harder when you don't have in-house staff, but it's not horrible.

- **Building Plans Reviewer/County Government/Central Oregon:** Training can be inconsistent.

**Frequent and evolving state requirements require ongoing updates to local development standards, processes, and staff training.**

- **City Manager/Small City/Willamette Valley:** Pace of changes from the land use side of the state is making things really challenging.

**Issues with the State's e-permitting software.**

- **Building Plans Reviewer/County Government/Central Oregon:** Required to have electronic permitting program, Accela, for building-code tracking purposes, but only one other jurisdiction uses it in the county. Doesn't know what each City in the county uses, and the county doesn't utilize concurrent reviews due to the IT system. Used to be a state office - no sense in going in to review the safety of the building if the planning process isn't done yet - they waste their time, and the building permit fee isn't refundable. Still only gets two weeks but doesn't feel like it's a burden for them.
- **Planner/Small City/Oregon Coast and Portland Metro:** Accela caused delays in CG with the wait between specialty code reviews/requests for information. Other reviewers would not necessarily know what was going on with a permit unless they actively sought information (not cc'd on status/info request correspondence).
- **City Manager/Small City/Willamette Valley:** Deals with the same issues in the building permitting agency mentioned above.

**Limited ability to enforce completion of public improvements after occupancy can create accountability challenges, especially where final inspections and sign-off processes are inconsistent.**

- **City Manager/Small City/Willamette Valley:** City's standpoint, final review, city didn't use to do final inspections once it was done at public works. This lack of final review caused a lot of problems (landscaping is minor), like a sidewalk being built over. They don't have much leverage after a Certificate of Occupancy (only code enforcement and fines). This can sometimes fall on the homeowner (city goes after them for code enforcement, landscaping can sometimes be an erosion issue). People move in before Certificate of Occupancy all the time.
- **City Manager/Small City/Willamette Valley:** County says they can't do it but will try and work with the developer to meet the requirements.
- **Building Plans Reviewer/Small City/Willamette Valley:** Have required the developer to have a bond, which can leverage the developer or just pay for the work.

**Discussion Question 3:** *What measures has your jurisdiction put in place to facilitate residential development review and permitting that have been most helpful?*



**Ensuring consistent staff availability and opportunities for direct engagement with applicants, such as walk-in support and time to address questions, can improve clarity and reduce process uncertainty.**

- **All:** Open-door policy of being available for questions and making time to work through issues.
- **Planner/Small City/Oregon Coast and Portland Metro:** Planners at these two cities were part time prior to their current roles. These cities now have a full-time planner and an open-door policy. People can walk in anytime and see what you are working on.

**Regular cleanup of code inconsistencies and frequent internal coordination on code interpretation, including changes to ensure consistency across reviewers, improve clarity and consistency in development review.**

- **All:** Staying on top of code amendments to ensure development applications are reviewed under the most current state law.

**Establishing clear communication of future development projects and having up-to-date information regarding requirements and processes available to the public.**

- **Planner/Small City/Portland Metro:** The City Manager releases a weekly newsletter covering the latest from each department. Is there a new project, etc. that would make it into that newsletter to make sure communication on development is widely accessible?
- **All:** Maintaining the jurisdiction's website to ensure accurate information is available.

**Allowing simpler projects to take advantage of "easier" permitting processing flows.**

- **City Manager/Small City/Willamette Valley:** Have a public works permit for construction of public infrastructure. However, if it is something simple like a sewer lateral, storm drain connection, or driveway connecting to a street, we have a right-of-way permit we can use for a project of limited impact. That permit has a flat fee and a turnaround time of a day or two.
- **Engineer/Small City/Portland Metro:** If the project has small public improvement elements, using the right-of-way permit as a public works alternative to save the city's staff time and reduce the project's cost.

**Utilizing an e-permitting software that provides transparency into status of reviews.**

- **Planner/Small City/Oregon Coast and Portland Metro:** E-permitting - Without concurrent reviews, applicants can log in and see comments. There are a lot of processes related to tagging people, who will get an email when the status update changes, etc.



## FOCUS GROUP: MODULAR/MANUFACTURED/FACTORY-PRODUCED HOUSING

*Discussion Question 1: Where do you see opportunities to streamline the development review process to reduce burdens on staff or applicants?*

### **Need for state technical assistance for jurisdictions reviewing modular and manufactured homes.**

- **Building Official/County Government/Eastern Oregon:** Bringing back state training on manufactured housing to ensure consistent interpretation. There was a program a few years back, but that state doesn't do it anymore. The program covered training for plan review and inspections.
- **Building Official/County Government/Eastern Oregon:** Training about the differences in review for these housing types versus others to reinforce consistent interpretation of requirements and thus ensure timelines are met.
- **Building Official/County Government/Eastern Oregon:** DLCD technical assistance to rural areas, as folks don't have the technical expertise to understand the distinction between the housing types and the different review needs.

*Discussion Question 2: What challenges do you see to streamlining residential development reviews and approvals?*

### **Misalignment between the perceived simplicity and actual requirements of modular housing.**

- **Building Official/County Government/Eastern Oregon:** Misconceptions and accessibility of purchasing a home (off Amazon (don't get permits, and don't understand that these don't meet building requirements) or other states that don't have the same requirements needed to get approval.
- **Building Official/County Government/Eastern Oregon:** Manufacturing folks are not building to state requirements, and individuals buying them don't know that they don't meet code, which makes plan review challenging. Some manufactured homes have come in through code cases or need to be enforced.
- **Building Official/County Government/Eastern Oregon:** Environmental review and building permits—misconception around manufactured homes being easy and whether sites require an environmental review, which may feel unnecessary to the applicant.
- **Building Official/County Government/Eastern Oregon:** People don't understand that modular products need permanent foundations, which require separate sets of plans and design. (If modular companies can tell their customers that separate plans are needed or if they could include the foundation plans in their package).
- Foundation needs are different across manufactured homes—ground lease scenarios can use block and tie foundations.

### **Inconsistent application quality and varying applicant experience can result in incomplete submittals and iterative review cycles.**



- **Planner/Small City/Portland Metro:** Applicants will submit plans of low quality, which adds to timelines.

**Frequent and evolving state requirements demand ongoing updates to local development standards, processes, and staff training.**

- **Building Official/County Government/Eastern Oregon:** Legislation changes are adding more complexity, and it's "hard to hit a moving target."

***Discussion Question 3:** What measures has your jurisdiction put in place to facilitate residential development review and permitting that have been most helpful?*

**Providing forms and checklists makes requirements clearer to applicants.**

- **Planner/Small City/Portland Metro:** Forms and checklists are helpful to get people further along in the early stages of project planning and to be clear about what requirements are needed for the project to get approved.

**Other mentions** not related to discussion questions:

**Manufactured homes mortgage financing and need for permanent foundations.**

- **Building Official/County Government/Eastern Oregon:** Mortgages for home loans require permanent foundations. The "type of lot" changes foundation needs. Mortgage lending on manufactured homes can only take place on "real property" and requires a permanent foundation.



# Summary of Developer Focus Groups

## Participant Groups

The focus groups were designed to engage two primary stakeholder groups involved in the residential development review process: regulators and developers.

For the purposes of this study:

- **Regulators** refer to public sector staff and officials responsible for reviewing, permitting, inspecting, and approving residential development. This includes planning, building, public works, and special district staff, as well as others involved in administering development regulations and infrastructure requirements.
- **Developers** refer to private sector development applicants and their development teams—those who are responsible for advancing residential projects through the development process. This includes developers of all housing types, as well as engineers, architects, and consultants to the development industry.

