

Town of San Anselmo

Permit Improvement Program (PIP) Phase I Report



December 2025

Authored by:

**Marin Builders Association and
Economic Forensics and Analytics**



Introduction

In 2020, the Marin Builders Association (MBA), in partnership with multiple cities and the County of Marin, launched the Permit Improvement Program (PIP). MBA's prior collaborations with jurisdictions including the City of San Rafael, City of Novato, Town of Tiburon, and the County of Marin provided valuable insights into differences in local permitting processes. These learnings helped shape this initial phase (Phase I) of the program for the Town of San Anselmo.

The overarching goal of these partnerships is to reduce illegal and non-permitted construction activity across all Marin County jurisdictions. Survey participants are customers of the permitting department who had applied for permits within the previous twelve months, including both homeowners and building professionals. The PIP gathers data through online surveys, focus groups, one-on-one interviews, all of which provide insight into how Town of San Anselmo staff interact with customers from the customers' perspective.

In this report, the MBA is partnering with Dr. Robert Eyler, formerly of Marin Economic Forum (MEF), to provide conclusions, recommendations and best-practice examples to help improve the Town of San Anselmo's permitting process and culture to generate more permitted versus unpermitted construction projects that support economic development in San Anselmo and beyond.

Key Findings

Potential Lost Revenue of \$418,000 – \$524,000 from Non-Permitted Work

Based on conservative estimates from previous MBA work with cities and the County of Marin, the percentage of non-permitted construction countywide in 2024 is estimated to be between 40 to 50 percent.¹ The Town of San Anselmo's total fees collected for permits in fiscal year 2023-24 was approximately \$1.047 million.² Thus, non-permitted work is estimated to represent approximately \$418,930 to \$523,660 per year of lost revenue to the Town of San Anselmo; in essence, the amount of permit revenue would increase substantially if all estimated, non-permitted work became permitted. As outlined in the report to follow, such changes can lead to more permitted work, safer construction projects, and capturing revenue for the Town of San Anselmo.

¹ Based on estimates from building officials and residential resale program data in various cities and for the unincorporated portion of Marin County.

² See Town of San Anselmo financial data at <https://www.sananselmo.gov/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/6561>

Direct Efforts Yielded Strong Response Rate to Customer Satisfaction Survey

The Phase I PIP survey was distributed to permit applicant contacts, a list provided and verified by Town staff of approximately 1,100 recent customers. Marin Builders Association (MBA) provided and distributed the online survey. MBA acted as direct contact for distribution of the survey, including building professionals that are MBA members. Efforts yielded 282 completed, affirmative online surveys (an aggregate 25.6-percent response rate). Because this is an opinion survey based on a finite number of potential customers (not a scientific study), the sample size is sufficient to accurately represent permit-customers' current sentiment, and was much larger than expected. The figures show there was dispersion among the respondents; the process was random in terms of surveying a subset of residents and building professionals seeking permitting services. Data collection, focus groups and one-on-one interviews with home owners and building professionals for this project were conducted between March – October of 2025.

The survey had four distinct sections:

1. Respondent's demographics and interactions within the permitting department of the Town of San Anselmo in seeking a permit or solution to a related issue;
2. Information regarding services and the customer experience in specific ways (time, precision, consistency, etc.);
3. Overall satisfaction levels based on a method similar to a Net Promoter Score (NPS) defined below; and
4. Recommendations were also requested, and the Appendix provides verbatim survey responses to questions about process improvements and comparisons to other jurisdictions.

The final question asked in the survey provided data on a "net promoter score" or NPS³. In some ways, this is the most illuminating question in the survey. The NPS is generally defined as the likelihood that a customer or client picked at random would recommend a vendor's good or service to another person. In future phases, comparing NPS scores to past surveys drive conclusions on how changes have been recognized by those visiting the Town of San Anselmo permitting department.

The following bullets are general rules to follow with net promoter scores:

- Answers 9 or 10 would most likely recommend the service (Promoters);
- Answers 7 or 8 are neutral (Passives); and
- Answers 0 and 6 most likely would not recommend the service (Detractors).

