



# BELLEVUE DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

## Customer Feedback Report

August 2016





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## Contents

<b>1.0</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>METHODS.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>RESULTS AND KEY THEMES .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3.1</b>	<b>Major Findings .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3.2</b>	<b>Additional Findings .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>3.3</b>	<b>Survey Results by Customer Type .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>3.4</b>	<b>Comparison of 2012 and 2016 Survey Results, by DS Service .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>3.5</b>	<b>Summary of Feedback by Customer Type.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>21</b>

## Appendices

- A. Survey Results
- B. Survey Instrument
- C. Interview and Workshop Questions
- D. Intercept Survey Summary

## 1.0 Introduction

On behalf of Bellevue Development Services (DS), BERK Consulting conducted customer outreach in March through June of 2016 to help DS evaluate its services. The goals were to:

- Gather candid feedback from current and recent customers about their experiences with the agency. This includes what's working well, where there's room for improvement, and the best way to provide customer input on an ongoing basis.
- Develop recommendations for ongoing feedback methods DS can use to collect customer input in a consistent manner.

This report summarizes the customer outreach work, additional research, and the findings from both. The report contains the following:

- A description of outreach methods.
- A summary of results and key themes.
- Best practices and recommendations for customer feedback and related topics.

Several Appendices are a companion to this report:

- Appendix A, Survey Results.
- Appendix B, Survey Instrument.
- Appendix D, Interview and Workshop Questions.
- Appendix E, Intercept Survey Results.

## 2.0 Methods

### Outreach Methods

A range of outreach methods were used to gather quantitative and qualitative data from a wide range of DS customers and to test the effectiveness of a variety of feedback methods. From March through June 2016, the BERK team contacted customers using the following methods.

- **Customer Interviews.** BERK conducted 42 phone interviews lasting 15 to 30 minutes with DS customers.
- **Customer Workshops.** BERK held two customer workshops, one for Major Commercial/Multifamily customers, and one for Tenant Improvement customers.
- **Intercept Surveys.** BERK staff conducted three intercept survey sessions at the Bellevue City Hall Permit Center. During each two-hour session, BERK staff interviewed DS customers who had just used Permit Center services. A total of 38 customers were interviewed.
- **Online Survey.** A 47-question online survey was open for three weeks. DS promoted the survey several ways, including emails to all customers from the past three years; City of Bellevue social media accounts; the DS website; and informational cards handed out at Bellevue City Hall. The survey received a total of 741 responses. A full analysis of survey results is provided in Appendix A.

Note that for the interviews and workshops, a larger amount of respondent self-selection occurred, which could skew results –customers with constructive feedback are often more likely to take the initiative and spend the time in an interview or workshop.

## 3.0 Results and Key Themes

This section summarizes customer outreach results, including major findings, additional findings, survey result comparisons, and feedback by customer type.

### 3.1 MAJOR FINDINGS

#### Summary

The major findings from customer outreach are:

1. Customers rate DS highly
2. Customers appreciate DS staff
3. Customers have compliments and suggestions for MyBuildingPermit.com
4. Faster and more predictable review time is a top priority
5. There is a desire for more consistency and coordination
6. Single-family residential builders have the lowest satisfaction ratings
7. Customer ratings for inspections have improved substantially
8. Most customers prefer to provide feedback online

Each finding is explored below.

#### 1. Customers rate Bellevue DS highly

In all outreach types (interviews, workshops, online survey, and intercept survey), most customers were positive about their experience with Bellevue DS.

Examples of comments include:

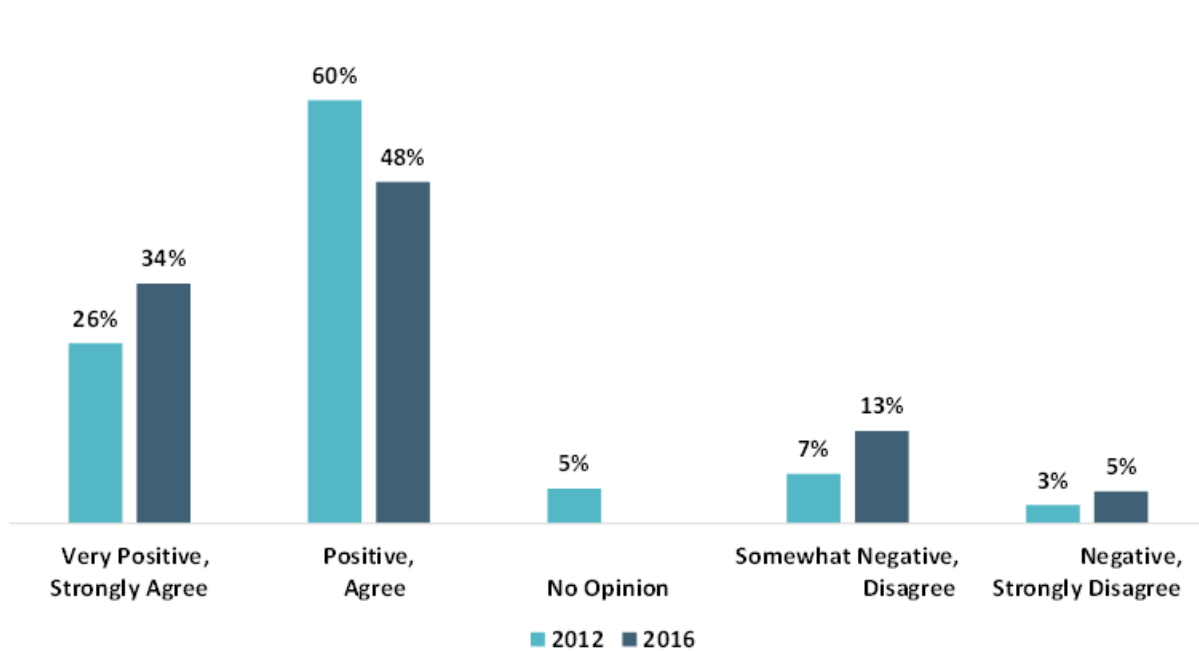
- *I have been very pleased working with the City of Bellevue.*
- *As a whole, it's still overall a good experience to work with the city on permitting.*
- *I consider Bellevue to provide some of the best overall development services in the region.*

In the online survey, respondents were asked to rate the overall quality of their customer service experience with Bellevue Development Services. Of the 618 responses, **82%** answered either “Very Positive” (34%) or “Positive” (48%).

A similar question was asked of DS customers in a 2012 survey, “Overall, Bellevue does a good job inspecting projects and reviewing permit applications.” Of the 384 responses to that survey, **86%** answered either “Strongly Agree” (26%) or “Agree” (60%). Unlike the 2016 survey, the 2012 survey had an option for “no opinion,” which was chosen by 5% of question respondents.

As shown in Exhibit 1, the percentage of Very Positive and Negative responses increased from 2012 to 2016, while the percentage of Positive responses declined.

Exhibit 1. Comparison of 2016 and 2012 Results: Overall Customer Service (2016 n=618; 2012 n=384)



In the intercept survey, 31 of 38 customers (82%) rated their experience with DS that day as “Very Positive” and another two customers rated it as “Somewhat Positive.” Representative comments:

- *City of Bellevue is very helpful. I'm the office manager at a General Contractor. They are receptive and tell you what you need to do.*
- *Good information and help.*

## 2. Customers appreciate DS staff

Throughout the outreach, DS staff were praised for their helpfulness, friendliness, and positive attitude.

- *Staff went above and beyond trying to find the answer to my question. They were very helpful.*
- *Your building department is very helpful and answers questions in a manner that allows for a quick response if need by us.*
- *Keep up the good work and the great staff.*

In the online survey, questions with the highest proportion of positive responses were related to staff helpfulness, courteousness, knowledge, professionalism, and respectful treatment. As shown in Exhibit 2, Inspections, Permit Processing, and the Permit Center all had positive responses ranging from 88% to 91%, while Plan Review/ Design Review and Pre-Application scored lower. Note that some questions include slightly different wording, and the number of responses for each question varies.



## Exhibit 2. Survey Questions on Staff Courtesy, Helpfulness, and Knowledge: Positive Responses

DS Service	Question	Positive Responses	# of Responses
Inspections	Inspectors treat me in a professional and respectful manner.	91%	396
Permit Processing	Permit Technicians treat me in a helpful, courteous, and knowledgeable manner.	90%	350
Permit Center	Permit Center reviewers treat me in a helpful, courteous, and knowledgeable manner.	89%	441
Inspections	Inspectors demonstrate the expertise and knowledge required for the type of project.	88%	390
Plan Review/Design Review	Reviewers treat me in a helpful, courteous, and knowledgeable manner.	85%	314
Pre-Application Services	Staff are knowledgeable about codes and regulations affecting my property.	74%	234

### Room for Improvement

Although staff customer service skills were widely praised, customers indicated that there is room for improvement.

**Isolated negative experiences are a big deal to customers.** Many comments, while praising the vast majority of interactions, mentioned isolated negative experiences with DS staff, which have a big impact. For example, some customers referenced inspectors with unhelpful attitudes, and mentioned trying to avoid them whenever possible.

**Timely response to calls and emails.** Some customers commented that they do not always get timely responses (or any response) to calls and emails to DS staff with questions.

**Staff knowledge, turnover, and training.** Some comments in interviews, workshops, and the online survey called for better staff knowledge of codes and training staff for more consistency. Others referenced problems when there is staff turnover, and permit applications seem to get lost, or new staff disregard earlier decisions.

### 3. Customers have compliments and suggestions for MyBuildingPermit.com

Customers were generally positive about MyBuildingPermit.com, though many had suggestions for improvements.

In the online survey, 67% of respondents noted they have used MyBuildingPermit.com to apply for a permit in Bellevue. Of those, 79% find the online application process clear and easy-to-use and can find the information they need related to application status, fees, and who to contact on the site. Survey results differed by project type, with Commercial New Building and Major Mixed-Use having the lowest shares of positive responses.

### What customers like:

- Generally easy to use.
- Streamlines process, saves time and money.
- Multiple jurisdictions use it.
- Provides permit status information.

### Room for improvement

In interviews, workshops, and survey comments, customers noted there's room for improvement and gave detailed suggestions. Key topics include:

- **Uploads.** Difficulty uploading attachments to applications. Insufficient options and problems with file types were mentioned.
- **Status Information.** While some customers praised the permit status information provided, others believed status information was insufficient or inaccurate. One customer stated, *"Permits that are dropped off can say 'pending' for a long time, over a month, so you don't really know what that means. I usually have to call and talk to the planner to get more information."*
- Representative comments:
  - *Not all DS staff use the site to upload comments.*
  - *Notification of comments and a change in status is insufficient.*
  - *Scheduling inspections could be improved.*
  - *A "how-to" guide for MyBuildingPermit.com is needed.*

## 4. Faster and more predictable review time is a top priority

Many customers spoke of their frustration with how long permit review takes in Bellevue; many also mentioned frustration with the unpredictability of review times.

### Survey

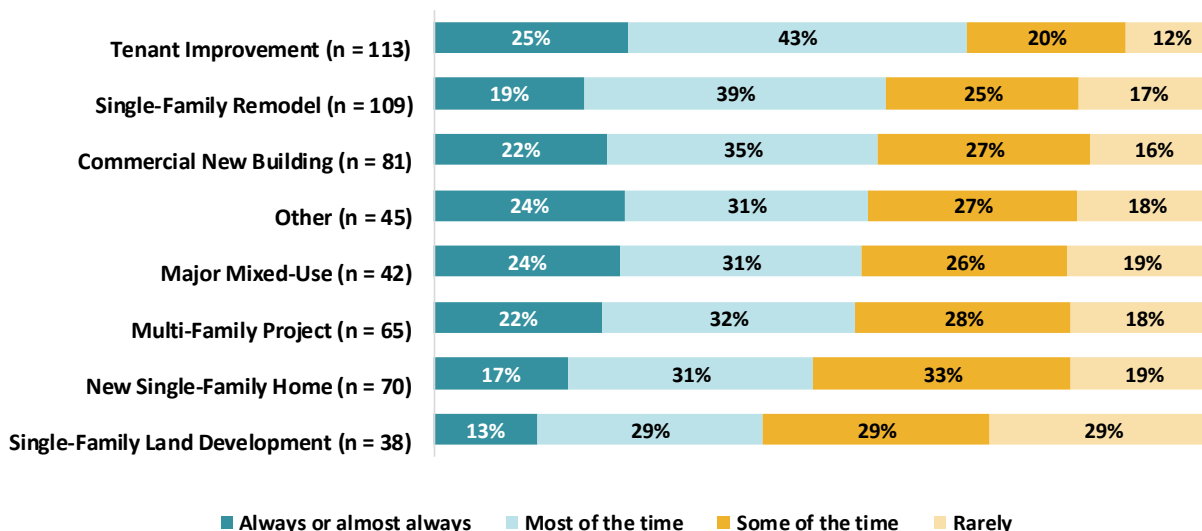
The online survey question with the lowest share of positive responses asked about permit approval timelines: "The amount of time it takes to get my approval or permit is consistent with timelines communicated by staff." Only 57% of question respondents (176 of 312) gave positive responses (either "Always or Almost Always" or "Most of the Time").

### By customer type

There was a significant difference in responses to this question among customer types. As shown in Exhibit 3, the highest percentage of positive responses was in the Tenant Improvement category (68%) and the lowest in Single-Family Land Development (42%) and New Single-Family Home (48%).



**Exhibit 3. The amount of time it takes to get my approval or permit is consistent with timelines communicated by staff. (n=312)**



In an open-ended survey question asking how DS can improve, one of the top suggestions was reducing the time it takes to approve a permit. Examples of comments include:

- *The amount of time it takes to have permits reviewed is way too much. Processes should be streamlined so that the quality of the review remains, but we don't have to wait 3 months for a response.*
- *Reduce permit approval from 8 months to 8 weeks like most all other city or counties.*
- *Review times are way too long. We've lost customers because they decide to scrap a project because of how long it takes. The ones that do move forward are very upset that it ends up taking longer than the estimate range when started.*

## Interviews, Workshop, and Intercept Survey

In interviews, workshops, and the intercept survey, review time was a top concern. Examples of comments:

- *The City of Bellevue refuses to hire more people to keep up with the work. This is adversely affecting the economy. Here's an example: I had a lobby tenant improvement, 500 square feet, very small, took me 8.5 weeks to get a permit. Then told me there were things they didn't like, and I had to resubmit it and go back in line - added 4.5 weeks.*
- *We still get great customer services and great support, but generally timelines have slipped.*

However, some customers had other points of view. For example:

- *Turnaround times for straightforward projects are predictable. Everyone asks us how long it will take and in some jurisdictions it's "who knows?" Kudos to them for having enough staff.*

In the intercept survey, the top suggestion for DS to improve was reducing review time, mentioned by 7 of 38 customers surveyed.

## 5. Desire for more consistency and coordination

In all forms of outreach, customers expressed a desire for more consistency and/or coordination at DS. Consistent answers and decisions will improve predictability, while coordination improves efficiency and timelines.

Customers highlighted several types of inconsistency: different answers from Permit Center staff, different decisions and standards from reviewers, different standards among inspectors, and different decisions between reviewers and inspectors.

### Different answers at the Permit Center.

- Frustrated with the city. Two parties gave me opposite answers and I still don't know the correct answer.*

### Inconsistency between reviewers of the same department.

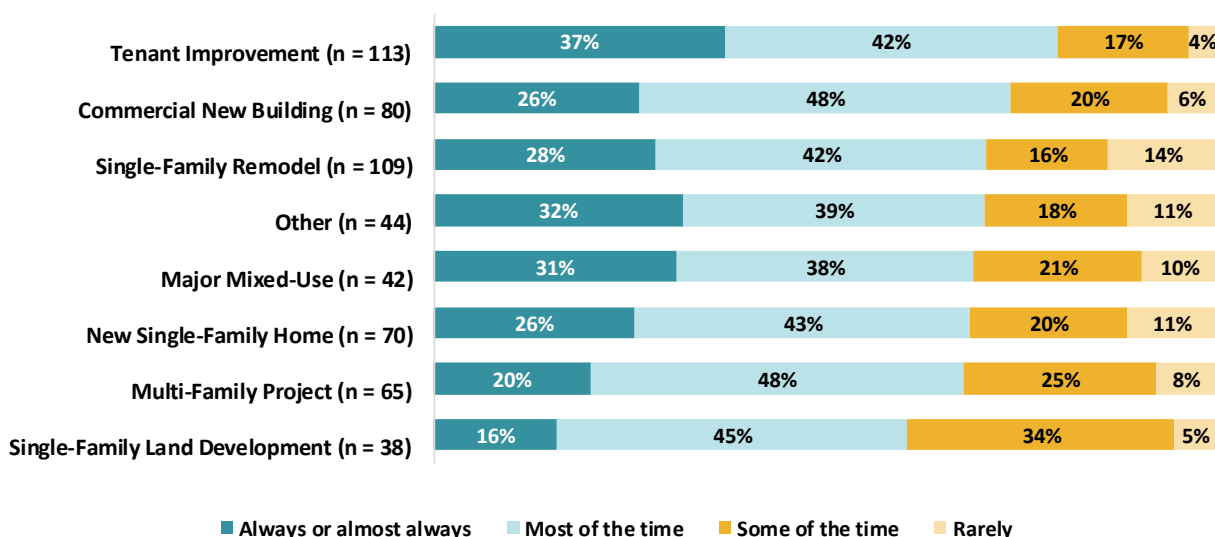
- Different reviewers flag different issues. I can do something the exact same way on two projects. One reviewer passes it, but for the next home, the same permit is flagged differently. It's unpredictable for homebuilders because of inconsistencies in reviewers.*

**Newer staff and contractors.** Some customers mentioned that inconsistency can be a bigger problem among new staff as well as contract reviewers.

- I'm glad to see the city adding more staff, but as they ramp up they need to train for consistency.*

**Inconsistency between reviewers in different departments.** Some customers recounted situations where they received conflicting review notes from different departments. In the online survey, customers were asked if “review comments from different departments are consistent with each other.” Overall, **70%** gave a positive response (Always/Almost Always or Most of the Time). Responses varied by customer type, with the highest share of positive responses from Tenant Improvement customers, and the lowest from Single-Family Land Development customers, as shown in Exhibit 4.

**Exhibit 4. “Review comments from different departments are consistent with each other.”**  
Response by Project Type (n=311)



**Inconsistency between inspectors.** Consistency between inspectors was ranked relatively high among survey respondents, with 85% giving a positive response (“Always or Almost Always” or “Most of the Time”) to the question: “My inspectors provide consistent information and decisions regarding my inspection.”

However, there were some comments in the survey and in interviews about inconsistency:

- *It would be nice if there was more consistency between inspectors on interpretation of the building codes. I think this would greatly reduce friction between the contractors and inspectors, it would also cut down on wasted time for repeat inspections and schedule delays.*
- *Two inspectors will give completely different checklists to complete. If I don't get signoff on inspector 1, and get inspector 2 next time, I get another set of new things to correct.*
- *My electrical inspector changed his requirements throughout the course. His expectations were vague and lack consistency.*
- *...the contractor wants a set of standard to live by -- but it doesn't seem that way in Bellevue. Some are hard to get closeout done, some are easy and communicative about what needs to be done...*

**Inconsistency between reviewers and inspectors.** Some customers are frustrated by inconsistencies between reviewers and inspectors, and recounted situations where their plans were approved and inspectors made major changes in the field. Examples of comments:

- *Sometimes inspectors bring up comments about something that did not come up during plan review – you feel like you are being held to two different standards.*
- *My only item is when there is a discrepancy or code interpretation from the field and was not disclosed in the plan review. I understand there are unforeseen conditions but sometimes statements requiring code review or upgrades which was not expressed in the plan review is costly and timely.*
- *An inspector can always open up his 500-page book and find something to get you on; others just use their plan notes and make sure everything is fine. The contractor doesn't know the 500-page book; we should be able to depend on plan notes.*

**More coordinated process.** Some customers feel frustrated that comments from different departments come at different times. A desire for a single-point-of-contact throughout the process was mentioned by multiple people in interviews and the online survey.

## 6. Single-family residential builders have the lowest satisfaction ratings

The online survey showed two customer groups, New Single-Family Home and Single-Family Land Development, with the lowest satisfaction ratings of Bellevue DS, across many categories. This is shown in Exhibit 8 and detailed in the Survey Results by Customer Type section below.

In interviews conducted with single-family residential builders, priorities for improvement were: shorten review times; provide consistent answers, decisions, and standards; and improve staff responsiveness.

## 7. Customer ratings for Inspections have improved substantially

This year's survey results were compared to results from a 2012 survey of DS customers. For the four questions on Inspections that are comparable, the proportion of positive responses is substantially higher in 2016, as shown in Exhibit 5.

### Exhibit 5. Inspections: Percentage of Positive Responses in 2012 and 2016 Surveys

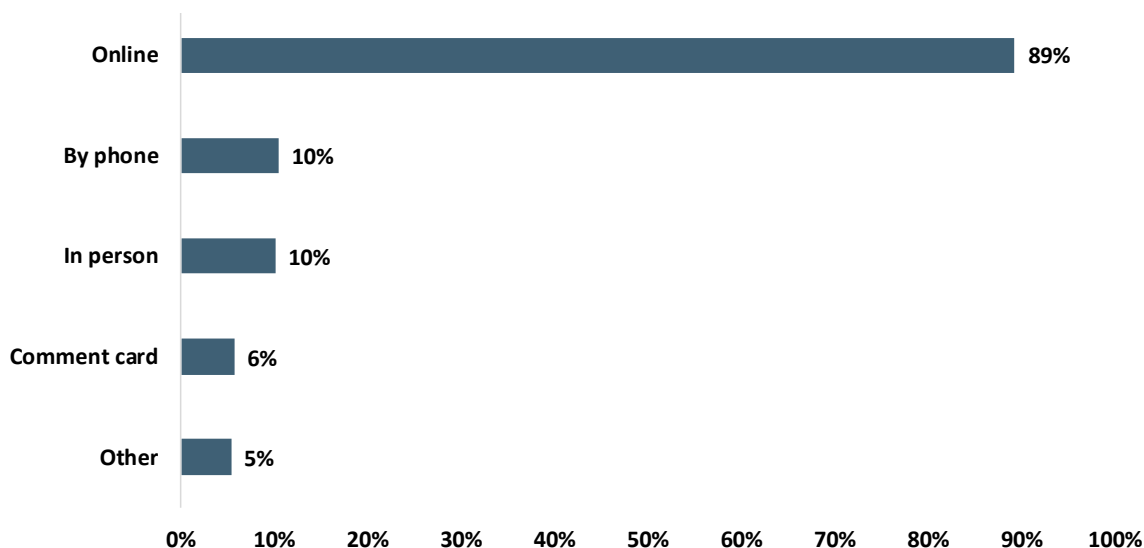
	Change, 2012-2016	2012	2016
Inspectors treat me in a professional and respectful manner.	+18%	73%	91%
If deficiencies are found during an inspection, the inspector gives a clear explanation of what has to be done to correct them.	+12%	76%	88%
Inspectors work with me to address project-related challenges.	+29%	65%	85%
My inspectors provide consistent information and decisions regarding my inspection.	+27%	58%	85%

Notes: Positive Responses include “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” in 2012 and “Always or Almost Always” and “Most of the Time” in 2016. 2012 questions had five answer choices, including “No Opinion,” which is included in the total number of responses; 2016 question had four answer choices. Number of responses: 389 in 2016; 248 in 2012.

## 8. Most customers prefer to provide feedback online

Survey respondents strongly prefer to provide feedback online, with lesser numbers favoring phone, in-person, and comment cards, as shown in Exhibit 6.

### Exhibit 6. How do you prefer to provide feedback to Development Services? (Check all that apply.) (n=572)



Interviews and workshops unearthed additional information about feedback preferences, including:

- For general feedback (not addressing an immediate problem), many interviewees prefer to fill out a survey after a permit is issued and/or after a certificate of occupancy is issued. They feel they will not be able to provide useful feedback until after process completion.
- Many interviewees strongly prefer to talk directly to a DS staff member when they have an immediate problem that needs attention.
- Some customers have strong concerns about candor, fearing they will face retribution from DS staff if they provide constructive feedback that is not anonymous. Others expressed no hesitancy about providing candid comments that are not anonymous.

- Several interviewees and workshop participants support DS roundtables, focus groups, and similar methods to bring customers together with DS staff to discuss issues. Some suggested that small groups to address upcoming issues (such as new codes) in a collaborative way are most useful.
- Some contractors interviewed prefer phone calls. They are generally out in the field and are less likely to respond to an emailed survey. As one stated, "...honestly I am not going to do a survey when I get home. And I am not in the office much, so a phone call works best."
- People appreciate being asked about their experiences, and they want to know their feedback will be listened to and used.

See Section 5 for recommendations on how DS should collect customer feedback on an ongoing basis.

## 3.2 ADDITIONAL FINDINGS

In addition to the major findings above, several other themes emerged from the outreach that while raised less frequently are worth noting.

### 1. Skepticism that plan review and inspections improve the quality and safety of projects.

In online survey results, some of the lowest shares of positive responses were for the following two questions:

- Nearly 40% of respondents believe that only sometimes or rarely does Plan Review improve the quality and/or safety of their project.
- Nearly 25% believe that only sometimes or rarely do inspections improve the quality and /or safety of their project.

For Plan Review, the issue is most pronounced among Single-Family Land Development (54% negative response) and New Single-Family Home (46% negative response). For Inspections, the issue is most pronounced for Tenant Improvement (24% negative response) and New Single-Family Home (23% negative response).

### 2. Some customers desire better information about the process.

Survey questions and interviews showed some concern for better process information. Two survey questions particularly demonstrate this:

- 25% believe the Permit Center is not providing clear information about approval process.
- 33% state they are not getting clear information from Pre-Application Services.

This was most pronounced for Single-Family Land Development, Multifamily, and New Single-Family Home categories.

### 3. Some perceive Bellevue as stricter than other jurisdictions.

Some interviewees and survey respondents stated that DS reviewers and inspectors can be over-zealous in enforcing regulations, costing more time and money for customers. Some stated that inspectors sometimes want things done a particular way that isn't consistent with the code.

Other customers agreed that Bellevue is relatively strict compared to other jurisdictions, but didn't perceive that in a negative light.

One contractor stated: *“They are thorough. I respect that. I would rather have them be thorough. Honestly if you want my opinion, the people complaining are the people who are just trying to cut corners.”*

The same interviewee later suggested an area where Bellevue could learn from other cities: allowing some work before the permit is issued. Other interviewees mentioned this as well.

#### 4. Kirkland and Seattle cited for best practices

In interviews and the online survey, customers were asked about other cities with best practices in permitting and inspections. The City of Kirkland was frequently praised for a well-coordinated review process, target timelines for review, and access to decision-makers. Seattle was praised for its online process, access to decision-makers, over-the-counter permits, and Subject-to-Field-Inspection option.

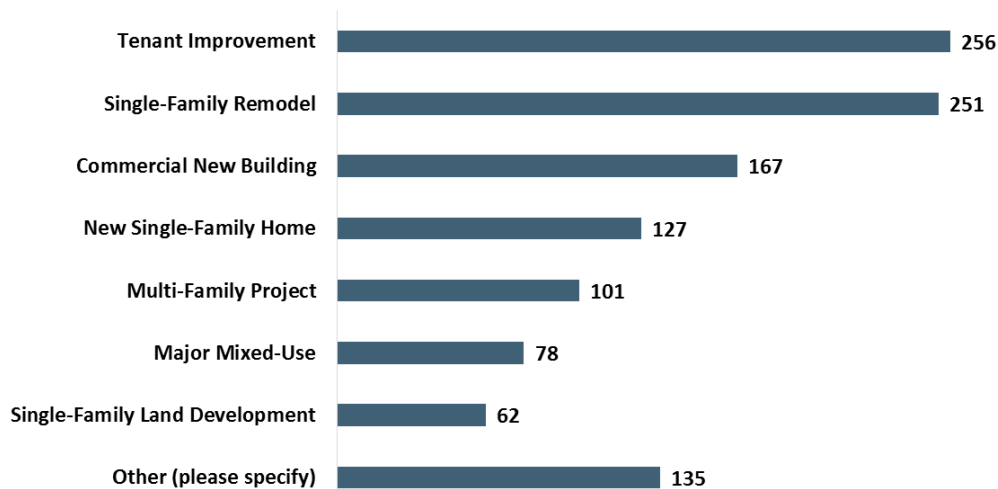
### 3.3 SURVEY RESULTS BY CUSTOMER TYPE

The online survey asked customer to identify the type of construction projects they work on, which allowed results to be analyzed by customer type. This section includes project type responses, a comparison of “overall satisfaction” results by customer type, and summary tables of responses for each DS service. More detailed results can be viewed in Appendix A.

#### Project Type

The highest number of project types selected were Tenant Improvement and Single-Family Remodel projects, as shown in Exhibit 7. In addition, 36% of respondents (261 people) chose two or more project types. Of the 135 people who chose “Other,” many described renovation or maintenance work for unspecified building types.

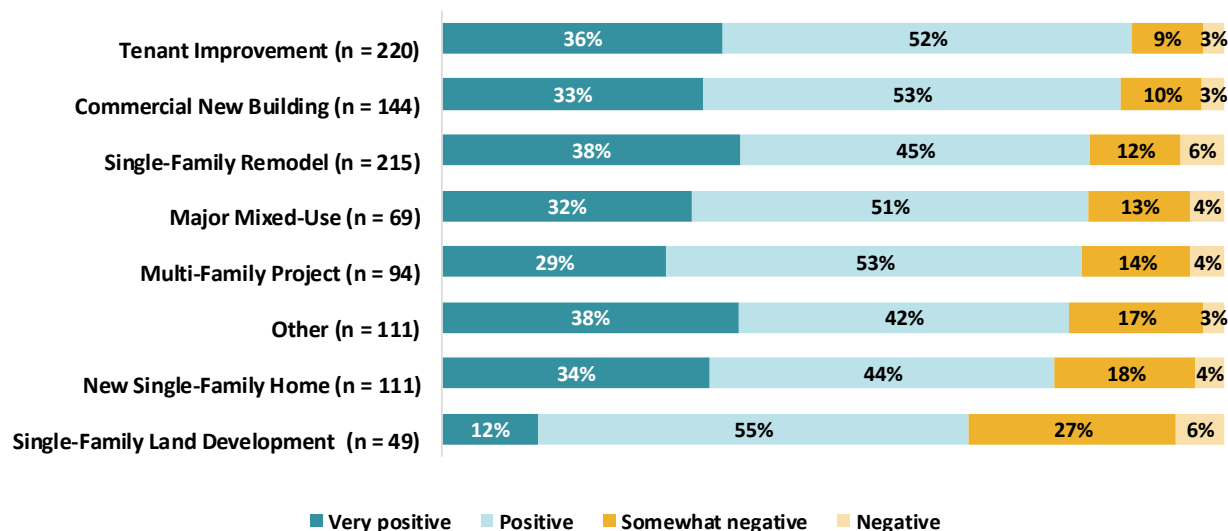
**Exhibit 7. What types of construction projects have you worked on in Bellevue?**  
(Check all that apply.) (n=731)



## Overall Satisfaction

Overall satisfaction with Bellevue DS is highest among the Tenant Improvement and Commercial New Building groups, and lowest for New Single-Family Home and Single-Family Land Development groups, as shown in Exhibit 8.

**Exhibit 8. Overall, how would you rate the quality of your customer service experience with Bellevue Development Services? (n=618)**



## Responses By DS Service Type

The survey included questions organized by five DS-staffed services: Permit Center, Pre-Application Services, Permit Processing, Plan Review/Design Review, and Inspections, as well as questions about MyBuildingPermit.com. Throughout the survey customers were given a statement and asked how frequently it was true. Response options were: “Always or Almost Always,” “Most of the Time,” “Some of the Time,” and “Rarely.”

The tables below show the percentage of respondents in each customer group who provided a positive response, defined as “Always or Almost Always” or “Most of the Time,” to each question. Results are color-coded by the percentage of positive responses: green for 85% or higher, yellow for 71-84%, orange for 55-70%, and red for below 55%.