Engagement of both groups allowed the study to capture perspectives from those administering the development review process and those navigating it, providing a more comprehensive understanding of how the process functions across different contexts. This section summarizes the regulator focus groups. A corresponding summary of the developer focus groups is provided [here](#).

## Discussion Topics and Questions

### TOPIC AREAS

The developer focus group discussions were structured around key differences across development types to ensure coverage of the full range of perspectives:

- *Subdivision Developers*
- *Infill/Multiunit Developers*

Topics focused on development review stages, jurisdictional variation, and trade-offs between certainty and speed, allowing participants to speak to challenges, opportunities, and best practices based on their experience.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Within each topic area, participants were asked a consistent set of questions to facilitate comparison across groups in order to identify common themes and differences driven by project type, jurisdictional practices, and development conditions. Participants were asked the following questions:

- *What parts of the development review and permitting process have created the greatest challenges for your developments?*



- *Are there jurisdictions where things run (more) smoothly? What do you think makes things work better there?*
- *Which is more important to you in improving development review processes, increasing certainty or speed?*
- *How often is coordination between various departments and/or jurisdictions a challenge for your projects?*

These questions were designed to elicit both practical insights and strategic perspectives, with a focus on identifying actionable improvements, persistent barriers, and examples of effective practices that could inform broader application to the study.

## ORGANIZATIONS AND REGIONS REPRESENTED

A major goal of the focus groups was to capture a broad range of experiences, ensuring representation across diverse geographies, jurisdiction size, and housing types. For the developer focus groups, the project team was able to engage with individuals with variation in project scale, development type, and regional context to reflect diverse market and regulatory conditions.

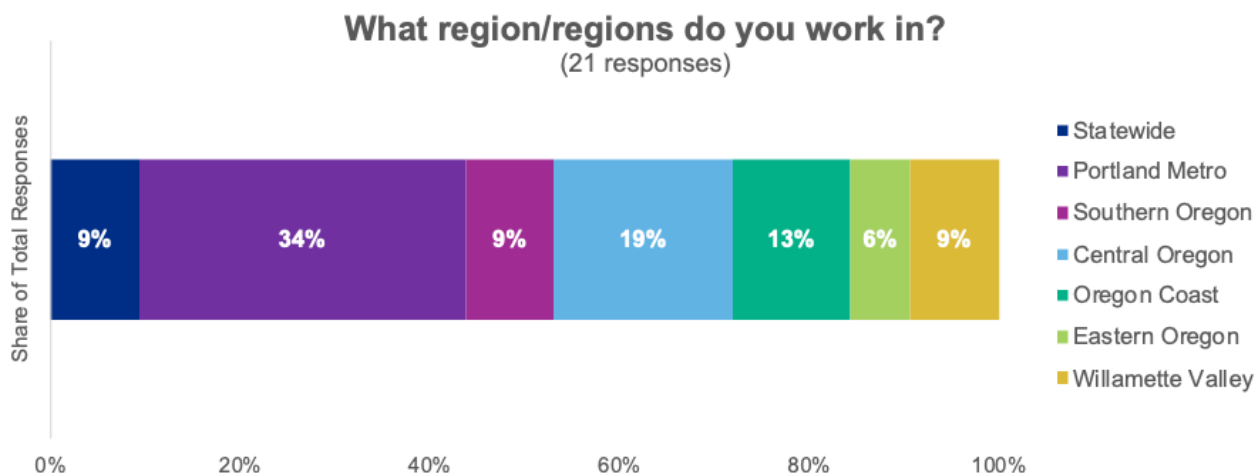
In total, 25 individuals attended the developer focus groups. For each topic area session, we engaged the following number of participants:

- **Subdivision Developers + Teams:** 16 participants
- **Infill/Multi-Unit Developers + Teams:** 9 participants

Among the 25 individuals (21 responded) who attended the developer focus groups, all regions of Oregon were represented. As shown in **Exhibit 3**, the largest share of participants (34%, or 7 participants) reported working in the Portland Metro region, followed by 19% (4 participants) in Central Oregon. Other regions represented included the Oregon Coast (13%, 3 participants), Southern Oregon (9%, 2 participants), the Willamette Valley (9%, 2 participants), and Eastern Oregon (6%, 1 participant). An additional 9% (2 participants) reported working statewide.



**Exhibit 3. Summary of Zoom Polling Results for 'What region/regions do you work in?' for Developer Focus Groups**

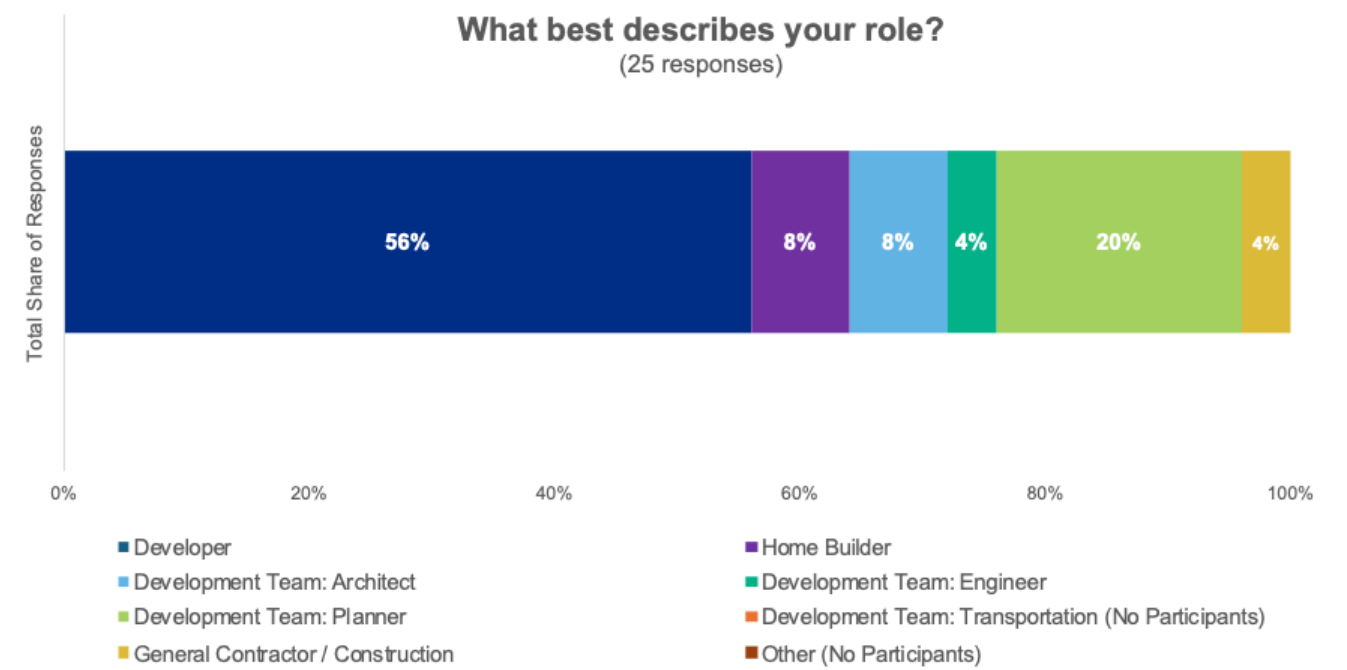


Source: EConorthwest

Participants represented a range of roles within the development process, as shown in **Exhibit 4**. Over half of respondents identified as developers (56%, 14 participants), followed by development team planners (20%, 5 participants). Smaller shares of participants identified as development team architects (8%, 2 participants) and engineers (8%, 2 participants), as well as homebuilders (4%, 1 participant) and general contractors or construction professionals (4%, 1 participant). No participants identified as part of a development team focused on transportation or selected "Other."



