

# 2013 Annual Report

## Clark County Community Development

### 2013 – A Path of Change and Recovery



Marty Snell, director

In recounting 2013, two terms come to my mind immediately: change and recovery.

For Community Development, many changes have taken place and all for the positive. The first change was shortly after the New Year and was two-fold. On the same day of diving into Lean process improvements, we welcomed a

new Permit Center Manager. January 14 marked the first day for Chuck Crider and the first day of a five-day Kaizen event. More than a dozen staff, with the assistance of many others, tackled the Single Family Residential permitting for four days in an effort to ‘streamline’ the intake and review process. As the sponsor, I witnessed first-hand the great work of all who participated. Serendipitously Chuck was able to start Lean improvements from the ground floor and got to know ‘up-close and personal’ many of the staff he would come manage and lead. Since that very first day, I would say things in the Permit Center have been on the rise! Great things are in store for us this year and into the future.

Other changes throughout the year have taken on different forms, from staffing and workload to budget and physical space improvements. During the first half of the year, we saw the baton for managing the Weatherization program pass from Tif Rock to Mike Selig. During the construction season and beyond, we welcomed many new faces (some new and some old) to help with the increase in plans to review and projects to inspect. In December, an approved 2014 budget meant hiring nine new people.

The three most noticeable changes are the budget picture, the Permit Center remodel and the attitude of staff. The change in residential and non-residential development, coupled with a tempered response to hire staff commensurate with the level and type of increase, has created the best budget Community Development has seen since before the Great Recession. With the design and approval to go-ahead with remodeling the Permit Center, construction started in December. The function and staff of the Permit Center relocated temporarily to the second and third floors of the Public Service Center. The Permit Center remodel is now complete and celebrated a ‘Grand Re-opening’ on March 25. Many thanks go to folks who made this happen and who made accommodations for us during the remodel.

The last change, that being the attitude of staff, is certainly noteworthy for me. It has been my sixth year in Community Development and I have experienced the roller coaster of emotions. From the depths of budget-cutting and lay-offs in 2008/2009 to the recovery of budgets and building in 2012/2013, I have seen the attitudes of staff go from deflated and depressed to hopeful and positive.



Permit Center remodel

This Year in Review would not be complete without mentioning two more things: the Tidemark Replacement Project and the continued great work of all CD staff. A handful of us spent a majority of the year narrowing down a list of potential vendors to the top two. A small team of staff spent two weeks last summer visiting four jurisdictions – two with one vendor and two with another – to better understand whether either of these two could meet our needs or would provide the best ‘fit’ for Clark County. After additional inquiries and research in the fall, we decided to cancel the RFP, do additional and refined work on a new RFP, and pursue additional opportunities and vendors in 2014. For all the fantastic work on this project throughout 2013, I thank each and every staffer who has been or continues to be involved. Not picking one of the vendors is, in no way, a sign of failure. In my opinion, it is one of the many successes making the work we have done to date such excellent work.

Regardless of the program or the functions of Community Development, I am constantly reminded of the tireless and professional efforts you put into your work. We have been through the worst of the economic collapse and we have come through it. Poised to be more customer focused and open to experimental ideas and innovation, CD staff shined in 2013 and will see a fruitful 2014.

The year 2014 promises to be busy and dynamic and I take comfort in knowing we will succeed together.

### **Clark County Community Development Location**

Public Service Center  
Floors one and three  
1300 Franklin Street  
Vancouver, WA 98660

### **Mailing**

PO Box 9810  
Vancouver, WA 98666-9810

### **Phone**

(360) 397-2375

### **Email**

[commdev@clark.wa.gov](mailto:commdev@clark.wa.gov)

### **Web**

[www.clark.wa.gov/development](http://www.clark.wa.gov/development)



For an alternate format, contact the Clark County ADA Compliance Office.  
Phone: (360)397-2322  
Relay: 711 or (800) 833-6384  
E-mail: [ADA@clark.wa.gov](mailto:ADA@clark.wa.gov)

# Animal Protection and Control

Animal Protection and Control (APC) provides animal services seven days a week except holidays to Clark County, the City of Vancouver, and Town of Yaocolt, covering over 600 square miles. Average daily call volume asking for some kind of help with animals was 68, jumping between 80 to 100 calls during summer months.

