



# DEVELOPMENT SERVICES STRATEGIC PLAN

City Council Meeting  
August 6, 2024

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# AGENDA

## Development Services Strategic Plan

1. Background
2. Goals
3. Project Approach
4. Key Findings and Issues
5. Strategic Plan Focus Areas & Recommendations
6. Next Steps and Feedback



# Development Services Departments

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**Permit Applications**

≈10,000 per year

**Inspections Performed**

≈45,000 per year

## Planning and Economic Development Department

### Water Department

- Water
- Wastewater
- Stormwater
- Demand fees

### Fire Department

- Access
- Fire protection systems
- Issues fire permits

### Transportation & Public Works Department

- Street design
- Traffic Engineering

### Recreation and Parks Department

- Park design
- Fee credit agreements



# Previous Development Services Challenges

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- Significant Development Services Reorganization in 2009/2010
  - Water and Public Works Engineering teams were merged into Community Development
  - Significant staff reductions due to reduced revenue
- Gradual increase in development through 2014-2017
  - Minor staffing increases
  - Increased use of consultants
- Tubbs Fire Response
- Significant development activity through 2018-Present
  - Staff increases and heavy reliance on professional services (consultants)



# Development Sequence – Large Projects

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**Lead Division**

Planning Division

**Support Divisions and Depts.**

- Engineering Division
- Building Division
- Traffic Engineering (TPW)
- Materials Lab (TPW)
- Water Engineering (Water)
- Stormwater (Water)
- Fire Prevention (Fire)
- Parks Planning (Parks)



**Lead Division**

Differs based on permit type

**Support Divisions and Depts.**

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# Strategic Plan Goals

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- Define and realign development services goals and approaches.
- Develop solutions focused on equipping, empowering, and developing staff.
- Align technology, resource, and organizational needs to provide a predictable customer experience.
- Define strategies to improve development service operations.
- Focus on a 3-year implementation strategy aligning with City Council Goals.



# Project Approach: Input

## Interviews and Data Collection

- Understanding the context and history of Santa Rosa development processes and service levels through staff interviews and employee survey.
- Extensive data collection in each functional area.

## Customer Survey and Focus Groups

- Conducted anonymous survey of prior customers.
- Focus groups and one-on-one conversations with customers.

## SWOC Analysis and Mission/Vision Setting

- Conducted a strengths, weakness, opportunities, and challenges exercise with all staff.
- Completed mission/vision workshop with all staff.



# Project Approach: Analysis Phase

## Best Practices Analysis

- Compared existing operations, technology, performance, and organizational structure to prevailing industry practices.

## Analysis and Recommendations

- Analyzed customer service levels, performance timelines, customer service approaches, communication, collaboration, technology approaches.

## Draft Strategic Plan

- Consolidated interim deliverables into a draft strategic plan and aligned recommendations with Council priorities.





# External Stakeholder Feedback

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1

Conducted online survey and focus groups in June 2023.

2

522 responses received. 46.5% identified as business/home owner.

3

Responses were generally positive.