**Exhibit 4. Summary of Zoom Polling Results for ‘What best describes your role?’ for Developer Focus Groups**

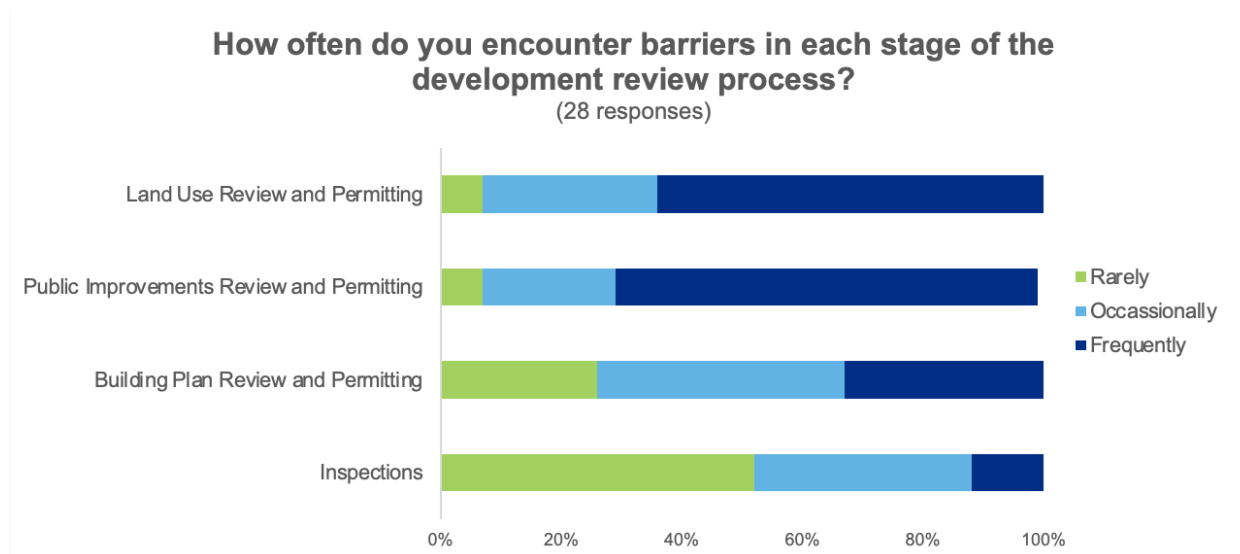


Source: EConorthwest

As shown in **Exhibit 5**, participants reported encountering barriers most frequently during public improvements review and permitting, followed by land use review and permitting. Building plan review and permitting also presented notable challenges, though responses were more mixed across frequency levels. Inspections were least likely to be identified as a frequent source of barriers, with most participants indicating barriers occur only occasionally or rarely at this stage.



**Exhibit 5. Summary of Zoom Polling Results for ‘How often do you encounter barriers in each stage of the development review process?’ for Developer Focus Groups**



Source: EConorthwest

As shown in **Exhibit 6**, participants identified several key priorities for improving the development review and permitting process. The most common themes included the need for faster and more predictable timelines, improved coordination across reviewing departments and agencies, and clearer, more consistent processes.

**Exhibit 6. Summary of Zoom Polling Results for ‘If you could change one thing to improve the development review and permitting process, what would you change?’ for Developer Focus Groups**

**If you could change one thing to improve the development review and permitting process, what would you change?**

(19 responses)

**In summary, we heard:**

- Faster and predictable timelines
- Better coordination across reviewing departments and agencies
- Clearer, simpler, and more standardized processes

Source: EConorthwest



## Summary of Developer Participant Feedback and Themes

### ORGANIZATION OF FINDINGS

This section presents focus group findings in **two** formats: (1) a synthesis of key themes and (2) detailed, unattributed discussion notes. This structure is intended to both highlight the most salient takeaways and provide transparency into how these themes were developed based on participant feedback.

### SYNTHESIS OF KEY THEMES

This section summarizes the key themes identified across developer focus groups. While perspectives varied by development type, housing tenure, jurisdiction, and project context, participants consistently identified several common barriers, opportunities, and successful practices related to residential development review processes. Themes marked with an asterisk (\*) were also identified in regulator focus groups.

#### **Communication, Coordination, and Customer Service\***

Participants emphasized the importance of clear, timely, and consistent communication during development review. Common themes included the need for a single point of contact, clearer completeness review expectations, more reliable feedback during review, and improved coordination among departments, agencies, and special districts. Participants also noted that access to staff relationships and institutional knowledge can influence permitting outcomes.

#### **Regulatory Complexity and Standards Interpretation\***

Participants identified challenges associated with highly prescriptive clear and objective standards, evolving state requirements, inconsistent terminology, and varying interpretations across departments and jurisdictions. MHLD requirements, proportionality and exaction processes, and differences between land use, building, public works, and agency standards were frequently cited as sources of complexity.

#### **Review Timelines, Sequencing, and Predictability\***

Participants consistently identified unpredictable and prolonged review timelines as a major barrier to housing production. Discussions focused on the need for more concurrent review pathways; clearer sequencing between land use, public improvements, final plat recording, and building permits; and reduced delays caused by outside agency reviews or late-stage review comments.

#### **Jurisdictional Variation and Local Review Culture**

Participants noted that development review experiences varied substantially across jurisdictions and, in some cases, across departments within the same jurisdiction. Differences in growth attitudes, staff interpretation, local practices, and willingness to problem-solve shaped project outcomes and affected the predictability of development review.

#### **Infrastructure Requirements, Fees, and Project Feasibility\***

Participants discussed how public improvements requirements, bonding, sign-off processes, development fees, and exactions can affect project feasibility. These issues were especially important for subdivision development, infill projects, affordable housing, ADUs, and projects where infrastructure requirements were difficult to anticipate early in the process.



### Site Conditions and Development Context\*

Participants noted that site-specific conditions often affect the complexity, cost, and timing of development review. Environmental regulations, recently expanded urban growth boundary (UGB) areas, infill constraints, and outside agency reviews were identified as factors that can add process steps and increase uncertainty.

### Staffing, Capacity, and Inspection Availability\*

Participants identified staff capacity, reviewer availability, and inspection timing as factors that can affect review timelines and project completion. These challenges were particularly relevant when delayed inspections, inconsistent reviewer comments, or limited staff availability affected the ability to move projects through final approvals and occupancy.

### Successful Practices and Opportunities for Improvement\*

Across developer focus groups, participants identified several practices that supported more effective development review processes, including single points of contact, accessible and coordinated early assistance, pro-growth and solution-oriented staff approaches, clearer standards and expectations, simpler review processes in some smaller jurisdictions, and better coordination among reviewing departments and agencies.

## Detailed Focus Group Notes by Topic Area

The following section provides detailed, unattributed notes from the focus groups, organized by focus group topic and discussion question. These notes include emerging theme language and summarized participant input, and they are intended to illustrate the range of perspectives that informed the key themes presented above.