It was a typical year where APC helped with cats, dogs, horses, cows, coyotes, rabbits, birds, reptiles, livestock, and wildlife. Humans continue to be the largest client. Part of what makes the job interesting is that no two days are the same and even the seemingly simplest of service requests can turn into a protracted investigation. APC is an integral part of the local law enforcement network, often being called to crime scenes aiding SWAT, VPD, CCSO, WSP, as well as others, when pets are involved. Animals are picked up from detained vehicles, hospitals, drug busts, jail, and there is a pretty steady business with the area's homeless population. Thanks to the generosity of the county's Risk Management department, all APC officers were outfitted with the latest in body armor, which unfortunately is becoming an industry standard.

## Favorite pet names

Dogs	Cats
Buddy	Tigger
Bella	Baby
Lucy	Bella
Charlie	Tiger
Max	Princess

As staff looks forward to 2014 some final adjustments will be made to codes surrounding Potentially Dangerous and Dangerous Dogs, online licensing will become a reality, and steps will be taken for a necessary increase in pet license pricing, since it has now been ten years since the last adjustment.



Kittens rescued during SWAT mission



Kangaroo



Horses, mare and colt

	2012	2013	% change
Service requests*	18,073	8,594	-52%
Pet licenses	31,941	30,880	-3%
Pet license revenue	\$449,310	\$427,805	-5%

\* A significant decrease, with a total of 8,594 requests, is seen in 2013. This is attributed to a new tracking method for these activities. In the past, each time an officer was called to an address, it was counted as a separate request. Beginning in 2013, each address was treated as single case/request.

## Permit Services

It was a pinnacle year for Permit Services. The program developed an entire new process, changing how we do things for the better, added more hours, welcomed an additional program, hired a permanent manager, and began a renovation project.

In January, Permit Services had the opportunity to step outside the box and rethink our processes by participating in a LEAN event. Working hands-on, staff fully participated in the LEAN evaluation and the Single-Family Residential (in a subdivision) process was reworked. Staff spent the first half of the year working with builders and testing the new process before going “live” for everyone. By June, what was learned in the LEAN event became a new way of doing business. Due to process changes, review times decreased from 23 days to 11-13 days. Builders in the community are ecstatic about the faster turn around and appreciate that the county is recognizing that time is money.

With increasing demand in the development community, the Permit Center is now open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Customers learned very quickly of the expanded hours and with the continued growth in the community the extra time has proved to be very valuable.

Permit Services welcomed the Land Use Review program. The goal of this union is to have better coordination between the land use team and permit team to ensure better communication from where a project ends with land use and begins with the permit center. So far it has allowed the opportunity for staff to talk to each other easily and quickly and resolve problems that arise.



Permit Center remodel

In January, Chuck Crider became the new Permit Center Manager. In a short time he introduced concepts like customer experience vs customer service and started looking for ways staff could change our day to day to be more customer focused and friendly. In June, the Permit Center hired Maria Rennaker in a project permit tech role, which became a permanent assignment in January 2014. The workload saw some relief but with the economy vastly changing staff are still getting busier and busier.

In December, the walls came down in the Permit Center to make way for a more open customer-centric environment. Staff has worked many hours and months on a new layout for the Permit Center. Permit staff relocated to temporary locations on the third floor, while the permit counter was open on the second floor. The permit center implemented an appointment line to help minimize wait times for customers. The accommodation really shows the great partnerships we have with other departments in the building. The new Permit Center opened in March 2014.

