Development Services Department Focus Group Action Plan

COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION	
Focus Group Verbatim Comments: 1. No hidden taxes on businesses. 2. Should have a method to estimate permit fees. 3. Process doesn't make sense. 4. Need predictability for what happens next. 5. Need a way to find old records readily. 6. Can you find property records on-line? 7. Use ENews link. 8. Please have Board of Architects agenda up earlier. 9. Do you have expedited lien search? 10. What to do with open permits? 11. What is the review timeframe when a permit is pulled?	12. To start a home remodeling, could you specify a people (flow) chart? 13. Pamphlet on "Moving to Gables", how to look up permits, closing permits, etc. 14. Homeowners in CG have a disadvantage when compared with major projects. By the time the citizen is involved; don't know when departments reviewed the project. When issue raised by private resident, it's too late. 15. I would like to see a better earlier system for notifying residents before a plan or permit is approved especially like the Miller UM entrance and the new UHealth facility.

| Goal: | To improve the delivery of information to the public. | | |

Action Plan	Responsible Party	Target Completion Date
1. Post on the Planning and Zoning Division's (P&Z) Web page detailed information on the process, review timeframe, flow chart and fees associated with how to open a business in Coral Gables (Comment #1) http://www.coralgables.com/index.aspx?page=1087	P&Z/ Concurrency	Completed
2. Publicize the EDEN's permit estimation tool (Comment #2) https://edenweb.coralgables.com/Default.asp?Build=PM.pmPermit.Estimate1&Mode=ClearBo&BOName=pmPermit	Building	On-going
3. Create and post a flowchart showing how the permit review and inspection process works (Comments #3, 4) http://coralgables.com/Modules/ShowDocument.aspx?documentID=14781	Building	Completed
4. Research the feasibility of allowing direct public access to existing legacy property permit files (Comment #5)	DS/IT	12.31.15
5. Create Web links to the Miami-Dade County Clerk's Web page to search property's official re cords (Comment #6) http://coralgables.com/index.aspx?page=91	Building	Completed
6. Include links to development projects in eNews (Comments #7, 14)	Public Relations/DS	System Setup Completed
7. Post Board of Architects' agenda at least two days before meeting date (Tuesday noontime) (Comment #8, 14)	P&Z	Completed
8. Provide expedited lien search form for the public (Comment #9) http://coralgables.com/modules/showdocument.aspx?documentid=626	Code	Already Provided
9. Create a Web page focusing on specific topics for homeowners,	Building	Completed

perspective home buyers, and Realtors including information, brochures, flow charts and Web page links such as "Moving to Coral Gables," "How to Close an Open Permit?" "How do You Get an After-the-Fact-Permit?" "How to Request an Expedited Lien Search?" etc. (Comments # 9, 10, 11, 12, 13)		
10. Provide timely information to the public on a map that includes all the pending non-single family development projects so the public has a comprehensive view of all the major on-going projects in the City. (Comments # 14, 15) http://cggisw.coralgables.com/cgdevelopment/	P&Z/ED/IT	Completed

OPERATION AND PERFORMANCE	
Focus Group Verbatim Comments: 1. Streamline process. 2. Need a checklist. 3. Suggest checklist for zoning. 4. Suggest walk thru hours. 5. Need to establish benchmarks.	6. What is the review timeframe when a permit is pulled? 7. Need to fast track for maintenance projects. When front line employee cannot move the plans forward, give to ombudsman or Mr. Lopez.

Goals:
1. To decrease the time needed for permitting.
2. To improve the predictability of the permitting process.

Action Plan	Responsible Party	Target Completion Date
1. Institute a pilot program to conduct concurrent review for threshold projects (Comment #1)	Building	System Setup Completed
2. Evaluate a voluntary pilot program for electronic plan review for smaller development projects such as Storefronts. (Comment #1)	Building/IT	12.31.15
3. Upon a 3rd plan rejection, Staff will invite the architect and trade professional to go through the review comments with Staff and plan a course of action for review approval (Comment #1)	Building	Instituted
4. Institute application checklists for various types of building permits (Comment #2) http://coralgables.com/Modules/ShowDocument.aspx?documentID=13134 (BOA) http://coralgables.com/modules/showdocument.aspx?documentid=14330 (Building Permit)	Building	Instituted
5. Institute a pilot program to use the checklist guidelines by Miami-Dade County for all Building Code review trades (Comment #2)	Building	Instituted
6. Institute Zoning Code checklists for frequently sought permits such as fences, pools, etc. (Comment #3)	P&Z	12.31.15
7. Institute a Walk-through Pilot Program for certain types of permits (Downtown Signs, Solar Panels, Storefront) (Comment #4)	Building	Instituted

