

## **Executive Summary**

### **2024 Customer Service Survey for the Land Use Planning Division**

Early in 2024, Margi Bradway, Director of the Department of Community Services, asked staff to review how we currently provide service to our customers in the County Surveyor's Office, Transportation Division and the Land Use Planning Division, and to make recommendations for changes in how we serve our communities. Transportation Planning, including Survey, and Land Use Planning are co-located at the Yeon Annex, where these groups have historically provided front desk service. This is an executive summary of the results for the Land Use Planning Division.

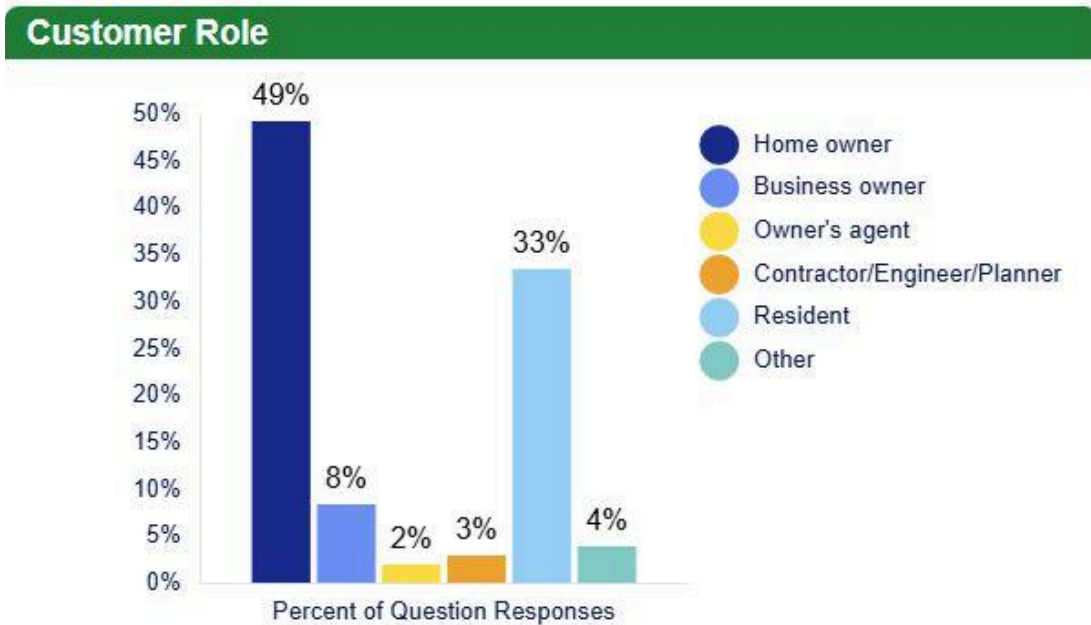
As a part of this review, a community survey for Land Use Planning was made available to the public from July through October of 2024. These surveys were distributed via the County website, social media, direct email, and outreach to local committees, community groups, partners, and organizations.

Overall, the survey findings suggest that while some customers have positive experiences, there is significant room for improvement in various aspects of customer service. Addressing the concerns and suggestions raised in these responses could lead to greater customer satisfaction and improved service delivery.

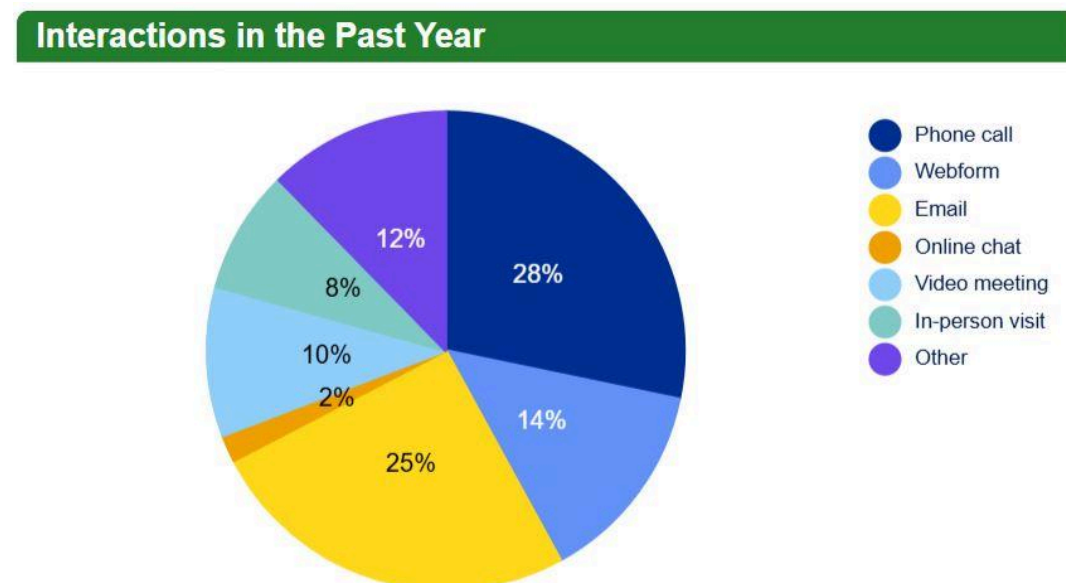
The Land Use Planning Division's survey received a total 249 responses, with the majority of responders being home owners or Multnomah County residents, with English as the primary language, in the age group of 41-55. 44% of responders live in the rural eastside areas of Multnomah County, followed by urban areas at 33%, and 15% in the rural westside.