Building permits issued	2012	2013	% change
Single Family and Duplex	577	908	57%
Residential Add/Alt	533	552	4%
Commercial	281	306	9%
Valuation			
Residential	\$183M	\$287M	57%
Commercial	\$72M	\$143M	99%

## Land Use Review

Land Use Review experienced a shift in 2013. Caseload went up drastically and continued to rise. Staff continued to revise the review process to decrease review time and get development moving, and the planners moved to a new home, only to move again to a permanent location in the Permit Center.

Casework began rising for the Land Use Review program this year. Through 2013, the caseload focused predominately on existing projects that were coming back to life as the economy started to pick up. Planners began seeing caseloads resembling pre-recession times. As we moved into the end of 2013 staff began seeing more and more brand new projects coming in for pre-application conferences aiming to begin work in 2014.



Planners at a land use hearing

In 2012, staff introduced the 60-day process for development. In 2013, many commercial projects took advantage of the process to expedite their review and get to construction faster. The process is still a work in progress but staff has worked hard to ensure that applicants experience a smooth process with the county staff.

Moving the Land Use Review program to the Permit Center ensures better coordination of projects from land development to building permits. Easier and quicker communication

between staff allows for faster resolution of any issues that may come up. The planners moved mid-year and packed up again at the end of the year to temporary locations during the Permit Center remodel.

Applications received	2012	2013	% change
Appeals	3	3	no change
Boundary Line Adjustment	40	33	-17.5%
Conditional Use Permit	1	2	100%
Misc. Zoning Review	49	45	-8%
Final Land Division	*	28	
Final Site Plan	*	15	
Planned Unit Development	0	3	300%
Post Decision Review	21	24	14%
Shoreline	10	30	200%
Site Plan Review	39	50	28%
Subdivision/Short Plat	4	17	325%
Variance	8	11	38%

\* Prior to 2013, Final Land Divisions and Final Site Plans were processed by Public Works.

# Building Safety

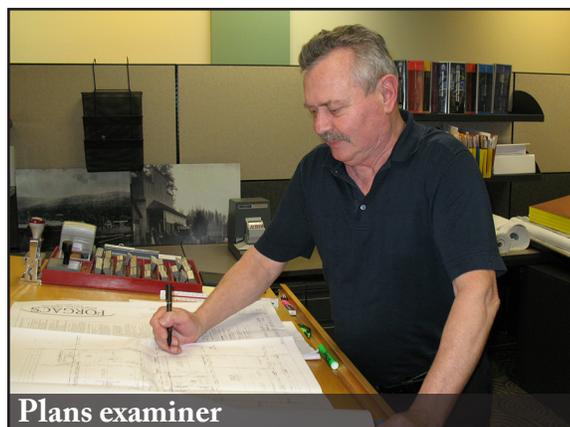
Residential construction steadily increased again in 2013; single family home permits were up about a third over 2012. As was the case last year, commercial construction remained steady, but showed little sign of heating up.

Building Safety continued to hire staff in 2013 to provide a consistent level of customer service. In conjunction with additional staffing, Building Safety will implement innovative ways to deliver improved customer service in the future.

In 2013 Building Safety continued with changes made in 2012 to the commercial tenant improvement process in conjunction with a work group from the Greater Vancouver Chamber of Commerce. This resulted in subcategories for process clarity, improved service, and relevant fees.

The Planet Clark outreach partnership that began in 2011 continues as an informative community resource. This public/private partnership is a unique program offering a hands-on approach to building and development information and education.

The Weatherization program continues to serve our low-income community. The program staff conducts qualification audits, arranges for weatherization contractor work, and reviews work for final acceptance. This program will continue to focus on its core services after several busy years providing additional energy services under other grants.



Plans examiner



Planet Clark Emerald House



Inspecting a weatherization project

	2012	2013	% change
Plan reviews	1,448	2,078	44%
Inspections	28,545	42,396	49%

# Code Enforcement

The effects of the slowly improving economy continue to determine the type of issues referred to Code Enforcement. While the number of cases involving properties in the process of foreclosure has declined, the number of foreclosed properties being purchased is on the rise, and with it, the assumed responsibility for correcting any violations of Clark County Code.