### FOCUS GROUP: SUBDIVISION DEVELOPERS + TEAMS

*Discussion Question 1: What parts of the development review and permitting process have created the greatest challenges for your developments?*

#### Lack of clarity on completeness reviews.

- **Homebuilder:** Lack of confidence in completeness review.
- **Private Sector Planner/Portland Metro, Central Oregon, and Oregon Coast:** Completeness review letters that point out additional delays/requirements.
- **Developer/Portland Metro and Statewide:** Completeness review issues.
- **Homebuilder:** Incomplete letters.

#### Delayed and inconsistent feedback during reviews.

- **Developer:** In many jurisdictions, some staff won't provide helpful feedback to aid in the delivery of your project. Sometimes you have to be a mind reader to figure out what the planner/staff is really looking for—and staff says they're so busy, but they want another layer of review.



- **Private Sector Planner/Portland Metro, Central Oregon, and Oregon Coast:** Sometimes you get a notice from the jurisdiction that they found some additional requirement, and your plans have to be resubmitted; could have been addressed through a conditional approval.
- **Private Sector Planner/Portland Metro, Central Oregon, and Oregon Coast:** Requirements change midstream. Pre-application meeting—developers can hardly take these requirements at face value because by the time they're done, things have changed.
  - Another timeline problem: These applications can stall for so long that the code changes before you get to approval, and then you have to redesign things to meet the new code. We just had to redesign a stormwater facility in Salem and lost about 4 months because the code changed mid-review process.
- **Private Sector Planner/Portland Metro and Statewide:** Better collaboration between staff and applicants - varies by jurisdiction and relationships. Trying to avoid being litigious, so planners/reviewers might be more nitpicky since 2020. Some planners/reviewers are very by the book, might deem incomplete for missing one thing vs. call to say "You're missing one thing" and get it resolved. May stem from communities that have become more appeal ready - the public seems more riled up.
- **Developer/Portland Metro, Central Oregon, and Oregon Coast:** Need to get into a room and have a conversation and stop hiding behind the reviews.

**Highly prescriptive clear and objective standards can make compliance more complex and limit design flexibility.**

- **Private Sector Planner/Metro, Central Oregon, and Oregon Coast:** It's more expensive to develop concept plans and homes that meet the code. We have to address many different standards. There are individual jurisdiction requirements that are also quite problematic. Jurisdictions point to metro and the state.
- **Homebuilder:** The slow part is the land use - not just completeness but having to address the code that's being written these days used to be a simple planning exercise. But now it's way more complex. The codes for expansion areas are so detailed and so specific - have to have consultants for every element of the process. The requirements almost take the developer out of the picture - creativity is gone - can't just provide what the market needs/now it's almost like what they want. It is very hard to understand across different jurisdictions. I understand that it's in service of getting more housing, etc. But the West Hills is the best-looking neighborhood - but they are struggling to meet requirements of variety.
- **Homebuilder:** Hillsboro is seeing tons of increased architectural standards. Makes it impossible for those deals to pencil. Had to redesign an entire neighborhood in south Hillsboro because did not want front-loaded homes; that is how we make deals pencil. Thinks this pressure is coming from the city. It's "social engineering," but products do not meet demand. Houses on alleys - didn't want front-loaded homes.
- **Developer/Portland Metro and Statewide:** Design standards.
- **Developer:** Currently middle housing is a roadblock, but also design.
- **Developer/Portland Metro and Statewide:** Code complexity.



- **Homebuilder:** Have seen a lot of change. The complicated layers of approval necessary coupled with a need for more collaboration to help developers get projects built. Used to experience a more collaborative attitude to get projects built. A few are more collaborative and want to get development going. Has to come from top down at city level, can't regulate it.
  - The amount of proof needed to validate a project is large.
  - A developer who works in Metro and Central Oregon: Engineering requirements on the front end; now become an infrastructure project/process, not a land use project/process.
- **Developer/Central Oregon:** Silverton has an annexation moratorium, which causes issues. Additionally, there are some clear and objective standards that are "impossible to meet." Standards outlined in the zone change process require you to go through the full design review process without knowing if the project will actually result in a zone change for the project to move forward. Misalignment with timing of developer process and needed timing for permitting.
- **Developer/Metro, Central Oregon, and Oregon Coast:** Developers are the experts - City is not. Let the experts do their job. And let the reviewers check the box. Trust the accredited engineers.

#### **No single point of contact for projects during review.**

- **Developer/Portland Metro:** Planning staff see their role as protecting the code instead of making projects work. We want to be partners with municipalities. One accountable coordinator across city departments for approvals on housing developments would help. These themes have an impact on cost; the longer things take and standards are set, the less affordable housing becomes. Timing delays are common.
- **Developer/Portland Metro:** Various departments talk to each other, but they only care about their department (planning, engineering, etc.). There is no one person to go to to resolve the issue - the conflicts between departments are just left to the developers to figure out - ideally there is a project champion. They provided an example of a discrepancy between departments pertaining to the capacity of a site - allowed us to inspect for \$100k, said there was capacity for 600 units, we lost 2 years and a lot of money.

#### **Conflicting standards and terminology across departments, agencies, and jurisdictions.**

- **Private Sector Planner/Metro, Central Oregon, and Oregon Coast:** Jurisdiction's development codes can conflict with its engineering design manuals. They use the dev code to design their subdivisions. Sometimes dev code says one thing and the engineering design manual another.
- **Developer/Central Oregon:** Land use has gotten involved in other processes; scope creeping into site work and building code - they used to be more separate.
- **Developer/Metro, Central Oregon, and Oregon Coast:** Definition for living space not clear and changes by jurisdiction.

#### **Lack of concurrent reviews impacts project feasibility.**

- **Developer/Portland Metro, Central Oregon, and Oregon Coast:** There are timeline issues - the clock doesn't seem to act. Timeline - What are the REAL timelines?
- **Developer:** Experiencing lots of variance in approval processes. Plan approval is quick, but city requirements and water/stormwater calculations have caused bottlenecks. If stormwater



calculations are off, getting engineers to respond properly takes months. If two or three issues are stacked, how do we get it approved?

- **Follow-Up Question:** Where are you running into specific issues?
  - Cottage home project, city-approved project. Plumbing to each dwelling needed approval of the county, then sent to the state. The state doesn't like the plans approved by the city, so we are back with engineers.
- **Developer:** Site development and building review process happens simultaneously. Can put internal processes on roadblocks. Preventing moving site development forward; and getting the funding connected to that. Want to get site development moved forward - releases funding for some of the project (horizontal). Adds so much more time.
  - **Follow-Up Question:** *You want to start building those horizontal pieces before the vertical?*
    - Yes, there's a few jurisdictions who have allowed us to do horizontal before the building review is approved.

#### **Unpredictable and prolonged review timelines increase project risk and costs.**

- **Developer/Portland Metro, Central Oregon, and Oregon Coast:** Timing is make or break for developers and projects to the point where local builders are close to going out of business; there is no timeline review max for public works review.
- **Developer/Portland Metro:** The longer things take and the more standards are set, the less affordable housing becomes. Timing delays are common.
- **Developer/Portland Metro, Central Oregon, and Oregon Coast:** "Will never develop in Portland ever again—it took 4 years to get a subdivision permitted."
- **Private Sector Planner/Portland Metro, and Central Oregon:** Electronic portals for permits - the revisions process has completely delayed the entire process - the fact that someone could review the permit quickly, and if someone waits until the last minute, it doesn't go back out until the last person has signed off.
- **Developer/Metro, Central Oregon, and Oregon Coast:** The staff capacity excuse kills me because 80% of the work that city staff are doing is unnecessary work, which means the meaningful work can't happen timely and costs go up for the jurisdiction. Meanwhile, our work and delays also skyrocket. If we can streamline all of these processes, the jurisdictions win as much as we do. I keep hearing more and more about how easier it is in other states, and the running joke has been, When are we moving? And it's becoming less and less of a joke. Get out of our way, or we'll all move and Oregon will be stuck with DRH & Lennar.

