



Developers can check application status online

Land-use - A new database will eliminate the need for developers to call or visit City Hall

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BEAVERTON -- Developers itching to fire up the bulldozers -- and neighbors who want to know what's going on -- now have an easier way to track city permits.

A new online service called BRAD (Beaverton Records and Applications Database) allows developers to plug in their application number for land-use, site development and building permits and find out how close they are to getting the go-ahead from city officials.

The new system was inspired by a meeting last fall with developers, said Steven Sparks, interim community development director. As the city transacts more business over the Internet, officials assumed developers' top priority would be submitting applications online. But they really wanted to be able to track their projects by computer, Sparks said.

The new system means developers don't have to call or go to City Hall and reduces the need for meetings, said Frank Angelo, whose planning consulting firm has handled development applications for the Beaverton School District. Instead, developers and their consultants can see who has reviewed their applications, whether their application is missing information and when the review is expected to be finished. That saves time for developers and for city planners, engineers and inspectors.

"It certainly helps us at our end," Angelo said.

Such systems are still the exception, but Boise and Washington County are among jurisdictions with similar online tracking, Angelo said.

The system can route applications electronically to city staff and outside agencies, such as Clean Water Services and Tualatin Valley Fire & Rescue, which also review development applications. That saves time and paper.

The public can use the same system. Since they usually won't know the application number, they have to start at the Community Development Department's project list, get a file number and plug that into the permit tracker site.

In the future, the city hopes to include a feature that will overlay development projects on a city map. That would let residents see what's going on in their neighborhood and click on a link that sends them directly to the permit tracker page, said David Hughes, the city's information systems manager.

Homeowners who hear a neighbor working on a project over the weekend, for instance, could check the Web site to see if he has the proper permits, Sparks said.

The system, which was custom-designed for the city, cost about \$160,000, including staff time, said Patrick O'Claire, the city's finance director. **About \$3,000 of that was for consulting help from Robert L. Phillips Jr. of Compass Computing Group Inc.**

Comparable software systems off the shelf cost \$400,000 to \$800,000, Hughes said. Officials said other cities might be able to adapt Beaverton's system to their needs.

It's one more way for the city to be accessible when it's convenient to customers, said Janice Deardorff, assistant to Mayor Rob Drake.

"I think this is a great example of process improvement," she said.

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