Unfortunately, many individuals purchase these properties “as is” and may not be aware of an open enforcement action. Many times, the initial letter they receive from Code Enforcement is the first they hear about the issues involving their newly purchased property despite lien recordings or property postings. Code Enforcement staff will work with the new owner to gain compliance. While a new purchaser of a property may not have created the problem, as the new owner, they can work with the county to take corrective action.

Several code revisions have caused numerous cases to remain in limbo until the revisions are complete. The winery, kennel and stable ordinances have gone through a number of alterations over the past two years in an attempt to reduce the start-up costs for the operators while addressing “life-safety” issues to protect their clientele. This is not an easy task. Code Enforcement Coordinator Donna Goddard has worked diligently with the operators, neighbors, and the Board of Clark County Commissioners on implementing these ordinances.

In the year to come, Code Enforcement will continue in its efforts to improve working relationships with other departments and enforcement agencies in an effort to provide improved customer service. Some of those relationships were strained by the recent poor economy and the reduction of key staff. Our goal for 2014 will be to re-establish those



connections and create a more fluid enforcement environment for the future.

Code violations	2012	2013	% change
Building	253	277	9%
Fire	6	16	167%
Nuisance	652	640	-2%
Public Works	36	41	14%
Zoning	334	269	-19%
Total violations	1,281	1,243	-3%
Total cases opened	965	942	-2%

## Fire Marshal's Office

For the past two years, the Fire Marshal has had a number of work sessions with the Board of County Commissioners, as well as meetings with each individually, regarding the future of fire inspections in Clark County. Discussion has been focused on how frequently each business should be inspected and how an expanded program would be funded. The Fire Marshal's (FMO) goal has been to inspect every commercial occupancy on some rotating frequency to help ensure the safety of the general public by verifying compliance with building and fire codes. Representatives of the business community were asked for their input. This year, the board made a decision to leave the program unchanged, with the FMO inspecting only those businesses with a higher than average risk of fire (due to specific operations within the business) or with a greater exposure to injury to the public should a fire occur (based on occupancy for the business).

In 2013, the FMO performed 1,132 Fire and Life Safety inspections. This number shows overall reductions of 14 percent from 2012 and 24 percent over the last seven years. These reductions may be due to businesses being better prepared for their annual inspections (thus requiring fewer re-inspections) and businesses that closed due to the poor economy.

There was a healthy increase in new construction plan reviews and related inspections. Plans for new buildings, fire suppression and alarm systems, and various process equipment account for much of the increase. However, there was also an increase in the number of residential projects reviewed. This is due to the sizes of the structures or because there are associated fire-specific items, such as propane tanks, residential fire sprinklers, access concerns, that require FMO involvement. This increase has kept the FMO staff extremely busy both in the office and in the field.



**New construction**

The FMO investigated 118 fires to determine their origin and cause. With the exception of 2011, this is the lowest number of fires investigated by the FMO in the past seven years. While this lower-than-normal number is certainly something to celebrate, the amount of damage and the impact on the lives of those involved is staggering. The number, classification, and direct dollar loss estimates for the fires investigated break down as follows:

- 64 accidentally-caused structure fires, \$2.4 million in property damage
- 24 intentionally-caused structure fires, \$63,000 in property damage
- 17 undetermined structure fires, \$960,000 in property damage
- 13 other investigations (fireworks, illegal burns, etc.)

**118 total fires with \$3.4 million in property damage**

It is important to emphasize that these numbers only reflect those fires to which the Clark County Fire Marshal's Office was dispatched for investigative purposes. This is a fraction of the overall fires that happen in Clark County every year.

Fire code	2012	2013	% change
Investigations	166	118	-29%
Building plan reviews	246	416	69%
New construction inspections	661	826	25%
Fire and life safety inspections	1,323	1,132	-14%
Land use planning reviews	23	71	208%

Fire code plan review	goal	2012	2013	% change
New construction	10 days	4.1 days	3.2 days	-22%