### Exhibit 9. Permit Center Positive Responses, By Project Type

Question	SFR (n=151)	NSFH (n=96)	SFLD (n=45)	MF (n=71)	TI (n=133)	CNB (n=102)	MMU (n=48)	Other (n=77)
Permit Center reviewers treat me in a helpful, courteous, and knowledgeable manner.	85%	86%	78%	89%	89%	90%	94%	90%
Permit Center reviewers clearly inform me about the plan and document requirements of all the reviewing departments.	81%	80%	69%	76%	82%	86%	83%	90%
Permit Center reviewers give me enough information to submit a complete application for review.	80%	74%	71%	80%	80%	85%	83%	83%
Permit Center reviewers clearly inform me about the approval process for my permit.	76%	72%	55%	70%	76%	80%	75%	79%

Project Types: SFR=Single-Family Remodel; NSFH=New Single-Family Home; SFLD=Single-Family Land Development; MF=Multi-Family; TI=Tenant Improvement; CNB=Commercial New Building; MMU=Major Mixed-Use.

Note: Survey respondents could choose more than one project type.

### Exhibit 10. Pre-Application Positive Responses, By Project Type

Question	SFR (n=81)	NSFH (n=55)	SFLD (n=31)	MF (n=45)	TI (n=66)	CNB (n=48)	MMU (n=45)	Other (n=47)
I receive accurate, comprehensive, and helpful information from staff who attended my meeting, given the level of information I provided.	76%	78%	61%	73%	85%	78%	84%	79%
The permit process is explained clearly such that the timeline and steps to permit approval were clear.	66%	71%	61%	62%	77%	71%	72%	77%
Staff are knowledgeable about codes and regulations affecting my property.	69%	73%	68%	69%	76%	76%	76%	85%

Project Types: SFR=Single-Family Remodel; NSFH=New Single-Family Home; SFLD=Single-Family Land Development; MF=Multi-Family; TI=Tenant Improvement; CNB=Commercial New Building; MMU=Major Mixed-Use.

Note: Survey respondents could choose more than one project type.

### Exhibit 11. Permit Processing Positive Responses, by Project Type

Question	SFR (n=130)	NSFH (n=80)	SFLD (n=37)	MF (n=53)	TI (n=107)	CNB (n=84)	MMU (n=39)	Other (n=58)
Permit Technicians treat me in a helpful, courteous, and knowledgeable manner.	88%	94%	92%	94%	90%	92%	95%	83%
Permit Technicians clearly inform me about project submittal requirements - permit type, plans, documents, and fees.	85%	85%	78%	89%	85%	92%	92%	90%
Permit Technicians gave me an accurate estimate of the total cost of my permit.	83%	86%	76%	83%	89%	90%	90%	81%

Project Types: SFR=Single-Family Remodel; NSFH=New Single-Family Home; SFLD=Single-Family Land Development; MF=Multi-Family; TI=Tenant Improvement; CNB=Commercial New Building; MMU=Major Mixed-Use.

Note: Survey respondents could choose more than one project type.

### Exhibit 12. Plan Review/ Design Review Positive Responses, By Project Type

Question	SFR (n=107)	NSFH (n=69)	SFLD (n=37)	MF (n=64)	TI (n=111)	CNB (n=80)	MMU (n=41)	Other (n=111)
Review is complete and accurate. Additional problems do not surface later, during review or construction, that should have been caught in the initial review.	70%	71%	63%	68%	81%	74%	69%	73%
Review comments from different departments are consistent with each other.	71%	69%	61%	68%	80%	74%	69%	70%
If deficiencies are found during review, the reviewer gives a clear explanation for what needs to be done to correct them.	75%	71%	63%	64%	81%	74%	68%	86%
The review improves the quality and/or safety of the project.	57%	54%	46%	63%	68%	61%	67%	50%
The amount of time it takes to get my approval or permit is consistent with timelines communicated by staff.	58%	49%	42%	54%	68%	57%	55%	56%
Reviewers treat me in a helpful, courteous, and knowledgeable manner.	83%	80%	76%	91%	87%	90%	90%	83%
Reviewers work with me to address project-related challenges.	71%	77%	63%	82%	82%	80%	86%	73%

Project Types: SFR=Single-Family Remodel; NSFH=New Single-Family Home; SFLD=Single-Family Land Development;  
MF=Multi-Family; TI=Tenant Improvement; CNB=Commercial New Building; MMU=Major Mixed-Use.

Note: Survey respondents could choose more than one project type.

### Exhibit 13. Inspections Positive Responses, By Project Type

Question	SFR (n=161)	NSFH (n=64)	SFLD (n=27)	MF (n=48)	TI (n=135)	CNB (n=94)	MMU (n=42)	Other (n=65)
My inspectors address issues in a timely manner (including responding to phone calls or inquiries, performing inspections when scheduled, time spent performing inspections, etc.).	86%	85%	85%	76%	88%	85%	90%	91%
My inspectors provide consistent information and decisions regarding my inspection.	84%	85%	96%	84%	82%	81%	81%	87%
If deficiencies are found during an inspection, the inspector gives a clear explanation of what has to be done to correct them.	87%	88%	93%	83%	85%	88%	88%	91%
Inspections improve the quality and/or safety of the project.	80%	77%	78%	82%	76%	78%	81%	76%
Inspectors treat me in a professional and respectful manner.	91%	89%	93%	90%	91%	91%	93%	94%
Inspectors work with me to address project-related challenges.	82%	82%	93%	80%	86%	82%	86%	89%
Inspectors demonstrate the expertise and knowledge required for the type of project.	87%	89%	96%	88%	90%	89%	88%	89%

Project Types: SFR=Single-Family Remodel; NSFH=New Single-Family Home; SFLD=Single-Family Land Development;  
MF=Multi-Family; TI=Tenant Improvement; CNB=Commercial New Building; MMU=Major Mixed-Use.

Note: Survey respondents could choose more than one project type.

### Exhibit 14. MyBuildingPermit.com Positive Responses, By Project Type

Question	SFR (n=160)	NSFH (n=81)	SFLD (n=34)	MF (n=70)	TI (n=165)	CNB (n=115)	MMU (n=55)	Other (n=62)
The application process at www.MyBuildingPermit.com is clear and easy-to-use.	85%	85%	79%	79%	84%	73%	76%	73%
I can find the information I need at MyBuildingPermit.com about my application status, fees, and who to contact.	82%	87%	76%	76%	81%	74%	73%	76%

Project Types: SFR=Single-Family Remodel; NSFH=New Single-Family Home; SFLD=Single-Family Land Development; MF=Multi-Family; TI=Tenant Improvement; CNB=Commercial New Building; MMU=Major Mixed-Use.  
Note: Survey respondents could choose more than one project type.

## 3.4 COMPARISON OF 2012 AND 2016 SURVEY RESULTS, BY DS SERVICE

A 2012 survey of DS customers included many of the same questions as the 2016 survey, allowing for a comparison of results, which are summarized below.<sup>1</sup> Two important differences between these surveys are the response options and the number of respondents. Unlike the 2016 survey, the 2012 survey had an option for “no opinion” in addition to not applicable. The 2012 survey also had significantly fewer respondents, 384 compared to 741 in 2016. The tables below include only those survey questions that are similar enough to be directly comparable, 19 out of the 27 questions asked in 2016. Note that no questions were asked about MyBuildingPermit.com in 2012.

### Exhibit 15. Permit Center Questions: Percentage of Positive Responses in 2012 and 2016

	Change, 2012-2016	2012	2016
Permit Center reviewers treat me in a helpful, courteous, and knowledgeable manner.	-4%	92%	88%
Permit Center reviewers clearly inform me about the plan and document requirements of all the reviewing departments.	+3%	79%	82%
Permit Center reviewers give me enough information to submit a complete application for review.	-2%	83%	81%
Permit Center reviewers clearly inform me about the approval process for my permit.	-4%	78%	74%

Notes: Positive Responses include “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” in 2012 and “Always or Almost Always” and “Most of the Time” in 2016. 2012 questions had five answer choices, including “no opinion,” which is included in the total number of responses; 2016 question had four answer choices. Number of responses: 435 in 2016; 348 in 2012.

<sup>1</sup> “One objectives of the 2016 survey was to establish baseline results that can be compared over time. We expect future surveys to have the same questions to facilitate comparison.

### Exhibit 16. Pre-Application Questions: Percentage of Positive Responses in 2012 and 2016

	Change, 2012-2016	2012	2016
I receive accurate, comprehensive, and helpful information from staff who attended my meeting, given the level of information I provided.	-5%	78%	73%
The permit process is explained clearly such that the timeline and steps to permit approval were clear.	-2%	69%	67%
Staff are knowledgeable about codes and regulations affecting my property.	-4%	78%	74%

Notes: Positive responses include “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” in 2012 and “Always or Almost Always” and “Most of the Time” in 2016. 2012 question had five answer choices, including “no opinion,” which is included in the total number of responses; 2016 question had four answer choices. Number of responses 234 in 2016; 273 in 2012.

### Exhibit 17. Permit Processing Questions: Percentage of Positive Responses in 2012 and 2016

	Change, 2012-2016	2012	2016
Permit Technicians treat me in a helpful, courteous, and knowledgeable manner.	-1%	91%	90%
Permit Technicians clearly inform me about project submittal requirements - permit type, plans, documents, and fees.	+7%	79%	86%
Permit Technicians gave me an accurate estimate of the total cost of my permit.	+6%	77%	83%

Notes: Positive Responses include “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” in 2012 and “Always or Almost Always” and “Most of the Time” in 2016. 2012 question had five answer choices, including “no opinion,” which is included in the total number of responses; 2016 question had four answer choices. Number of responses: 350 in 2016; 299 in 2012.

### Exhibit 18. Plan Review/Design Review Questions: Percentage of Positive Responses in 2012 and 2016

	Change, 2012-2016	2012	2016
Reviewers treat me in a helpful, courteous, and knowledgeable manner.	+3%	81%	84%
Review is complete and accurate. Additional problems do not surface later, during review or construction, that should have been caught in the initial review.	+9%	62%	71%
Reviewers work with me to address project-related challenges.	+8%	67%	75%
Review comments from different departments are consistent with each other.	+9%	60%	69%
Reviewers are practical in applying regulations, within the City's codes.	-1%	71%	70%

Notes: Positive Responses include “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” in 2012 and “Always or Almost Always” and “Most of the Time” in 2016. 2012 question had five answer choices, including “no opinion,” which is included in the total number of responses; 2016 question had four answer choices. Number of responses: 308 in 2016; 258 in 2012.

## Exhibit 19. Inspections Questions: Percentage of Positive Responses in 2012 and 2016

	Change, 2012-2016	2012	2016
Inspectors treat me in a professional and respectful manner.	+18%	73%	91%
If deficiencies are found during an inspection, the inspector gives a clear explanation of what has to be done to correct them.	+12%	76%	88%
Inspectors work with me to address project-related challenges.	+29%	65%	85%
My inspectors provide consistent information and decisions regarding my inspection.	+27%	58%	85%

Notes: Positive Responses include “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” in 2012 and “Always or Almost Always” and “Most of the Time” in 2016. 2012 question had five answer choices, including “no opinion,” which is included in the total number of responses; 2016 question had four answer choices. Number of responses: 389 in 2016; 248 in 2012.

## 3.5 SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK BY CUSTOMER TYPE

### Single-Family Residential: New Construction

#### Interview Themes: Priorities for Improvements

Nine single-family residential customers were interviewed, primarily architects and developers. Praise for DS from this group included staff friendliness and attitude, the online application and information at MyBuildingPermit.com, and the layout and accessibility of the Permit Center.

Among the interviews, common priorities included: shorten review times, improve consistency, and improve staff responsiveness.

#### Shorten review times

Faster review time is a priority for most interviewees (mentioned by seven). Right-of-Way/Transportation approval was specifically called out as too slow by four people. In addition, three people asked that the City provide customers with target dates for review completion, similar to Kirkland. This would improve predictability and tell them when to follow up with staff.

#### Provide Consistent Answers, Decisions, and Standards

##### Permit Counter and Pre-Application Staff

Several interviewees (four) mentioned getting conflicting and/or incorrect answers from Permit Counter staff on land use questions. (Issues included FAR requirements, a property on a critical slope area, and permits needed for a short plat.) In addition, one person said they received incorrect information during Pre-Application. Inconsistent answers delay the process and create uncertainty.

Two people suggested Bellevue provide more access to decision-makers when questions arise (Seattle and Kirkland were called out as examples), which would speed up the process. One customer specifically requested access when coming to the Permit Counter with questions.

One interviewee made additional suggestions for land use code issues:

- Provide code references when answering questions (Seattle).
- Provide links to tip sheets in the online code (Kirkland).
- Clarify and reorganize the land use code, so that requirements are clear and easy to find.

## Reviewers

Four customers have received different decisions from reviewers for very similar projects, which left them unclear on what to expect or what the standards are.

Two people said consistency is a bigger problem with newer staff. In addition, staff turnover during a permit process can mean previous decisions are overturned.

Two people mentioned that contract reviewers for the Building department are stricter than in-house staff, creating inconsistent standards. While the customers appreciate DS addressing workload issues through hiring new staff and using contractors, they requested training that would produce consistent standards.

## Improve staff responsiveness to calls and emails

Four interviewees mentioned that DS staff do not always respond to their calls and emails, which is a frustration. One person noted they get no response about one-third of the time.

## Survey Findings

### Overall Rating of DS

The online survey included three project categories for single-family residential: Single-Family Remodel, New Single-Family Home, and Single-Family Land Development. The survey asked customers to rate overall customer service experience with Bellevue DS (see Exhibit 20). New Single-Family Home and Single-Family Land Development had the lowest ratings compared to other customer groups.

**Exhibit 20. Single-Family Overall Ratings of DS**

Customer Type	Overall Positive Ratings of DS	# of Respondents
Single-Family Remodel	83%	251
New Single-Family Home	78%	127
Single-Family Land Development	67%	62

## Major Commercial, Mixed-Use, and Multifamily

### Top Priorities

From interviews and the customer workshop, several priorities for this customer group emerged:

- Improve review times.
- Better consistency between plan reviewers and inspectors.
- More flexibility among inspectors.
- Provide an outline for each step in the process for builders who have not worked in Bellevue before.
- Provide a case manager for large projects – one person responsible for collecting department comments, consolidating comments, and sharing information.
- Handle staff transitions and retirements better, and train new hires better.

## Survey Findings

The online survey included three project categories in this group: Commercial New Building, Multi-Family, and Major Mixed-Use. The survey asked customers to rate overall customer service experience with Bellevue DS (see Exhibit 21).

**Exhibit 21. Major Commercial, Mixed-Use, and Multifamily Overall Ratings of DS**

Customer Type	Overall Positive Ratings of DS	# of Respondents
Commercial New Building	87%	167
Major Mixed-Use	83%	78
Multi-Family	82%	101

### Lower Ratings for MyBuildingPermit.com

In the online survey, the Commercial New Building and Major Mixed-Use customers had the lowest percentage of positive scores for MyBuildingPermit.com, compared to other customer groups, with fewer than 75% typically finding it clear and easy-to-use and able to find the information they need.

## Tenant Improvement

### Survey Findings

A total of 256 survey respondents have worked on Tenant Improvement (TI) projects. As described above, the TI group had the largest share of positive/very positive overall ratings of DS, at 88%.

For individual survey topics, the TI group's ratings of DS services were roughly in the middle of all customer groups. The TI group had the biggest difference from other customer groups in scores for **Plan Review**, with a much **higher percentage of positive responses** to almost every question, compared to other customer groups. This was particularly pronounced for:

- Review completeness and accuracy: 81% positive, 8-18 percentage points higher than other groups.
- Review consistency: 80% positive, roughly 10 points higher than other customer groups.
- Clear explanations for corrections: 81% positive, 6-18 points higher than almost all other groups.
- Improving the quality of the project: TI 68% positive, higher than all other groups.
- Consistent approval time: 68% positive, the highest of all customer groups.

The only survey question where TI customers had the lowest shares of positive responses was for "Inspections improve the quality and/or safety of the project". This was not a large difference, with the TI positive responses (76%) roughly 1 to 6 percentage points below other groups.

### Interview and Workshop Themes

In interviews and workshops, this group expressed general praise for DS staff. Top priorities for improvements include:

#### Shorten review times

#### Customer Service Attitude, Flexibility, and Collaboration



- Cultivate a customer service attitude among staff of working to solve problems. Show more flexibility.
- A single point of contact at the City to help expedite the process and coordinate between departments.

### **Inspections**

Flexibility and consistency is desired. When inspectors retire mid-project it can create inconsistency, with previous decisions overturned.

- *Newer inspectors are focused on going “by the book” and do not use common sense.*

### **Consistency and Predictability**

Unwritten requirements harm predictability. Clarify code language and make it more specific to reflect the City’s priorities.

- *We struggle to get answers to questions that require interpretation and they are really reluctant to do it unless everyone has a chance to weigh in.*

## **Contractors**

BERK interviewed 14 contractors and the themes are presented below. The online survey did not ask customers to identify themselves as contractors, and so results cannot be segmented in that way (although it is likely that many of the responses on inspections are from contractors).

Most contractors interviewed (11 of 14) praised inspectors’ helpfulness, knowledge, collaboration, and friendliness.

- *As an all-round group Bellevue is one of the best places to work...People I deal with in the field are great people and professionals - they know what they're doing and do a great job for me.*
- *I work in 5-6 jurisdictions; none are better than Bellevue.*

One stated that while most inspectors are great, there are one or two he avoids:

- *...they have a problem with attitude or problem with authority, they don't treat you like a customer or a partner... it's like the inspector is there to do you a favor.*

Four contractors specifically praised inspector responsiveness to calls and emails, while one stated that he sometimes did not get his phone calls returned.

Of the three contractors who mentioned scheduling of inspections, all felt the system was working well.

## **Suggestions for Improvement**

### **Consistency/Coordination**

Among the contractors interviewed, there were mixed opinions on the consistency and coordination of the DS process.

- Several said that inspectors were generally consistent with each other.
- Three mentioned lack of communication/coordination between departments.
- Two stated there is major inconsistency between reviewers and inspectors.

## Strict Enforcement

Five of the contractors interviewed mentioned that Bellevue tends to be stricter in code enforcement than other jurisdictions, but most did not think this was a bad thing.

## Review Times

Of the three contractors who mentioned review times, two said they are far too long, while one said they are reasonable.

## MyBuildingPermit.com

Several praised MyBuildingPermit.com for ease of use. Two mentioned problems with status information – that it isn't specific enough or is incorrect. One mentioned a problem with downloading documents and the lack of a point person to call when there's a problem.

## Feedback Preferences

Seven of the 14 contractors interviewed stated that they prefer a phone call for providing feedback. Some said being out of the office makes an emailed survey difficult:

- *...honestly I am not going to do a survey when I get home. And I am not in the office much, so a phone call works best.*

Four stated they prefer an online survey. One emphasized that the survey be short:

- *Anything they can do to make the time commitment smaller is good.*

Most stated they want their feedback to be anonymous.

## Infrequent Customers and Homeowners

Comments in the online survey suggest that DS customers who use the services infrequently, such as homeowners, have unique perspectives and concerns. Multiple respondents expressed that it is difficult to understand the permit and inspection process as a non-professional or infrequent customer, and several suggested providing "how to" information geared toward infrequent customers.

BERK also interviewed three homeowners who have used DS services. Suggested improvements for DS included: improve consistency between reviewers; improve inspector professionalism; improve inspection scheduling; and provide an FAQ to help homeowners with the inspections process. One homeowner had interacted with DS code enforcement and stated that staff were enforcing requirements that are not in code, that staff made incorrect findings, staff required unneeded work, and staff treated the homeowner unfairly.

# 4.0 Recommendations

## BERK OUTREACH SUMMARY

As described above, the goals of this customer outreach were to gather candid feedback from current and recent customers about experiences with DS, including what's working well, where there's room for improvement, and the best ways to provide input on an ongoing basis. Uncovering top priorities for each customer group was another goal of the outreach.

The four outreach methods used by BERK are described below, followed by a summary of customer preferences for providing feedback, and our recommendations for ongoing feedback methods.

## 1. Interviews

BERK conducted 42 phone interviews with DS customers, in two rounds. DS selected the customer list to reach a mix of customer types. In the first round of interviews, BERK contacted individuals on the list and conducted 19 interviews in this round.

In the second round, customers were chosen in two ways. First, an email sent by DS to all customers about the online survey included a request for customer interviews; several people contacted BERK and were interviewed. These interviews may have self-selection bias as these customers may have been more motivated to provide critical feedback. Second, in an effort to increase the number of contractors interviewed, BERK staff cold-called a list of contractors provided by DS. In round two, 23 interviews were conducted.

Interviews lasted 15-30 minutes. For interview questions, see Appendix C.

### Advantages

This method allowed for in-depth, back-and-forth conversation, with a fuller discussion of issues than could be covered in an online or intercept survey. It also allowed for clarification of customer statements.

The interviews, because they were conducted by a third-party rather than DS, also allowed for candid feedback. Participants were comfortable sharing opinions with BERK, and many (but not all) noted that they would not have been comfortable sharing the same opinions with DS staff.

### Disadvantages

Depending how customers are chosen, interviewees may or may not represent the full customer base. Customers chosen by DS may or may not be representative, but there is some value in identifying customers due to known problems, complex or multiple projects, or other perspectives DS has an interest in. However, self-selection bias can skew results –customers with constructive feedback are more likely to take the initiative and spend the time on an interview.

It is difficult to reach some customer groups, including contractors and homeowners.

Third party interviewers do not have the same detailed knowledge of DS procedures and therefore can't have the same level of back-and-forth conversation on every issue raised that DS staff likely could.

## 2. Workshops

BERK held two customer workshops, one for Major Commercial/Multifamily customers, and one for Tenant Improvement customers. Invitees were chosen by DS; BERK sent an introductory email invitation and followed up by phone. The Major Commercial/Multifamily workshop had five participants and was held at Bellevue City Hall on a weekday afternoon. The Tenant Improvement workshop included two participants and was held at the BERK office in Seattle on a weekday afternoon. BERK had planned to hold a Single-family Developer workshop, but cancelled the effort due to lack of interest from customers contacted.

### Advantages

This format allows in-depth discussion of issues and joint problem-solving. Having a third-party facilitator helps promote honest and candid feedback. The group format lends itself to identifying deeper issues and causes, and brainstorming solutions.

## Disadvantages

Generating participants for workshops proved challenging. This method required a longer time commitment than interviews, considering travel time and the 60-minute format. Because of the difficulty recruiting participants, it's likely that a larger amount of self-selection occurred, as customers with a negative experience are more motivated to spend the time to come to a workshop than satisfied customers.

Because of the low participation and potential self-selection bias, we do not recommend this method for future customer outreach. However, we do recommend topic-specific customer roundtables (see Recommended Feedback Methods below).

## 3. Intercept Survey

BERK staff conducted three intercept survey sessions at the Bellevue City Hall Permit Center. During each two-hour session, BERK staff interviewed DS customers who had just used Permit Center services. A total of 38 customers were interviewed over the three sessions. Customers were asked about the quality of their experience with DS that day, how DS can improve, and other questions. (For more details on the intercept survey method and findings, see Appendix D.)

The goals of this outreach method included reaching customers immediately after an interaction with DS, gathering input from customers less likely to fill out an online survey, and soliciting candid feedback.

### Advantages

Perhaps the most valuable part of the intercept survey is that it is likely less susceptible to customer self-selection. Because the majority of customers who were approached participated in the survey, results provide a more representative sample of customers at the Permit Center. This also provided a method to get positive feedback. While we can't know for sure, it's possible that these same individuals would not provide feedback through a survey or interview request.

### Disadvantages

This method does not capture people who are doing all their interactions online or over the phone, increasingly a greater share of DS customers.

## 4. Online Survey

A 47-question online survey was open for three weeks. DS promoted the survey several ways, including emails to all customers from the past three years; City of Bellevue social media accounts; the DS website; and informational cards handed out at Bellevue City Hall. The survey received 741 responses.

### Advantages

This method garnered the most responses of all outreach methods, and likely includes a more representative sample. It allowed for detailed questions about different DS services as well as segmentation of results by customer type.

### Disadvantages

Some customers may be less inclined to fill out an online survey, such as first-time customers or busy contractors who are on the job site.

## CUSTOMER PREFERENCES FOR FEEDBACK

As described above, survey respondents strongly prefer to provide feedback online (selected as a preferred method by 89% of online survey respondents, with lesser numbers favoring phone, in-person, and comment cards). This further supports the recommendation for continued use of an online survey.

Interviews and workshops unearthed additional information about feedback preferences, including:

- For general feedback (not addressing an immediate problem), many interviewees prefer to fill out a survey after a permit is issued and/or after a certificate of occupancy is issued. They feel they will not be able to provide useful feedback until after process completion.
- When they have an immediate problem that needs attention, many interviewees strongly prefer to talk directly to a DS staff member.
- Several interviewees and workshop participants would like to see DS roundtables, focus groups, and similar methods to bring customers together with DS staff to discuss issues. Some suggested that small groups to address upcoming issues (such as new codes) in a collaborative way are most useful.
- People appreciate being asked about their experiences, and they want to know that their feedback will be listened to and used.

## RECOMMENDED FEEDBACK METHODS

Based on stated feedback preferences from customers, BERK's experience with outreach, and knowledge of practices in other jurisdictions, we recommend the following methods for DS to collect customer feedback on an ongoing basis. Note that some methods will depend on the priority DS places on sometimes conflicting goals, such as candid feedback versus joint problem-solving, and feasibility will depend on DS resources.

### 1. Ongoing Surveys

We recommend that DS institute short online surveys at key points in the permitting process, including:

- After submitting an application for a permit, either in person or on MyBuildingPermit.com.
- After issuance of a permit.
- After issuance of a certificate of occupancy.

In customer interviews, many people recommended that DS survey customers in this way, pointing out that they would have more to say after they reach a milestone in the process. Further, they would be more comfortable giving candid feedback when they are not waiting for DS staff approval, and the issues would be fresher in their mind than months later. Other public agencies send surveys to customers after issuing a permit.

We recommend these surveys be shorter than an annual survey (discussed below).

Questions could cover:

- Rating of overall experience. To be consistent with this year's annual survey, include four response options: Very Positive, Positive, Somewhat Negative, and Negative.
- Ratings for:
  - Staff customer service, friendliness, helpfulness, and knowledge.

- Adequate information about the process.
- Consistent answers and decisions from staff.
- Project type.
- One open-ended question, “How can we improve to serve you better?”

The survey could be automated to be sent after an application is received, a permit issued, or a certificate issued.

Potential downsides for this method include the ongoing staff time to analyze survey results, and less specificity on feedback due to the shorter survey length.

## 2. Customer Roundtables

We recommend that DS directly engage with groups of customers on a regular basis, for feedback, conversations about improving the process, and to address specific topics, such as MyBuildingPermit.com. While this method does not allow for anonymous feedback and some customers may be hesitant to speak candidly, the advantage is that it allows DS to problem-solve collaboratively with customers. This method may work well when upcoming changes in regulations or process are anticipated, such as new building codes.

Compared to anonymous surveys or third-party interviews, this method of direct engagement between DS staff and customers allows for more in-depth problem solving, clarification of issues, and testing of alternatives or solutions.

## 3. Annual survey

We recommend DS continue to administer an annual customer survey so that in-depth feedback can be gathered and compared year-to-year. The survey should be primarily online, for highest response rate, but could include other methods as well. Specific recommendations include:

- Keep the questions and response options as similar as possible every year, so that results can be compared.
- If results by customer type are desired, carefully consider how customer types are named. In this year’s survey, customers were asked to choose the types of construction projects they work on. A large number of respondents (135) chose “Other.” Consider adding more project types, providing definitions, or removing the “Other” option.
- Consider additional customer categories, such as role (contractor, architect, developer, homeowner, etc.) and a question for infrequent or first-time customers.
- For efficiency in survey analysis, limit the number of open-ended questions. This year’s survey included nine open-ended questions, which took significant time to analyze and draw conclusions from. We recommend limiting the survey to one open-ended question.

The benefits of the online survey are: most representative of all customers; provides quantitative results that can be compared year-to-year; allows for anonymous feedback.

## 4. Other Methods

### **MyBuildingPermit.com Feedback**

We recommend that DS work closely with MyBuildingPermit.com leadership to gather feedback on the website, which is now a large part of the customer experience. We understand that there are regular customer surveys at MyBuildingPermit.com – Bellevue should closely analyze these to suggest improvements to the site.

If DS includes questions about MyBuildingPermit.com in its future surveys, we recommend adding more questions relating to specific parts of the website, such as status information, document upload, inspection scheduling, and application requirements. As noted above, the website could also be the topic of a customer roundtable.

### **Intercept**

If feedback for in-person interactions at the Permit Counter is a priority for DS, we recommend continuing the intercept survey at City Hall.

### **Contractors**

As described above, BERK had more difficulty reaching contractors and some expressed less interest in filling out online surveys. We recommend DS experiment with feedback methods for contractors, including phone surveys after an inspection, or having inspectors hand out surveys or survey links to contractors.

If feedback from contractors as a group is desired, the online survey should include a question about whether the respondent is a contractor.

## Transparency and Accountability

### **Publish feedback results and demonstrate use**

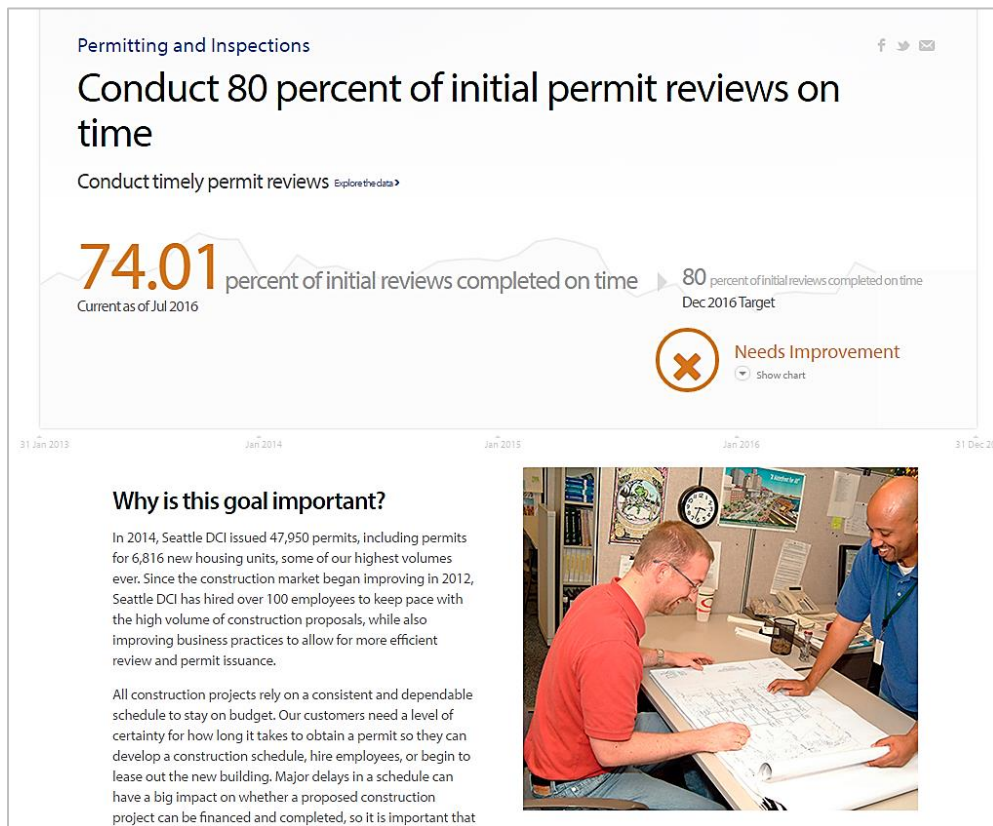
To generate customer feedback on a regular basis and maintain a good relationship with customers, DS should publish feedback results regularly. As some customers expressed in interviews, they appreciate being asked for their opinion, but are skeptical that DS will actually use their feedback. To maintain trust with customers and increase transparency, DS should publish feedback results at least once per year. Along with publishing what customers said, DS should explain to customers what changes it has made to address feedback.

### **Publishing performance metrics**

Posting performance metrics, such as permit review time, can also be a benefit to customers and increase transparency. The City of Seattle's performance metrics website (shown in Exhibit 22) includes monthly performance on permit review time performance and an explanation of why the goals matter, how they measure them, and what progress they are making towards improving results.



## Exhibit 22. City of Seattle Performance Website



Source: Performance Seattle, Economic Development, <https://performance.seattle.gov/stat/goals/gedg-zkgv>.

## OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to instituting regular feedback systems, DS should consider how it can continually improve its overall customer service orientation and the permitting process in general.

