

City of Piedmont
COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

DATE: March 17, 2025

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: Rosanna Bayon Moore, City Administrator

SUBJECT: Presentation of Staffing Recommendations Included in a Draft Development Review Staffing and Organizational Assessment Report prepared by Matrix Consulting Group for the Piedmont Planning & Building Department

RECOMMENDATION

Receive the information provided in the draft report and the accompanying slideshow presentation; provide direction regarding staffing recommendations for the Planning & Building Department.

BACKGROUND

On March 18, 2024, the City Council approved a consulting services agreement with Matrix Consulting Group to conduct a two phased project. The team undertook research, data collection, and stakeholder engagement that includes a staffing and organizational assessment (Report), and a fee schedule study for Piedmont's Planning & Building Department. The organizational assessment looks to assist the Department with optimizing resources to meet a broad range of community needs. (The Sustainability Division was not included in the assessment.) The second phase portion of the scope of work is a study that will establish a fee schedule that generates revenue to cover all or part of the cost of City services provided.

The primary members of the Matrix team assigned to this project are:

- Courtney Ramos, Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer
- Aaron Baggarly, AICP
- Allyson Brekke, AICP

Completion of the second phase of the project requires City Council direction on any staffing changes. This Council agenda item highlights one category of recommended actions in the Report, which proposes changes to departmental staffing and organization. The direction sought will help finalize staffing levels and time estimate assumptions for the fee study, lead to the development of cost recovery policies for fee-based services and create a fee schedule consistent with the City's cost recovery goals.

DISCUSSION

Matrix undertook an analysis of the Department's operations, including a survey and stakeholder

interviews. The results point to a positive and professional customer experience that clearly stands out among public agencies in the San Francisco Bay Area region. Staff are described as accessible and attentive when providing service at the public counter, by phone and through email. The analysis also found that improvements could be made to permit review processes, the public information available about such processes, and the use of technology during permit review. Recommendations for improvement are currently under review for prioritization and implementation.

In addition to operations and processes, Matrix analyzed the Department's current staffing levels in comparison to workload. The study found that during the past several years, the Department's workload has been relatively high when compared to previous decades. This is due to the volume of permits, changes in regulations, and continuous State legislation necessitating policy development and City Code updates. The result is a set of recommended staffing changes intended to address the workload while maintaining high quality customer service.

The second and final part of Matrix's scope of work is to conduct a fee study and prepare a revised fee schedule for the City. Local jurisdictions commonly undertake fee studies to ensure that the fees charged for services are justified, consistent with State law, and result in a fee schedule consistent with the agency's cost recovery goals. Matrix's work thus far on a fee study includes data collection, the development of a schedule of current and potential fees, and time estimations for each service or permit. Remaining tasks will be shaped by the City Council's discussion and guidance regarding near term staffing levels.

Current Staffing

The two main areas of work undertaken by the Planning & Building Department are the processing of planning and building permit applications, and the development of policies, regulations and programs that govern land development in Piedmont. The workload for both of these areas has grown substantially in recent years. To assist Planning Division staff with the increased demand for policy development, the City has engaged the services of professional planning consultants. However, in 2022, the Department began to directly hire professionals to work on a part-time basis to address the increased number of building permit applications. Initially, the hiring of part-time staff was intended to be a temporary measure, but as building permit application numbers have remained steady, the employment of these staff members has been relied upon to address the ongoing work volume.

Recommended Staffing

Matrix's analysis of staffing includes a recommendation to cross train Administrative Assistants, a task that can be undertaken with a minimum of planning and with negligible impact on the general fund. At this time, Staff recommends taking a phased approach that prioritizes maintaining and improving customer service with minimal impact on the general fund.

Building Permits Issued (2020-2023)

<u>Year</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>
Total	1,671	2,028	1,847	2,187

First Phase

Building permit application numbers are expected to remain at current levels in the coming years so it makes sense to have full-time professionals perform permit review and construction inspection responsibilities. These staff members would develop institutional knowledge and build professional relationships that would better serve Piedmont's property owners, contractors, architects and engineers. Staff recommends implementing the following two actions with the FY2025-2026 Budget:

1. Transitioning the two temporary part-time Building Inspector positions to one full-time Building Inspector classification.
2. Transitioning the two temporary part-time Permit Technician positions to one full-time Permit Technician classification.

The salaries and benefits of the two part-time employees is expected to be similar to the salaries and benefits of one full time employee. In addition, both the Building Inspector classification and the Permit Technician classification would provide fee-based services that could be fully cost recovered.

Subsequent Phases

Matrix presents several additional staffing recommendations to optimize the work of the Planning & Building Department and model best practices. While not financially feasible to implement at this time, the recommendations provide key insight into areas for improvement and potential pathways for address. Staff intends to revisit these topics in future year budget discussions with the City Council.

FISCAL IMPACT

Staff's recommendation to transition the two temporary part-time Building Inspector positions to one full-time Building Inspector classification, and two temporary part-time Permit Technician positions to one full-time Permit Technician classification would provide fee-based services that could be fully cost recovered.

Prepared by: Kevin Jackson, Director of Planning & Building