### **Customer Interactions**

The graphic below illustrates the role in which survey responders contacted the Land Use Planning Division. The majority of responders indicated they are home owners and county residents.



Survey responses indicate that most of the interactions with the Land Use Planning Division in the last year are by phone call, email, or webform respectively, followed by other methods shown in the graphic below.



When asked if survey responders have applied, or intended to apply for a permit with the Land Use Planning Division, 34% indicated they had applied and have had an application approved,

30% have not yet applied, and 29% are in progress. The remaining 4% indicated their permit was denied and/or under review, or their permit was withdrawn.

## **Experiences and Preferences**

Survey responders indicated varying levels of usefulness of various forms of customer services including:

- Office hours and location
- Online services - website, webforms, and online permit submission
- First come and first services
- Scheduled appointments
- Virtual and in-person services

Responders overwhelmingly prefer in-person services, with some indicating virtual appointments as useful and convenient.

The least useful services included web-based services such as the

- Ask-a-Planner webform
- online permit submissions
- online code enforcement submissions.

In addition, first come and first served phone calls were not considered useful.

The most useful services include in-person first come and first served services, such as having a planner or other staff available to answer questions, explain processes, and get started on permit applications. In-person pre-application appointments were also noted as very useful.

## **Highlighted Comments**

The following comments highlight many of the issues customers are facing, including concrete examples and suggestions for improvements:

"Appointment hours are very limited. When entering an agreement to purchase a home/property, during the "due diligence period" particularly if you desire to build new or do an addition - there were not timely appointments. It was not reasonable. I would have liked to have the option to have walk-in hours, even if it meant I had to wait in the lobby for a while."

“Need planner back in the office and able to answer questions that the public has on submitting paperwork, 10-14 days to get a phone call back is not acceptable.”

“I just want to be able to reach the planning staff without waiting 3 weeks for an appointment, just to ask a question of a planner. Also, provide a staff list on your website with contact info. It's nearly impossible to reach your staff. It's disappointing the county charges partner agencies \$150 just to check a box on a land-use from OWEB for small grant funding and makes us wait weeks for that check-box. In the past, we were able to just email it to a planner and often had it back the next day. That was good customer service! I also believe fees would be waived for habitat restoration projects, which have nothing but costs and no profits, unlike developers, and provide great public benefits.

“Many times there are complicated questions on how to deal with a property or land use issue and it needs to be a back and forth conversation with computer access to look at the issues. I have not been wanting to deal with east Multnomah county due to the inability to get questions answered in a timely fashion, unwillingness to help solve a problem and give positive advice, most of the advice is negative and in general not helping the public to move forward to get a project completed, but give them more hoops to jump through until they give up on the process.”

“There needs to be a county planner available to answer questions on applications and processes for the community. The inability to get questions answered in a timely fashion stops the building process in the County and in many cases people leave and don't want to invest in the area due to the long process and unwillingness to allow our county to grow.”

In conclusion, the survey results highlight the following needs:

- Better engagement with customers on a first come, first served basis, with an emphasis on in-person services for more responsive communication. In-person services include an open and accessible front desk service, availability of planners to meet to discuss applications, and phone availability.
- Increased availability of planners and subject matter experts to answer quick questions or provide guidance at the beginning of a land use process without having to schedule an appointment. Wait times for appointments with a planner can be two or more weeks beyond the initial time of inquiry which impacts customers who need to make timely decisions.

- Increased staffing beyond the current model to ensure responsive customer services. The complexity of the land use code requirements in Multnomah County requires more staff bandwidth to ensure timely processing of applications, customer communications, and availability of subject matter expertise.

This executive summary was compiled by the Department of Community Services Director's Office. Questions regarding the survey or executive summary should be directed through:

Tina LeFebvre  
Senior Management Analyst  
[tina.lefebvre@multco.us](mailto:tina.lefebvre@multco.us)