### Customer Service

Organizational emphasis on customer service can include several parts:

- **Vision, Values, Guiding Principles.** Integrating customer service mindset into guiding documents, philosophy, and performance metrics.
- **Job descriptions.** Include customer service as an element of all job descriptions, and include positions focused solely on customer experience.
- **Staff training and Capacity.** Include customer service in regular staff trainings.

### Improving the Permitting Process

While detailed recommendations for improving the permitting process are beyond the scope of this project, we do have the following recommendations, based on customer feedback.

- **Process information.** Provide information and guides that explain steps in the permitting process. Many customers requested this type of service. Make sure the guides are easy to access and find, both online and in-person.
- **Purpose.** Educate customers about the value and purpose of the permitting and inspection process. As described in survey findings, many customers do not believe plan review and inspections are improving the quality and/or safety of their project.
- **Point of Contact.** Consider instituting a single point of contact for customers, to help coordinate the process and ensure a smoother flow. This was particularly called out as being needed to help gather and coordinate review comments from different departments.

Information about best practices in the permitting process are excerpted below from two sources: a 2015 report from the National Association of Home Builders and a 2008 report from the Washington State Governor's Office for Regulatory Innovation and Assistance. While DS is following many of these practices, they are a good reminder for how the agency can continually improve to serve customers and its mission.

### National Association of Home Builders 2015 Report

In 2015, the National Association of Home Builders published a report, "Development Process Efficiency: Cutting Through the Red Tape,"<sup>2</sup> detailing recent strategies used by local governments to make land development review and approval processes more efficient. Strategies were in six primary categories, in addition to state-level strategies.

- **Streamlining the Review Process.** This includes steps to simplify, combine, or eliminate parts of the process; to increase coordination between agencies; and to standardize codes. The goal is to make the process more predictable, efficient, and shorter.
- **Increasing Staff Capacity.** Sufficient staffing is needed to shorten review times. Correcting shortfalls in staffing and properly training staff are key to an efficient process. Strategies include hiring more staff; approving overtime; outsourcing work during peak periods; and hiring specialized staff. In addition, some agencies have created positions to help applicants, such as ombudsman, gatekeeper, or a single point of contact for applicants. Funding strategies such as dedicating revenue from development services, can help with an adequate funding for the department.
- **Expedited Review.** Some agencies have created separate review processes (expedited review) that are used when certain conditions are met. Conditions are typically in three categories: affordable housing projects, pre-approval based on self-certification; and expedited review for applicants willing to pay extra.
- **Online Permitting.** Online permit systems, mobile technology for inspectors. Some systems provide mobile technology for inspectors to enter results in real time; others include real-time inspection arrival notifications.

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<sup>2</sup> National Association of Home Builders, 2015. Development Process Efficiency: Cutting Through the Red Tape. Available at: <https://www.nahb.org/en/research/~media/FD37A8E6AE0E4360B388D161EC9B2B4D.ashx>. Accessed: June, 2016.

- **Accountability.** Measures to increase accountability, such as posting public reports of average permit processing time and customer satisfaction surveys, can help improve the efficiency of the process. Online permit progress tracking adds transparency. Customer satisfaction surveys help gauge department performance.
- **User-Friendly Process.** Many frustrations with the development review process revolve around the complexity and uncertainty over the steps, requirements, and timeline. Many builders work in several jurisdictions with different processes, making a user-friendly process even more important. Best practices include: checklist of requirements; flow chart of the process; liaisons providing a consistent point of contact throughout the process; assistance with applications before submittal; and regular meetings between agency staff and developers to discuss issues and identify solutions.

## Washington State Governor's Office for Regulatory Innovation and Assistance

The Governor's Office of Regulatory Innovation and Assistance (ORIA) was established to work with local governments and applicants to help improve development permitting processes. It works with developers to obtain environmental permits.

ORIA, formerly known as ORA (Office of Regulatory Assistance) published a report in 2008<sup>3</sup> on best practices in local government permitting. ORA used outreach sessions with local government and the development industry, along with an online survey and interviews, to gather examples of best practices in Washington state.

The study identified six best practices, listed below. A commitment to continuously improving customer service is the basic principle underlying all six themes. ORA recommends local governments commit publicly and continuously to providing extraordinary customer service.

### Best Practices in Permitting

1. **Build Mutual Understanding.** Work with industry and the public to understand both the purpose of the permit process and how it works.
2. **Engage Reviewers and Stakeholders Early.** Connecting with stakeholders before applications are submitted can help identify and resolve requirements and constraints early, preventing rework later in the process.
3. **Ensure Complete Applications.** Define a complete application and make requirements clear to customers.
4. **Analyze Process, Performance, and Costs.** Mapping the permit process can identify opportunities for improvement.
5. **Use Information Technology.** Electronic permit tracking and other online systems can reduce paperwork and make project records more accessible.
6. **Implement Systems for Staffing Flexibility.** Make a plan to ensure adequate staffing during high-volume periods, such as temporary hiring, consultants, contracting, or interlocal agreements.

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<sup>3</sup> Report available at

[http://www.oria.wa.gov/Portals/\\_oria/VersionedDocuments/Local\\_Government/lgp\\_best\\_practices\\_report.pdf](http://www.oria.wa.gov/Portals/_oria/VersionedDocuments/Local_Government/lgp_best_practices_report.pdf).

Accessed: June, 2016.

# Appendix A. Survey Results

<b>A.1</b>	<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>A-2</b>
<b>A.2</b>	<b>Overall Results (All Project Types) .....</b>	<b>A-2</b>
	Overall Customer Service Experience .....	A-2
	Customer Information .....	A-3
	Questions by DS Service.....	A-4
	Comparison: Staff Courtesy, Helpfulness, and Knowledge.....	A-20
	General Questions .....	A-21
	Miscellaneous Feedback .....	A-25
<b>A.3</b>	<b>Results By Project Type .....</b>	<b>A-26</b>
	Project Types.....	A-26
	Overall Customer Service Experience .....	A-27
	Permit Center.....	A-28
	Pre-Application Services .....	A-30
	Permit Processing .....	A-32
	Plan Review/ Design Review .....	A-34
	Inspections .....	A-39
	MyBuildingPermit.com .....	A-43
<b>A.4</b>	<b>Inspection Questions by Inspection Type .....</b>	<b>A-45</b>
	Summary .....	A-46
	Full Question Responses .....	A-47

## A.1 INTRODUCTION

An online survey for Bellevue Development Services (DS) customers was created through surveymonkey.com with 47 questions about the services. Customers were informed of the survey through emails, social media, and marketing at Bellevue City Hall. The survey was open from June 7<sup>th</sup> through June 24<sup>th</sup> and received 741 responses. In addition, DS staff received two direct customer emails in response to the survey.

This Appendix contains an analysis of survey responses, including both quantitative and open-ended questions. The full survey instrument is included in this report in Appendix B.

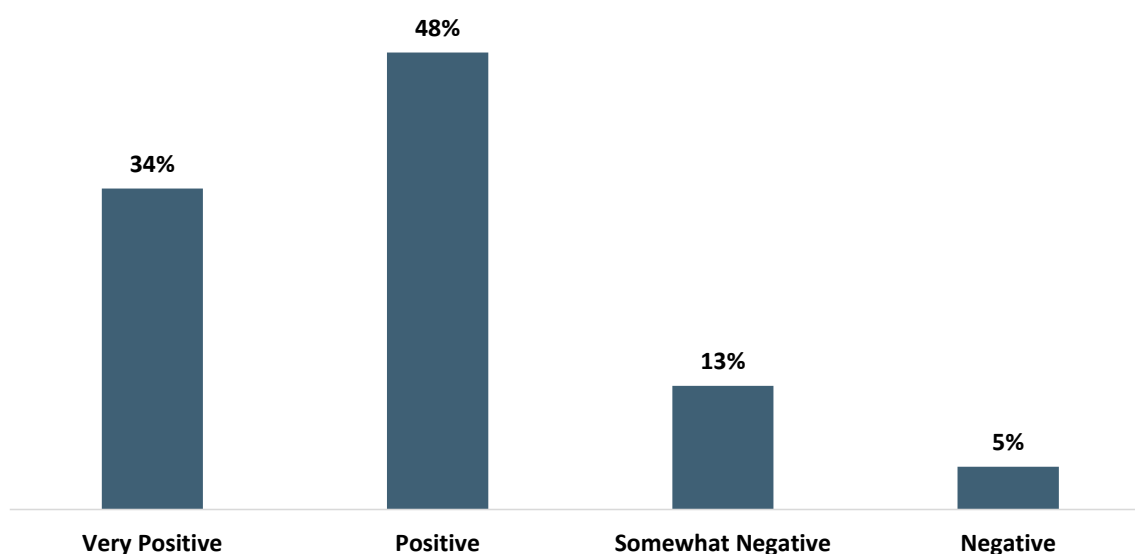
Survey responses were analyzed as a whole (Section A.2) and by customer project type (Section A.3). Questions about Inspection Services were also analyzed by inspection type (Section A.4).

## A.2 OVERALL RESULTS (ALL PROJECT TYPES)

### Overall Customer Service Experience

Customers were asked to rate the overall quality of their customer service experience with Bellevue Development Services. Of the 618 responses, **82%** answered either “Very Positive” or “Positive,” as shown in Exhibit A-1.

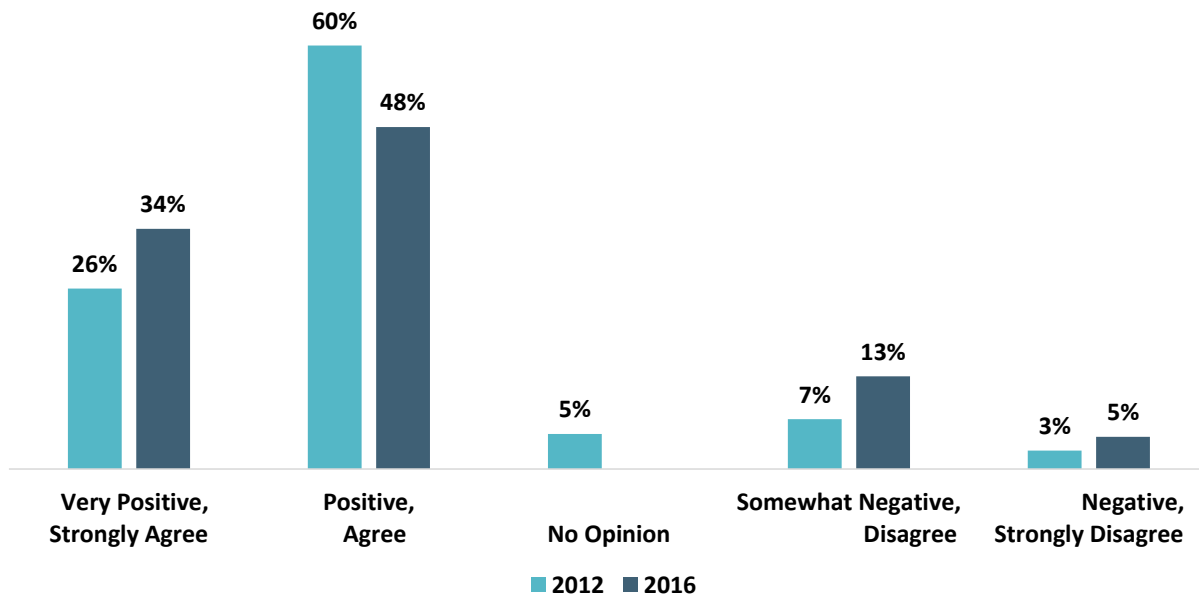
Exhibit A-1. Overall Customer Service Experience (n=618)



In a 2012 customer survey, DS asked a similar question: “Overall, Bellevue does a good job inspecting projects and reviewing permit applications.” For that question, **86%** answered either “Strongly Agree” or “Agree,” as shown in Exhibit A-2. The percentage of Very Positive and Negative responses increased from 2012 to 2016, while the percentage of Positive responses declined.

Two important differences between these surveys are the response options and the number of respondents. Unlike the 2016 survey, the 2012 survey had an option for “no opinion,” which was chosen by 5% of respondents. The 2012 survey had significantly fewer responses, 384 compared to 618 in 2016.

**Exhibit A-2. Comparison of 2012 and 2016 Results: Overall Customer Service (2016 n=618; 2012 n=384)**

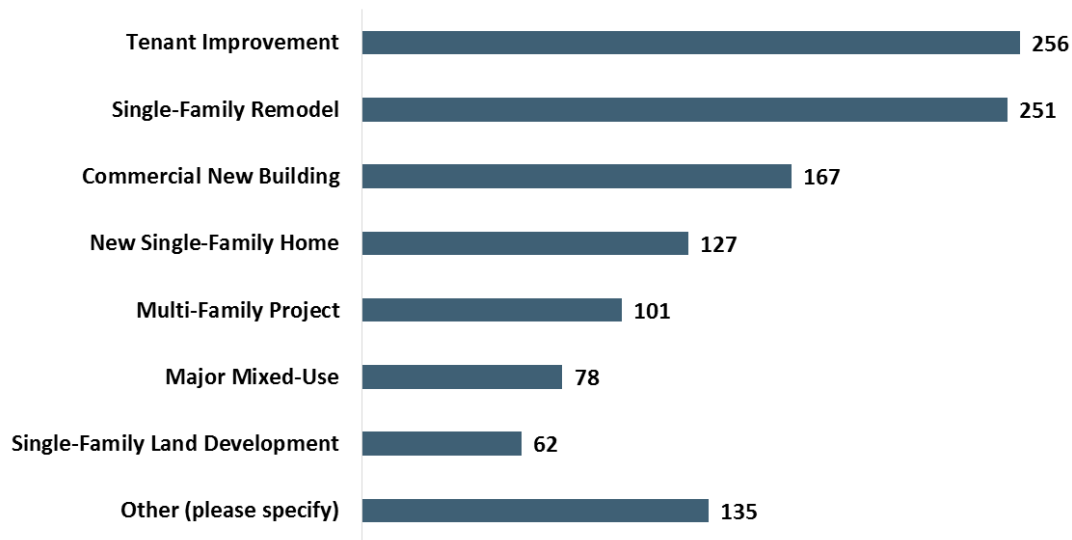


## Customer Information

### Project Type

Customers were asked what type of construction projects they've worked on in Bellevue. The highest number of responses were Tenant Improvement and Single-Family Remodel, as shown in Exhibit A-3.

**Exhibit A-3. What types of construction projects have you worked on in Bellevue?**  
(Check all that apply.) (n=731)



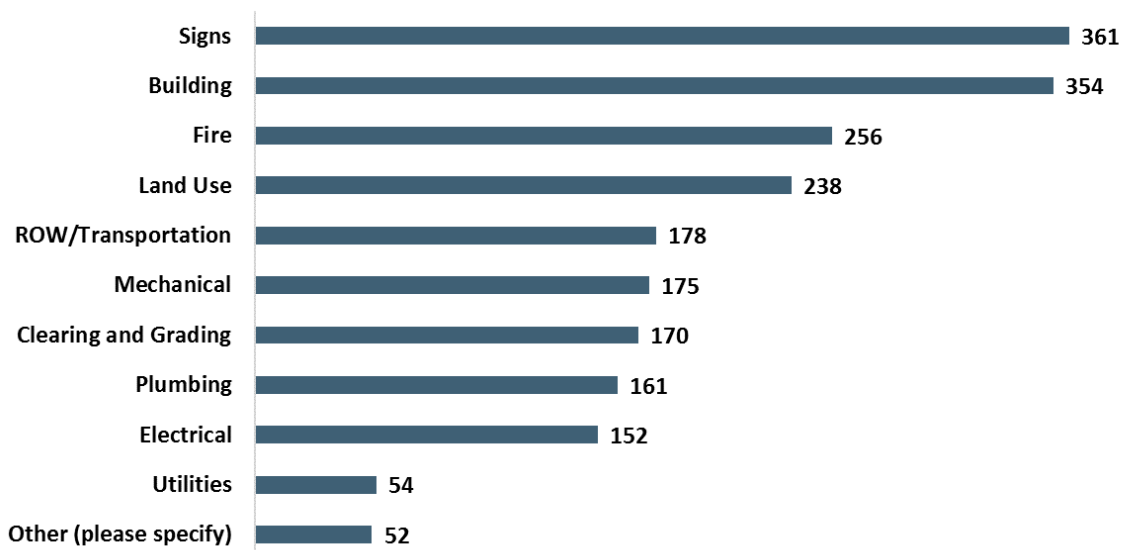
In addition, 36% of respondents (261 people) chose two or more project types, and 135 people chose "Other" project type. Many of the "Other" comments described renovation or maintenance work for unspecified building types (39 responses), such as installing water heaters, air conditioning, etc. Other

responses referred to types of permits, including: trees/landscaping (9), telecommunications (9), signs (7), and transportation or right-of-way work, such as driveways (14). A few responses listed building types, including public sector buildings (13), and churches (2).

## Permit Type

Customers were asked what types of permits they've received from Bellevue. The highest responses were Building, Electrical, and Mechanical, as shown below. Responses in the "Other" category included none, tree removal, demolition, driveway work, roofing, and more.

**Exhibit A-4. What types of permits have you received from Bellevue? (Check all that apply.) (n=729)**



## Questions by DS Service

The survey included questions organized by five DS-staffed services: Permit Center, Pre-Application Services, Permit Processing, Plan Review/Design Review, and Inspection Services, as well as questions about MyBuildingPermit.com.

In the question format throughout the survey, customers were given a statement and asked how frequently it was true. Response options were: "Always or Almost Always," "Most of the Time," "Some of the time," and "Rarely." Results by DS service are shown below.

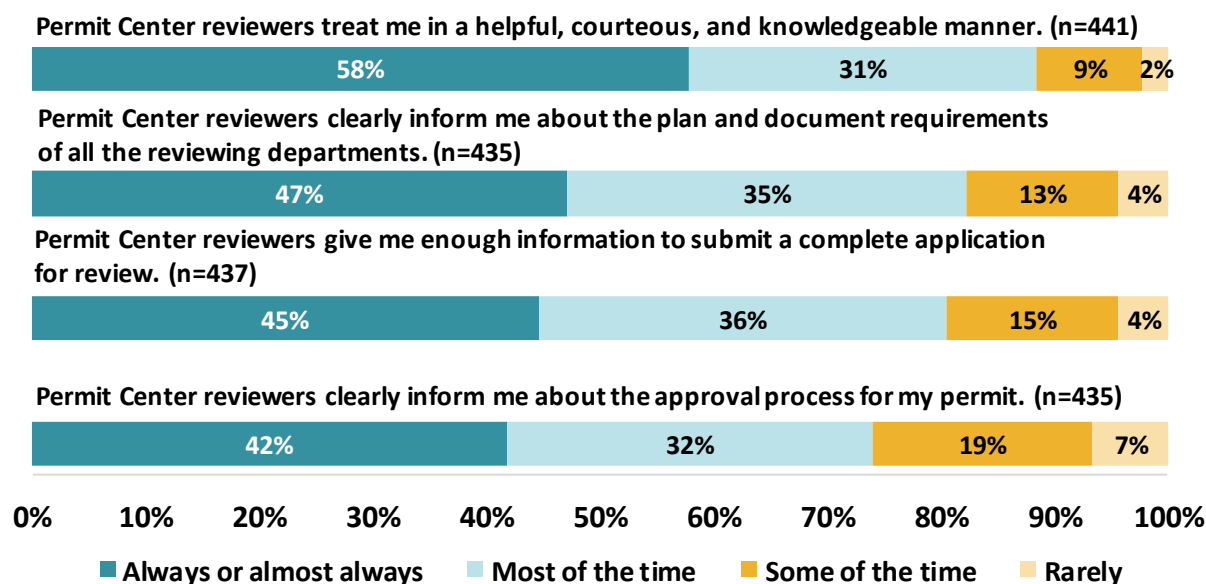
### Permit Center

Customers were asked if they have made a visit to the Permit Center in the past three years. A total of **479 people** (66% of question respondents) answered yes. These customers were then asked four questions about the Permit Center. Responses are shown in Exhibit A-5, with questions sorted by total positive responses ("Always or Almost Always" and "Most of the Time"), highest to lowest.

Similar to many DS services, staff score highest for helpfulness and courtesy, and less well for providing adequate information on requirements, application submittal, and the approval process. Over 1 in 4 respondents (26%) reported they sometimes or rarely are clearly informed about the approval process.



### Exhibit A-5. Permit Center Questions: All Responses



### Comparison to 2012 Results

Customers rated the Permit Center slightly worse on three questions and slightly better on one question in 2016 than in 2012, as shown in Exhibit A-6.

### Exhibit A-6. Permit Center Questions: Percentage of Positive Responses in 2012 and 2016

	Change, 2012-2016	2012	2016
Permit Center reviewers treat me in a helpful, courteous, and knowledgeable manner.	-4%	92%	88%
Permit Center reviewers clearly inform me about the plan and document requirements of all the reviewing departments.	+3%	79%	82%
Permit Center reviewers give me enough information to submit a complete application for review.	-2%	83%	81%
Permit Center reviewers clearly inform me about the approval process for my permit.	-4%	78%	74%

Notes: Positive Responses include "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" in 2012 and "Always or Almost Always" and "Most of the Time" in 2016. 2012 questions had five answer choices, including "no opinion," which is included in the total number of responses; 2016 question had four answer choices. Number of responses: 435 in 2016; 348 in 2012.

### Open-Ended Responses

Customers were asked for other comments or suggestions about the Permit Center; **152** people provided comments (of whom 11 said they had no comment). The most common topics were: praise for DS staff; improvements needed to customer service; lengthy review times; lack of consistency; and challenges for infrequent customers, process information, and facilities/logistics. Common topics, number of responses, and sample comments are provided in Exhibit A-7. Responses may be in two or more categories.

**Exhibit A-7. Do you have any other comments or suggestions about the Permit Center? (n=152)**

Topic	Sample Comments
<b>Praise (44 comments)</b> For the overall Bellevue process, staff helpfulness, friendliness, attitude, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>I work in multiple jurisdictions and find Bellevue's staff to be highly professional, technically proficient, and customer focused.</i></li> <li><i>Staff members are very good at their job and informative to visitors.</i></li> <li><i>I love meeting the people at Bellevue they are always courteous and very helpful.</i></li> <li><i>Always a good experience.</i></li> <li><i>They are always helpful and polite. Enjoy the staff greatly</i></li> </ul>
<b>Improve customer service (30 comments)</b> Improve friendliness, helpful attitude, responsiveness, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>It would be nice if the Permit Center employees were friendlier - they spend time talking with each other but don't act like my application is important. A smile would be nice.</i></li> <li><i>This is an unfair set of questions as my experience is that the majority of plan reviewers provide an exemplary service but my experience with one reviewer was awful ..rude, unhelpful and refused to make a meeting with me and my engineer to clarify his requirements</i></li> <li><i>While they clearly know what they are doing, they are not very friendly. A smile and an effort to be friendly would help.</i></li> <li><i>Improvement of attitude of front line staff would be helpful. They seem to provide the impression that my presence is an interruption to their day rather than reflect a pleasant customer service approach</i></li> </ul>
<b>Shorten permit time/ hire more staff (17 comments)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Faster processing time.</i></li> <li><i>Well, it did take 3+ months to get the building permit, so speeding up the process would be nice.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Improve consistency (16 comments)</b> Between Permit Center staff, reviewers, reviewers and inspectors, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>When I came in for a sewer line replacement one person said I didn't need a permit, another said I did. When an inspector came out to inspect another part of the remodel, he informed me I needed a permit months after all the work was completed.</i></li> <li><i>The basic problem is that the code has evolved over the years and no one has bothered to clear out the irrelevant and contradictory sections. As a result you can talk to 5 different people and get 5 different answers because nobody knows what this stuff means.</i></li> <li><i>Determining whether or not you need a permit for a job trailer was quite challenging. Inspectors seem to think one way but the permit center has a different view.</i></li> <li><i>Permit center comments have been conflicting between different reviewers when asked the same questions. Reviewers will give answers without referencing where it is found in the code and say it is just "policy." This causes an incredible amount of delay for everyone.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Better information on process and requirements (19 comments)</b> More information about steps in the process, requirements, fees, timeframes, etc. Some	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Published documents outlining the process and requirements at various stages of the entitlement and permitting processes</i></li> <li><i>I'm never quite sure when I need to add mechanical to an existing single family building permit or not.</i></li> <li><i>Permit Center should give a fee schedule at initial submittal so applicant knows what to expect at each step of the process.</i></li> </ul>

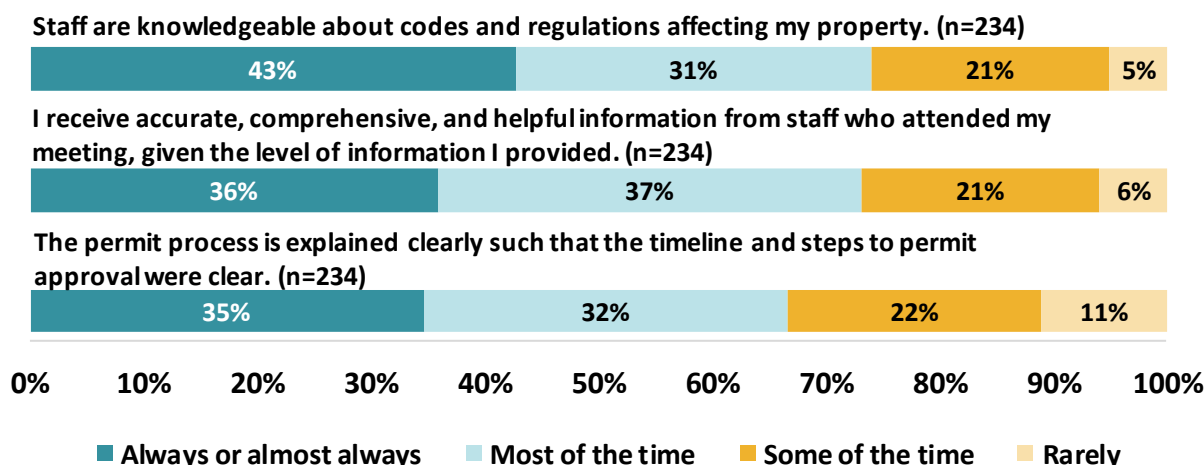
overlap with “infrequent customer” category.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>A homeowner should go for a permit and not fear it. Posters on why permits are important for homeowners’ safety will greatly help.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Infrequent customer (13 comments)</b> Both praise and constructive feedback from infrequent customers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The staff has always been very helpful and patient with new people learning the processes of permitting</i></li> <li>• <i>This was an exceedingly difficult process for a homeowner. It was obviously meant for professionals etc. and as a housewife, I had no idea where to start, how to proceed or what to do when.</i></li> <li>• <i>The process was new to me so it took a little getting used to. However everyone was very helpful.</i></li> <li>• <i>For a demolition permit, they were insisting I apply a full application, demo + build. The terminology and ambience is set for "professionals" in the trade and not for a common tax payer. I took my project as a DIY and was able to finish it with sub-contractors... There was a huge learning curve</i></li> </ul>
<b>Facilities/ logistics (11 comments)</b> Requirement for in-person visit; layout and logistics of Permit Center; time limits, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Public computers at north end of development services room need to be linked to printer to allow downloading of city applications both approved and pending.</i></li> <li>• <i>The 15 minute time period is not enough when the reviewers are not informed and they generate more questions than answered.</i></li> <li>• <i>I really wish we could do the Quick Review through mybuildingpermit.com instead of having to come in to your office.</i></li> <li>• <i>Limit counter staff to 15 min. per customer when others are waiting</i></li> <li>• <i>Check in computer needs better signage</i></li> <li>• <i>I like the remodel of the front reception area and how the computer sign in is used to queue customers.</i></li> <li>• <i>It's a little hard to know where to go when you first just have questions about the need for a permit or what type of permit. Handouts were easier to find before.</i></li> </ul>

## Pre-Application Services

Customers were asked if they have used Pre-Application services for a project in the past three years; **234** people (34% of question respondents) answered yes. These customers were then asked three questions about Pre-Application. Responses are shown in Exhibit A-8, with questions sorted by total positive responses (“Always or Almost Always” and “Most of the Time”), highest to lowest.

For each Pre-Application question, more than 1 in 4 respondents gave a negative response (“some of the time” or “rarely”). One in three respondents stated that the approval process is clearly explained only some of the time or rarely.

### Exhibit A-8. Pre-Application Services



### Comparison to 2012 Results

Customers rated the Pre-Application Services lower in 2016 than they did in 2012, as shown in Exhibit A-9. Note that these questions received fewer responses in 2016 than in 2012 (234 in 2016 versus roughly 273 in 2012), unlike most other questions.

### Exhibit A-9. Pre-Application Questions: Percentage of Positive Responses in 2012 and 2016

	Change, 2012-2016	2012	2016
I receive accurate, comprehensive, and helpful information from staff who attended my meeting, given the level of information I provided.	-5%	78%	73%
The permit process is explained clearly such that the timeline and steps to permit approval were clear.	-2%	69%	67%
Staff are knowledgeable about codes and regulations affecting my property.	-4%	78%	74%

Notes: Positive responses include "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" in 2012 and "Always or Almost Always" and "Most of the Time" in 2016. 2012 question had five answer choices, including "no opinion," which is included in the total number of responses; 2016 question had four answer choices. Number of responses 234 in 2016; 273 in 2012.

### Open-Ended Responses

Customers were asked for other comments or suggestions about Pre-Application Services; **82** people provided comments (of whom 11 said they had no comment). The most common topics were: improving customer service, inadequate or incorrect information or staff knowledge; praise for DS staff; improving consistency; streamlining; and better information on the process.

Common topics, number of responses, and sample comments are provided in Exhibit A-10. Responses may be in two or more categories.

**Exhibit A-10. Pre-Application Services: Do you have any other comments or suggestions? (n=82)**

Topic	Sample Comments
<b>Improve customer service (15 comments)</b> Lack of flexibility, responsiveness, helpfulness, friendliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>This sub-group has been the most frustrating to work with. They have been hostile and uninformative to work with.</i></li> <li><i>As they have experience - it might be nice if they offered an alternative opinion to how to do something.</i></li> <li><i>The last time I called. No one answered the phone. I left two voice messages, no one call back.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Information provided/ staff knowledge (13 comments)</b> Information provided was inadequate, incorrect, and/or staff knowledge was inadequate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>I submitted a development services application for staff review with 2 simple questions. The questions were not answered in the DC response.</i></li> <li><i>It would be nice to receive written responses from staff review of our pre-app submittal. The design team had to write everything the city staff said. No way we got it all.</i></li> <li><i>Letter that follows meeting and states the findings could be more specific.</i></li> <li><i>Staff member had difficulty understanding scope of kitchen remodel.</i></li> <li><i>Staff was not aware of requirements regarding our project.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Praise (11 comments)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>This a great process. We are able to understand critical issues early on in our design process.</i></li> <li><i>The one-on-one meeting to review permit checklist requirements is very valuable and helps focus on efficient permit application material prep on my side.</i></li> <li><i>Very helpful, and gave a thorough briefing on their expectations and areas our design and construction team needed to pay special attention.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Improve consistency (11 comments)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The comments received can be very different than comments received once application is made.</i></li> <li><i>I received two different answers from two departments. Caused extra trips and time and frustration.</i></li> <li><i>Requirements that were in the code were either changed or added to by reviewers with the explanation that the city is changing the way they want things and we have to do it, even though it is not written in the code or any supplemental information.</i></li> <li><i>The people at the Pre-Application meeting are often not the same as those doing the actual review. Requirements tend to be a moving target.</i></li> <li><i>Staff is always friendly and nice, but the code interpretations can result in bizarre results. The codes need to be reevaluated, especially in planning. The biggest problem is we are told one thing one day and something else entirely different the next...after we have gone to great lengths to comply with the first directive.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Streamline (6 comments)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Make simple tenant improvement jobs easier to get, the review process should not be so difficult, then I think more plumbers would pull permits instead of flying by night.</i></li> <li><i>Seems like some permitting processes have become unreasonably complex.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Better information on process (4 comments)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>It was difficult finding out clearly how the process worked beforehand.</i></li> <li><i>The Permit process explanation with timelines and expectations in a chart will be helpful</i></li> </ul>

## Online Services at MyBuildingPermit.com

Customers were asked if they've used MyBuildingPermit.com to apply for a permit in Bellevue; **455 people** answered yes (67% of question respondents). These customers were then asked two questions about MyBuildingPermit.com. Responses are shown in Exhibit A-11 below.