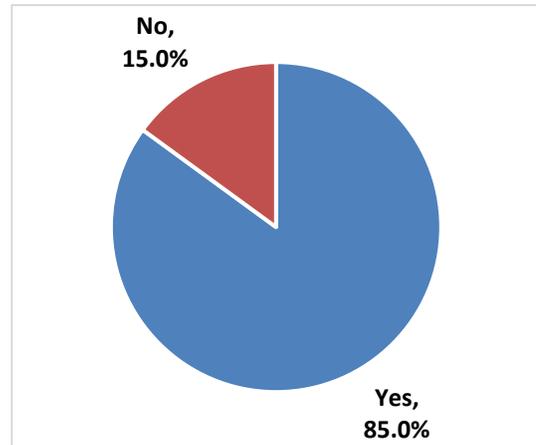
The NPS score for Phase I (2025) was -58.5, or 58.5 percentage points more detractors than promoters. We will see more detail on this below. Let's now turn to the data from the survey.

³ Net Promoter Score®, or NPS®, measures customer experience and predicts business growth. This proven metric transformed the business world and now provides the core measurement for customer experience management programs. Respondents are divided into Promoters, Passives, and Detractors. Subtracting the percentage of Detractors from the percentage of Promoters (Passives are Neutral) yields the Net Promoter Score, which can range from a low of -100 (if every customer is a Detractor) to a high of 100 (if every customer is a Promoter). For more visit <https://www.netpromoter.com/know/>

Survey Responses: Respondent Demography

Engagement with Town staff in last 12 months

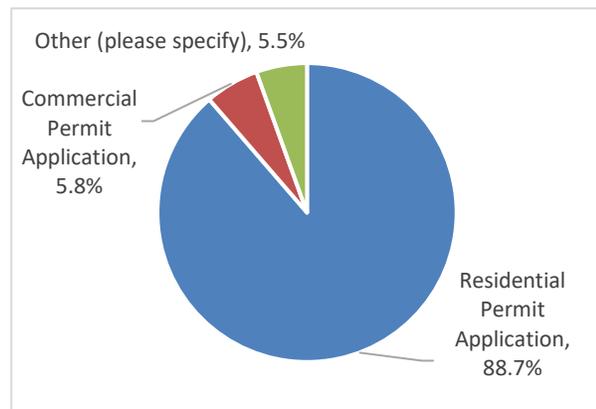
In the first survey question, participants were asked if they had engaged with the Town of San Anselmo in the last 12 months seeking a building permit. 85% of the respondents said they had used the Town of San Anselmo permitting services. For these respondents, those that answered “No” to this question did not continue. Of the 426 respondents that responded “Yes”, 282 continued to complete the survey.



Type of Applicant and Main Interactions with Town of San Anselmo

The next question asked respondents to describe their relationship with projects seeking a permit with the Town of San Anselmo. Of those responding, contractors and property owners were over 77 percent of the responses. Other responses not listed here were realtors in all but one case.

Type of Applicant	% Respondents
Property Owner	60.0%
Contractor	17.8%
Architect	9.2%
Business Owner	4.4%
Other (please specify)	8.6%

