

# 2012 Annual Report

## Clark County Community Development

### 2012 – ‘The Second Half Story’



Marty Snell, director

In my retrospect of the past year, I often spend time highlighting the activities, events, and issues of the entire year. It takes awhile as I sit quietly, or not so, recalling from the beginning of the year what noteworthy things happened. My recounting of 2012 will be different in that I will touch only a bit on the first half of

the year and spend more time on the things that occurred in the second half of the year.

At the beginning of 2012, a committee of the Greater Vancouver Chamber of Commerce contacted me about the possibility of making changes to the commercial building permit process. After an initial meeting, Jim Muir, Jon Dunaway and I met with a group of five to six professionals over the course of about four months to development what eventually became the ‘Business Change Only – Certificate of Occupancy’ and ‘Business Move-in Only’ permits. Staff from other areas, namely Susie Davidson and Debbie Weber, provided invaluable assistance in the success of getting these beneficial changes adopted by the Board of County Commissioners. A side note: this work resulted in the Greater Vancouver Chamber of Commerce committee winning a Spirit of Clark County Award.

As the first half of 2012 rolled on, other events transpired. The Weatherization program became more and more a part of the Building Safety program and the department, the ‘fee holiday’ resolution was revised and re-adopted to include a jobs creation threshold, and the year’s construction

season started off strong a little earlier with increased Single-family Residential permits in May and June.

The second half of the year brought more personnel change, a significant project hitting a milestone, and an adopted 2013-2014 budget. On the staffing side, we began two recruitments: a project employee to be the department’s second technology specialist and a permanent Permit Center Manager. These two recruitments led to the appointment of Susie Davidson as the second technology specialist and to the hiring of Chuck Crider as the Permit Center Manager. They both are great additions to the team and I applaud all who were involved in making this staffing change happen. One other staff change: we said a heartfelt ‘Good-bye and Happy Retirement’ to John ‘Jack’ Paradis. After 30+ years at Clark County, Jack hung up his inspection boots for the last time in mid-December.

The most important project I have been pursuing since 2009 has been the replacement of Tidemark. Over the course of the summer months and culminating in late September, a Request for



Commercial space awaiting tenants

Proposals (RFP) was developed and advertised. When the deadline to submit arrived, a total of nine vendors submitted their proposals. Huge kudos go out to Susan Ellinger and Debbie Weber for all their efforts in getting the RFP done and out on the street. I know others were involved with this as well, so I say 'Thank you' to you as well. As this has triggered a considerable amount of work in 2013 for a committee of fifteen, I want to applaud all the staff for the follow-up work and the work to come. I am hopeful that we will have the system replaced by the end of the 2013-2014 budget, which was successfully adopted by the Board in December.

I am sure much else happened in 2012 that I have missed. The effort that staff puts into their work – countless in energy and time – is what I commend every week. To be sure 2013 will be a very busy and different year and I know that we will all be up for the challenges.

### **Clark County Community Development**

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## Animal Protection and Control activity

Animal Protection and Control provides animal services seven days a week to Clark County, the City of Vancouver, and Town of Yacolt, covering over 600 square miles. Average daily call volume asking for some kind of help with animals was 69, jumping between 80 to 100 calls during summer months.

In 2012, our field officers responded to a loose flock of Guinea hens, a dead one ton bison, 60 goats in the road, a giant gecko, 2 angry alpacas, a different herd of 17 alpacas running at large, a micro (teacup) pig, and a turkey loose in the city. They also dealt with a large quantity of reptiles including 70 red-tailed boas, a carpet python, a ball python, 2 reticulated pythons, and two monitor snakes.

Horses and livestock are generally a challenge given the size of the animals, however the winter months were mild in 2012 requiring much less demand for emergency rescues and delivery of donated feed.

The unusual pets of the year were two Texas Longhorn Steer found wandering the streets of Vancouver. The breed can be found in various locations throughout the county. Some steer horns run between 70-80 inches from tip to tip. They are believed to be native to India and the Middle East, bred for their ability to withstand harsh/dry environments. Luckily the officers found their home nearby and talked to the owner about better fencing.

The method of tracking service requests was changed at the beginning of 2011. In 2010, if an officer visited an address multiple times, it was still considered one service request. As of 2011, each visit is considered a separate request. The 20,468 calls for service in 2012 was a 2.6 percent increase. Both licensing and their revenues decreased versus 2011 as the program pulled back on marketing in anticipation of a rebranding campaign in 2013 including online licensing.