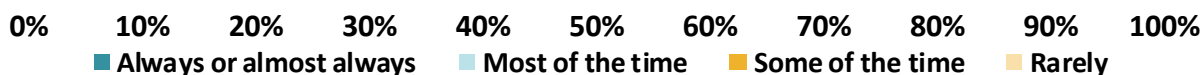
One in five respondents (96 people) stated that they only sometimes or rarely find the information they need and find the application process clear on MyBuildingPermit.com.

### Exhibit A-11. MyBuildingPermit.com Questions

**I can find the information I need at MyBuildingPermit.com about my application status, fees, and who to contact. (n=443)**



**The application process at www.MyBuildingPermit.com is clear and easy-to-use. (n=442)**



Survey results for this question are not compared to 2012, as there were no questions about MyBuildingPermit.com that year.

## Open-Ended Survey Responses

Customers were asked what improvements are most needed for MyBuildingPermit.com; **186 people** answered the question (of whom 12 said they had no comment). Common topics included: praise, user-friendliness, document uploading; permit status information; inspection scheduling; and better information on the process and requirements. The most common topics, number of responses, and sample comments are provided in Exhibit A-12. Responses may be in two or more categories.

### Exhibit A-12. What improvements are most needed for MyBuildingPermit.com? (n=186)

Topic	Sample Comments
<b>Praise (30 comments)</b> Ease of use, speed, efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quick and Easy!</li> <li>Very happy with it. Thorough, concise, and logical for the most part.</li> <li>This is a great time saver.</li> <li>Great service. Really streamlines the processing.</li> <li>This is a great service and works well. We submit our permits on MyBuildingPermit which saves time and paper.</li> </ul>

<b>More user-friendly/ better navigation (31 comments)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The user interface needs to be more intuitive...for example yesterday I had to call the city and have the inspector walk me through the inspection sheets....it was not easy to find....</i></li> <li>• <i>The search permit is a very busy web page and a little confusing.</i></li> <li>• <i>It is hard to navigate.. especially when I need to pay fees.</i></li> <li>• <i>Simplify the website further: too many tabs and choices. some of which overlap or are meaningless, like "Status" which just goes to a bunch of definitions.</i></li> <li>• <i>Parcel number lookups by address. Allow address to be close, as websites are not always updated for new address.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Document upload (22 comments)</b>  Expand document types allowed, process for uploading drawings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Document upload is limited on document types. Almost every single submission required re-submission of materials.</i></li> <li>• <i>The submittal items for a permit may or may not be part of the pull down menu of possible items to be submitted.</i></li> <li>• <i>Drop down menu choices for submitting documents can be difficult to choose the correct 'document' type. Sometimes, there are more than one of the same/similar documents to submit, but the 'document' type can only be selected once.</i></li> <li>• <i>Clearer instructions on uploading packages of drawings. Twice we had to resubmit because of a preference of certain drawings needing to be classified as something else in the MBP drop down.</i></li> <li>• <i>Additional categories for uploading review comment responses. Nothing to distinguish the difference between revision additions form and response letter.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Inspection scheduling (13 comments)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>There is a disconnect between this and having to call a special number to find out when inspection will take place.</i></li> <li>• <i>The process for communicating with inspectors is very difficult. Sometimes the homeowner just has to sit and wait the whole day if we can't get ahold of anyone.</i></li> <li>• <i>I think there is still room for improvement with any city in requesting a specific time for an inspection. I know inspectors have a tight schedule, but so do our customers. There must be some way to resolve this.</i></li> <li>• <i>Names and assignment process for field inspectors. It helps to know who I'm waiting for.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Better information on process/ requirements (13 comments)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>More user friendly - clear step by step procedures would be great.</i></li> <li>• <i>List what is required for each type of permit.</i></li> <li>• <i>Sometimes the process is not intuitive for me. I am (at times) left wondering if I'm using the right submittal process/path.</i></li> <li>• <i>Better instructions.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Status Information (15 comments)</b>  Inadequate or incorrect permit status information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Update on progress of permit status. Sometimes a project will sit in the In Review status for a long period of time and the progress is unknown.</i></li> <li>• <i>Never informed as to status, completion of review or ready to pick up or correct. Project seems lost in the web.</i></li> <li>• <i>Conversations with office staff do not match information online.</i></li> <li>• <i>The system seriously lags reality. We would submit and find the information not appearing until weeks later.</i></li> <li>• <i>Not always easy to follow and or find the information. such as inspected or not, and corrections that need to be made are not listed online.</i></li> </ul>



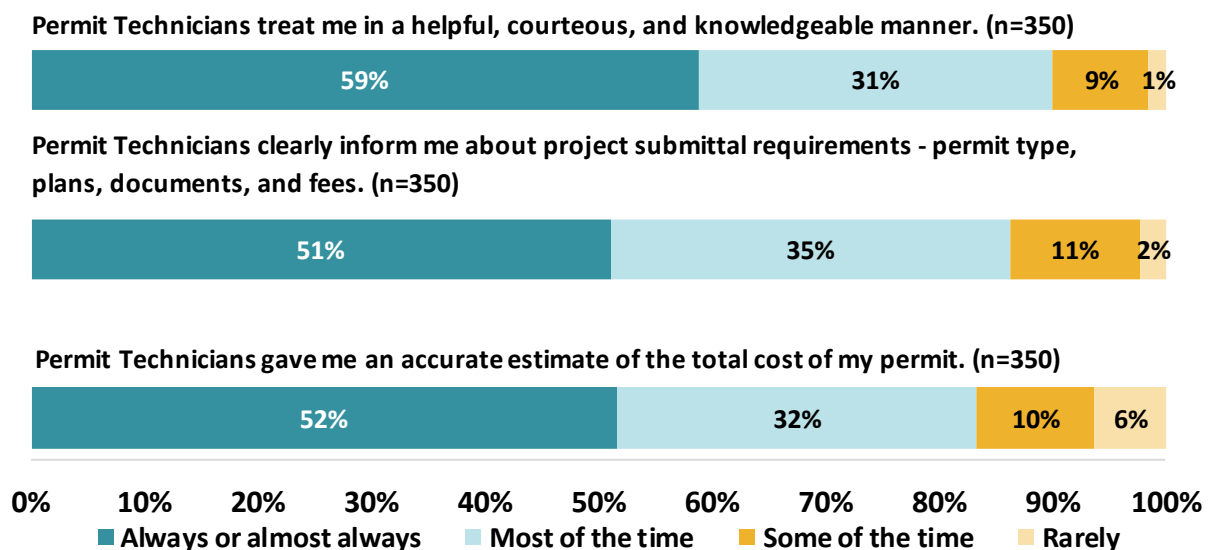
<b>Infrequent customer (7 comments)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Possibly the worst online site I've ever tried to use. I will concede that this may be due to the fact that I had no direct previous personal experience doing a permit submittal using the online service. But for a first timer, I found it totally indecipherable and blocked from being able to move forward without assistance.</i></li> <li><i>it's sometimes unclear to a homeowner what kind of permit I'm looking for, and the site doesn't allow you to easily look for ALL permits at a location, but forces you to know if you have electrical, mechanical, land use, etc. VERY frustrating for ignorant homeowners.</i></li> <li><i>Hard to actually talk to someone to help explain what categories activities fall under, as a homeowner. A contractor may understand better but they don't really want to get permits for some things.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Inconsistent staff use (4 comments)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>I find reviewers are not consistent with how they request and process their comments and revisions.</i></li> <li><i>Plan reviewers do not consistently upload comments to MBP.com</i></li> </ul>
<b>Contractor information (4 comments)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Updating our contractor license expiration so we do not have to call and request the site updates.</i></li> </ul>

## Permit Processing

Customers were asked if they have applied for a permit in person at the permit counter; **354 people** said yes (54% of question respondents). These customers were then asked three questions about permit processing. Responses are shown in Exhibit A-13, with questions sorted by total positive responses (“Always or Almost Always” and “Most of the Time”), highest to lowest.

Similar to other DS services, staff helpfulness and courtesy had the most positive responses (90%), while submittal requirements (86%) and accurate cost estimate (84%) had fewer positive responses.

**Exhibit A-13. Permit Processing Questions**





## Comparison to 2012 Results

Customers rated Permit Processing higher on two questions and lower on one question in 2016 than in 2012, as shown in Exhibit A-14.

**Exhibit A-14. Permit Processing Questions: Percentage of Positive Responses in 2012 and 2016**

	Change, 2012-2016	2012	2016
Permit Technicians treat me in a helpful, courteous, and knowledgeable manner.	-1%	91%	90%
Permit Technicians clearly inform me about project submittal requirements - permit type, plans, documents, and fees.	+7%	79%	86%
Permit Technicians gave me an accurate estimate of the total cost of my permit.	+6%	77%	83%

Note: Positive Responses include “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” in 2012 and “Always or Almost Always” and “Most of the Time” in 2016. 2012 question had five answer choices, including “no opinion,” which is included in the total number of responses; 2016 question had four answer choices. Number of responses: 350 in 2016; 299 in 2012.

## Open-Ended Survey Responses

Customers were asked for other comments or suggestions about Permit Processing; **70** people answered the question (of whom 13 said they had no comment). Topics included: praise for DS; needed improvements in customer service; better information needed; streamlining; and improving consistency. Topics and sample comments are provided in Exhibit A-15. Responses may be in two or more categories.

**Exhibit A-15. Permit Processing: Do you have any other comments or suggestions? (n=70)**

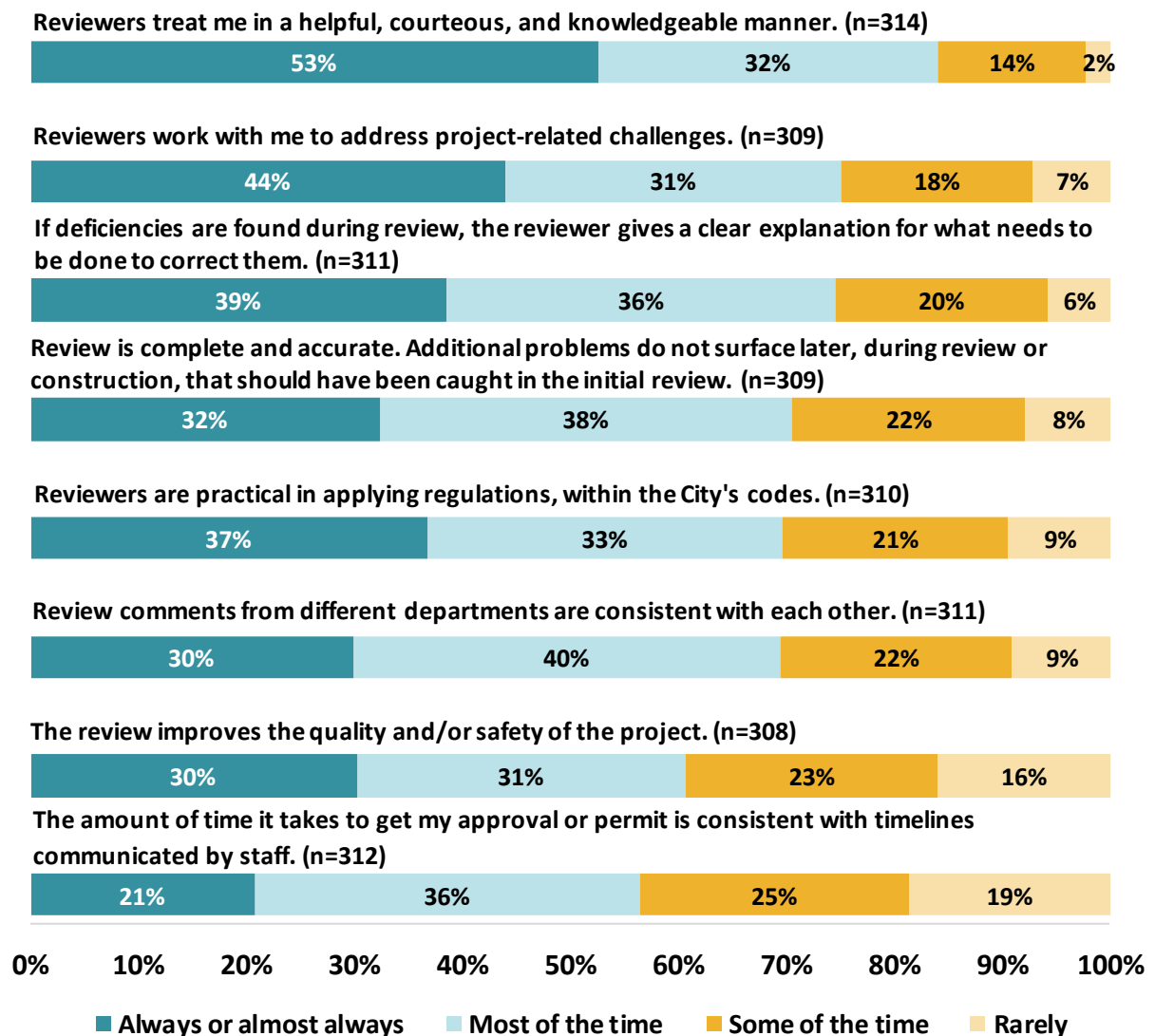
Topic	Sample Comments
<b>Praise (17 comments)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Intuitive and streamlined process!</i></li> <li>• <i>Friendly people that know what to do.</i></li> <li>• <i>You guys are #1.</i></li> <li>• <i>The permit technicians are very helpful and always have a good attitude.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Improve customer service (10 comments)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I would like to see the mentality on how to get permit in... some seem to be trying to find a way to not take in permit.</i></li> <li>• <i>Was not fond of the techs planning an office party amongst each other while I was waiting in line.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Better information needed (9 comments)</b> Process, fees, requirements, permit expiration, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I've never asked or received cost estimates from Permit Technicians. I didn't know that service was available.</i></li> <li>• <i>Publish clear and concise documents as to the permit fee calculations for all aspects of a particular project type.</i></li> <li>• <i>You need a flow chart to show the steps for each permit.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Streamline the process (4 comments)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Seems like the permits that we pull could be OTC.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Improve consistency (4 comments)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Have received different feedback on submittal requirements for identical projects, depending on the intake clerk.</i></li> </ul>

## Plan Review / Design Review

Customers were asked if they have been directly involved in Plan Review or Design Review for a project; **323 people** answered yes (49% of question respondents). These customers were then asked eight questions about Plan Review. Responses are shown in Exhibit A-16; questions are sorted by total positive responses (“Always or Almost Always” and “Most of the Time”), highest to lowest.

Similar to other DS services, staff helpfulness, courtesy, and knowledge received the most positive responses (85%), while improvement to the project (61%) and consistent timeline (57%) had the fewest positive responses. Nearly half of respondents (44% or 136 people) stated that actual approval time is only sometimes or rarely consistent with what staff have communicated.

**Exhibit A-16. Plan Review/ Design Review**



### Comparison to 2012 Results

Of the eight questions on Plan Review/ Design Review asked in 2016, five were directly comparable to questions in the 2012 survey. Customers rated DS higher on four of these five questions in 2016, as

shown in Exhibit A-17. In particular, ratings for consistency, accuracy, and a collaborative attitude improved the most.

**Exhibit A-17. Plan Review/Design Review Questions: Percentage of Positive Responses in 2012 and 2016**

	Change, 2012-2016	2012	2016
Reviewers treat me in a helpful, courteous, and knowledgeable manner.	+3%	81%	84%
Review is complete and accurate. Additional problems do not surface later, during review or construction, that should have been caught in the initial review.	+9%	62%	71%
Reviewers work with me to address project-related challenges.	+8%	67%	75%
Review comments from different departments are consistent with each other.	+9%	60%	69%
Reviewers are practical in applying regulations, within the City's codes.	-1%	71%	70%

Notes: Positive Responses include "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" in 2012 and "Always or Almost Always" and "Most of the Time" in 2016. 2012 question had five answer choices, including "no opinion," which is included in the total number of responses; 2016 question had four answer choices. Number of responses: 308 in 2016; 258 in 2012.

## Open-Ended Survey Responses

Customers were asked for other comments or suggestions about Plan Review/ Design Review; **104** people answered the question (of whom 12 said they had no comment). The most common topics include: consistency; customer service; review time; praise for DS; streamlining; flexibility, and coordination.

Common topics, number of responses, and sample comments are provided in Exhibit A-18. Responses may be in two or more categories.

**Exhibit A-18. Plan Review/Design Review: Do you have any other comments or suggestions? (n=104)**

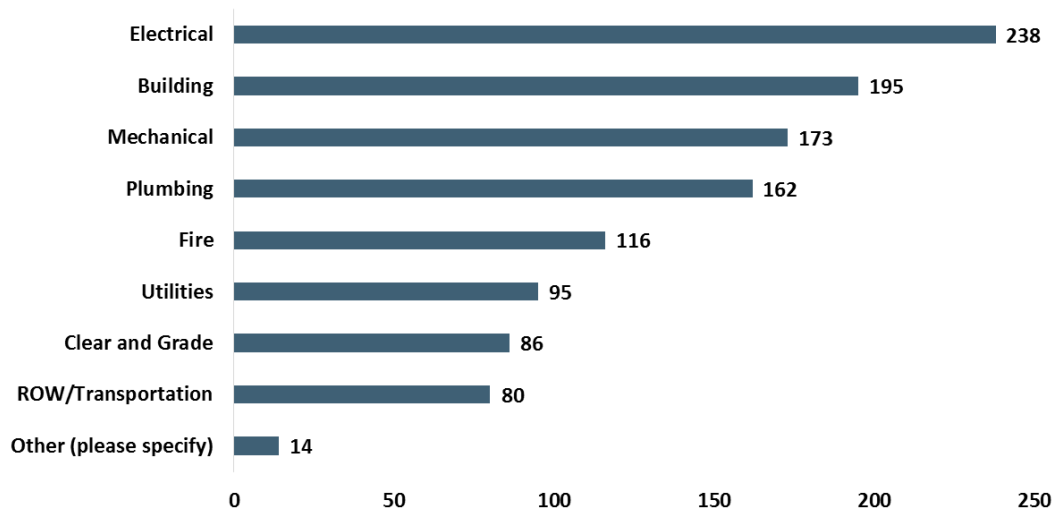
Topic	Sample Comments
<b>Improve consistency (21 comments)</b> Between reviewers, as part of corrections process, between reviewers and inspectors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On two separate projects, have had reviewers add new comments/needed corrections after we submitted first response/corrections. We get the drawings back expecting comments related to previous corrections and have completely new corrections to make. Clients have been unhappy.</li> <li>Occasionally first round comments will be turned in and then on review of those we get completely new comments. That should not be allowed, especially when the new comments are not practical/life safety or substantial comments.</li> <li>Electrical plan review staff should be meeting regularly with electrical inspectors. We were told one thing by the electrical plan reviewer that was later delegated back to an electrical inspector for plan interpretation which should have been the plan reviewer's authority. Otherwise why have the plan review at all...just give it to the electrical inspectors.</li> <li>Staff often were inconsistent with each other. Actual on-site inspection differed from office staff.</li> </ul>

<b>Improve customer service</b> <b>(19 comments)</b> Responsiveness to calls and emails, more collaborative attitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Most reviewers don't have timely response to emails and phone calls. 3-5 days is common and often only when re-emailed or called to get a response.</i></li> <li>• <i>Honestly, the hardest part is just getting a reviewer to return an email or phone call. Once we've communicated the result is typically very productive.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Praise</b> <b>(12 comments)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The staff has always been very professional.</i></li> <li>• <i>Review staff are great assets, somehow you Need to clone them so turnaround time can be quicker.</i></li> <li>• <i>Building reviewers and utility reviews are exceptional...</i></li> <li>• <i>The reviewers are knowledgeable and VERY hard working.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Shorten review time</b> <b>(11 comments)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Review time can take 3-4 weeks. That is excessive.</i></li> <li>• <i>Plan reviews take longer than any other city. It is unreasonable that a permit outside of city limits can be obtained in 10 minutes or less and City of Bellevue takes weeks.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Timeline estimate</b> <b>(5 comments)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Lack of communication on schedule, and on target dates for completion of review has hampered the ability to plan for start of construction and ultimately, move-in.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Streamline</b> <b>(7 comments)</b> Reduce or simplify the permit process, the number of permits required, and/or the regulatory code.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>There are too many reviews for each permit, and they are all redundant.</i></li> <li>• <i>Too many layers of contradictory regulations piled on top of each other. Somebody needs to clean up the code.</i></li> <li>• <i>Some of the requirements are often just ridiculous leaving you to wonder if the people working in the department ever did any building before being hired.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Staff flexibility</b> <b>(5 comments)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Bellevue... has some of the strictest interpretation of the code. It regularly adds significant cost without adding any safety or value to a project.</i></li> <li>• <i>Reviewers have trouble being practical, particularly when the code leaves options - that is, the reviewer usually picks an option he likes with little room for the contractor/owner to provide his preference.</i></li> <li>• <i>Reviewers should be given more flexibility to make decisions that may not always fit into the exact box of the local codes or zoning.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Improve coordination</b> <b>(3 comments)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The reviewers clearly do not communicate with each other and it was on us to figure it out. Would be nice to have one contact at the city that coordinated the reviewers.</i></li> </ul>

## Inspections

Customers were asked if they've interacted with city inspectors providing on-site inspection services; **404 people** (63% of question respondents) answered yes. These customers were then asked what type of inspection service they've been directly involved in. As shown in Exhibit A-19, the highest responses were for electrical, building, mechanical, and plumbing. In addition, 260 people (65%) chose two or more inspection types.

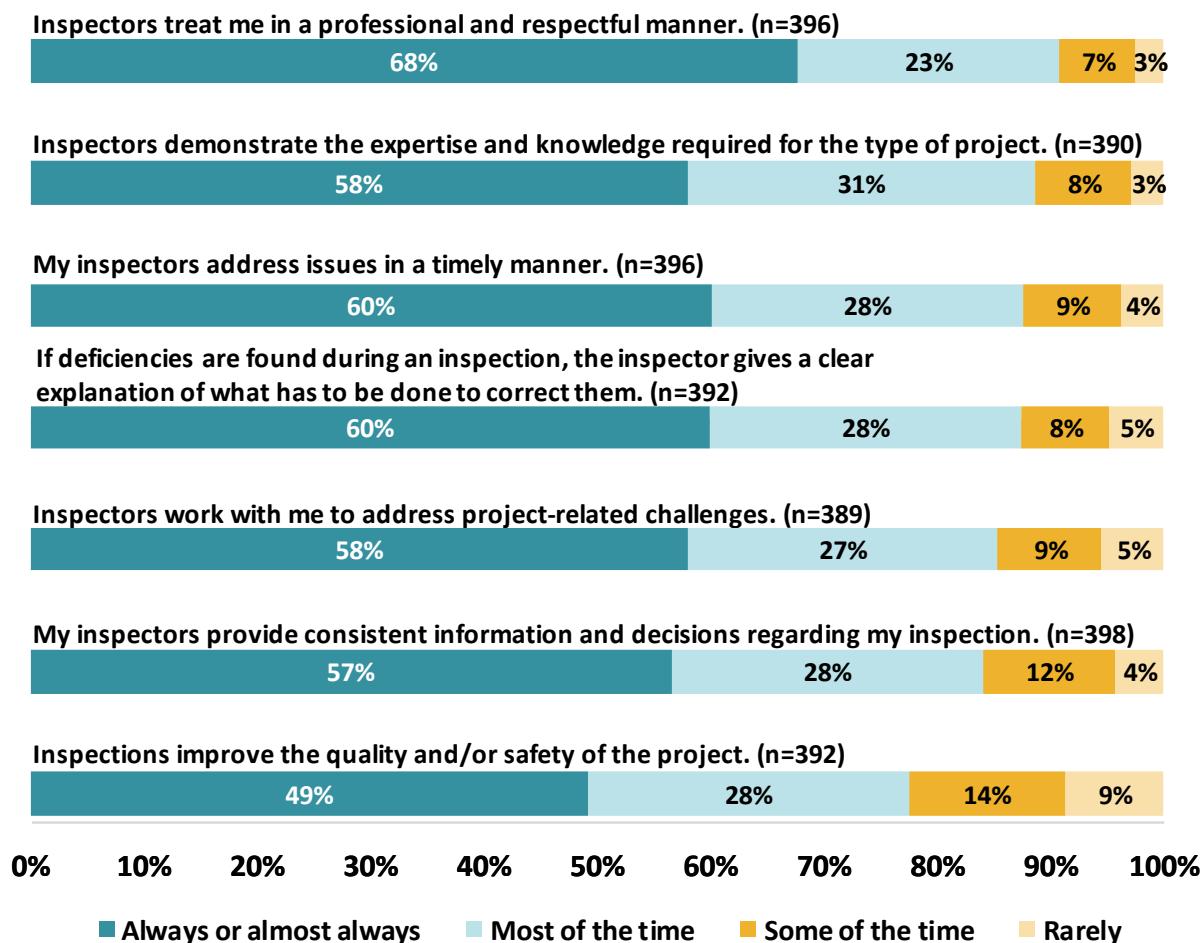
**Exhibit A-19. What type of inspection service have you been directly involved in?**  
(Choose all that apply.) (n=401)



## Inspection Question Responses

Customers were asked seven questions about inspections. Responses are shown in Exhibit A-20, sorted by total positive responses ("Always or Almost Always" and "Most of the Time"). Staff professionalism had the most positive responses (91%), followed by inspector expertise, while improving the quality and/or safety of the project had the fewest (77%).

### Exhibit A-20. Inspection Questions



### Comparison to 2012 Results

Of the seven questions on inspection, four are comparable to questions in the 2012 survey. Customers rated inspection much higher on these questions in 2016, as shown in Exhibit A-21. In particular, a collaborative attitude and consistency improved substantially.

### Exhibit A-21. Inspections Questions: Percentage of Positive Responses in 2012 and 2016

	Change, 2012-2016	2012	2016
Inspectors treat me in a professional and respectful manner.	+18%	73%	91%
If deficiencies are found during an inspection, the inspector gives a clear explanation of what has to be done to correct them.	+12%	76%	88%
Inspectors work with me to address project-related challenges.	+29%	65%	85%
My inspectors provide consistent information and decisions regarding my inspection.	+27%	58%	85%

Notes: Positive Responses include “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” in 2012 and “Always or Almost Always” and “Most of the Time” in 2016. 2012 question had five answer choices, including “no opinion,” which is included in the total number of responses; 2016 question had four answer choices. Number of responses: 389 in 2016; 248 in 2012.

## Open-Ended Responses

Customers were asked for other comments or suggestions about Inspection Services; **121 people** answered the question (of whom 8 said they had no comment). Common topics included: praise for staff, customer service improvements, scheduling, and consistency.

The most common topics, number of responses, and sample comments are provided in Exhibit A-22. Responses may be in two or more categories.

**Exhibit A-22. Inspections: Do you have any other comments or suggestions? (n=121)**

Topic	Sample Comments
<b>Praise</b> <b>(38 comments)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The inspectors were all serious professionals and offered good advice on what was needed to complete the project within requirements.</i></li> <li><i>Most inspectors have been a pleasure to work with.</i></li> <li><i>I am a traveling Superintendent that builds tenant improvement projects all over the United States. ...I found the city of Bellevue Building Inspectors to be courteous, knowledgeable and efficient. My experience with your building department was much better than it is in 95 % of other cities nationwide.</i></li> <li><i>It is always a pleasure to work with the Bellevue inspectors. They are friendly and informative.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Scheduling</b> <b>(19 comments)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Sometimes, we are only on a job for a couple of days. So when it comes to inspections, we need to have the Inspector call us at least 1 hour before he arrives. This will make it possible for us to be there. We cannot pay an employee for a full day just to stand there waiting for inspection. So a few times we have not been called and therefore failed our inspection, which just cost more time and money for all involved.</i></li> <li><i>Inspectors will give a 2-3 hour window that they will arrive for inspection. Assuming our work is complete, this means we are standing around for hours waiting. I suggest texting as a means of more accurate arrival time.</i></li> <li><i>Many of our projects are time sensitive as we have to travel 2 hours to job sites. Inspection times are usually scheduled a week in advance to ensure inspectors can be there at specific time windows. Recent experience finds inspectors calling morning of inspection to say inspections cannot be done the day specified. Problem arises in that crew has left shop before inspector calls.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Improve customer service (22 comments)</b> Responsiveness to calls and emails, collaborative attitude, too strict enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Inspectors routinely fail inspections due to non-code related issues of personal preference that do not affect performance or quality of the plumbing system.</i></li> <li><i>Some of the inspectors have a small man complex. For example. Only do it my way. Your new furnace specs. doesn't specify an item according to city code therefore buy another new furnace.</i></li> <li><i>For the most part, the inspector base for the city is very good to work with; however they have a few that are on a power trip and do whatever it takes to make you job extremely difficult.</i></li> <li><i>The quality of inspectors has been a mixed bag. Some have been very good and others are some of the laziest and most unreasonable I have worked with...and we work in multiple jurisdictions.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Improve consistency</b> <b>(13 comments)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>My only item is when there is a discrepancy or code interpretation from the field and was not disclosed in the plan review. I understand there are unforeseen</i></li> </ul>

Between inspectors in the same department, and between inspectors and plan reviewers.

*conditions but sometimes statements requiring code review or upgrades which were not expressed in the plan review is costly and timely.*

- *Items that were discussed & settled in plan review get overturned by the inspectors in the field. We are at the mercy of the inspector's opinion / interpretation of the code even if the approved plans show something different. It would be extremely helpful if the plan review could be done and considered final. Maybe the inspectors need to be involved with the plan review process? Or at least the plan reviewer & inspector need to come to an agreement. It's so much more difficult to change things after they are built.*
- *Two inspectors will give completely different checklists to complete. If I don't get signoff on inspector 1, and get inspector 2 next time, I get another set of new things to correct.*

## Comparison: Staff Courtesy, Helpfulness, and Knowledge

While most survey questions differed across DS services, questions concerning staff courtesy, helpfulness, and knowledge were asked for all staffed services. As shown in Exhibit A-23, Inspections, Permit Processing, and the Permit Center all had between 88 and 91% positive responses, while Plan Review/Design Review and Pre-Application scored lower. Note that some questions include slightly different text (in particular, the Pre-Application question asks only about staff knowledge), and the number of responses for each question varies.

**Exhibit A-23. Staff Courtesy, Helpfulness, and Knowledge: Positive Responses Across DS Services**

DS Service	Question	Positive Responses*	# of Responses
<b>Inspections</b>	Inspectors treat me in a professional and respectful manner.	91%	396
<b>Permit Processing</b>	Permit technicians treat me in a helpful, courteous, and knowledgeable manner.	90%	350
<b>Permit Center</b>	Permit Center reviewers treat me in a helpful, courteous, and knowledgeable manner.	89%	441
<b>Inspections</b>	Inspectors demonstrate the expertise and knowledge required for the type of project.	88%	390
<b>Plan Review/Design Review</b>	Reviewers treat me in a helpful, courteous, and knowledgeable manner.	85%	314
<b>Pre-Application Services</b>	Staff are knowledgeable about codes and regulations affecting my property.	74%	234

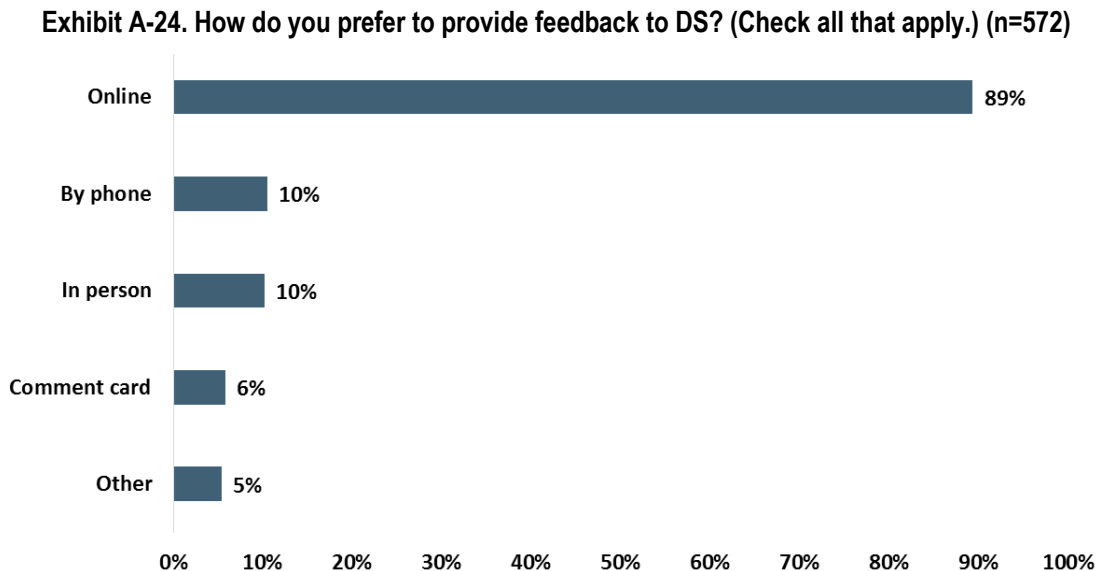
\*Positive responses include "Always or Almost Always" and "Most of the Time."