#### **High and disproportionate fees increase project costs and reduce feasibility.**

- **Developer:** They are not affordable because of all the delays and fees. Their revenue generating—they do not care about affordable housing if they don't realize the funding implications and how their processes/fees don't align.



- **Private Sector Planner/Metro, Central Oregon, and Oregon Coast:** Some are jacking up adjustment fees. Beaverton has a 10 percent adjustment that is 20k? Six-lot subdivision application could cost less than an adjustment fee.
- **Developer/Portland Metro, Central Oregon, and Oregon Coast:** Started project in December of 2023—10-house cottage cluster—want to charge \$290,000 to remove the trees.

**Private utility companies can contribute to timeline delays, as they are not subject to local or state timeline requirements.**

- **Private Sector Planner/Portland Metro and Central Oregon; Developer and Developer/Metro, Central Oregon, and Oregon Coast:** PGE – all franchise utilities are causing major delays. They do not have timelines. And if they say they have timelines, they never follow it. No accountability.
- **Homebuilder:** Timelines; at state level requiring infrastructure plans to be reviewed within a certain time. Have projects halfway under construction without a lighting plan from the utility company; now it'll be required before engineering starts. Need to go through Type I approval to switch out the type of trees for planting in the development and \$750 fee.
  - **Follow-Up Question: Do some jurisdictions require this?**
    - A letter saying they could provide services to the site was not sufficient—they wanted the plans done. To get the work order to design the plan for the utility company takes a long time; 3-month lead time.
- **Developer/Portland Metro, Central Oregon, and Oregon Coast:** PGE took forever – Feb to August for the PGE review. Six months to get designed. Washington County – street light district review – requires additional review time – no timeline.

**Coordination challenges and conflicting standards between local jurisdictions, special district agencies, and/or private utility companies.**

- **Developer:** 41 lots out in Washington County – Clean Water Services in Washington County is a barrier and held up the project.

**The proportionality and exaction process can be difficult to plan for.**

- **Developer:** Direct proportionality and exaction process. What are the developer's impacts and fair for them to provide off-site? What is the best measure? Projects don't get built because they are financially infeasible. Solution: If you allow permission to donate lands (ROW, park land) as an incentive to do it, rather than exacting, those tax benefits could encourage development.

**Sign-off, accountability, and bonding requirements for final construction.**

- **Developer/Central Oregon:** In Corvallis – Delayed on getting sign-off on our final plat because the drain cleanouts needed a concrete collar around them, which needed to get ripped out anyway because of new sidewalks that needed to be put in.
- **Developer/Portland Metro, Central Oregon, and Oregon Coast:** Tacking things onto conditions of approval so things can move forward.



- **Homebuilder:** Iterations with bonding can be a difficult process – can be different from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. In one jurisdiction, plat was recorded but performance bond wouldn't be released until sidewalks, trees, and curbs were in. Some jurisdictions will allow for remaining improvements to come later. They had to be in place the whole time and now have to submit a maintenance bond (Sherwood).
- **Homebuilder:** Paving for 55-lot subdivision now – should be done and signed off in next 30–45 days. Planting plan submitted with land use approval from jurisdiction's list. With time of year, I can't get those particular trees. Asked to substitute other trees on the city list, and being told to pay and go through Type I approval to change trees.

#### **Frequent and evolving state requirements changing local development standards and processes.**

- **Developer:** Cities lack staff, time, and funds to adopt model ordinances (smaller communities). In a few cities where we own development land, the cities don't have a planned development process. No way to modify to provide a range of housing products. Solution: Help smaller communities adopt model development ordinance.
- **Private Sector Planner/Portland Metro, and Statewide:** Couple of solutions-based thoughts: Staff training on newly adopted legislative changes may help with process/procedures delays, staff training on proportionate exactions, and better pre-app notes that lead to less incompleteness letters may also help.
- **Developer/Central Oregon:** Silverton – it's a revolving door for the city engineer (staff turnover).
  - o How often is coordination between various departments and/or jurisdictions a challenge for your projects?
  - o Have had very helpful pre-application meetings. However, a lot of things can change and fall apart between the pre-application meeting and the final land use permit.

#### **Final plat recording can create permitting delays due to sequencing constraints.**

- **Developer/Portland Metro, Central Oregon, and Oregon Coast:** Jurisdictions need to use Docusign—it's safe and official. A notarized signature and plat document take up too much time. Bought a permit that was nearly ready to build.
- **Developer:** The physical signing of plats and printing the plats on mylar and plat notes and font changes/plat notes between jurisdictions and others that take weeks to get everybody to sign across all the different agencies to record.
- **Developer:** Plat recording, addressing, and building permit timing is a barrier. No concurrent processes.
- **Developer/Central Oregon:** Same, the process is too complex and different everywhere you work.

#### **Extended and more complex development review processes are often necessary for sites subject to environmental regulations.**

- **Homebuilder:** Agrees on the local side of wetland permitting. An idea years ago was to establish wetland banks. Usually county approvals. Exit is difficult. Build mostly in Portland Metro and Central Oregon.



- **Developer:** You are usually trying to get an ecological lift on farmland. Need endowment to take care of a wetland bank long term, many are not interested in that.
- **Developer:** Wetland process for statewide development needs looking at. The wetland process in Oregon constrains the supply of development land. Have to avoid low-quality wetlands. Limited wetland credits; if you want on-site mitigation, you need to build three silver dollar wetlands for the one that you have impacted. All land within UGB (a significant portion in Willamette Valley) is impacted by wetlands.
  - **Follow-Up Question:** Anything on the local side?
    - **Developer:** When submitting a permit, you are required to get a land use compatibility statement from local jurisdiction. Some planners are participatory, and others will not help. It depends on when you reach out; we try to run them concurrently since both have long lead times. Approvals may be objective, can help move forward. The planner might say without approvals, they can't sign the permit.

#### **Development in recently expanded UGB areas often involves added complexity, which can affect permitting and review processes.**

- **Developer/Portland Metro:** UGB expansion projects are typically large, 500–700 units. Cities' codes are trying to mandate housing type, floor plan, and variety (OHNA Contextualized Housing Need). Codes are so prescriptive; they create subdistricts with a certain number of units for each type. The code is not aligned with the units that the market wants or the units that are financially feasible. Is this locally driven subsection, or is it a housing mix requirement being pushed on them by the state? City says they're being pressured by the state; planning firm/attorney say that's not true. No single housing type can be more than 60% of the net development area. SF lot > TH lot - end up with more THs than can be absorbed. Reduced SF detached we can build. Tried to get creative and do smaller detached SFs of different widths, but the city/code treats these as one type and they hit that 60% threshold. Some [requirements] are just because they want variety. We can exceed required density but nearly impossible to reach the variety they are looking for. On one project, we are on site plan #58. "They are mandating the market." Do not believe mandating variety is appropriate.
- **Homebuilder:** Agree strongly with (above comments), in line with (earlier) comments about code complexity in expansion areas.