8. Monitor on a monthly basis all the benchmarks established for each division and included in the FY 15/16 budget. (Comments #5, 6)	Administration	Instituted; monitored daily
9. Create and post a pamphlet that contains information on permit review timeframes (Comments #5, 6) http://coralgables.com/Modules/ShowDocument.aspx?documentID=14781	Building	Completed
10. Create a Mobile Liaison position who'll guide homeowners through the permit review process (Comment #7)	Building	Initiated
11. Propose to the City Commission the deletion of certain zoning permits and the reduction of permit fees for maintenance projects that cost less than $500 (Comment #7)	Administration	Completed

RESOURCES AND TECHNOLOGY	
Focus Group Verbatim Comments: 1. Structural review should carve time out for large and small projects. 2. Express lane for small projects, larger projects hold up – ½ day for big projects, ½ for small projects. 3. Permitting takes too long.	4. City understaffed. 5. Not enough people to handle the work load. Staffing is an issue. 6. Is the City ready for wave of commercial projects to come? Use private providers as option.

Goals:
1. To provide staff at the levels and training needed to meet the demand of our customers.
2. To use appropriate technology to increase efficiency in the delivery of services.

Action Plan	Responsible Party	Target Completion Date
1. Procure the services of private firms on stand-by to cover various review trades in times of critical need due to work load, staffing, etc. (Comments #1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6)	Building	3 firms currently under contract and projects have been assigned for their review
2. Publicize the Private Provider and Peer Review options and associated permit credit. (Comments #1, 3, 4, 5, 6)	Building	On-going
3. Develop a succession plan for the pending retirements of seasoned city staff (Comment #5)	Building	On-going

OTHER FOCUS GROUP VERBATIM COMMENTS WITH STAFF RESPONSES	
Comment	**Staff Response**
1. Seasonal sign should be accommodated.	Staff is working with the Business Improvement District to address downtown signs, including seasonal signs.
2. US1 street frontage should have more enhanced sign code.	Sign code changes for US 1 street frontage could be made part of the US1 Corridor charrette process that will ultimately result in changes in the Zoning Code.
3. Certificate of Use is an area to improve, why change of use need to go before Development Review Committee (DRC).	The Zoning Code was recently changed to no longer require DRC review for all changes of use. The Planning and Zoning Director now has the discretion to determine which cases go before the DRC.
4. Business License Official should check with Certificate of Use status prior to issuing business license. Business Tax should communicate with Building.	This is a standard practice. Further, Business License staff regularly checks with the Concurrency Administrator on pending Business Tax License applications as needed.
5. Concurrency delays an otherwise streamlined process.	A Zoning Technician will be cross-trained to assist the Concurrency Administrator in addressing any review turnaround time issues.
6. Project less than 15,000 sf should have a streamline process for smaller projects.	The square footage limitation may not reflect the complexity of the project. Structural and zoning reviewers typically will alternate their review between larger, complex projects and smaller, simpler ones. For simpler projects, staff is initiating a Walk-through Program that, if successful, can be expanded to include other smaller projects as well.
7. Delete the insurance requirement for ROW encroachment. Prior to Andrew, if went into encroachment, it was easy, now insurance is required.	Staff will work with Public Works, the City Attorney's Office and Risk Management to see if there are alternative means to address ROW encroachment.
8. Historic review letter only good for 6 months. Please look at the $100 fee from Historic Resources Dept. for non-designated properties. Why would your designation only last for 6 months? It's very hard to get it all together for demolition in a 6 month period. And why wouldn't your non-historic designation last forever! What could possibly happen in six months to make the property all of a sudden become historic? I resented having to re-pay the $100 again. I have a friend who has paid it 3 times. It leaves a bad taste in one's mouth.	Unless there's a change in the material facts that the determinations were made, there should be no change in the determination. The reason for an expiration date is that new information on a property may reveal important insight not originally analyzed that could change the staff's original determination of historic significance. Staff, however, is in support of having a longer than 6 month determination, and will initiate a Zoning Code text change that is estimated to be completed in January of 2016.