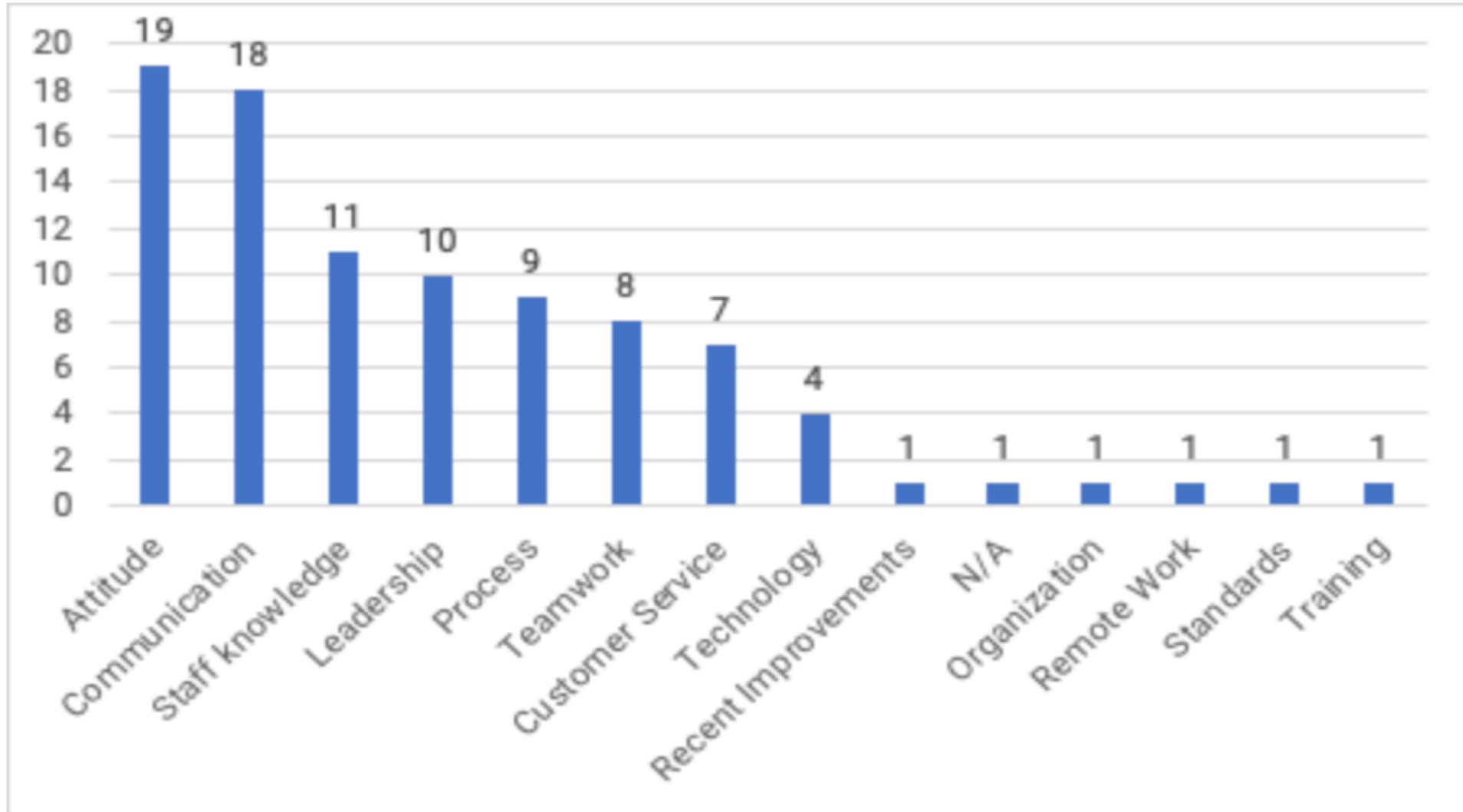
4

Areas of improvement: setting and meeting timeline expectations, information available online, and understanding respective roles in the process.