#### **Varying approaches to MHL D regulations across jurisdictions.**

- **Homebuilder:** As far as middle housing, we can do land use approval and overlapping subdivision all in the same application. One jurisdiction allows MHL Ds to be reviewed concurrently with subdivision applications; some require separate land use approval.
  - Standard subdivision land use application with overlapping portion that allows for middle housing land division – more feasible for middle housing development.
- **Developer:** Currently middle housing is a roadblock. But also, sometimes there's just a lot to be reviewed.

#### **Differences in growth attitudes across jurisdictions shape different review experiences.**



- **Homebuilder:** Believes the anti-growth culture is coming from staff or city council/planning directors in the past 10 years ago. Incomplete letters; want more direction on what is wrong with the application.
- **Homebuilder:** Believes pro-growth attitude is coming from staff more than city council. Land use is highly complicated; can get push back on both big and small projects; sense that developers are the bad guy.

***Discussion Question 2:** Are there jurisdictions where things run (more) smoothly? What do you think makes things work better there?*

**A single point of contact was associated with improved coordination.**

- **Developer/Metro, Central Oregon, and Oregon Coast:** Gresham - smaller subdivision - they have someone in their engineering department who is moving the project forward. Taking ownership of the project, keeping track of the permit, providing updates, and reaching out to outside.
- **Developer/Metro, Central Oregon, and Oregon Coast:** Start to finish, a 40-lot subdivision in Hurricane, Utah - they have one planner and one engineer. Cottage cluster in Portland - still no approval.

**A pro-growth approach from local staff helped move projects forward.**

- **Developer/Metro, Central Oregon, and Oregon Coast:** Culture is huge. Dallas has a good attitude. It felt like a team effort.
- **Private Sector Planner/Metro, Central Oregon, and Oregon Coast:** Generally, has not had good communication between departments and believes communication is the primary problem. Even when communication is there, it takes so long to get a response (people working from home, not responding to emails, etc.); takes much longer than it used to.
- **Developer/Metro, Central Oregon, and Oregon Coast:** Albany staff have an attitude of wanting to get to yes - and get out of the way. They have great staff coordination. Forest Grove is similar.
- **All:** Oregon City, Forest Grove, Albany, Gresham, and Springfield for their availability, and get to a "yes" attitude.
- **Developer:** Experiencing a lot of variance in the approval process - mostly getting through building plan approval quickly, but city requirements have caused a lot of glitches:
  - Water, stormwater calculations - getting engineers to respond and get back through it with the city can take months.
  - When some level of discretion, leniency; how do we get to go?

**Smaller cities mentioned as having simpler review processes.**

- **Developer/Metro and Central Oregon:** [Engineering requirements on the front end; now become an infrastructure project/process, not a land use project/process] Outside of PDX and



Bend, the process is easier. A lot of small jurisdictions seem to do things the simpler, old way - land use processes are simpler and easier.

***Discussion Question 3:** Which is more important to you in improving development review processes, increasing certainty or speed?*

**Clarity is more important.**

- **Developer/Portland Metro and Statewide:** Certainty.
- **Homebuilder:** Certainty and clarity; developers must have certainty.
- **Developer/Portland Metro:** Certainty- look to increase market-rate housing with some level of certainty; working on one project for 3 years.
- **Private Sector Planner/Metro, Central Oregon, and Oregon Coast:** Increase certainty might mean longer code, but not sure how to increase speed without more certainty - tough question.

**Speed is more important.**

- **Developer/Portland Metro and Central Oregon:** Speed.
- **Developer/Central Oregon:** Lean toward speed.

**Other mentions** not related to discussion questions:

**HAPO**

- **Developer/Portland Metro:** Hopefully, HAPO can solve these issues [on different and unclear standards, but HAPO is a pretty new organization; unsure exactly how they help us.
- **Homebuilder:** HAPO was very responsive to one of their complaints but ultimately were not really able to help; indicated it would ultimately take a lawsuit to resolve.
- **Private Sector Planner/Metro, Central Oregon, and Oregon Coast:** Has done lots with HAPO - they're great, enjoy working with them - but the jurisdictions are questioning HAPO's authority.

**Modular Construction**

- **Developer:** Modular construction, working with OHCS - very replicable, simple design, siting is simple.

**FOCUS GROUP: INFILL DEVELOPERS + TEAMS**

***Discussion Question 1:** What parts of the development review and permitting process have created the greatest challenges for your developments?*

**No single point of contact for projects during review.**

- **Engineer/Eastern Oregon:** It's a collective issue - from start to finish you interface with hundreds of people; incremental everything issue; public works - series of departments - every agency is different. Planning has multiple entities; building has different divisions. Global slowdown - everybody in their own silos on their work and they take longer - incremental delay. Everyone



maybe just takes a little longer, but cumulatively it adds up. Solution: Hire a permit coordinator - someone the private world can have as a point of contact who is connecting all the dots. People are hard to get a hold of; having to reach out to a lot of different people is hard. That is the biggest need - people come together. Time is important in every single project.

- **Developer/Portland Metro:** Individual practiced a bit in the city of Oakland, CA. They have a permit point person that you submit your application with. They are then your point of contact with any general question. They are also aware of where your permit is in review and how long it's taken in various silos. It really helped streamline the permit review process from the outside, and I'm sure it also helps them track where they are lacking in the process.

#### **Highly prescriptive clear and objective standards can make compliance more complex and limit design flexibility.**

- **Architect/Central Oregon:** Standards are overly prescriptive; engineering department requirements and standards are hard to meet. The only thing I care about in a pre-app anymore is what the engineering department is going to say because it will make or break my project.

#### **Varying approaches to MHL D regulations across jurisdictions.**

- **Developer/Portland Metro:** Condo can be more beneficial vs. MHL D - same building but sometimes different requirements - e.g., meter equivalency (discount for condo, not for MHL D).
- **Developer/Portland Metro:** Condo is cheaper than other options for middle housing.
- **Private Sector Planner/Portland Metro:** After preliminary MHL D plats go to final plat, sometimes get comments from reviewers that weren't involved asking why utilities placed like this. Extra coordination to show why things were set up that way. Holds up plat recording and improvement.

#### **The proportionality and exaction process can be difficult to plan for.**

- **Developer/Portland Metro:** Challenges arise with public works - identify a lot for development, have to move quickly, no idea what dedication requirements will be for that project. Can set up a 15-minute meeting with transportation to share the requirements, but they never end up being what they say. The dedication sometimes results in unfeasibility because it results in having to dedicate 15% of the lot. Appealed twice and took it all the way to the City attorney, who agreed, but was 2 months later and money was wasted on two appeals.
- **Developer/Portland Metro:** Infrastructure, infrastructure, infrastructure. It kills so many infill projects. Especially when they are small infill like quadplexes.
- **Developer/Portland Metro:** Willingness to put excessive financial demands (e.g., build new road, underground utilities, put in new water main) - no awareness or concern for how expensive it is on the city size. No sense of impact for nonprofit affordable housing development. Put the financial burden of public work on the development, and that is why the people.
- **Private Sector Planner/Oregon Coast:** A lot of issues with public works standards and right-of-way dedications are hurting middle housing feasibility. Major infrastructure and road dedications still being hooked to middle housing projects (60' wide public street dedication). Talking to housing production about it. They're aware but stay in their lane.