9. Duplicate review between Historic Resources and Board of Architects.	The Board of Architects (BOA) is a recommending board to the Historic Preservation Board (HPB). Prior to going to the BOA, the applications for historic property are reviewed by Historic staff, who will then note "OK for Board of Architects review only." When the Historic Preservation staff attends the BOA meetings, it is as a courtesy so they can be part of the discussion and ensure that the BOA does not make a suggestion that may negatively affect the historic character of the structure. Oftentimes the BOA recommends changes to the design which are then incorporated into the application. The roles of both boards are different in that the BOA's is for aesthetics reasons and design standards and the HPB's is for historical context and compliance with the Historic Preservation Ordinance.
10. My wife is with sequencing of Certificate of Appropriateness approval after Board of Architects public hearings. If a representative of the historical resources department is present at the BOA public hearing, the Certificate of Appropriateness approval decision should be done at the same time. The Board of Architects hearing which is public and at which the homeowner can attend in person should be the final decision on aesthetics. No decisions should be made behind closed doors.	
11. Better information on which properties will be designated historic; City should be announcing which buildings will be historic.	When a report is presented before the HPB for historic designation, property owners within a 1,000 foot radius are notified at least 10 days in advance of the public hearing.
12. Historical Board needs to make a more comprehensive assessment of properties that are NOT historical, but yet when you applied for demolition or substantial changes, all of sudden they are declared of "Historical Importance" after the fact.	There is a difference between being historically significant and designated as historic. Since properties generally become eligible for local designation when they become 50 years of age, the number of potentially significant properties is constantly increasing. Construction projects for non-designated properties, however, may proceed without any Historic Preservation review.
13. Need accumulative impact for traffic.	Traffic impacts are evaluated when projects are proposed, and impacts are mitigated when feasible. The City, through the Public Works Department, will be undertaking a Downtown Transportation Master Plan that would address the traffic issues in a comprehensive manner.
14. I would love to see much better coordinated problem-solving w/M-D Highway/Roads. I believe significant improvements are possible, but only if the city and county are working better together to develop solutions.	Staff has, through the Public Works Director, coordinated closely with the Miami Dade County on roads that are of city and county jurisdiction.
15. Developers of greater than 1 acre need to pay for parks in the neighborhood, for example 10% of project square foot needs to be provided as an off-site public park or towards the purchase of park space.	As part its project review, staff enforces open space requirements in accordance with the Zoning Code. In an urban environment such as Coral Gables, staff works with developers to ensure these open spaces are pedestrian-friendly and inviting. They take the form of plazas, paseos, widened sidewalks, streetscape, street

	furniture and amenities, pocket green spaces, etc. Further, the City requires Park Impact Fees be paid by new residential projects that are used for park projects.
16. Consider Early Start Letter.	Early Starts are allowed on a case-by-case basis by the Building Official, pursuant to FBC 105.12.
17. Help residents with DERM and WASD process, takes at least 2 months.	A tutorial guide is available on Building Division's Web page that gives specific instructions how to seek DERM and WASD approval. http://coralgables.com/Modules/ ShowDocument.aspx?documentid=14327 Further, staff assists applicants and homeowners in determining application completeness prior to County submittal; however, DERM and WASD are county agencies and outside of City's jurisdiction.
18. Establish preliminary zoning review process; Key Biscayne does that and is helpful.	Upon submittal of a zoning verification application, staff will conduct a review of the property's zoning district. Also, as part of the Development Review Committee review process, a preliminary review for by all technical staff, including Zoning, is provided. (Staff has inquired about Key Biscayne's process and received no response to date.)
19. The idea of the "Storefront packaging" encouraging business owners/landlords to fix storefronts is a great idea and at the same time very challenging due to who will be responsible for cost, tenant or landowner?	The storefront renovation requires property owner's consent. Whether the business owner or the tenant pays for it is a private matter. Staff will institute a Walk-through Pilot Program for certain types of permits for a one-stop-shop review (Downtown Signs, Solar Panels, Storefront). This will help small business owners and homeowners to expedite simpler projects and provide quick staff feedback to the applicant.
20. Create ombudsman position for large commercial projects.	The ombudsman position assists the small business owner and homeowner with the permitting process. For large commercial and residential projects, applicants typically engage the services of professionals to shepherd the permitting process. When concerns arise, the Building Director and the Building Services Coordinator serve as the staff liaison to troubleshoot any issues. Further, staff will create a Permit Liaison position to guide homeowners and business owners through the permit review process.

INITIATIVES ALREADY UNDERWAY		
Action Plan	**Responsible Party**	**Target Completion Date**
1. To reinforce continuous customer service improvement: Conduct continuous customer service training for all staff.	Development Services	On-going
2. To seek feedback from customer on our service: Expand avenues and opportunities for public feedback on our services at various points of the public interaction and locations.	Development Services	Surveys are located at all 3 offices of P&Z, Building and Code Enforcement
3. To make Web information more user-friendly and current: Revamped all Development Services Department's Web pages and updated all the current information and forms for each division, especially the Building Division. (All forms are now fillable on-line.)	Development Services	On-going; Efforts continue to update and augment current information, as well as to make the Web page more user-friendly
4. For better tracking of the plans and afford greater accountability of plan review: Implemented barcode tracking system for all plan reviews.	Development Services	Instituted
5. Utilize EDEN to input actions by the Development Review Committee	All City Departments who review DRC cases	12.31.15
6. Institute a mobile app to register inspection results	IT/DS	Completed
7. Institute inspection window times for the public	IT/DS	Internal use: completed/ public use: 12.31.15