Texas Longhorn

The most popular dog names for 2012 were Bella, Buddy, and Molly, while cats were Shadow, Tigger, and Smokey, which are unchanged from 2011.

	2011	2012	% change
Service requests	19,951	20,468	3 %
Pet licenses	32,705	31,941	-2 %
Pet license revenue	\$465,462	\$449,310	-3 %

## Permit Services activity



Staff working on the single-family permit review process

Permit Services had a great year in 2012. Additional staffing resources were brought in to help enhance customer service. Land Use Review, Development Engineering, and Environmental Services have all located staff in the Permit Center to help with questions specific to their disciplines.

Marty Snell, Community Development director, worked closely with Human Resources and the Budget Office in hiring a new Permit Services manager. Chuck Crider was selected and began January 2013. Chuck's focus is on customer service expectations, streamlining processes, and creating a cohesive unit between Building Safety, Land Use Review, and Permit Services.

The department underwent a state audit review in 2012. The results were successful and showed strong operational control among staff and leaders. Changes to the permit center layout have been proposed.

Department managers and an architectural firm developed a design that will include a more visible entrance and reception area. The counters will be remodeled to more comfortably accommodate staff and customers. To create a more open environment, the wall behind the permit counter may be removed. Construction is expected to take place in summer 2013.

Marty Snell attended a conference in mid-2012 where LEAN permit processing was presented to introduce leaders across the state to the concept. The state auditor's office offers a program called the LEAN Academy that provides a consultant to assist departments through the five-day workshop. Jurisdictions were encouraged to apply, however only three would be chosen. Community Development was selected. The LEAN workshop, scheduled the week of January 14, focused on streamlining the single-family residential permit process. Staff worked diligently during the fourth quarter to complete pre-work for the workshop.

<b>Building permits issued</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>% change</b>
Single Family and Duplex	348	577	66%
Residential Addition/ Alteration	571	533	-7%
Commercial	281	281	no change
<b>Valuation</b>			
Residential	\$119M	\$183M	54%
Commercial	\$67M	\$72M	7%

## Land Use Review activity

With casework continuing at low levels, land use review was able to concentrate on some process improvements and administrative projects in 2012. The 60-day development process is now available for some site plan review projects. The process provides concurrent preliminary and final review. This results in construction approval within 60 calendar days if no holds occur during the review process. The 60-day process is an option for applicants with straightforward Type II site plan and post-decision projects where the developer's consultant team wants to work collaboratively with county staff to obtain both preliminary and final review in a significantly shortened timeframe.

To facilitate the expedited timeline, applicants are asked to resolve most land use and technical issues prior to the start of the 60-day timeline. Contact land use review staff to learn more about using this process.

Land Use staff also spent a significant amount of time working to issue a Request for Proposals to replace the county's development related permit tracking system. Over the next few years, this system will help improve many aspects of the development process. You can look forward to the opportunity to submit projects online, utilize electronic plan review, and access convenient online project tracking. We look forward to the opportunity to serve our customers better with more convenient, easy to use tools in a new permit tracking software system.



Land use planner's meeting

Applications received	2011	2012	% change
Appeals	0	3	100 %
Boundary Line Adjustment	40	40	no change
Conditional Use Permit	4	1	-75 %
Misc. Zoning Review	31	49	58 %
Planned Unit Development	0	0	no change
Post Decision Review	22	21	-5 %
Shoreline	8	10	25 %
Site Plan Review	40	39	-3 %
Subdivision/Short Plat	4	4	no change
Variance	8	8	no change

## Building Safety activity

Residential construction steadily increased in 2012 and the trend was more pronounced in the last half of the year. Commercial construction remained steady, but showed little sign of following the residential upswing. Recovery in residential often leads the way and may even contribute to improvements in commercial construction.

In anticipation of upward numbers, Building Safety included positions for two inspectors and one plans examiner in the new budget. Service levels are monitored relative to staffing so we can be responsive to growth and not hinder efficiencies. Other tools, such as temporary staffing and overtime, are used to bridge the gap should the recovery get hotter than predicted.

In 2012, changes were made to the commercial tenant improvement process in conjunction with a work group from the Greater Vancouver Chamber of Commerce. This resulted in subcategories for process clarity, improved service, and relevant fees. We will continue improving processes next year.