- Infill projects are infill projects for a reason. Typically, lacking infrastructure or requiring extensive utility/frontage improvements, right-of-way dedication or easements from adjacent property owners. If agencies do not support these projects with participation or lowering standards, these sites will remain undeveloped within the UGB forever.
- **Private Sector Planner/Oregon Coast:** Minor arterial classification to major arterial; changing arterial standards, as a result lost 4,000 square feet of developable space on a 12,000-square-foot lot. No eminent domain, no payment for this land. You don't get paid, but you need to put in all of the public infrastructure and maintenance of it.
- **Private Sector Planner/Oregon Coast:** Row houses - requires 6 new laterals - run a single lateral through the property and will run along a driveway/utility easement in the back. The city didn't want to allow it; they wanted it to come. But if they wanted to do a middle housing land division, then they were willing to be flexible with the utilities. But as a row house, it needed to look a certain way and utilities needed to go through the arterial.
- **General Contractor/Eastern Oregon:** Once you're dealing with PW, there are so many requirements - stormwater, electrical, vaults, etc.; if there is an off-site requirement that can really slow it down; complexity across codes across jurisdictions - hard to implement.
- **Private Sector Planner/Oregon Coast:** Coastal towns - difficult to get any public works out of those jurisdictions - like pulling teeth to get things from public works/engineering. Getting anything from civil work is almost impossible - not planning but public works.

#### **Frequent and evolving state requirements changing local development standards and processes.**

- **Private Sector Planner/Portland Metro:** A lot of developers want to jump in with new legislation, trying to apply for new processes while jurisdictions are still learning it and trying to get them implemented at the same time. It has created a stop and go through land use entitlement process.
- **Private Sector Planner/Portland Metro:** Acknowledgment that cities have a lot to implement, but also city staff aren't working with developers trying to navigate the changing environment - implementation process has been a struggle.
- **Private Sector Planner/Portland Metro:** Cities are creating processes while people are trying to use them.
- **Private Sector Planner/Portland Metro:** Jurisdictions not updating municipal code to reflect ordinances that have passed or legislation that's in effect. Causes some hiccups. Or current planning staff aren't aware of or keeping track of code changes and/or legislative changes. Sometimes things come up later because of code that was updated but not flagged initially; can result in changes to process in the middle of a permit.
- **Private Sector Planner/Oregon Coast:** Our planning department is really working hard to make things better. We also have a number of people dedicated to various things (middle housing, business, etc.), but they don't really have much say in changing things to improve the permitting process based on what they are hearing from the public.



- **Private Sector Planner/Oregon Coast:** Grants Pass - run really differently than any other city (administers things for the unincorporated areas in Grants County). Has also had a lot of turnover.

#### **Delayed and inconsistent feedback during reviews.**

- **Architect/Central Oregon:** Review cycles take place, and no comments take place. And then in the second review, get comments last minute on things that haven't changed. This happens often on the last steps and causes things to start over and add delays. Has happened on the very last step where just calculating fees but update plan review and have to do some things over- feels like they're changing their minds, finding things they missed. Don't know what to expect. Never feel like a project is really safe and correct until totally done and final - feels like working in quicksand.
- **Developer/Portland Metro:** Lack of transparency and lack of accountability of the review process.
- **Developer/Portland Metro:** 90% round got 200 new comments on the second part - on the public works permit.
- **Developer/Portland Metro:** Check sheet process requires everyone to respond before you can submit corrections. Plan review is very short-staffed, one reviewer part time to review check sheets - was a month and a half behind due date. Does them in order received.
- **Architect/Central Oregon:** Local jurisdiction continually changes their mind, finding things they missed. Don't know what to expect, and they don't do a complete review. "We missed this" and "we missed this." You never know what to expect- feel like a project is really safe and correct until totally done and final; feels like working in quicksand.
- **Developer:** They've asked for deferrals or requests that don't seem unreasonable, but the city staff don't seem to comprehend the question. They are focused on checking boxes instead of understanding the consequences of delays (AH can pull some strings - call the mayor = they say they want these things so).
- **Architect/Central Oregon:** But can't have a committee make every decision - have to empower people to make decisions. Deadline helps, but there needs to also be review accountability so you don't have partial reviews to meet a deadline.
- **Developer:** Completeness review and iteration of finding new issues each time.

#### **Access to relationships and institutional knowledge influences permitting outcomes.**

- **Developer/Portland Metro:** Faster permits have monetized permit expediting for City of Portland - indicates there's a problem with Portland permitting and requires special knowledge to navigate.
- **Private Sector Planner/Oregon Coast:** Ex-Portland city planners have created an opportunity as an ex-employee to navigate the permitting process as consultants. And why does Faster Permits have access to a City of Portland system that the rest of us don't get?
- **Developer/Southern Oregon:** "Good old boy" network - hired an architect in the clique has helped them - only one community that is problematic - done unnecessary things - example



was CFEC overlay in an area after developer had acquired the site - held that design to a higher standard, that area didn't meet the requirements for a CFEC, so the city went "above and beyond" to hurt the project.

- **Developer/Southern Oregon:** The person with good relationships helps smooth the way; they don't have to start from scratch each time - repetition and experience really helps - they know what is acceptable and submit the same project over and over again. (Exclusively funds AH projects under 60% AMI - cities know they're required to build these projects.)
- **Developer/Southern Oregon:** Architect and owners reps are chummy and buddy-buddy with the right people - helps grease the wheels.
- **Developer/Portland Metro:** A company has monetized Portland's review process - Faster Permits.

#### **Pre-application comments are often incomplete, nonbinding, and subject to change.**

- **Private Sector Planner/Portland Metro:** Pre-applications will get info to get going but sometimes change things down the road (e.g., for middle housing land divisions) - can mean redesigning lots and utilities.
- **Private Sector Planner/Oregon Coast:** A lot of the city required mandatory pre-app and comments that are not giving you anything important. Still have to chase down the departments to get comments in writing.
- **Developer:** Pre-application meetings - they've had these, too, and they follow the pre-applications suggestions but still hit the "never mind we want this" whiplash - causes resubmittals and even starting over.

#### **Unpredictable and prolonged review timelines.**

- **Developer/Portland Metro:** Public works timelines - took 30 months to get public works permit.
- **Developer:** Eugene is challenging process timelines, but they seem to be nutso - takes a ton of coordination - 12 meetings just to coordinate on a critical path.

#### **Conflicting attitudes, standards, and terminology across departments and agencies.**

- **Developer/Portland Metro:** Got conflicting standards: driveway from PBOT vs. driveway from fire - last-minute redesign that cost 6 figures.
- **Architect/Central Oregon:** The planning department in Bend has been really progressive and aggressive about the amount of infill projects that are available on the table. Not all the departments in Bend are as progressive. Engineering is difficult to deal with, as they are not as progressive as the planning department, which results in delays.

#### **Misaligned financing and permitting timelines can create challenges for affordable housing development.**

- **Developer:** Lots of subdivisions with AH developments - consultants and design teams map out a process to get a subdivision through, but it takes way longer than expected - some jurisdictions are worse than others.



- **Developer:** Takes a year, planning it out, still takes longer than expected. And with AH financing it becomes a huge issue.

#### **Outside agency reviews can create delays outside local permitting control.**

- **Private Sector Planner/Oregon Coast:** Utility districts (like Pacific Power) cause holdups. Pacific power doesn't participate in any pre-app or any other meetings. Change of policies on the Pacific Power- habit to respond to code language that is not actually in the code.
- **Private Sector Planner/Oregon Coast:** DEQ is cumbersome, but there is accountability in their permitting system and you can see where things are at.