## General Questions

### Feedback Preference

When asked how they prefer to provide feedback to DS, respondents chose “Online” by a wide margin, with a smaller number choosing phone, in-person, and comment cards, as shown in Exhibit A-24.



While the survey did not ask for comments about how to provide feedback, several people made comments in other questions. For example:

- *Customers should be able to rate personal interaction so that the former can be rewarded and the later can be given training on how to properly serve the public.*
- *Send testers through the process and get their impressions of effectiveness of the process. Have them leave a message for someone to get back to them and see if it ever happens.*

### Best Practices in Other Cities

Customers were asked if they were aware of practices in other cities that could serve as a model for Bellevue; **143 people** (25%) answered yes. Customers were then asked to specify which cities and practices; **150 people** provided comments.

Many cities and jurisdictions were mentioned as examples of best practices. Seattle was mentioned most often (43 comments), Kirkland next (20 comments), then Renton and Redmond (8 comments each). In addition, 20 people made comments praising Bellevue, with several stating that Bellevue is the leader in the region.

The most common best practices brought up included streamlining (fewer permits, less process, especially for small projects), inspection scheduling, customer service (collaborative attitude and responsiveness), and a coordinated and timely review process.

The most common topics, number of responses, and sample comments are provided in Exhibit A-25. Responses may be in two or more categories.

**Exhibit A-25. Are you aware of practices in other cities that could serve as a model for Bellevue? What cities, and what are the practices? (n=150)**

Topic	Sample Comments
<b>Praise for Bellevue DS (20 comments)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Many other cities I have worked with have too many layers of staff to navigate and projects get lost in the shuffle so I think COB is very effective by comparison. The COB staff is probably over worked, but I really appreciated being able to work with the same staff members throughout the project.</i></li> <li><i>Time is money with our clients and Bellevue does a great job for a tenant improvement contractor. I have not experienced a negative interaction!</i></li> <li><i>Bellevue is a model for other municipalities. The communication between departments is exemplary and efficient.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Overall process (20 comments)</b> Coordination between departments, online system, timeline, coordination, etc.	<p>Many comments referenced Kirkland and Seattle:</p> <p><b>Kirkland</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Kirkland: one letter addresses all comments from all departments. You make all your corrections on one drawing set, respond in one letter.</i></li> <li><i>Kirkland - availability of all departments for meetings at the early onset of projects to review specific requirements for a site or project</i></li> <li><i>Kirkland has very quick clear and consistent communication about the timeline and status of projects, and releases a formal letter which includes all department comments.</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Seattle</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The city of Seattle online process and the way we get permits from them is fabulous.</i></li> <li><i>City of Seattle through their online Portal with land use and building permits negates the need for in-person submittals and sign offs that COB requires for LUX.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Streamlined process (15 comments)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Seattle does over the counter building permits for small projects called "Subject to Field Inspection" or STFI permits. Every jurisdiction should offer these permits that can be acquired the same day as long as the drawings and documents are sufficient and in order.</i></li> <li><i>In Seattle no building permit is needed for residential solar as long as it's not 18" above the roof surface.</i></li> <li><i>Seattle is the best. They have a real system for permitting small projects. STFI.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Inspections (12 comments)</b> Scheduling, contacting inspectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Redmond. They call 15 minutes prior to arrival for an inspection and arrange a meeting location and access.</i></li> <li><i>Seattle, Renton, and others have direct inspector's lines I can call.</i></li> <li><i>All other city inspectors will give out cell numbers (Kirkland, Medina, Clyde Hill, Seattle). This makes it easier if they write corrections - you can get better clarification and remedy the issue in a timely fashion instead of leaving a message at the office line.</i></li> <li><i>Kirkland offers an AM or PM request slot which makes it much easier to schedule inspections with homeowners who usually do not want to take an entire day off work to meet the inspector.</i></li> </ul>

<b>Customer service (7 comments)</b> Collaborative attitude, responsiveness to calls and emails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Renton is superior in their responsiveness, and they take a perspective of how they can help solve a problem for the customer, not how many ways they can say what cannot be done.</i></li> <li><i>Renton, Seattle, Everett- all of these jurisdictions have staff that communicate throughout a project and do not blindly issue a correction instead of picking up a phone or sending an email to clarify what is going on.</i></li> </ul>
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## General Improvement Suggestions

Customers were asked how DS can improve to serve them better; **242** people provided comments. The most common suggestions were: improve customer service (including responsiveness to calls, collaborative attitude, etc.), shorten review times, improve consistency, streamline the process, improve the website, inspection scheduling, and better process information. Many respondents also praised DS.

The most common comment topics, number of responses, and sample comments are provided in Exhibit A-26. Responses may be in two or more categories.

**Exhibit A-26. "How Can We Improve to Serve You Better?" (n=242)**

Topic	Sample Comments
<b>Improve customer service</b> (56 comments) Largest subtopics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inspections: 11</li> <li>Responsiveness to calls &amp; emails: 10</li> <li>More collaborative attitude: 10</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Inspectors should view their job as customer service/advocate, not police of the permitting world. Some inspectors seem to think that they need to find defects in order to justify their position.</i></li> <li><i>Respond to emails and phone calls w/in a 24-hr period like city code states.</i></li> <li><i>...The experience starts from a "No, we are not going to let you do this" perspective rather than a "let's work together to come up with a solution that works from a code and homeowner" perspective.</i></li> <li><i>Be less rigid and more collaborative.</i></li> <li><i>As in most places, there is a mix of considerate, helpful staff and non-serving staff.</i></li> <li><i>Increase customer service training for your staff.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Shorten review times/ hire more staff</b> (42 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The review time is taking too long, reviewers are great but they're too busy.</i></li> <li><i>Hire a few more employees in the permitting departments.</i></li> <li><i>The amount of time it takes to have permits reviewed is way too much.</i></li> <li><i>Review times are way too long. We've lost customers who decide to scrap a project because of how long it takes.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Improve consistency</b> (20 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Planning in particular needs to be consistent in their evaluation and feedback. A significant part of the problem is contradictory and conflicting code requirements that are impossible to interpret.</i></li> <li><i>Consistent information from all staff.</i></li> <li><i>There is a tendency to get different code interpretations from different staff, even though there seems to be quite a bit of cross-staff discussion.</i></li> </ul> <p>One comment mentioned a trade-off between being fast and being consistent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Consistency and communicating the timeline is more important than getting permits quicker.</i></li> </ul>

<b>Streamline the process, regulations</b> (16 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Just the nature of a bureaucratic system does not allow for adjustments for very small TI improvement. Employees apply the same standards for a \$30,000 project as for a \$100,000 project.</i></li> <li>• <i>Require fewer inspections for very small projects.</i></li> <li>• <i>Make city codes simpler, more commonsense, and less expensive to meet.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Inspection scheduling</b> (14 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Narrow the time of visit window to 2 hours instead of morning/afternoon.</i></li> <li>• <i>A system for inspectors to automatically notify us via text or email with inspection timing window and any other notes.</i></li> <li>• <i>Have your scheduling process work differently. It is too loose without giving approx. times. I work full time and can't give up a whole day just waiting.</i></li> <li>• <i>Allow inspection requests to be scheduled on-line.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Website and MyBuildingPermit.com</b> (17 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Make sure that Mybuildingpermit.com continues to improve their web site to be more user-friendly.</i></li> <li>• <i>Make the online submittal easier.</i></li> <li>• <i>It is great to have the online applications.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Praise for DS</b> (16 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I consider City of Bellevue to provide some of the best overall development services in the region.</i></li> <li>• <i>Doing a good job.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Better process information</b> (15 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>There needs to be a clear chart that can inform anyone what steps are required to obtain a permit and in what order they must be obtained.</i></li> <li>• <i>Ensure that submittal checklists accurately describe exactly what each department will need.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Infrequent customers</b> (7 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Help first time applicants - and those with custom homes. Processes seem set up for large contractors with many applications.</i></li> <li>• <i>Clarify the steps and timelines for a rookie (versus an experienced builder).</i></li> <li>• <i>Only used twice, both times it was great.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Improve coordination</b> (11 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>When questions cross areas of expertise, sometimes I have to connect the different departments myself.</i></li> <li>• <i>Have a better way to get information that is reliable and a better coordination between departments. A single point person would help.</i></li> <li>• <i>Don't like the piece-meal delivery of plan check comments. Some departments would review building permit while short plat is in review, others wouldn't.</i></li> </ul>

## Other Comments and Suggestions

Customers were asked if they have any other comments or suggestions; **146** people answered the question (of whom 35 said they had no comments). The most common topics were praise for DS, improving customer service, shortening review times, streamlining, and improving process information.

Common topics, number of responses, and sample comments are provided in Exhibit A-27. Responses may be in two or more categories.

### Exhibit A-27. Do you have any other comments or suggestions? (n=146)

Topic	Sample Comments
<b>Praise for DS</b> (37 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>I enjoy working with the City of Bellevue.</i></li> <li><i>I have appreciated all the practical assistance my inspectors, reviewers, and office staff have provided. Thank you!</i></li> <li><i>Overall, City of Bellevue does an outstanding job of getting permits issued and inspections of jobs.</i></li> <li><i>I love the ease of getting simple permits for furnace change-outs or AC additions. I wish other cities could be just as easy to work with. :)</i></li> </ul>
<b>Improve customer service</b> (16 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Be more friendly to your applicants.</i></li> <li><i>Staff should be encouraged to meet with applicants and design professionals and interact as part of their review. Too often, workload is the excuse to stay behind the "curtain."</i></li> <li><i>When someone goes to the City to apply for a permit, staff need to be friendly.</i></li> <li><i>Your inspectors are capricious and unwilling to put comments in writing [where] it will become record that they are overly conservative in application of code. I have personally had to have an official ICC ruling for an obvious matter to get an inspector to back down.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Shorten review times/ hire more staff</b> (14 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The time to review online submission is unacceptable.</i></li> <li><i>Hire more staff, and reduce review time guidelines.</i></li> <li><i>In our business timeliness is everything. I realize we are all very busy, but when we have to wait 8-12 weeks for a permit to work in the ROW, it causes our customers to get very irritated.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Streamline</b> (11 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Contractors universally tell me that the City of Bellevue, in comparison to neighboring cities, is the most difficult to work with in regards to red tape and requirements for permits, and raise trivial issues during inspections.</i></li> <li><i>Not all projects require review. Not all reviews require such lengthy and burdensome submittal attachments.</i></li> <li><i>I found the process for small landscape projects a bit excessive. We are forced to get a permit for clearing and grading and all we are doing is replacing plants. There must be an easier way or a different approach for these types of small landscape projects.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Improve process information</b> (5 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Clear communication, clear guidance - many of us work in 50-75 different jurisdictions. I freely admit I don't know all your rules, please help. Don't preach, lecture or talk down - we are professionals too, we just work outside of your system much of the time!</i></li> </ul>

## Miscellaneous Feedback

In addition to the 741 survey responses, DS staff received two direct emails from customers in response to the survey announcement. One customer provided feedback about Bellevue's code compliance staff from a recent experience, praising DS staff as understanding, patient, and helpful. The second customer, who indicated they also filled out the survey, works in commercial design and praised DS staff for being helpful, courteous, and proactive.

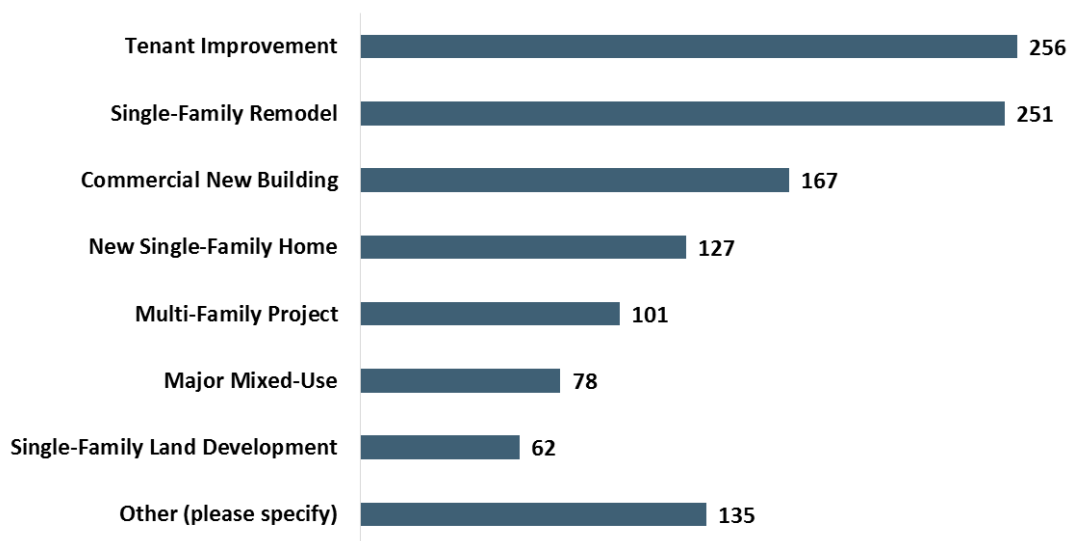
## A.3 RESULTS BY PROJECT TYPE

This section details responses to all close-ended survey questions by customer project type.

### Project Types

As described above, customers were asked what type of construction projects they work on in Bellevue. Results are shown in Exhibit A-28. The highest number of responses were Tenant Improvement and Single-Family Remodel projects. In addition, 261 respondents (36%) chose two or more projects.

**Exhibit A-28. What types of construction projects have you worked on in Bellevue?**  
(Check all that apply.) (n=731)



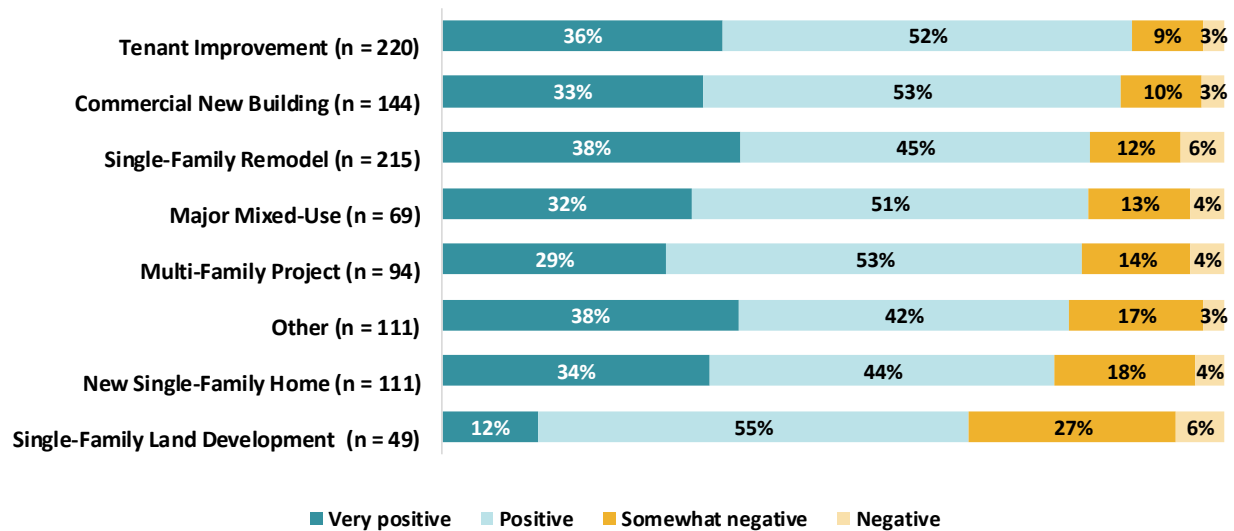
Note: Customers could choose more than one project type.

There were 135 “Other” responses to this question. Many of these comments described renovation or maintenance work for unspecified building types (39 responses), such as installing water heaters, air conditioning, etc. Other responses referred to types of permits, including: trees/landscaping (9), telecommunications (9), signs (7), and transportation or right-of-way work, such as driveways (14). A few responses listed building types, including public sector buildings (13), and church projects (2).

## Overall Customer Service Experience

In rating the overall customer service experience with DS, customers in Tenant Improvement and Commercial New Building had the highest proportion of positive responses (88% and 85%, respectively), while New Single Family Home and Single Family Land Development had the lowest (78% and 67%, respectively). Results are shown in Exhibit A-29.

**Exhibit A-29. Overall, how would you rate the quality of your customer service experience with Bellevue Development Services? (n=618)**



Note: Customers could choose more than one project type.

## Permit Center

Exhibit A-30 shows the percentage of positive responses (“Always or Almost Always” or “Most of the Time”) for each Permit Center question, by project type. Positive responses of 85% or more are shown in green, 71-84% in yellow, 55-70% in orange. No questions had below 55% positive responses.

By project type, the highest shares of positive responses are generally in Commercial New Building, and the lowest shares in Single Family Land Development.

**Exhibit A-30. Permit Center Positive Responses, By Project Type**

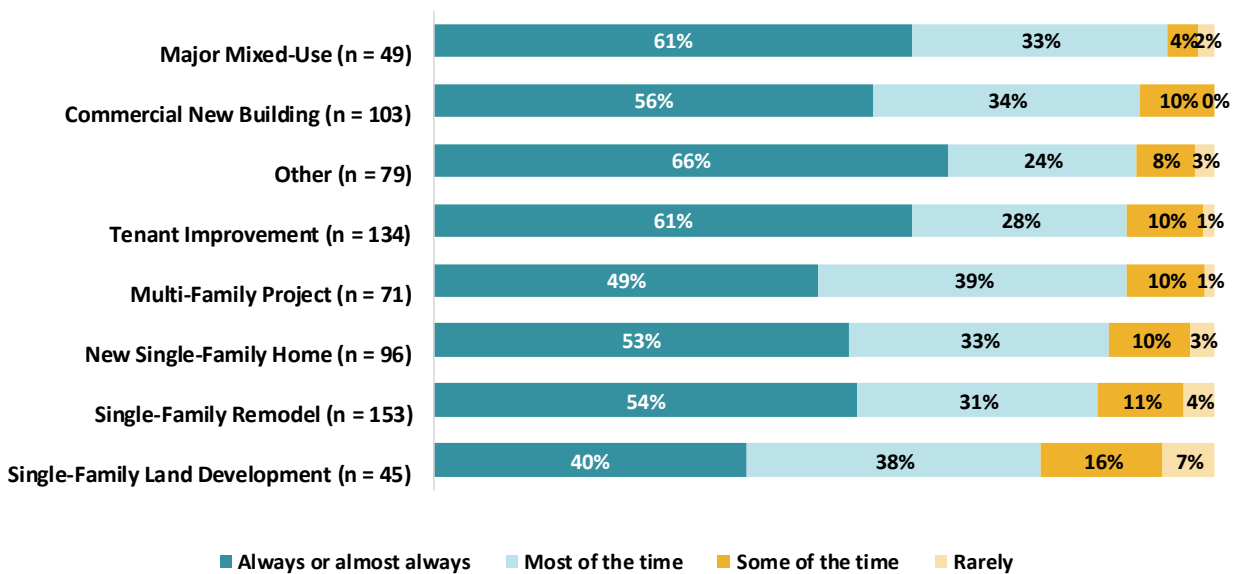
Question	SFR (n=151)	NSFH (n=96)	SFLD (n=45)	MF (n=71)	TI (n=133)	CNB (n=102)	MMU (n=48)	Other (n=77)
Permit Center reviewers treat me in a helpful, courteous, and knowledgeable manner.	85%	86%	78%	89%	89%	90%	94%	90%
Permit Center reviewers clearly inform me about the plan and document requirements of all the reviewing departments.	81%	80%	69%	76%	82%	86%	83%	90%
Permit Center reviewers give me enough information to submit a complete application for review.	80%	74%	71%	80%	80%	85%	83%	83%
Permit Center reviewers clearly inform me about the approval process for my permit.	76%	72%	55%	70%	76%	80%	75%	79%

Project Types: SFR=Single-Family Remodel; NSFH=New Single-Family Home; SFLD=Single-Family Land Development; MF=Multi-Family; TI=Tenant Improvement; CNB=Commercial New Building; MMU=Major Mixed-Use.

Note: Survey respondents could choose more than one project type.

The full break-down of responses to each Permit Center question are shown in Exhibit A-31 through Exhibit A-34.

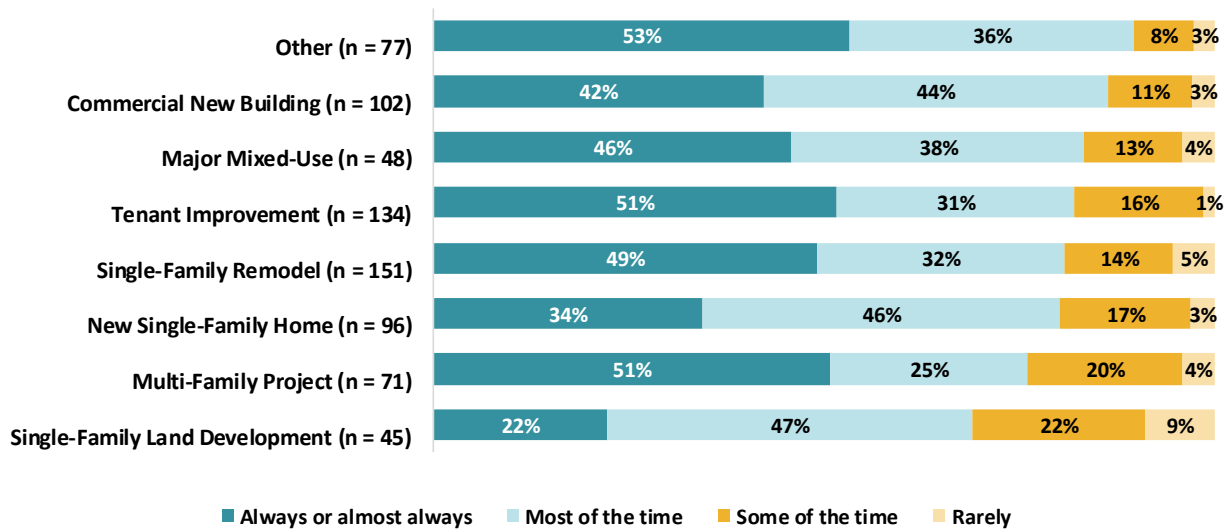
**Exhibit A-31. Permit Center reviewers treat me in a helpful, courteous, and knowledgeable manner. (n=441)**



Note: Survey respondents could choose more than one project type.

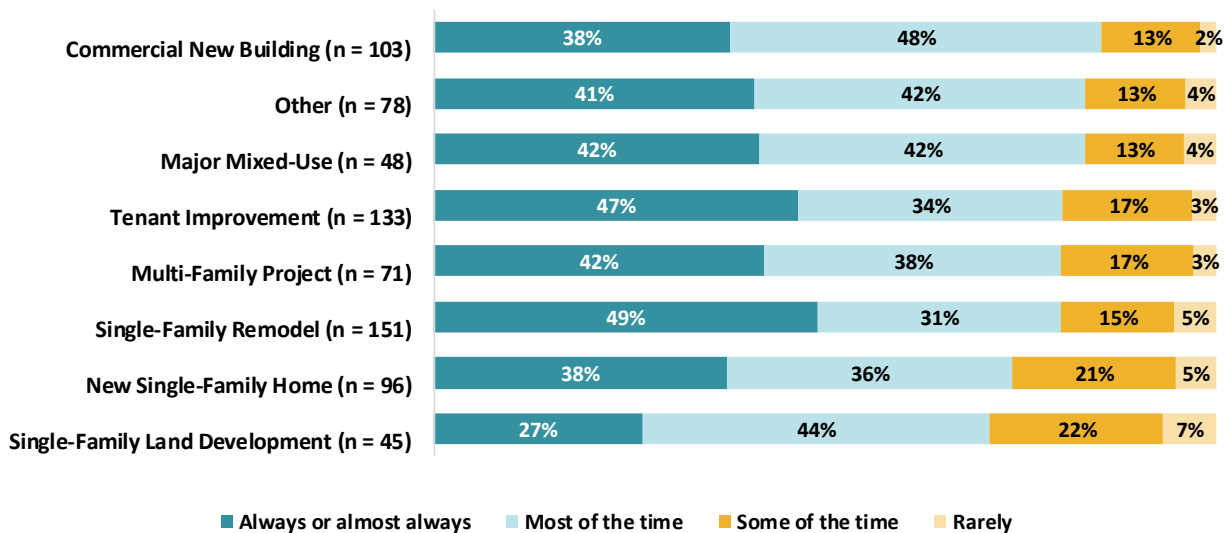


**Exhibit A-32. Permit Center reviewers clearly inform me about the plan and document requirements of all the reviewing departments. (n=435)**



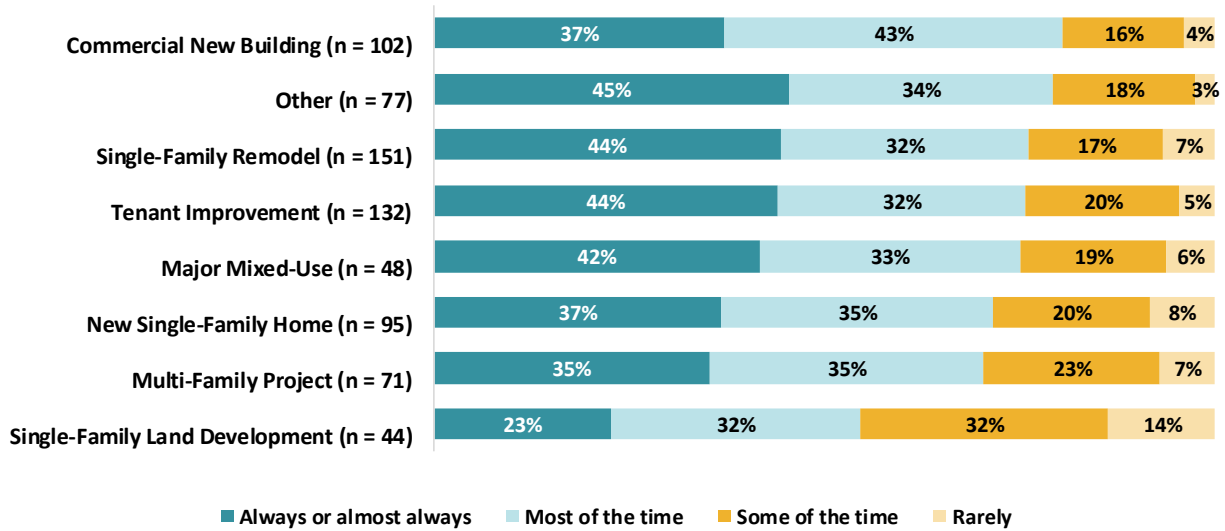
Note: Survey respondents could choose more than one project type.

**Exhibit A-33. Permit Center reviewers give me enough information to submit a complete application for review (n=437)**



Note: Survey respondents could choose more than one project type.

**Exhibit A-34. Permit Center reviewers clearly inform me about the approval process for my permit. (n=435)**



Note: Survey respondents could choose more than one project type.

## Pre-Application Services

Exhibit A-35 shows the percent of positive responses (“Always or Almost Always” or “Most of the Time”) for each Pre-Application Services question, by project type. Positive responses of 85% or more are shown in green, 71-84% in yellow, and 55-70% in orange. No questions had below 55% positive responses.

By project type, the highest shares of positive responses are generally in Tenant Improvement, Major Mixed-Use, and Commercial New Building, and the lowest are generally in Single-Family Land Development, Single-Family Remodel, and Multi-Family.

**Exhibit A-35. Pre-Application Positive Responses, By Project Type**

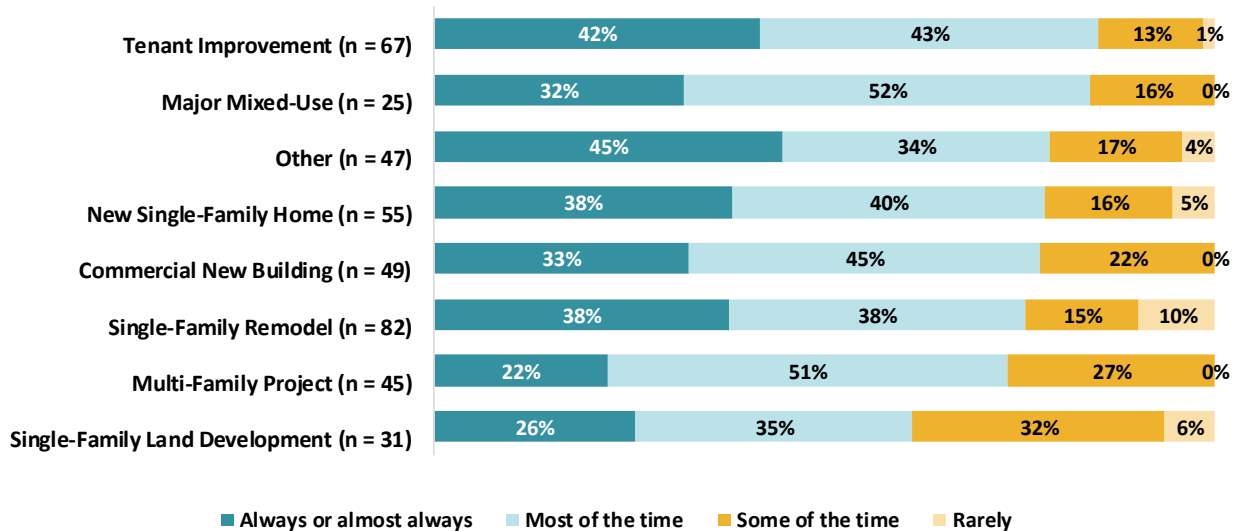
Question	SFR (n=81)	NSFH (n=55)	SFLD (n=31)	MF (n=45)	TI (n=66)	CNB (n=48)	MMU (n=45)	Other (n=47)
I receive accurate, comprehensive, and helpful information from staff who attended my meeting, given the level of information I provided.	76%	78%	61%	73%	85%	78%	84%	79%
The permit process is explained clearly such that the timeline and steps to permit approval were clear.	66%	71%	61%	62%	77%	71%	72%	77%
Staff are knowledgeable about codes and regulations affecting my property.	69%	73%	68%	69%	76%	76%	76%	85%

Project Types: SFR=Single-Family Remodel; NSFH=New Single-Family Home; SFLD=Single-Family Land Development; MF=Multi-Family; TI=Tenant Improvement; CNB=Commercial New Building; MMU=Major Mixed-Use.

Note: Survey respondents could choose more than one project type.

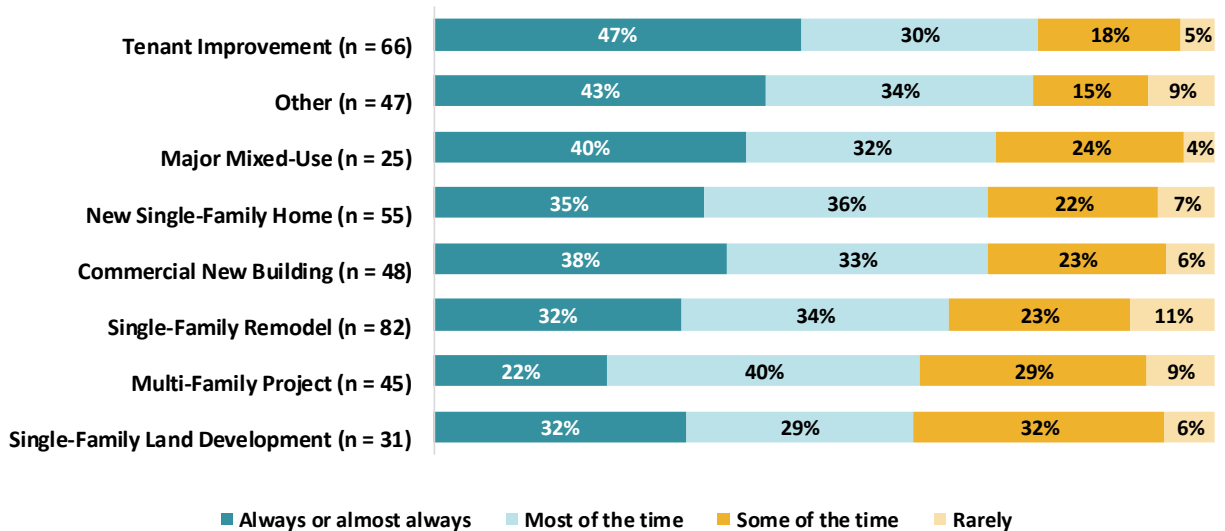
The full break-down of responses to each question are shown in Exhibit A-36 through Exhibit A-38.