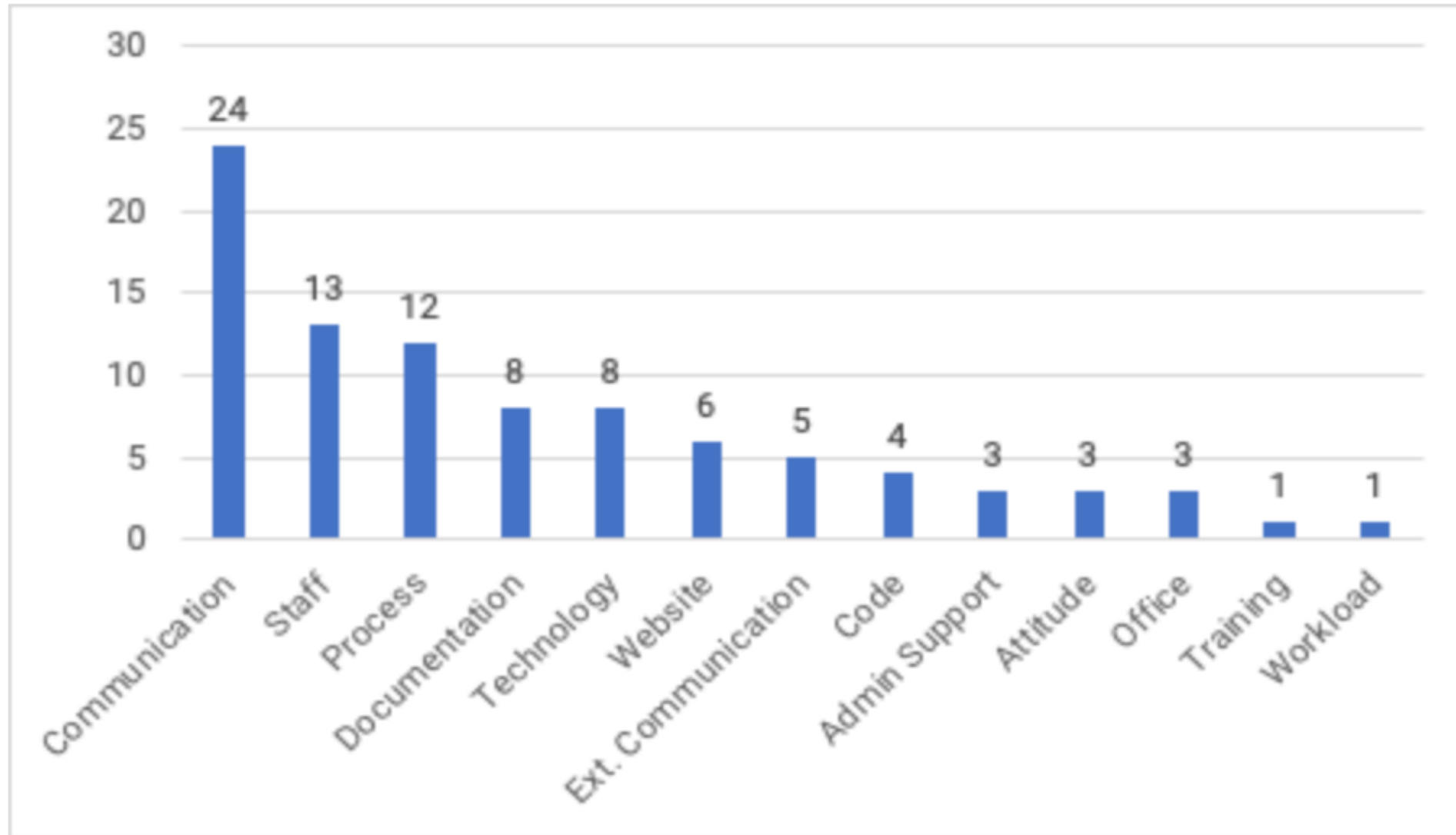
# Internal Staff Feedback - Strengths

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# Internal Staff Feedback - Opportunities for Improvement

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# Key Findings and Issues

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- 1 Significant autonomy between review disciplines.
- 2 Need for a single individual who understands and oversees the entire development review, permitting, and inspection processes.
- 3 Staff have limited understanding outside of their core discipline.
- 4 Technology challenges negatively impacting operations.
- 5 Staff turnover and shifting priorities has limited productivity and lowered staff morale.



# Strategic Plan Focus Areas

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- 1 Unite development service teams around a single operational mission.
- 2 Improve predictability for the public and staff.

- 3 Implement a culture that emphasizes customer service.
- 4 Leverage technology to improve operational efficiencies.



# Key Recommendations - Management (1)

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1

Each review discipline should identify specific approaches to meet strategic plan goals.

2

Establish regularly scheduled functional team and development services all hand meetings.

3

Create training materials that provide an overview of the development review process and roles / responsibilities.

4

Develop and implement succession planning strategies for all teams.

5

Citywide strategic objectives and framework should be set with an understanding of impacts on development services operations.



## Key Recommendations - Management (2)

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6

Establish and monitor performance expectations.

7

Standardized performance reports for internal and external use.

8

Formalized onboarding and in-service training programs.

9

Develop a specific customer service training program and establish customer service expectations.

10

Implement more formalized hybrid work policies to enhance internal collaboration.

11

Review and update zoning and design standards every three years on a rotating basis.



# Key Recommendations - Technology

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1

Create and implement a development services technology master plan.

2

A single person in PED should oversee development service technology platforms with IT staff.

3

Update software and hardware systems to increase operational efficiencies and collaboration.

4

Establish a technology training program.

5

Hire a temporary position to digitize historic development files.





# Key Recommendations – Customer Interaction

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- 1 Create a centralized development webpage.
- 2 Update development services webpages for greater consistency.
- 3 Develop an interactive development project webpage.
- 4 Prepare a comprehensive digital development handbook.
- 5 Modify the approach to the Developer’s Roundtable and hold quarterly meetings.
- 6 Build collaboration between development review functions and Community Engagement Department.



## Next Steps

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- Continue engaging the internal/external stakeholder groups
- Incorporate final comments into draft
- Refine implementation strategy and highlight improvements underway
- Return to Council for adoption prior to the end of the calendar year



# Questions and Feedback

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