#### **Differences in interpretation between staff or between plan reviewers and inspectors.**

- **General Contractor/Eastern Oregon:** Review, correction, inspector will sometimes say, "I am not sure how they approved this." Why does this happen? When they catch something after failing to catch it later, sometimes they don't even acknowledge it. They definitely don't say sorry. When an inspector says they don't know how something was approved, it often comes down to interpretation of the requirement.
  - 3 times the individual can recall it, it had to do with fire wall, fire pockets, or fire separation. [A developer] doesn't have great examples of why that happens—there is always a reason, but perhaps it can be extrapolated or generalized.
- **Architect/Central Oregon:** In Bend, inspectors will have different takes than permit reviewers but are more relaxed - can often work things out with the inspectors in the field. On a commercial project with mechanical on the roof. The city said it was visible from the street and wanted a screen around that. Submitted drawings were approved. Inspector says no, too visible/too open, have to redo the screen even though it was previously approved. Last thing reviewed before Certificate of Occupancy (C of O) - held up C of O over the screen that the City has already approved.

#### **Inspection capacity constraints can slow project completion and occupancy.**

- **Developer:** Eastern, OR - Baker, La Grande, Pendleton, Ontario. Specialize in small cottage cluster. Example: Cottage project in Ontario - city subbed out inspections to county for infrastructure part of plumbing to each dwelling; 15 cottages - above county's capabilities, sent to state. State doesn't like plans city approved. Now going back through development review.
- **Developer:** Sequencing of inspections.

#### **Limited distinction between life-safety and minor issues in review processes.**

- **Architect/Central Oregon:** [C of O held up over screen that city has already approved] not a building safety issue. Would be different if a major difference or a life-safety issue, but when hung up over some minor issue many years out, feels like shouldn't be a reason to hold things up. In reality, some things should carry more weight than others. Hard to deal with how frustrating things are. Can be understanding when there's give and take; other people may be more diplomatic. The legal department of Bend is scared of being sued again - very cautious about what-ifs. "Can't make decisions on 100 what-ifs."



- **Architect/Central Oregon:** Arbitrary numbers are causing issues, not life and safety - building and planning and not working well.

#### **ADU development feasibility constrained by unchanged public works requirements.**

- **General Contractor/Eastern Oregon:** Sits on planning commission - they've just reviewed their dev codes - just upped the limit on ADUs from 700 to 1,000; modular or FPH homes are often bigger than 700.
- **General Contractor/Eastern Oregon:** Increased heights from 20 to 25 feet to allow for two stories.
- **General Contractor/Eastern Oregon:** Requiring access through the alleys when the city doesn't plow alleys (on long blocks), let alone plow the streets - in an area that sees snow, this is a big deal - public works dept.
- **General Contractor/Eastern Oregon:** Utilities upgrades or even lot splits can be an issue. NEO ADU website - how to develop ADUs in NE Oregon.
- **General Contractor/Eastern Oregon:** Understanding public works requirements for ADUs is an issue.
- **General Contractor/Eastern Oregon:** Doing stick-built ADUs but had heard about modulars being bigger - hasn't had personal experience with modular ADUs.

#### **Differences in growth attitudes across jurisdictions shape different review experiences.**

- **Architect/Central Oregon:** Redmond bends over backward to help people develop there. Have great documentation of their plans, and document their process, to ensure folks want to develop there. Pre-app meetings included the head of their planning department, and head of their building department and the decision-makers were in the room and willing to make it happen. Approach of "we are here to help you." We have our standards, but the attitude is facilitator and helpfulness.
- **Architect/Central Oregon:** Bend doesn't have the same attitude. They gatekeep. Reviewing boards never have enough time or depth of knowledge to actually make reasonable decisions.

***Discussion Question 2:** Are there jurisdictions where things run (more) smoothly? What do you think makes things work better there?*

#### **A pro-growth approach from local staff helped move projects forward.**

- **General Contractor/Eastern Oregon:** If all staff could be "get to yes" mentality - early and often communication, predictability in timelines.

#### **Accessible, free or low-cost, well-coordinated early assistance that is clearly communicated and cross-departmental.**

- **Private Sector Planner/Oregon Coast:** Medford pre-application and planning application is attended by all the different departments. They hold a zoom meeting that is interactive, and then there are written comments and follow-up contacts. Deadline helps, but there needs to also be review accountability so you don't have partial reviews to meet a deadline.



- **Architect/Central Oregon:** Central Point does it better – public works director – similar to Medford – interactive, too, and learn about that. Get verbal and written comments. Provides opportunity for in-person meetings, which to meet someone face-to-face and have a conversation is helpful and eases the process. Agrees that a pre-application review meeting should include all parties involved in the development process. This only occurs in a few jurisdictions in Oregon.

***Discussion Question 3:** How often is coordination between various departments and/or jurisdictions a challenge for your projects?*

#### **Delayed and inconsistent feedback during reviews.**

- **Engineer/Eastern Oregon:** Global slowdown and folks working in silo.
- **Architect/Central Oregon:** Silo issue – not all other departments are necessarily on board.
- **Private Sector Planner/Portland Metro:** Silos within the department and jurisdictions and not communication – information sharing needs to take place across departments to be comprehensive and consistent.

#### **Differences in interpretation between staff or between plan reviewers and inspectors.**

- **Architect/Central Oregon:** Building and planning not working well. Examples: building department doesn't allow you to put plumbing in a wall because of freezing; when the planning department measures the inside of the wall for total square footage for ADU "living area" and the plumbing wall firing wall isn't included; don't count furring walls for ADUs – 6" strip over 10' adds up to multiple square feet, and every foot matters; planning department states that living space includes any head height above 5 ft, but building code says 7 ft. Building code requires stair up to the level. Were putting storage loft under vaulted roof (lid over bedroom/bathroom to provide some storage space). Too much of loft was >5' and counted as living space even though it didn't meet the standard; no stair or even ladder up to it – have to climb – was told that during the last 30 mins of the permit during the SDC calculation for the permit. Client had deemed loft too expensive and were changing back to trusses – had that all set to go, had to get permit done to submit revisions, were going to submit same day. Were told had to redesign to get the permit. No give at all in the process. The solution proposed was turning it into a duplex, which is a completely different process, and did not consider how different those processes are.
- **Architect/Central Oregon:** In Bend, Inspectors will have completely different perspectives and are more relaxed than the plan reviewers. If it can get through permitting, that's the hard part – inspectors are much more reasonable. On commercial project with mechanical on the roof. City said visible from the street, wanted a screen around that. Submitted drawings, was approved. Inspector says no, too visible/too open, have to redo the screen even though it was previously approved. Last thing reviewed before C of O – held up C of O over the screen that the City has already approved. Understanding if it was a life and safety issue, but that was not the case with this. But this is not uncommon: all the trusses and packages done – ready to be built – and then changes of this magnitude stop the process and reset the design and permit process. No concept of the troubles and delays the process creates.



#### Other mentions not related to discussion questions:

- **General Contractor/Eastern Oregon:** Halsey - outsourced review and it took forever due to complexity for the reviewer in that jurisdiction.
- **General Contractor/Eastern Oregon:** PDX - if architects could certify their own reviews, could go lots faster.
- **Developer/Portland Metro:** OTC reviews in San Francisco (of all places) help speed up the review of small projects. It pulls them out of the rest of the review system, helping to speed that up as well.
- **Developer/Portland Metro:** Is aware that the new director of permitting and development in Portland plans to overhaul the review system and make it so each department has to review simultaneously together. I am not entirely sure how that is going to work, but something different will likely be better.