**Exhibit A-36. I receive accurate, comprehensive, and helpful information from staff who attended my meeting, given the level of information provided. (n=234)**



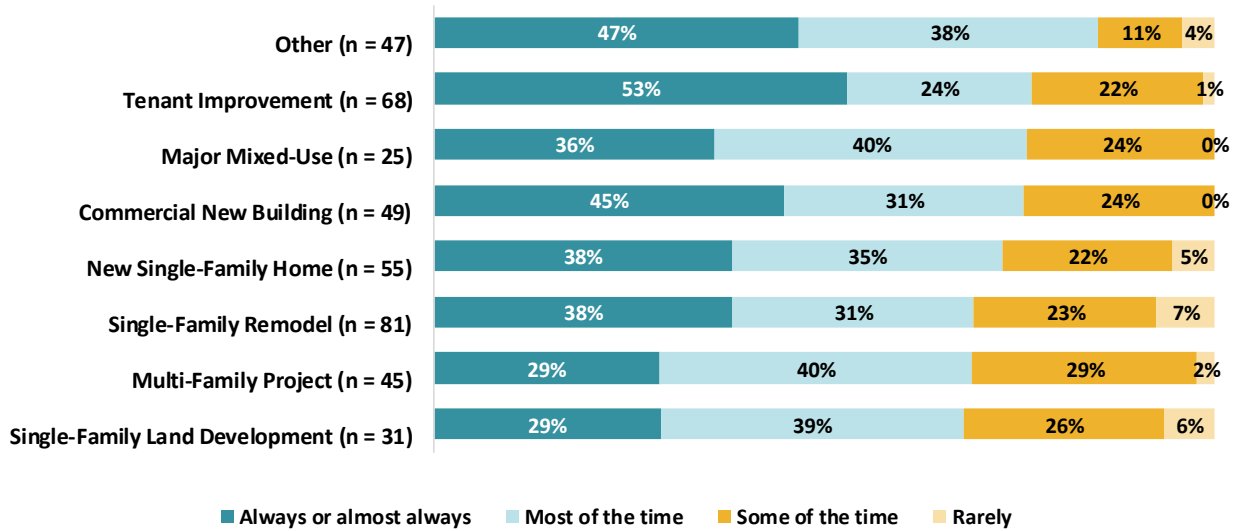
Note: Survey respondents could choose more than one project type.

**Exhibit A-37. The permit process is explained clearly such that the timeline and steps to permit approval were clear. (n=234)**



Note: Survey respondents could choose more than one project type.

**Exhibit A-38. Staff are knowledgeable about codes and regulations affecting my property. (n=234)**



Note: Survey respondents could choose more than one project type.

## Permit Processing

Exhibit A-39 shows the percent of positive responses (“Always or Almost Always” or “Most of the Time”) for each Permit Processing question, by project type. Positive responses of 85% or more are shown in green, and 70-84% in yellow. (No questions had below 70% positive responses.)

The highest shares of positive responses are generally in Major Mixed-Use and Commercial New Building, and the lowest in Single Family Land Development and “Other.”

**Exhibit A-39. Permit Processing Positive Responses, by Project Type**

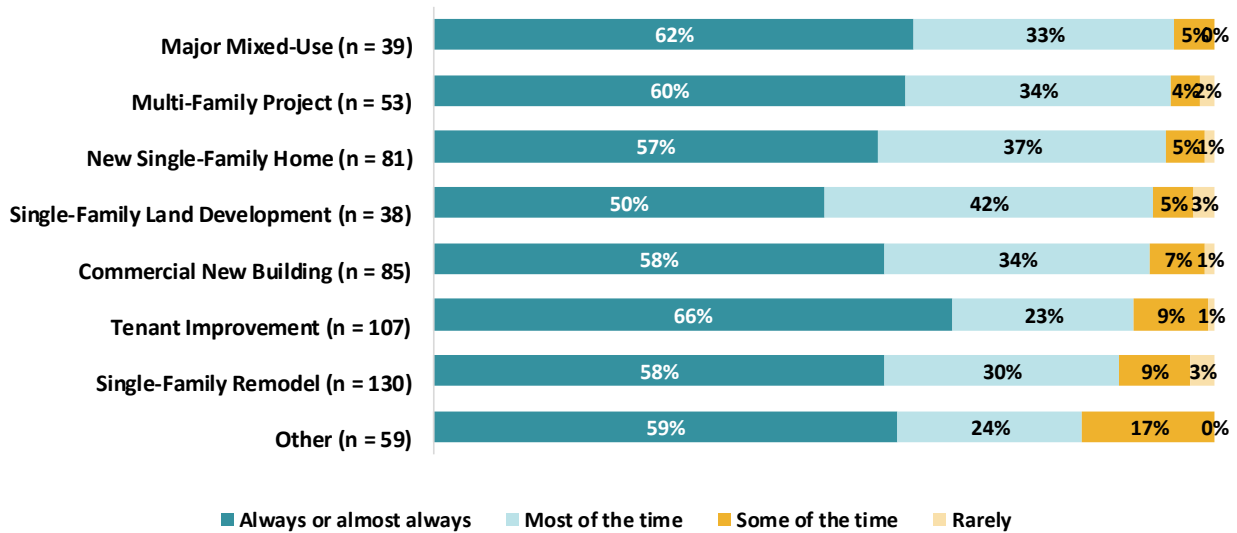
Question	SFR (n=130)	NSFH (n=80)	SFLD (n=37)	MF (n=53)	TI (n=107)	CNB (n=84)	MMU (n=39)	Other (n=58)
Permit Technicians treat me in a helpful, courteous, and knowledgeable manner.	88%	94%	92%	94%	90%	92%	95%	83%
Permit Technicians clearly inform me about project submittal requirements - permit type, plans, documents, and fees.	85%	85%	78%	89%	85%	92%	92%	90%
Permit Technicians gave me an accurate estimate of the total cost of my permit.	83%	86%	76%	83%	89%	90%	90%	81%

Project Types: SFR=Single-Family Remodel; NSFH=New Single-Family Home; SFLD=Single-Family Land Development; MF=Multi-Family; TI=Tenant Improvement; CNB=Commercial New Building; MMU=Major Mixed-Use.

Note: Survey respondents could choose more than one project type.

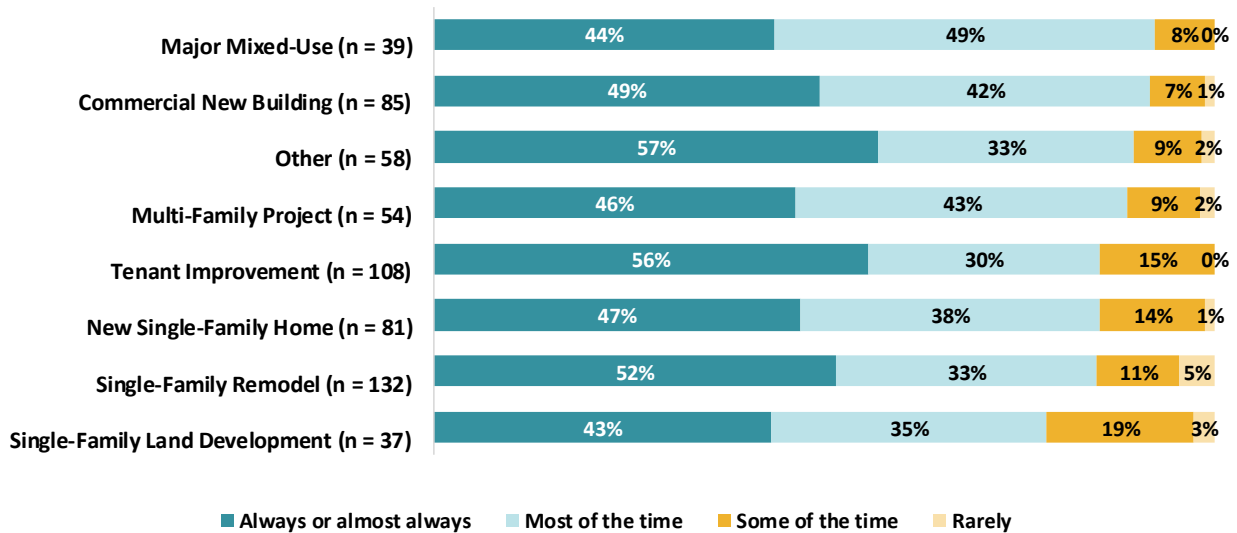
The full break-down of responses to each question are shown in Exhibit A-40 through Exhibit A-42.

**Exhibit A-40. Permit Technicians treat me in a helpful, courteous, and knowledgeable manner. (n=350)**



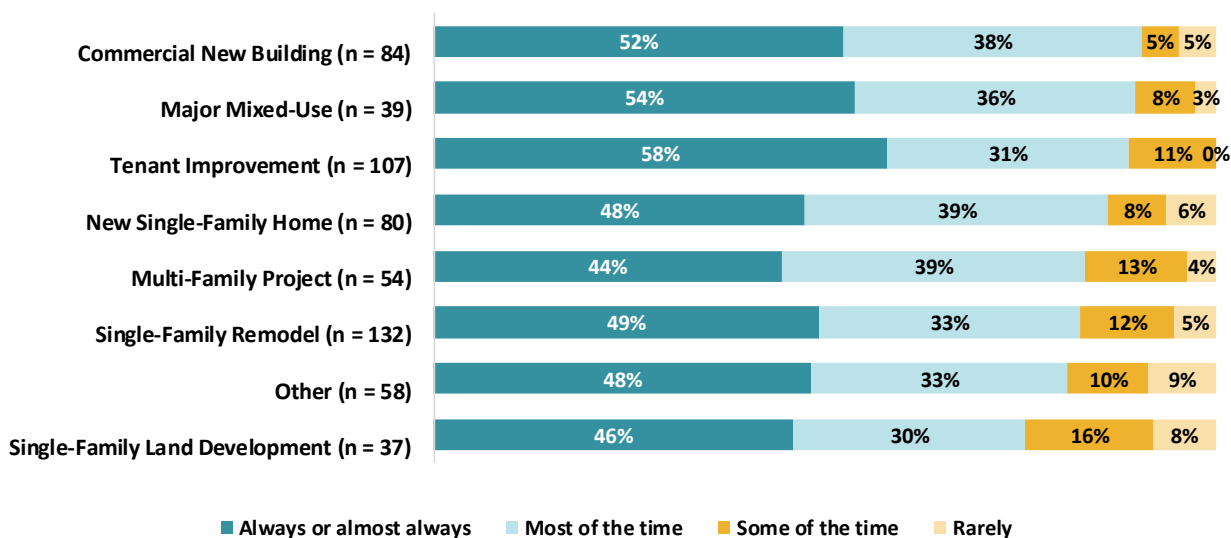
Note: Survey respondents could choose more than one project type.

**Exhibit A-41. Permit Technicians clearly inform me about project submittal requirements - permit type, plans, documents, and fees. (n=350)**



Note: Survey respondents could choose more than one project type.

**Exhibit A-42. Permit Technicians gave me an accurate estimate of the total cost of my permit. (n=350)**



Note: Survey respondents could choose more than one project type.

## Plan Review/ Design Review

Exhibit A-43 shows the percent of positive responses (“Always or Almost Always” or “Most of the Time”) for each Permit Processing question, by project type. Positive responses of 85% or more are shown in green, 71-84% in yellow, 55-70% in orange, and below 55% in red.

The highest shares of positive responses are generally in Tenant Improvement and Commercial New Building, and the lowest are in Single-Family Land Development and New Single-Family Home.

**Exhibit A-43. Plan Review/ Design Review Positive Responses, By Project Type**

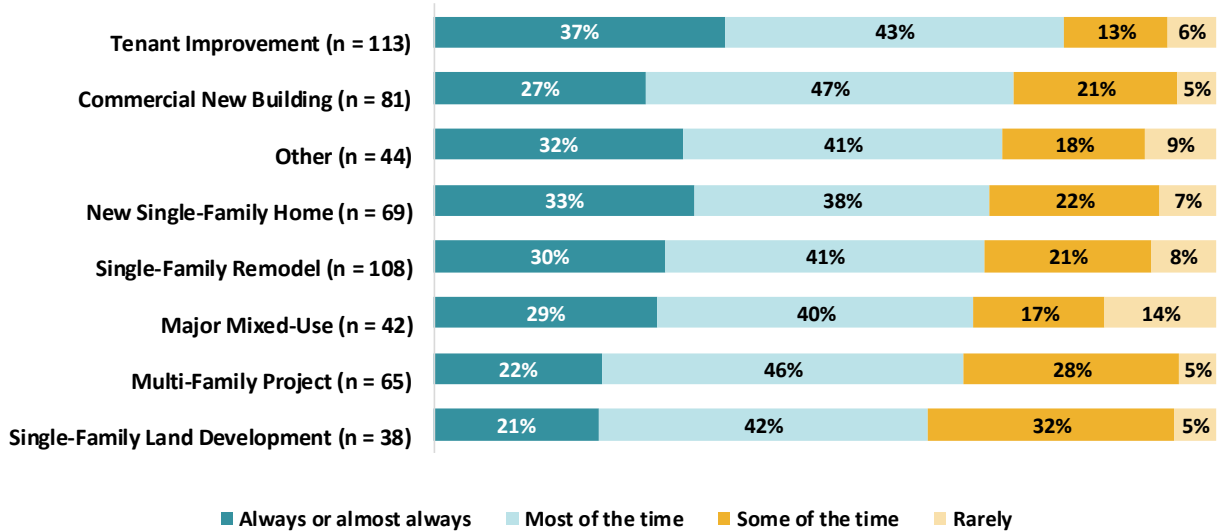
Question	SFR (n=107)	NSFH (n=69)	SFLD (n=37)	MF (n=64)	TI (n=111)	CNB (n=80)	MMU (n=41)	Other (n=111)
Review is complete and accurate. Additional problems do not surface later, during review or construction, that should have been caught in the initial review.	70%	71%	63%	68%	81%	74%	69%	73%
Review comments from different departments are consistent with each other.	71%	69%	61%	68%	80%	74%	69%	70%
If deficiencies are found during review, the reviewer gives a clear explanation for what needs to be done to correct them.	75%	71%	63%	64%	81%	74%	68%	86%
The review improves the quality and/or safety of the project.	57%	54%	46%	63%	68%	61%	67%	50%
The amount of time it takes to get my approval or permit is consistent with timelines communicated by staff.	58%	49%	42%	54%	68%	57%	55%	56%
Reviewers treat me in a helpful, courteous, and knowledgeable manner.	83%	80%	76%	91%	87%	90%	90%	83%
Reviewers work with me to address project-related challenges.	71%	77%	63%	82%	82%	80%	86%	73%

Project Types: SFR=Single-Family Remodel; NSFH=New Single-Family Home; SFLD=Single-Family Land Development; MF=Multi-Family; TI=Tenant Improvement; CNB=Commercial New Building; MMU=Major Mixed-Use.

Note: Survey respondents could choose more than one project type.

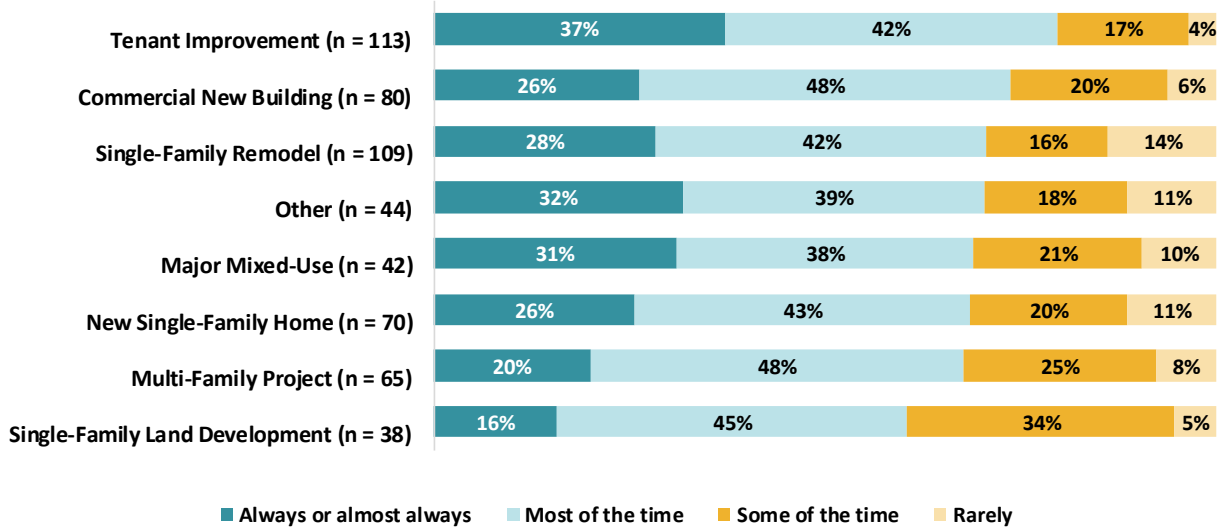
The full break-down of responses to each Permit Center question are shown in Exhibit A-44 through Exhibit A-51.

**Exhibit A-44. Review is complete and accurate. Additional problems do not surface later, during review or construction, that should have been caught in the initial review. (n=309)**



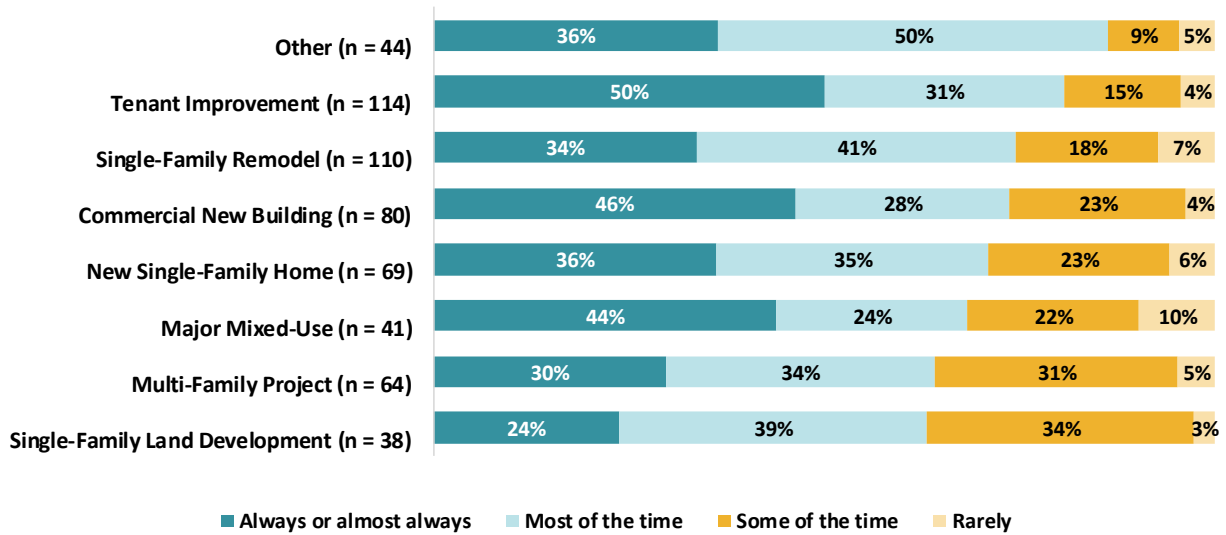
Note: Survey respondents could choose more than one project type.

**Exhibit A-45. Review comments from different departments are consistent with each other. (n=311)**



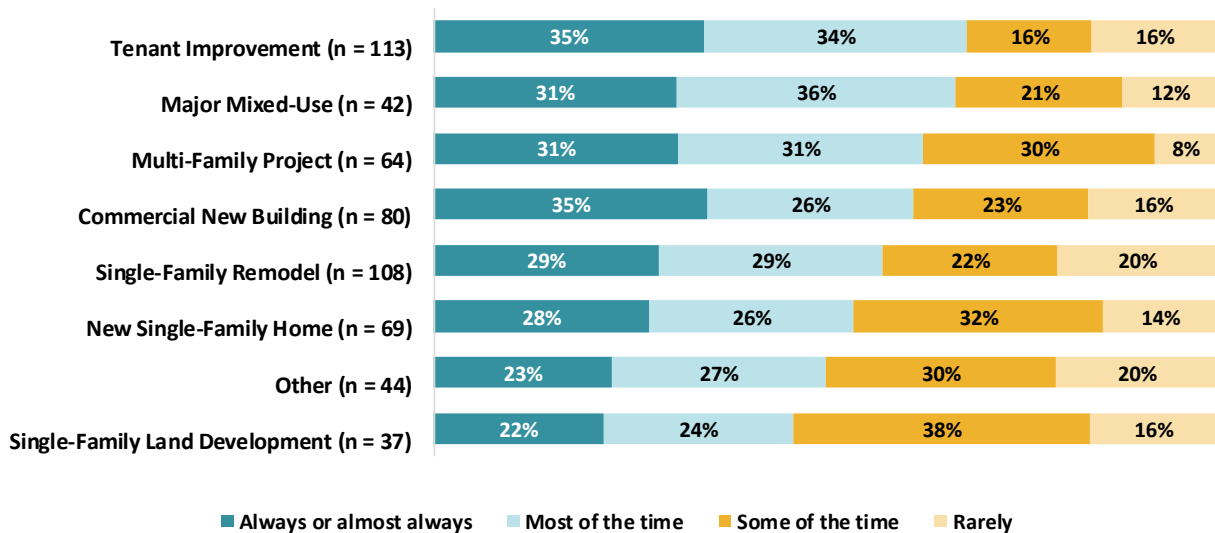
Note: Survey respondents could choose more than one project type.

**Exhibit A-46. If deficiencies are found during review, the reviewer gives a clear explanation for what needs to be done to correct them. (n=311)**



Note: Survey respondents could choose more than one project type.

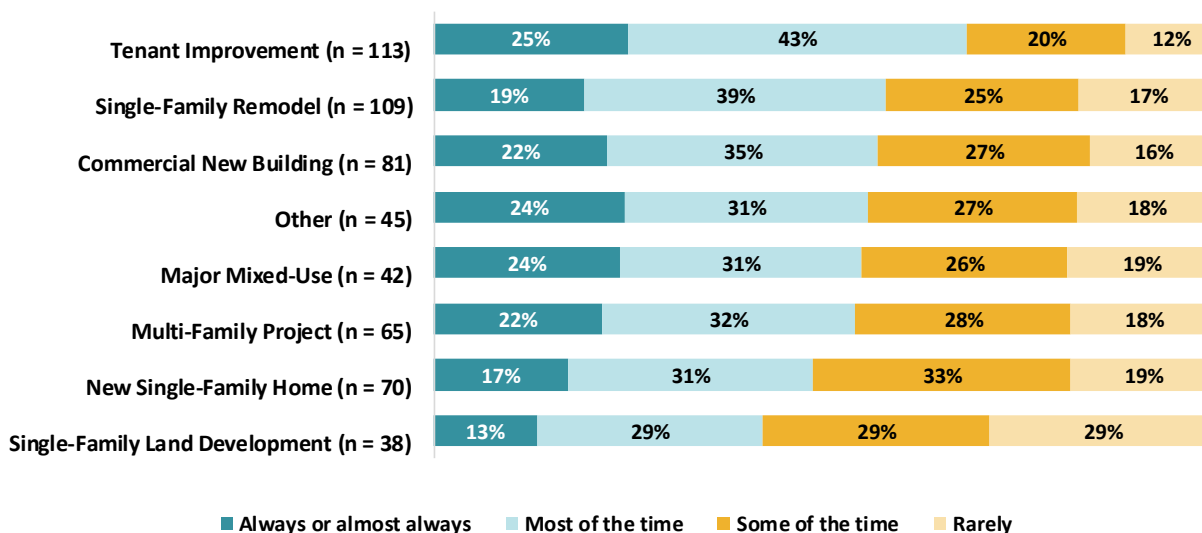
**Exhibit A-47. The review improves the quality and/or safety of the project. (n=308)**



Note: Survey respondents could choose more than one project type.

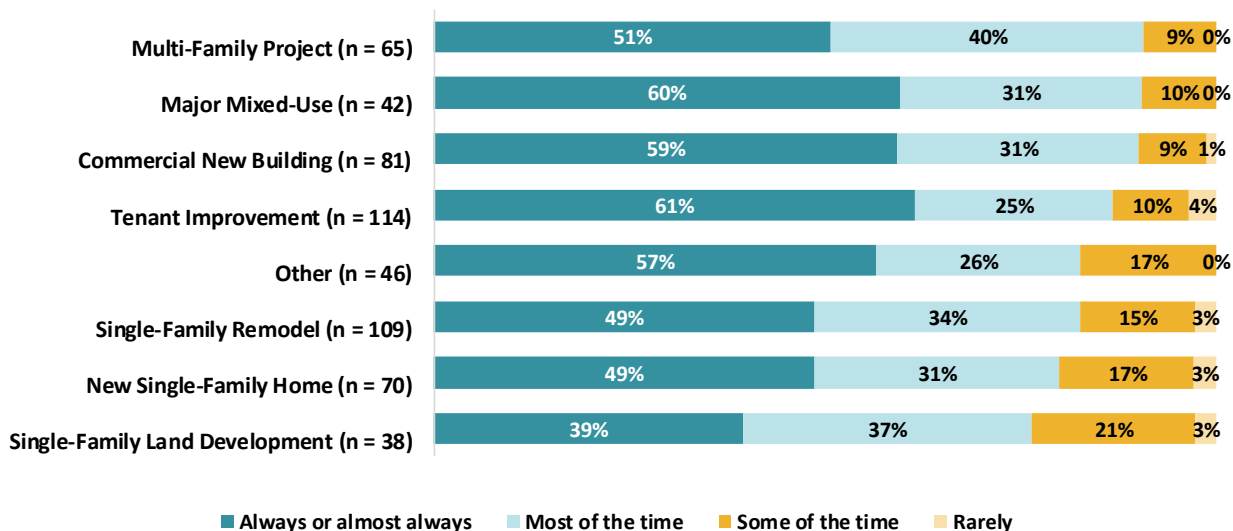


**Exhibit A-48. The amount of time it takes to get my approval or permit is consistent with timelines communicated by staff. (n=312)**



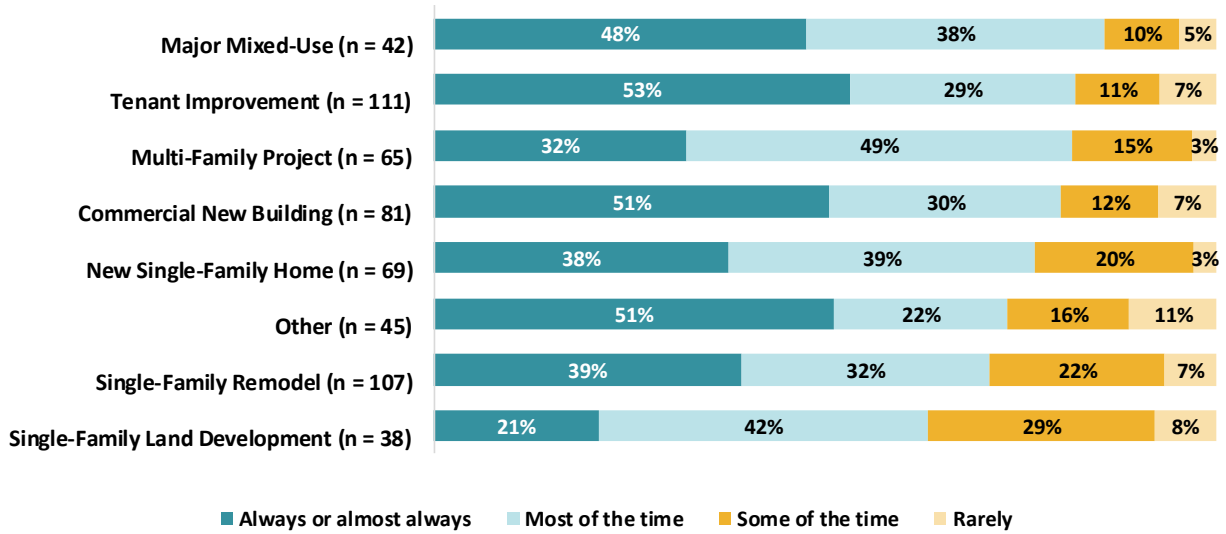
Note: Survey respondents could choose more than one project type.

**Exhibit A-49. Reviewers treat me in a helpful, courteous, and knowledgeable manner. (n=314)**



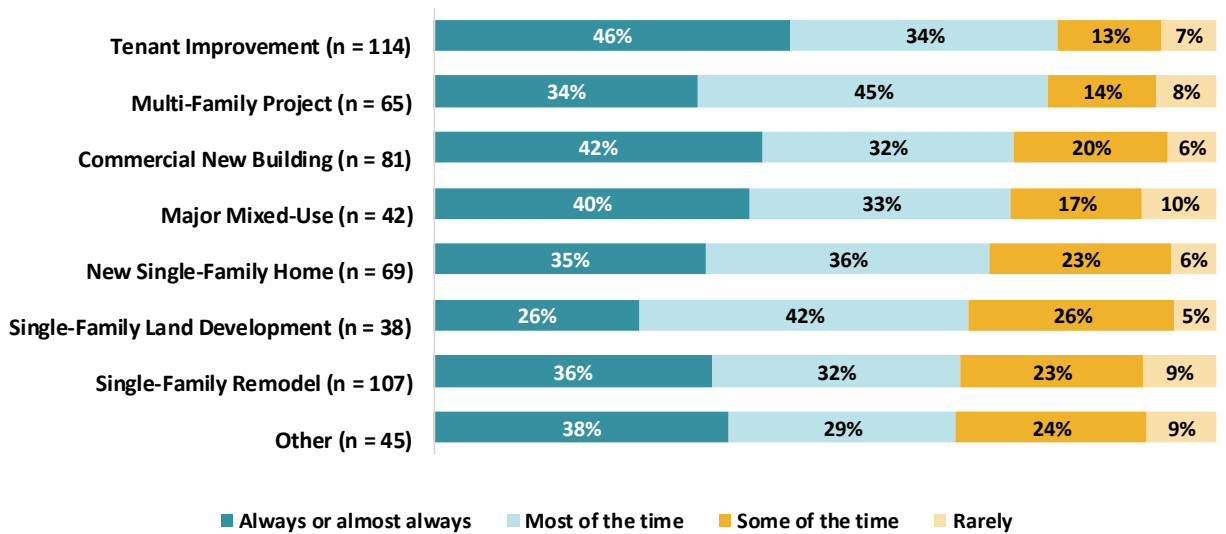
Note: Survey respondents could choose more than one project type.

**Exhibit A-50. Reviewers work with me to address project-related challenges. (n=309)**



Note: Survey respondents could choose more than one project type.

**Exhibit A-51. Reviewers are practical in applying regulations, within the City's codes. (n=310)**



Note: Survey respondents could choose more than one project type.

## Inspections

Exhibit A-52 shows the percent of positive responses (“Always or Almost Always” and “Most of the Time”) for each inspection question, by project type. Positive responses of 85% or more are shown in green, and 71-84% in yellow. (No questions had below 71% positive responses.)

The highest shares of positive responses are generally in Single-Family Land Development, and the lowest in Multi-Family.