The energy efficiency grant program ended October 31. The program tested over 750 duct systems in Clark County homes. Community education was provided through the PlanetClark.com partner program and the mobile display trailer. The public outreach component will continue in a scaled-down format working with our partners.

The Weatherization program continues to serve the community doing qualification audits, arranging for weatherization contractor work, and reviewing for final acceptance. This program will continue to focus on its core services after several busy years providing additional energy services under grants that also ended in the fall.



Plans examiner and building inspector



Verifying plans at job site



Inspecting new construction

	2011	2012	% change
Plan reviews	1,443	1,448	no change
Inspections	22,894	28,545	25 %

## Code Enforcement activity

The slowly improving economic situation in Clark County has resulted in less foreclosed properties being referred to Code Enforcement for property maintenance issues such as tall grass and debris. Banks have had a chance to improve their ability to deal with maintenance issues on properties in foreclosure which has resulted in fewer complaints.

With the improving economy, there has been an upswing in construction occurring without permits as property owners make improvements to already existing structures. Simple improvements such as building porch covers or carports without first obtaining a building permit have been on the rise as property owners once again feel confidence in the economy and attempt to build a better residential situation for themselves.

The economic crisis has not completely disappeared and numerous homeowners and renters are having problems keeping their property clear of garbage or getting vehicles repaired. Some rent rooms within their homes or allow others to live on their property in a trailer for extra money. Others start home businesses in an effort to pay their mortgage. Code Enforcement staff works with these clients to gain compliance with county codes.

Code Enforcement staff has adapted well to their new location and the return of two staff members to full time status.



Before



After

Code violations	2011	2012	% change
Building	276	253	-8%
Fire	1	6	500%
Nuisance	674	652	-3%
Public Works	32	36	13%
Zoning	233	334	43%
Total violations	1,216	1,281	5%
Total cases opened	1199	965	-20%

## Fire Marshal's Office activity

Reporting fire incidents statewide changed in 2011. Due to budget cuts, the Washington State Fire Marshal's Office stopped data collection for this information. As a result, the annual report outlining the fire causes and losses throughout the state is no longer published. With the cooperation of all of the fire departments in Clark County, the Fire Marshal's Office (FMO) took on the task of collecting all fire incident reports beginning in 2012. This is a valuable tool because we can track where local fires are occurring, calculate local fire losses, and develop public education programs for prevention trends when they are identified.

The FMO worked with the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) to re-invent the county's fire and life-safety inspection program. This program currently inspects approximately 25 percent of the county's businesses for fire and building code compliance, focusing on those businesses having potentially hazardous operations or life-safety concerns that warrant closer scrutiny. In 2013, we anticipate holding meetings with stakeholders to discuss who should be inspected, how often the inspections should occur, and what fee amount (if any) should be charged.

In 2012, the BOCC passed an ordinance regarding construction and maintenance of privately owned bridges. The ordinance is designed to address new bridges to assure they are constructed to adequately support the loads of fire apparatus, while at the same time allowing these bridges to be designed and built to a standard less than that required by existing code. It does not require upgrades to existing bridges. However, when a new home is constructed on the



Unstable private bridge

opposite side of a bridge, the ordinance requires either bridge improvements, if required by an engineer's analysis, or installation of fire sprinklers in the new home. The ordinance also calls for ongoing outreach to those who must cross such a bridge to access their homes so they are aware of the obstacle these bridges are to the first responders in the event of an emergency. This was a major victory for the fire service, which is challenged to cross any undocumented bridges with their heavy apparatus. It is also a victory for homeowners because they are now aware of the issues related to privately owned bridges and have choices as to how to deal with one. This project took about two years in partnership with Public Works, the Development and Engineering Advisory Board, the Building Industry Association, realtors, developers, and private sector engineers.

The FMO also continued outreach to share the benefits residential fire sprinklers can provide to protect families and their possessions from fire.

Fire code	2011	2012	% change
Investigations	105	166	58%
Building plan reviews	242	246	2%
New construction inspections	448	661	48%
Fire and life safety inspections	1,273	1,323	4%
Land use planning reviews	84	23	-73%

Fire code plan review	goal	2011	2012	% change
New construction	10 days	5.4 days	4.1 days	-24%