**Exhibit A-52. Inspections Positive Responses, By Project Type**

Question	SFR (n=161)	NSFH (n=64)	SFLD (n=27)	MF (n=48)	TI (n=135)	CNB (n=94)	MMU (n=42)	Other (n=65)
My inspectors address issues in a timely manner (including responding to phone calls or inquiries, performing inspections when scheduled, time spent performing inspections, etc.).	86%	85%	85%	76%	88%	85%	90%	91%
My inspectors provide consistent information and decisions regarding my inspection.	84%	85%	96%	84%	82%	81%	81%	87%
If deficiencies are found during an inspection, the inspector gives a clear explanation of what has to be done to correct them.	87%	88%	93%	83%	85%	88%	88%	91%
Inspections improve the quality and/or safety of the project.	80%	77%	78%	82%	76%	78%	81%	76%
Inspectors treat me in a professional and respectful manner.	91%	89%	93%	90%	91%	91%	93%	94%
Inspectors work with me to address project-related challenges.	82%	82%	93%	80%	86%	82%	86%	89%
Inspectors demonstrate the expertise and knowledge required for the type of project.	87%	89%	96%	88%	90%	89%	88%	89%

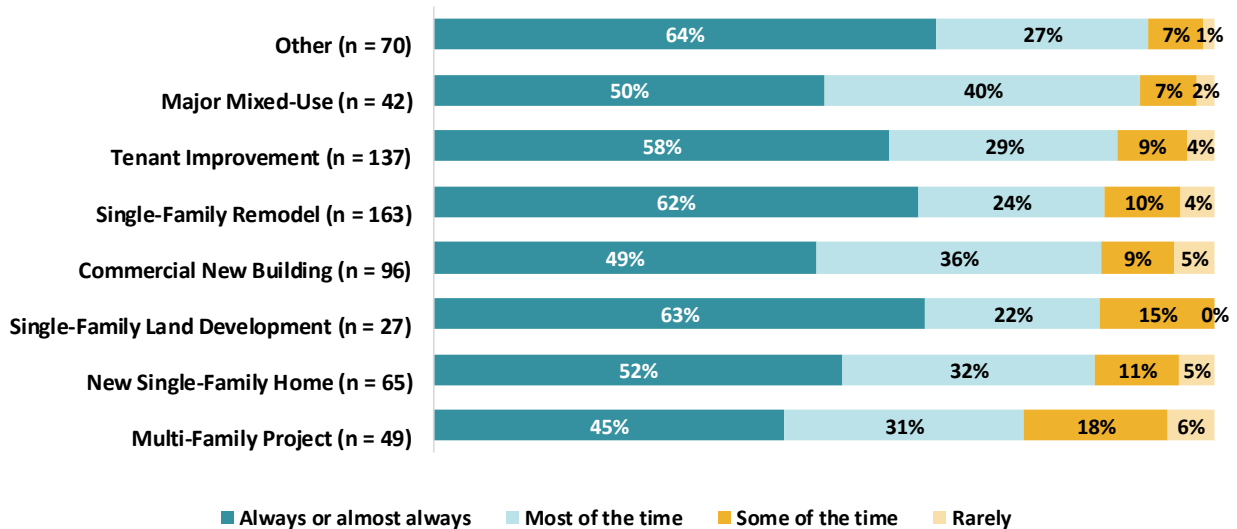
Project Types: SFR=Single-Family Remodel; NSFH=New Single-Family Home; SFLD=Single-Family Land Development;  
MF=Multi-Family; TI=Tenant Improvement; CNB=Commercial New Building; MMU=Major Mixed-Use.

Note: Survey respondents could choose more than one project type.

The full break-down of responses to each Inspection Services question, by project type, is shown in Exhibit A-53 through Note: Survey respondents could choose more than one project type.

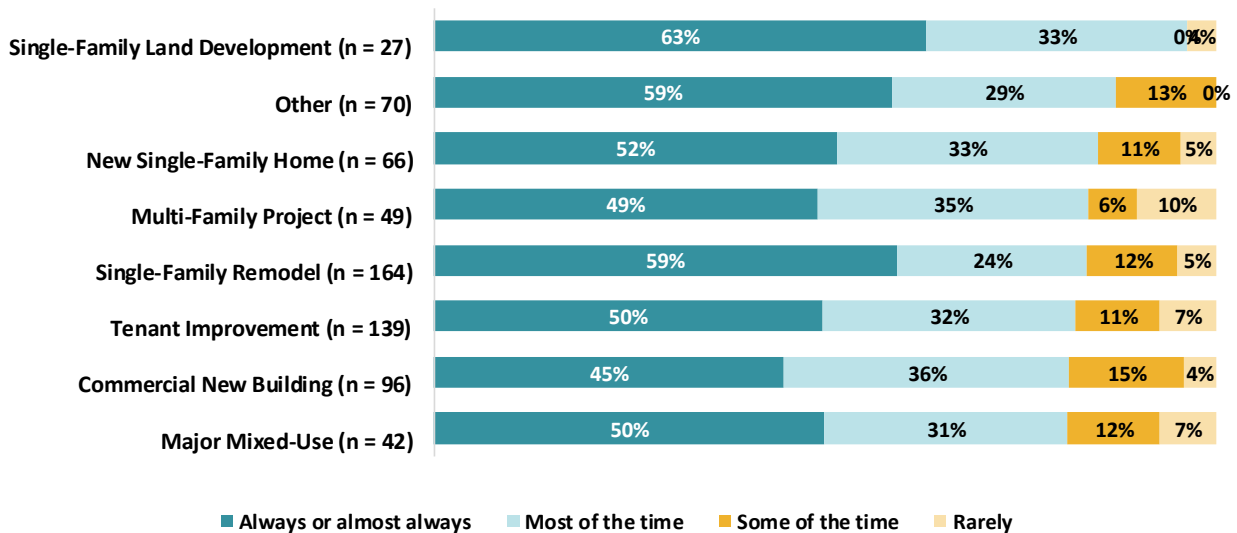
Exhibit A-59.

**Exhibit A-53. My inspectors address issues in a timely manner (including responding to phone calls or inquiries, performing inspections when scheduled, time spent performing inspections, etc.). (n=396)**



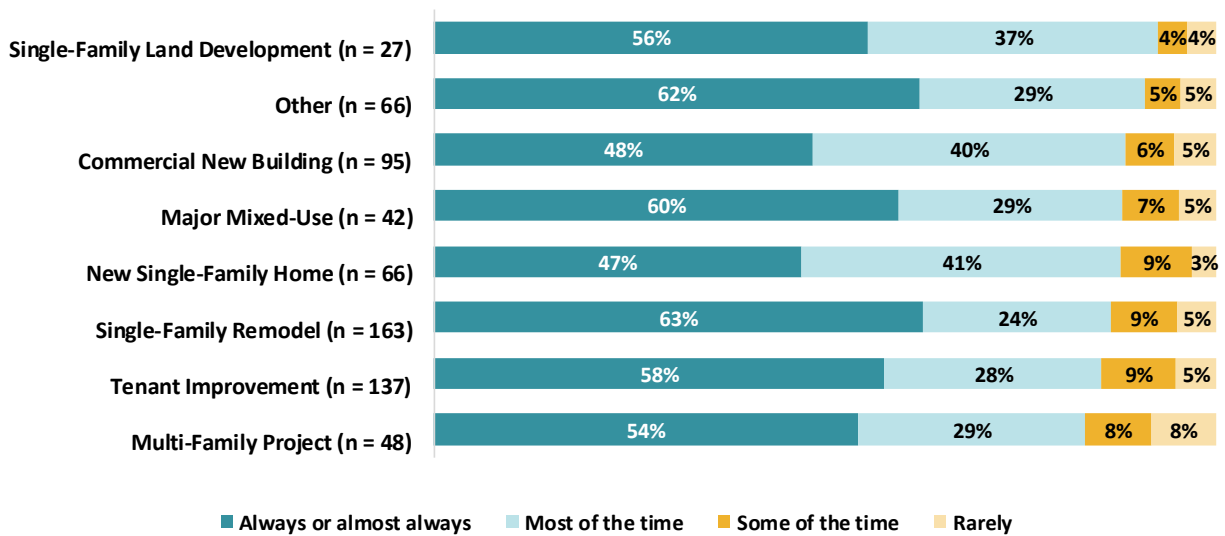
Note: Survey respondents could choose more than one project type.

**Exhibit A-54. My inspectors provide consistent information and decisions regarding my inspection. (n=398)**



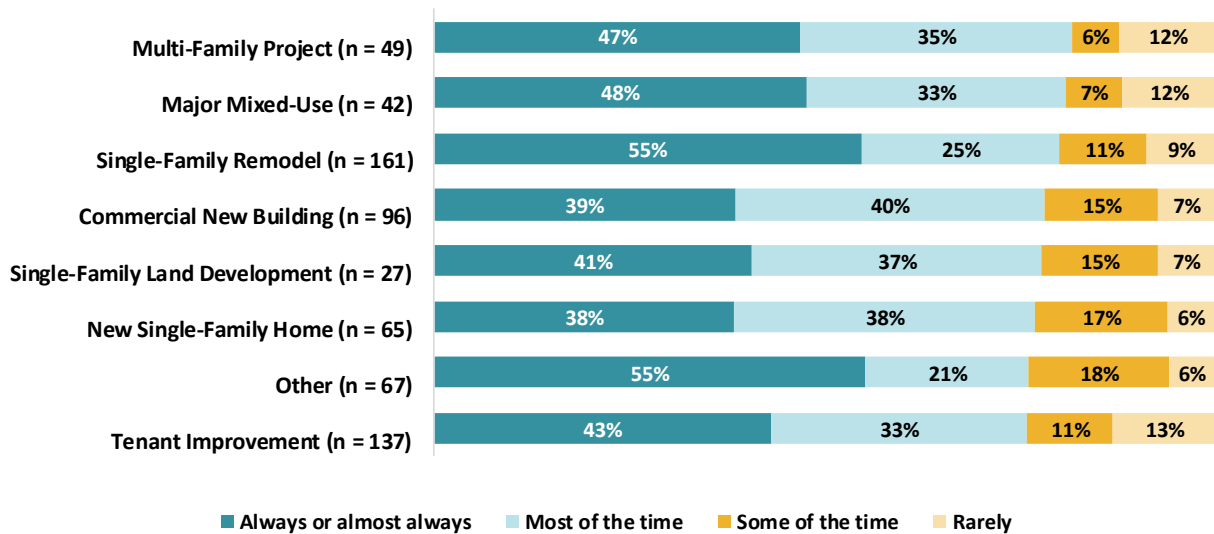
Note: Survey respondents could choose more than one project type.

**Exhibit A-55. If deficiencies are found during an inspection, the inspector gives a clear explanation of what has to be done to correct them. (n=392)**



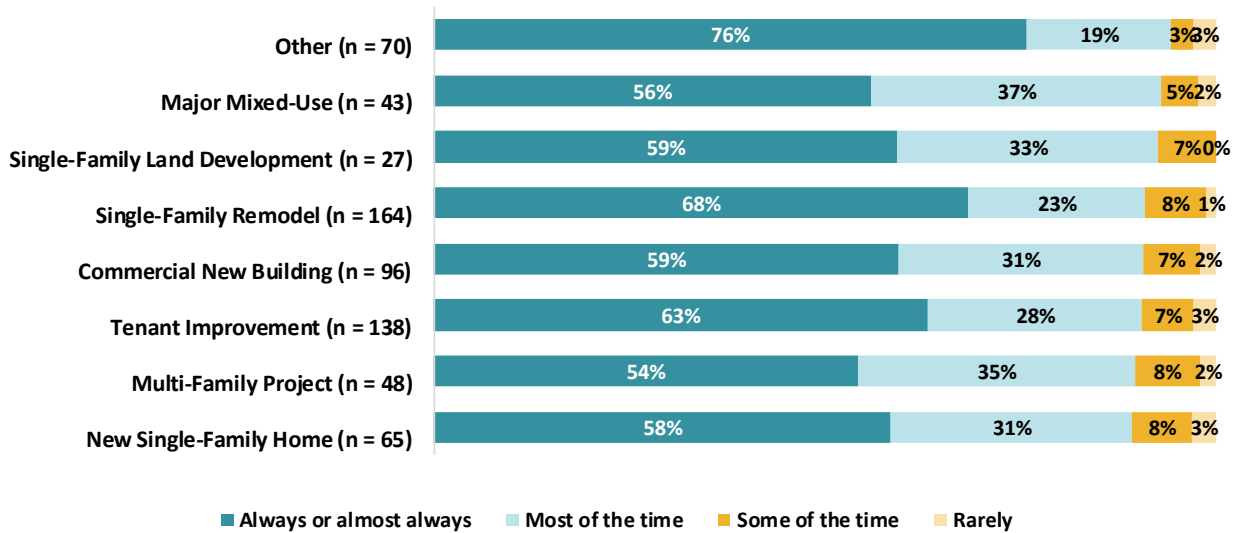
Note: Survey respondents could choose more than one project type.

**Exhibit A-56. Inspections improve the quality and/or safety of the project. (n=392)**



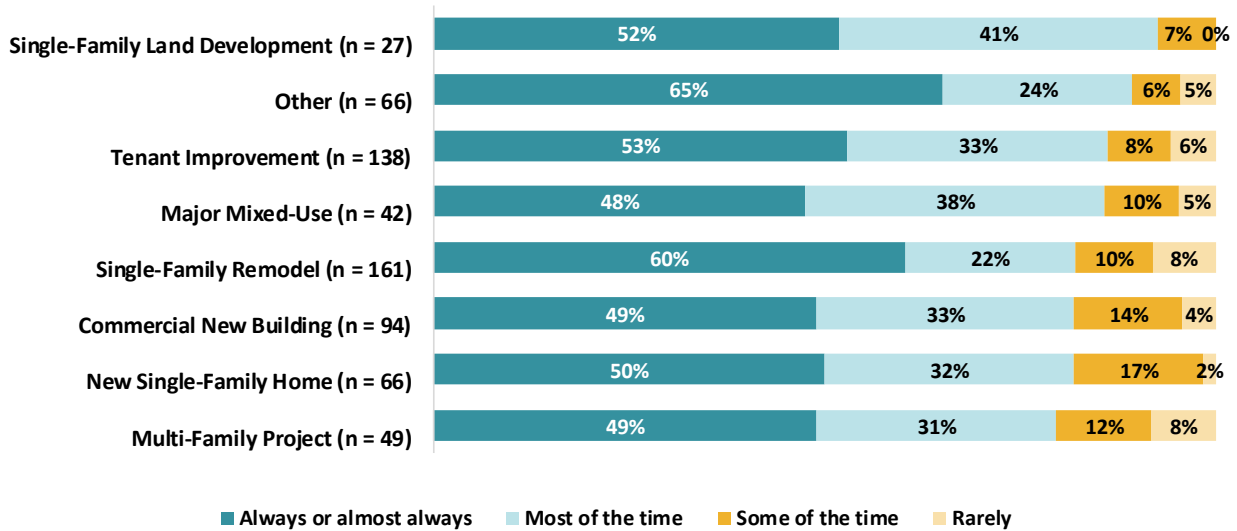
Note: Survey respondents could choose more than one project type.

**Exhibit A-57. Inspectors treat me in a professional and respectful manner. (n=396)**



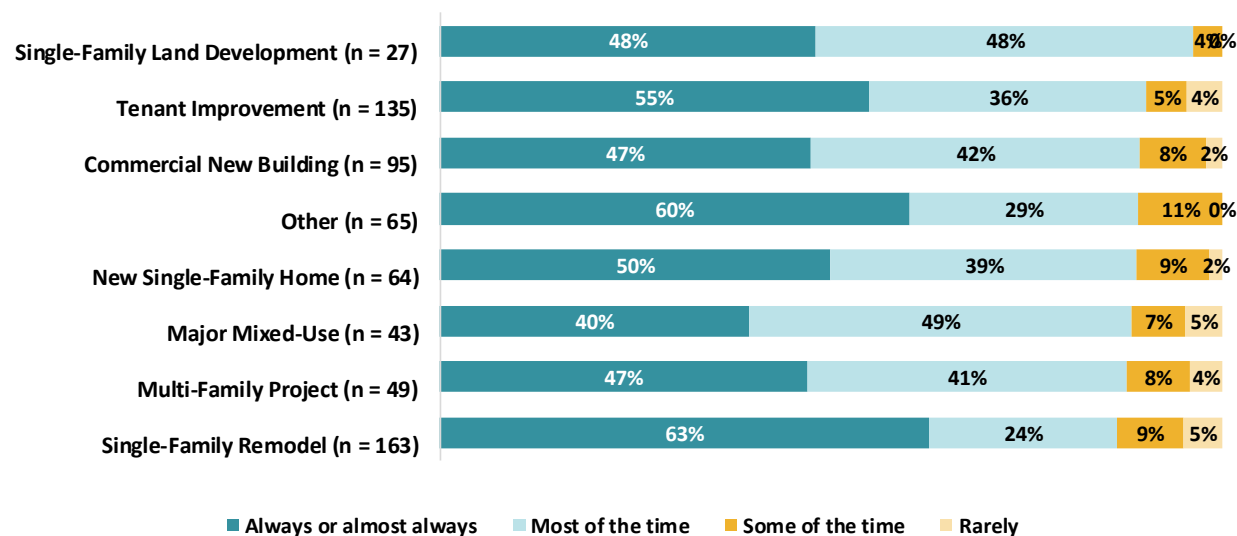
Note: Survey respondents could choose more than one project type.

**Exhibit A-58. Inspectors work with me to address project-related challenges. (n=389)**



Note: Survey respondents could choose more than one project type.

**Exhibit A-59. Inspectors demonstrate the expertise and knowledge required for the type of project. (n=390)**



Note: Survey respondents could choose more than one project type.

## MyBuildingPermit.com

Exhibit A-60 shows the percent of positive responses (“Always or Almost Always” and “Most of the Time”) for each question, by project type. Positive responses of 85% or more are shown in green, and 71-84% in yellow. None were below 71% positive.

The highest shares of positive responses are generally in New Single-Family Home and Single-Family Remodel, while the lowest are in Commercial New Building, Major Mixed-Use, and “Other.”

**Exhibit A-60. MyBuildingPermit.com Positive Responses, By Project Type**

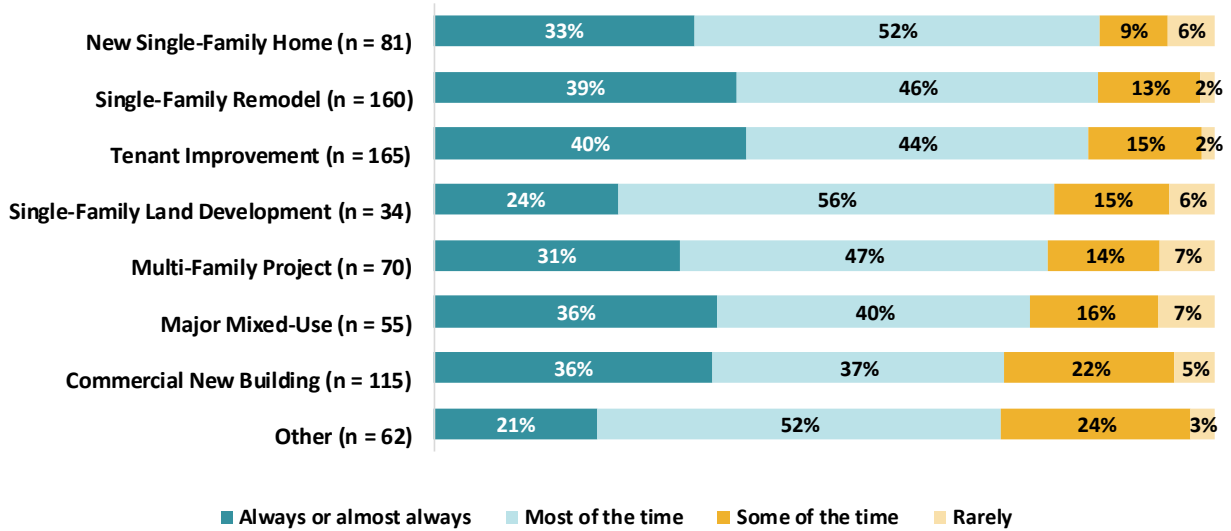
Question	SFR (n=160)	NSFH (n=81)	SFLD (n=34)	MF (n=70)	TI (n=165)	CNB (n=115)	MMU (n=55)	Other (n=62)
The application process at www.MyBuildingPermit.com is clear and easy-to-use.	85%	85%	79%	79%	84%	73%	76%	73%
I can find the information I need at MyBuildingPermit.com about my application status, fees, and who to contact.	82%	87%	76%	76%	81%	74%	73%	76%

Project Types: SFR=Single-Family Remodel; NSFH=New Single-Family Home; SFLD=Single-Family Land Development; MF=Multi-Family; TI=Tenant Improvement; CNB=Commercial New Building; MMU=Major Mixed-Use.

Note: Survey respondents could choose more than one project type.

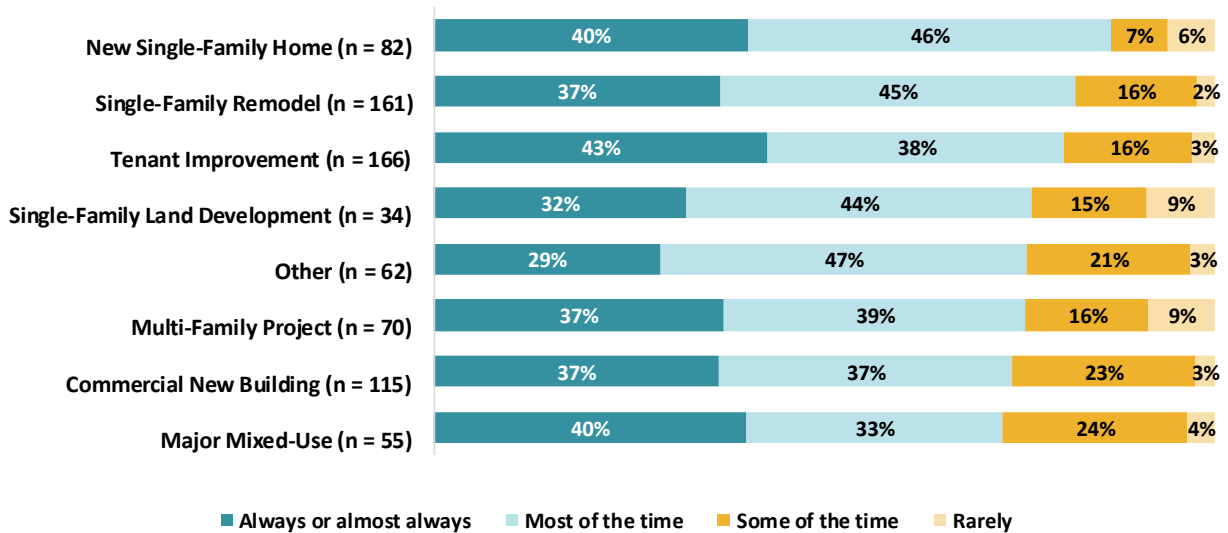
The full break-down of responses to each question is shown in Exhibit A-61 through Exhibit A-62.

**Exhibit A-61. The application process at [www.MyBuildingPermit.com](http://www.MyBuildingPermit.com) is clear and easy-to-use. (n=443)**



Note: Survey respondents could choose more than one project type.

**Exhibit A-62. I can find the information I need at [MyBuildingPermit.com](http://MyBuildingPermit.com) about my application status, fees, and who to contact. (n=443)**



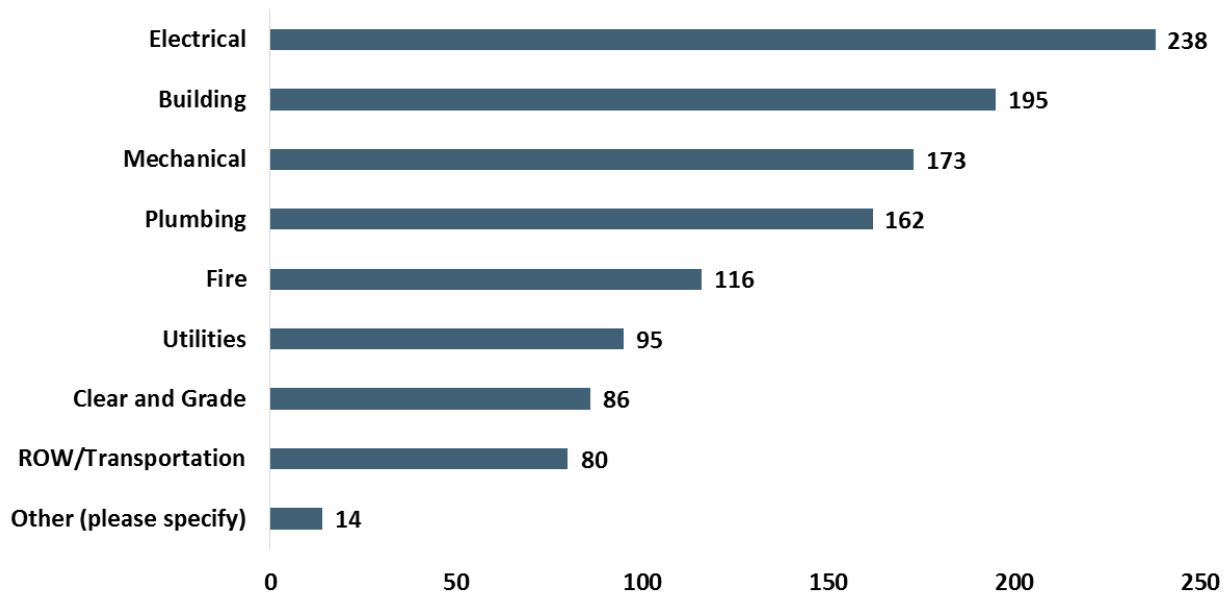
Note: Survey respondents could choose more than one project type.



## A.4 INSPECTION QUESTIONS BY INSPECTION TYPE

As described in Section A.2 above, **404** survey respondents answered that they have directly interacted with city inspectors providing on-site inspection services. These customers were asked what type of inspection service they've been involved in. As shown in Exhibit A-63, the highest responses were for electrical, building, mechanical, and plumbing. In addition, 260 people (65%) chose two or more inspection types. Fourteen customers chose "other" inspection types; these responses included land use, signs, driveway, parks, water heater, gas, and roofing.

**Exhibit A-63. What type of inspection service have you been directly involved in?**  
(Choose all that apply.) n=401



Note: Customers could choose more than one project type.

## Summary

Exhibit A-64 shows the percentage of positive responses for each Inspection Services question, by inspection type. Positive responses of 85% or more are shown in green, 71-84% in yellow, and 55-70% in orange. No question had below 55% positive responses.

While results are not dramatically different by inspection type, Electric and Fire generally had the highest positive responses, while Clear and Grade, Building, Right-of-Way/Transportation, and “Other” generally had the lowest.

**Exhibit A-64. Inspection Questions Positive Responses, by Inspection Type**

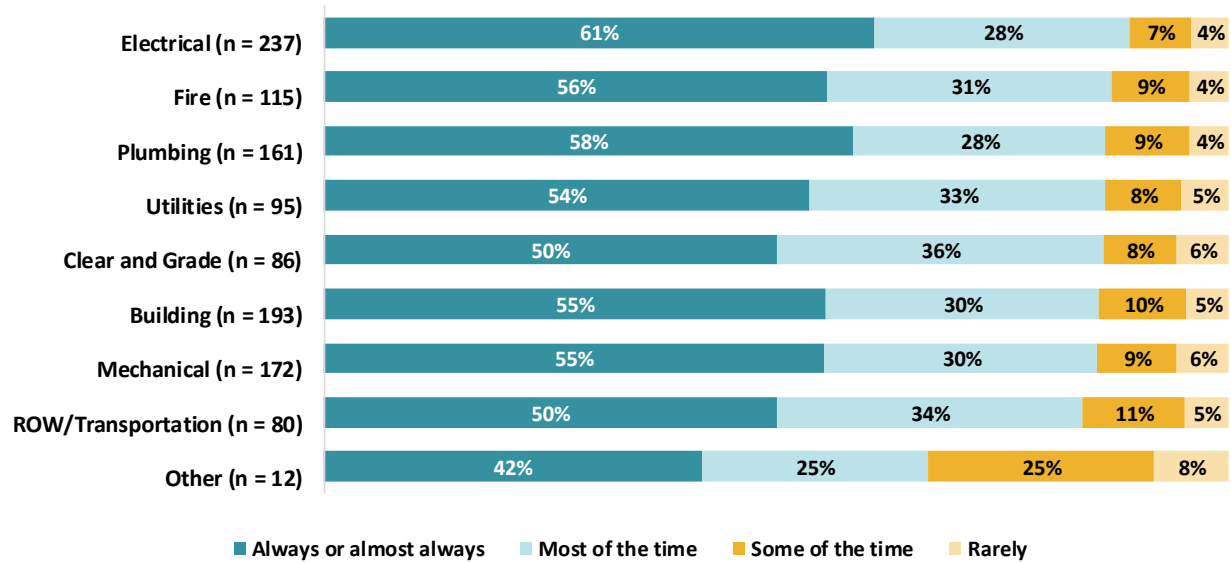
Question	Bldg (n=189)	C&G (n=84)	Fire (n=114)	Eltrc (n=234)	Mch (n=167)	Plmb (n=159)	ROW/ Trns (n=79)	Util (n=92)	Other (n=12)
My inspectors address issues in a timely manner (including responding to phone calls or inquiries, performing inspections when scheduled, time spent performing inspections, etc.).	85%	86%	87%	89%	85%	86%	84%	86%	67%
My inspectors provide consistent information and decisions regarding my inspection.	82%	77%	82%	85%	81%	81%	80%	82%	69%
If deficiencies are found during an inspection, the inspector gives a clear explanation of what has to be done to correct them.	84%	84%	87%	87%	83%	84%	86%	87%	75%
Inspections improve the quality and/or safety of the project.	74%	66%	75%	78%	75%	76%	67%	74%	85%
Inspectors treat me in a professional and respectful manner.	86%	89%	93%	93%	90%	91%	89%	90%	92%
Inspectors work with me to address project-related challenges.	82%	81%	84%	85%	83%	82%	84%	84%	92%
Inspectors demonstrate the expertise and knowledge required for the type of project.	85%	86%	91%	89%	88%	86%	89%	90%	85%

Inspection Types: Bldg=Building; C&G=Clear and Grade; Eltrc=Electrical; Mch=Mechanical; Plmb=Plumbing; ROW/Trns=Right-of-Way/Transportation; Util=Utilities.

Notes: Respondents could choose more than one inspection type. Positive responses include “Always or Almost Always” and “Most of the Time.” The “n” listed is the lowest number of responses received for the set of questions.

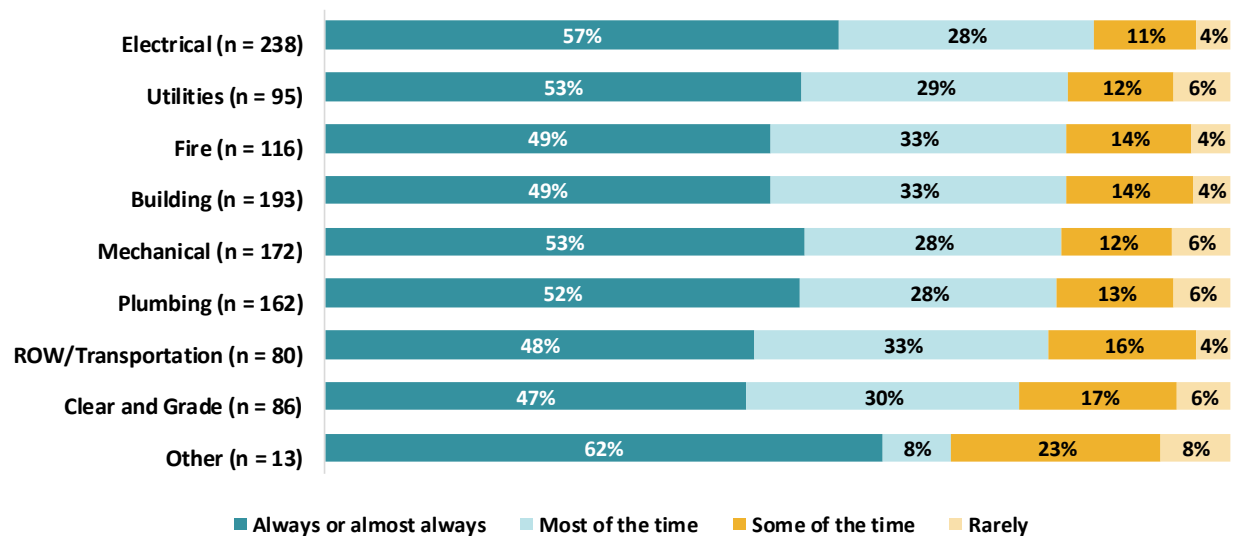
## Full Question Responses

**Exhibit A-65. My inspectors address issues in a timely manner (including responding to phone calls or inquiries, performing inspections when scheduled, time spent performing inspections, etc.). (n=396)**



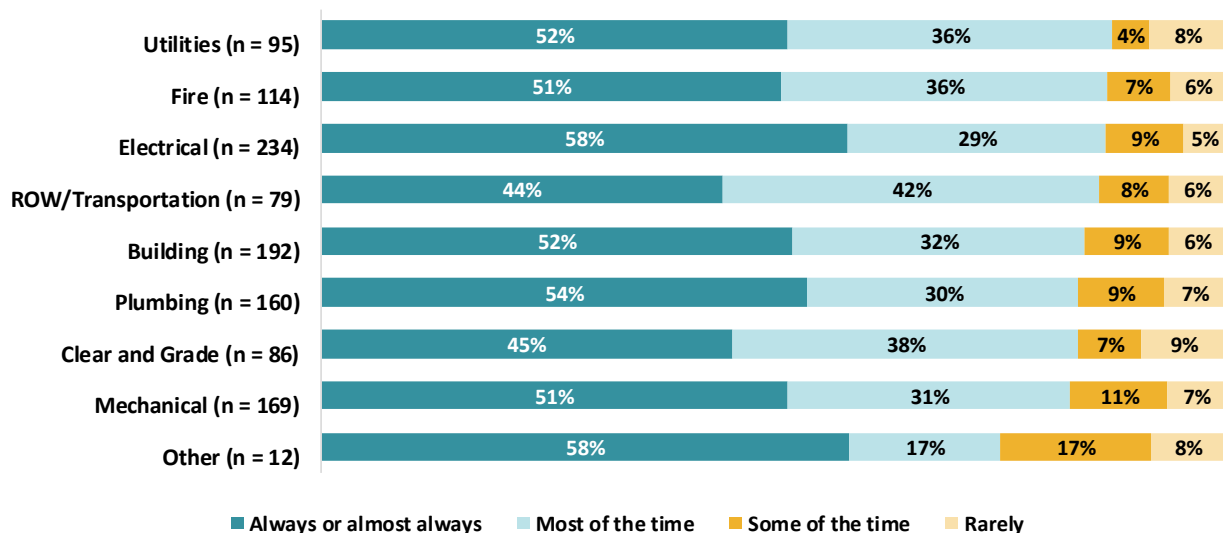
Note: Customers could choose more than one project type.

**Exhibit A-66. My inspectors provide consistent information and decisions regarding my inspection.(n=398)**



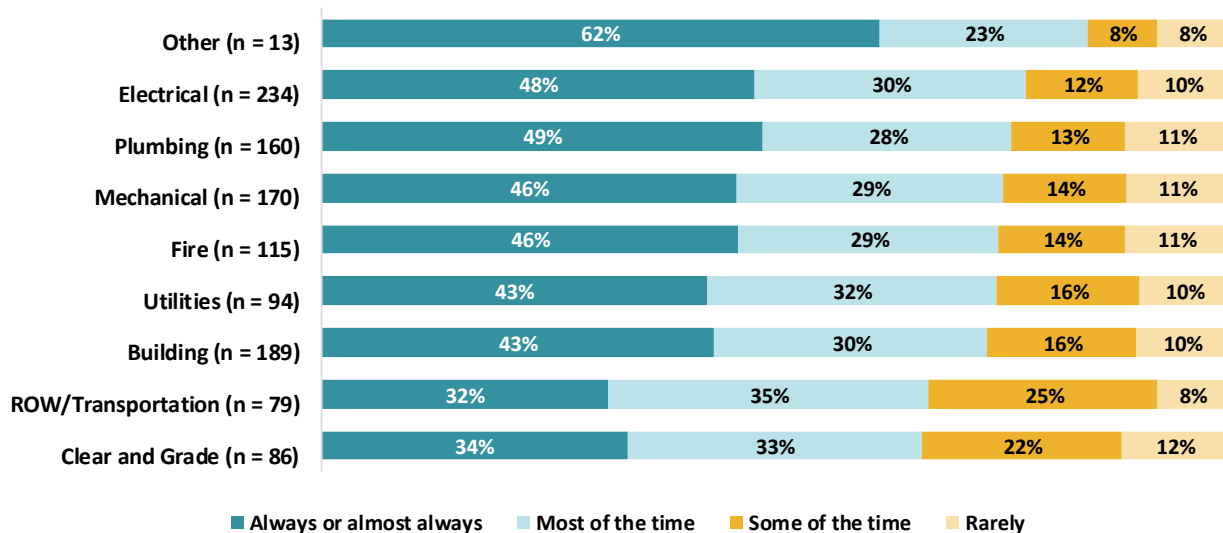
Note: Customers could choose more than one project type.

**Exhibit A-67. If deficiencies are found during an inspection, the inspector gives a clear explanation of what has to be done to correct them. (n=392)**



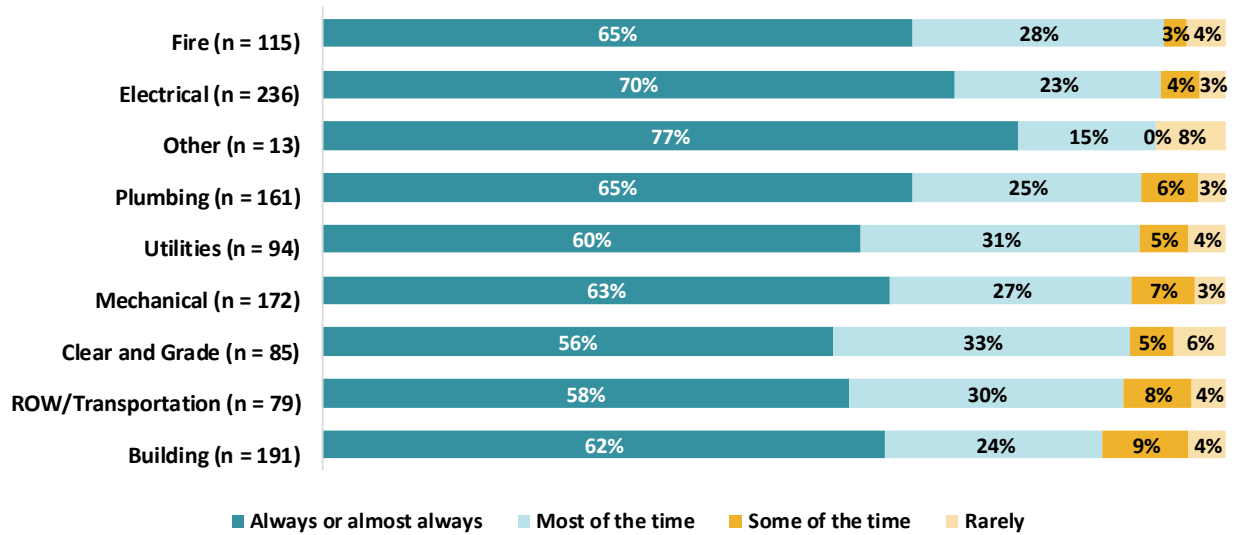
Note: Customers could choose more than one project type.

**Exhibit A-68. Inspections improve the quality and/or safety of the project. (n=392)**



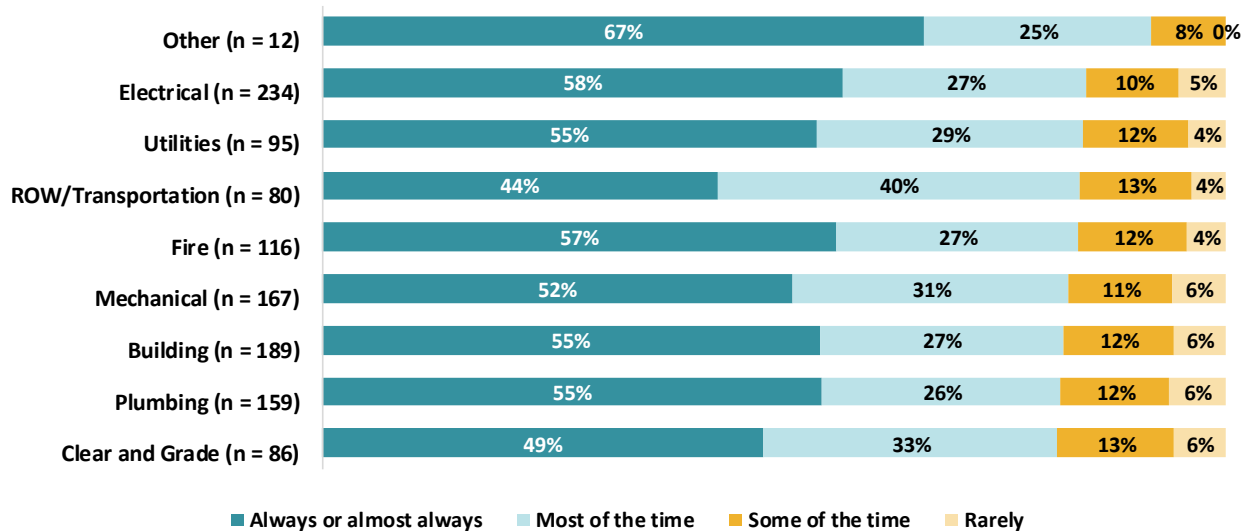
Note: Customers could choose more than one project type.

**Exhibit A-69. Inspectors treat me in a professional and respectful manner. (n=396)**



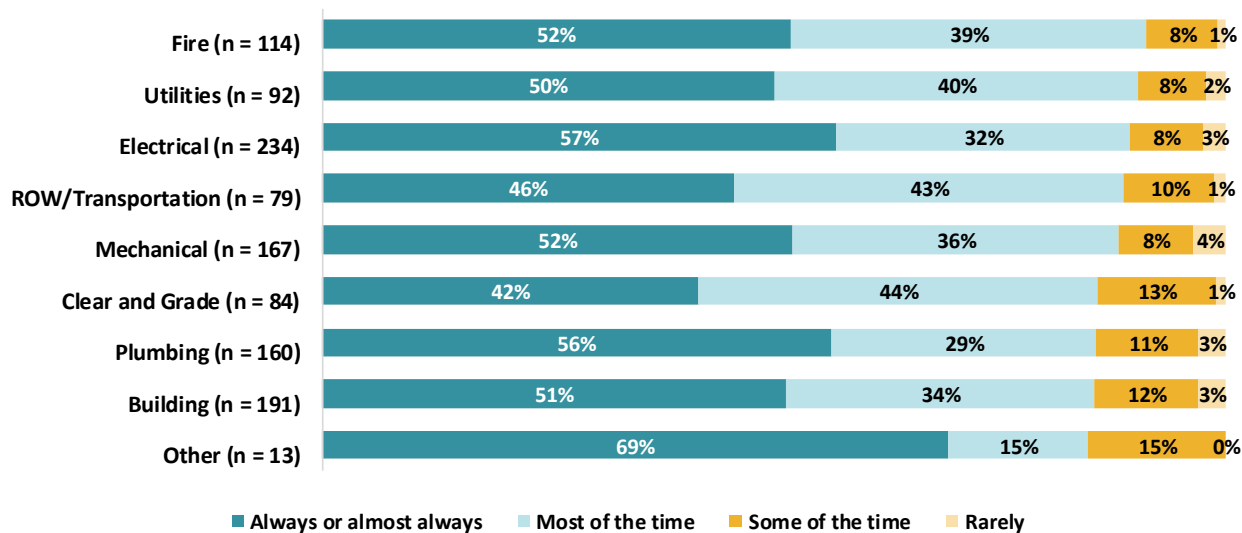
Note: Customers could choose more than one project type.

**Exhibit A-70. Inspectors work with me to address project-related challenges. (n=389)**



Note: Customers could choose more than one project type.

**Exhibit A-71. Inspectors demonstrate the expertise and knowledge required for the type of project. (n=390)**



Note: Customers could choose more than one project type.

## Appendix B. Survey Instrument

### Introduction

1. What types of construction projects have you worked on in Bellevue? (Check all that apply.)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single-Family Remodel                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Tenant Improvement      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> New Single-Family Home                                | <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial New Building |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single-Family Land Development (Plats/Land Divisions) | <input type="checkbox"/> Major Mixed-Use         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Multi-Family Project                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)  |

2. What types of permits have you received from Bellevue? (Check all that apply.)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Building             | <input type="checkbox"/> Electrical             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ROW/Transportation   | <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fire                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Plumbing               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Land Use             | <input type="checkbox"/> Signs                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Utilities            | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clearing and Grading |   |

### Permit Center (Where staff provide information about codes and standards prior to application.)

3. Have you made a visit to the Permit Center in the last 3 years? (The Permit Center is located at City Hall and is where staff provide information about codes and standards prior to application.)

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No  
☐ Don't know

***Please reflect on your overall experience with City of Bellevue Permit Center staff, and how frequently the following statements are true.***

4. Permit Center reviewers treat me in a helpful, courteous, and knowledgeable manner.

- ☐ Always or almost always  
☐ Most of the time  
☐ Some of the time  
☐ Rarely

5. Permit Center reviewers clearly inform me about the plan and document requirements of all the reviewing departments.

- ☐ Always or almost always  
☐ Most of the time  
☐ Some of the time  
☐ Rarely

6. Permit Center reviewers give me enough information to submit a complete application for review.

- ☐ Always or almost always

- ☐ Most of the time
- ☐ Some of the time
- ☐ Rarely

7. Permit Center reviewers clearly inform me about the approval process for my permit.

- ☐ Always or almost always
- ☐ Most of the time
- ☐ Some of the time
- ☐ Rarely

8. Do you have any other comments or suggestions about the Permit Center?

### Pre-Application Services (Staff review your conceptual plans and give feedback and information.)

9. Have you used pre-application services for a project in the past 3 years? (This is where staff review your conceptual plans and give feedback and information.)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know

***Please reflect on your overall experience with City of Bellevue Pre-Application Services, and how frequently the following statements are true.***

10. I receive accurate, comprehensive, and helpful information from staff who attended my meeting, given the level of information I provided.

- ☐ Always or almost always
- ☐ Most of the time
- ☐ Some of the time
- ☐ Rarely

11. The permit process is explained clearly such that the timeline and steps to permit approval were clear.

- ☐ Always or almost always
- ☐ Most of the time
- ☐ Some of the time
- ☐ Rarely

12. Staff are knowledgeable about codes and regulations affecting my property.

- ☐ Always or almost always
- ☐ Most of the time
- ☐ Some of the time
- ☐ Rarely

13. Do you have any other comments or suggestions?

### Online Services at [www.MyBuildingPermit.com](http://www.MyBuildingPermit.com)

14. Have you used MyBuildingPermit.com to apply for a permit in Bellevue?



- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know/ Not Applicable

***Please reflect on your overall experience with MyBuildingPermit.com, and how frequently the following statements are true.***

**15.** The application process at www.MyBuildingPermit.com is clear and easy-to-use.

- ☐ Always or Almost Always
- ☐ Most of the time
- ☐ Some of the time
- ☐ Rarely

**16.** I can find the information I need at MyBuildingPermit.com about my application status, fees, and who to contact.

- ☐ Always or Almost Always
- ☐ Most of the time
- ☐ Some of the time
- ☐ Rarely

**17.** What improvements are most needed for MyBuildingPermit.com?

## **Permit Processing (Application Intake)**

**18.** Have you applied for a permit in person at the permit counter?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know

***Please reflect on your overall experience with City of Bellevue Permit Processing, and how frequently the following statements are true.***

**19.** Permit Technicians treat me in a helpful, courteous, and knowledgeable manner.

- ☐ Always or Almost Always
- ☐ Most of the time
- ☐ Some of the time
- ☐ Rarely

**20.** Permit Technicians clearly inform me about project submittal requirements - permit type, plans, documents, and fees.

- ☐ Always or Almost Always
- ☐ Most of the time
- ☐ Some of the time
- ☐ Rarely

**21.** Permit Technicians gave me an accurate estimate of the total cost of my permit.

- ☐ Always or Almost Always
- ☐ Most of the time
- ☐ Some of the time

☐ Rarely

**22.** Do you have any other comments or suggestions?

### **Plan Review and/or Design Review (Where staff review your project and approve your permit.)**

**23.** Have you been directly involved in Plan Review or Design Review for a project? (This is where staff review your project and approve your permit.)

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Don't know

***Please reflect on your overall experience with City of Bellevue Plan Review and/or Design Review, and how frequently the following statements are true.***

**24.** Review is complete and accurate. Additional problems do not surface later, during review or construction that should have been caught in the initial review.

☐ Always or Almost Always

☐ Most of the time

☐ Some of the time

☐ Rarely

**25.** Review comments from different departments are consistent with each other.

☐ Always or Almost Always

☐ Most of the time

☐ Some of the time

☐ Rarely

**26.** If deficiencies are found during review, the reviewer gives a clear explanation for what needs to be done to correct them.

☐ Always or Almost Always

☐ Most of the time

☐ Some of the time

☐ Rarely

**27.** The review improves the quality and/or safety of the project.

☐ Always or Almost Always

☐ Most of the time

☐ Some of the time

☐ Rarely

**28.** The amount of time it takes to get my approval or permit is consistent with timelines communicated by staff.

☐ Always or Almost Always

☐ Most of the time

☐ Some of the time

☐ Rarely

**29.** Reviewers treat me in a helpful, courteous, and knowledgeable manner.

- ☐ Always or Almost Always
- ☐ Most of the time
- ☐ Some of the time
- ☐ Rarely

**30.** Reviewers work with me to address project-related challenges.

- ☐ Always or Almost Always
- ☐ Most of the time
- ☐ Some of the time
- ☐ Rarely

**31.** Reviewers are practical in applying regulations, within the City's codes.

- ☐ Always or Almost Always
- ☐ Most of the time
- ☐ Some of the time
- ☐ Rarely

**32.** Do you have any other comments or suggestions?

## Inspections

**33.** Have you directly interacted with city inspectors providing on-site inspection services?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know

**34.** What type of inspection service have you been directly involved in? (Choose all that apply.)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Building        | <input type="checkbox"/> Plumbing               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clear and Grade | <input type="checkbox"/> ROW/Transportation     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fire            | <input type="checkbox"/> Utilities              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electrical      | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical      |   |

***Please reflect on your overall experience with City of Bellevue inspectors, and how frequently the following statements are true.***

**35.** My inspectors address issues in a timely manner (including responding to phone calls or inquiries, performing inspections when scheduled, time spent performing inspections, etc.).

- ☐ Always or Almost Always
- ☐ Most of the time
- ☐ Some of the time
- ☐ Rarely

**36.** My inspectors provide consistent information and decisions regarding my inspection.

- ☐ Always or Almost Always

- ☐ Most of the time
- ☐ Some of the time
- ☐ Rarely

**37.** If deficiencies are found during an inspection, the inspector gives a clear explanation of what has to be done to correct them.

- ☐ Always or Almost Always
- ☐ Most of the time
- ☐ Some of the time
- ☐ Rarely

**38.** Inspections improve the quality and/or safety of the project.

- ☐ Always or Almost Always
- ☐ Most of the time
- ☐ Some of the time
- ☐ Rarely

**39.** Inspectors treat me in a professional and respectful manner.

- ☐ Always or Almost Always
- ☐ Most of the time
- ☐ Some of the time
- ☐ Rarely

**40.** Inspectors work with me to address project-related challenges.

- ☐ Always or Almost Always
- ☐ Most of the time
- ☐ Some of the time
- ☐ Rarely

**41.** Inspectors demonstrate the expertise and knowledge required for the type of project.

- ☐ Always or Almost Always
- ☐ Most of the time
- ☐ Some of the time
- ☐ Rarely

**42.** Do you have any other comments or suggestions?

## Service Overall

**43.** Overall, how would you rate the quality of your customer service experience with Bellevue Development Services?

- ☐ Very positive
- ☐ Positive
- ☐ Somewhat negative
- ☐ Negative

**44.** How can we improve to serve you better?

**45.** What cities, and what are the practices?

**46.** Are you aware of practices in other cities that could serve as a model for Bellevue?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

**47.** How do you prefer to provide feedback to Development Services? (Check all that apply.)

- ☐ Comment card
- ☐ Online
- ☐ In person
- ☐ By phone
- ☐ Other (please specify)

**48.** Do you have any other comments or suggestions?

# Appendix C. Interview and Workshop Questions

## Interview Protocol

Bellevue Development Services (DS) is undergoing an evaluation of its services through a customer outreach process. The goal of the outreach is to gather input from current and recent customers about experiences with the agency. We need your frank input on what's working well, where there's room for improvement, and the best way to provide customer input on an ongoing basis. The feedback will be shared with City leadership and used to improve DS services.

Interview themes will be reported in the aggregate and comments will not be directly attributed.

## Interview Questions

1. What recent interactions have you had with Bellevue Development Services?
2. What worked well? And where is there room for improvement? How can DS improve?
  - Clear and friendly communication?
  - Timely?
  - Predictable process?
  - Consistency between departments?
  - Other?
3. How are things going at each stage of the process?
  - Permit Process
  - Application Intake (including MyBuildingPermit.com)
  - Plan Review
  - Permit Issuance
  - Inspections
4. DS would like to gather customer input on a regular basis, to help continually improve. How do you prefer to give feedback?
  - Anonymous survey?
  - Focus group?
  - Follow-up phone call?
  - In the moment, speaking directly to the staff member?

5. Do you have experience with other development services programs or processes outside of the City of Bellevue? If so, where? Are there any practices that could serve as a model?

## Customer Interviewee Summary

A total of 42 customer interviews were completed during this analysis. A breakdown of those interviews, by customer type, is shown below.

Customer Type	Number of Interviews Conducted
Contractor	13
Residential Builders	12
Major Commercial	8
Internal Customers	4
Tenant Improvement	3
Individual Homeowners	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>42</b>

## Workshop Discussion Guide

### Background

Bellevue Development Services (DS) is undergoing an evaluation of its services through a customer outreach process. The goal of the outreach is to gather input from current and recent customers about experiences with the agency. We need your frank input on what's working well, where there's room for improvement, and the best way to provide customer input on an ongoing basis. The feedback will be shared with City leadership and used to improve DS services.

Interview themes will be reported in the aggregate and comments will not be directly attributed.

### Focus Group Meeting Agenda

#### Welcome and Introductions

#### Project Background

- What Development Services (DS) does, and why they are looking for feedback
- DS resources and constraints
- How feedback will be used

## Discussion Topics

### 1) What is going well, and what needs improvement?

- Parts of the process:
  - Permit Center
  - Pre-Application
  - Application Intake and MyBuildingPermit.com
  - Plan Review/ Design Review
  - Inspection
- Issues to consider:
  - Customer service
  - Clear requirements and process
  - Predictability
  - Timeline and status updates

### 2) Best practices from other cities

- Are you aware of processes in other cities that could serve as a model for Bellevue?

### 3) Providing feedback

Bellevue DS would like to gather candid customer input on a regular basis, to help with continuous improvement.

- How do you prefer to provide feedback? (Online survey, comment card, etc.? What point in the process?)
- How comfortable are you providing candid feedback to DS staff? What might help improve your comfort level?

## Wrap-Up

- How feedback will be used; project next steps



## Appendix D. Intercept Survey Summary

The Intercept Survey was designed to get feedback from Development Services customers at the Permit Center immediately after the time of service. It was intended to complement the longer online customer survey, and to reach a different set of customers.

BERK staff conducted three intercept survey sessions at the Bellevue City Hall Permit Center. A total of 38 customers were surveyed, as shown in Exhibit D-1.

**Exhibit D-1. Intercept Survey Dates, Times, and Number of Responses**

Date	Day	Time	# of Responses
May 12	Thursday	9:30 a.m. -11:00 a.m.	12
May 24	Tuesday	11 a.m. – 1 p.m.	12
June 7	Tuesday	10 a.m. – 2 p.m.	14

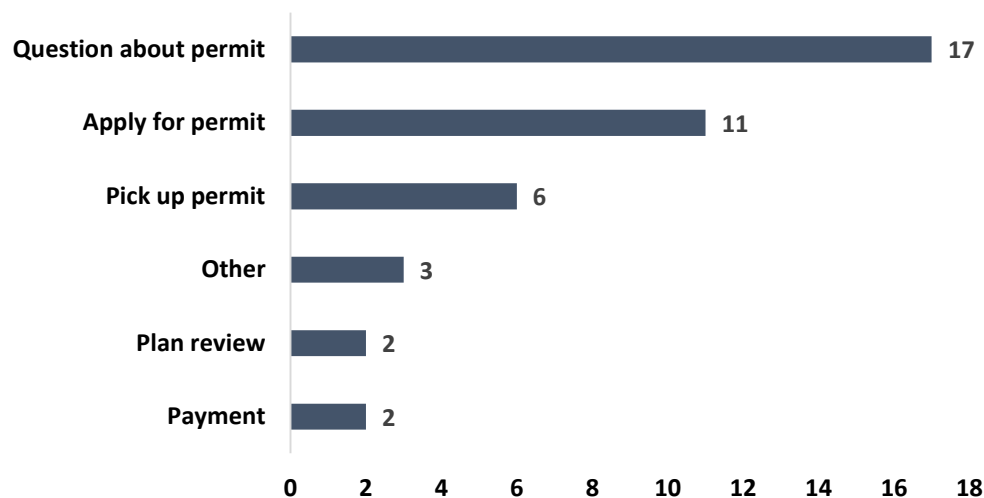
### Results

Customers were asked five questions about their experience: trip purpose, project type, quality of their experience that day, how DS can improve, and whether they use MyBuildingPermit.com. Responses are provided below.

#### Trip Purpose

Customers were asked the purpose of their trip to Development Services. The largest number of respondents were there to ask a question about a permit, as shown in Exhibit D-2

**Exhibit D-2. What was the purpose of your trip to Development Services today?**

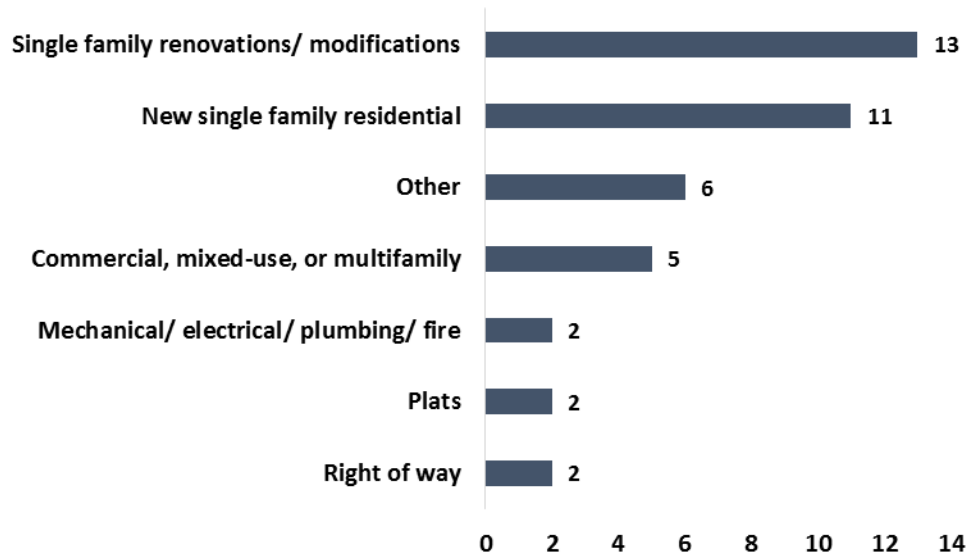


Note: Some customers provided more than one reason for their trip.

## Project Type

Customers were asked to describe the type of project they were working on; most were working on single family residences, either renovations/modifications or new construction, as shown in Exhibit D-3.

**Exhibit D-3. How would you describe the project you're working on?**

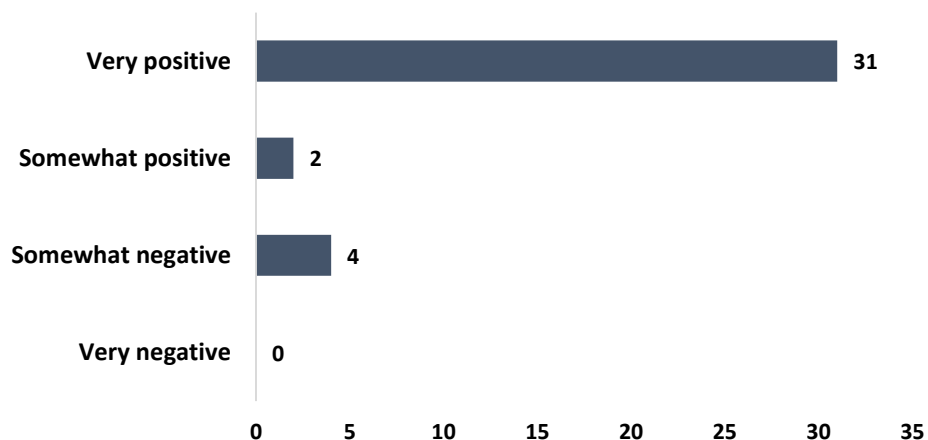


Note: Some customers provided more than one description for their project.

## Quality of Experience with DS

Customers were asked about the quality of their experience at Development Services that day. The vast majority, 31 of 38 customers, rated the experience as Very Positive, as shown in Exhibit D-4.

**Exhibit D-4. How would you rate the quality of your experience with Development Services today?**



Many customers made comments about the quality of their experience. Common topics include:

**Praise.** Many customers praised the quality of the staff at Development Services, with 14 people mentioning the quality of customer service, including helpfulness, friendliness, and knowledge level. Examples of comments:

- *Informative and friendly.*
- *Always very positive; I am a frequent visitor.*
- *Good people, good at helping*
- *Quick, helpful, and friendly.*

**Length of visit.** Four customers mentioned the length of time their visit took; three praised DS for fast service, while one stated the wait time was too long.

**Information provided.** Two customers reported getting inconsistent or poor information from staff members.

- *Different people give different information. A newer staff member gave me incorrect information. All were in Land Use dept. Trying to get answer on temporary turnaround easement. DS thinks about builders more than the buyer of property.*
- *Two parties gave me opposite answers and I still don't know the correct answer.*

## How DS Can Improve

Customers were asked to offer one thing that Development Services can improve on; 35 people provided comments. The most common topics were: praise and review time. Common topics and sample comments are provided in Exhibit D-5. Responses may be in two or more categories.

**Exhibit D-5. What's one thing Development Services can improve on?**

Topic	Sample Comments
<b>Praise</b> (7 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Can't think of anything, everybody who works in DS is fantastic.</i></li> <li>● <i>They do a great job compared with other municipalities I have worked with.</i></li> <li>● <i>It was my first visit to DS, but they were very helpful.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Shorten Review Time</b> (7 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Quicker review time!</i></li> <li>● <i>Timelines - permits in Bellevue take way too long and there are so many inspections. They are just splitting hairs.</i></li> <li>● <i>More staff to address long review times. But DS probably already knows that.</i></li> <li>● <i>Design review could be faster. Staff estimates are not accurate. I was told "by Friday" but it ends up being two weeks later.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Improve MyBuildingPermit.com</b> (5 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>MyBuildingPermit.com - there are too many hoops to jump through, not everything applies, and it needs to be more user friendly.</i></li> <li>● <i>DS and MyBuildingPermit.com seem to track statuses differently. When a permit on MBP may say "open" that doesn't give enough information that matches what DS may say about the permit.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Improve customer service</b> (4 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Everything is good except for not having my call returned.</i></li> <li>● <i>Response time to getting to talk to somebody seems unpredictable and takes a while. Once you're talking to a person it's very fast though.</i></li> </ul>

<b>Layout and logistics</b> (3 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Signage for coffee would have been good because I didn't realize there was a coffee stand so close.</i></li></ul>
<b>Improve consistency</b> (2 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>This is my third time here in the last few days. I've seen three people in the Building department. Got different instructions and criteria from each.</i></li><li>• <i>From a contractor's perspective the Bellevue process is very negative. I'm considering selling my building in Bellevue and moving out of doing business in the city. After things have already been approved, the city keeps slapping new requirements on a whim with significant costs. On more reviews, what the city said was okay before now isn't. The Seattle process is much better.</i></li></ul>

## MyBuildingPermit.com

For the last two survey sessions, customers were asked if they use MyBuildingPermit.com. Fourteen of 25 customers (56%) reported they use it, as shown in Exhibit D-6.

**Exhibit D-6. Do you use MyBuildingPermit.com?**