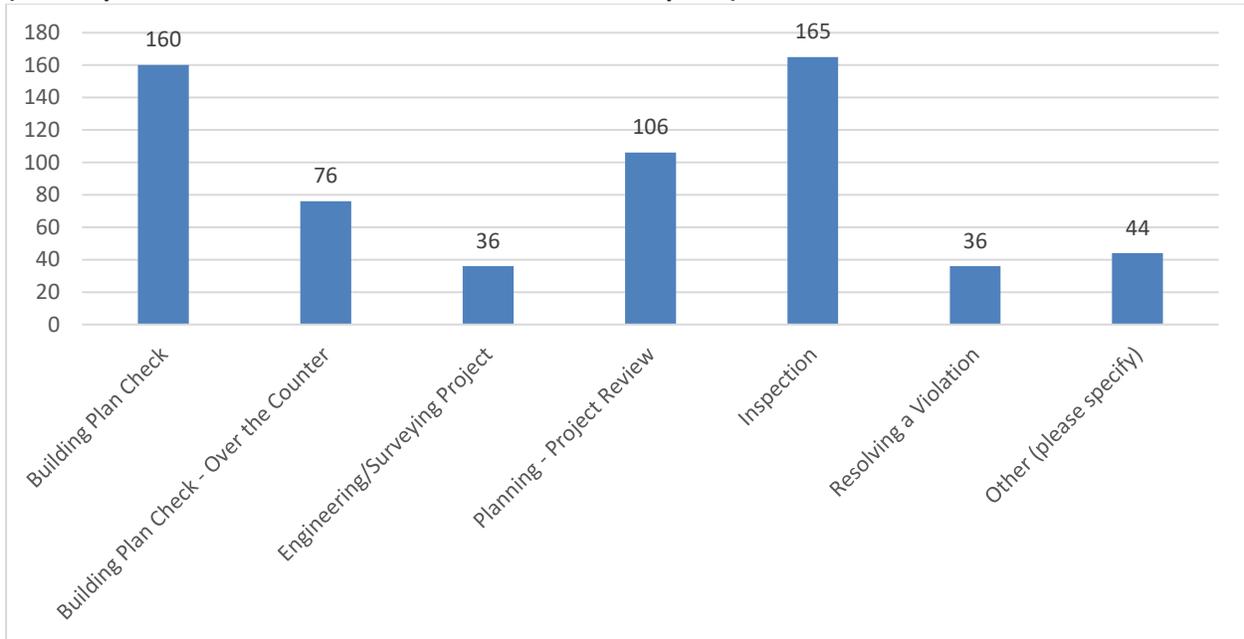


88.7% of Survey Respondents Filed for a Residential Permit Application

The survey also asked what type of permit application was pursued by applicants. A residential permit was pursued 88.7 percent of the time for these applicants. Commercial permitting covers all uses beyond residential, including senior-facility units where there are care facilities as part of the services provided on-site. Multi-family units are considered residential. In the next question, the survey asked why permit applicants came to the Town of San Anselmo’s permit counter. Generally, inspections and building plan checks are the reasons for coming to town offices. Building plan checks (both submittal

and over the counter) are a main reason (56.7 percent) for coming to the planning department; inspections are also a common reason (58.5 percent of respondents).

**Customer Interaction at Permit Counter Related to:
(282 respondents, each could answer more than one option):**

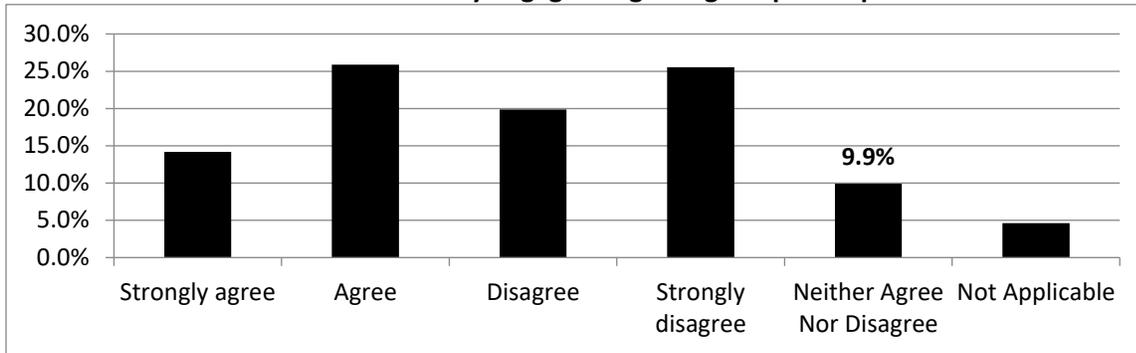


Main Survey Questions

These questions are really about customer service and the conversion of unpermitted work to permitted based on the **perceived ease and partnership** the building community has (or does not have) with planning departments across Marin County. These questions started with how applicants experienced timeliness, professionalism, and receptive staff when they interacted with the Town of San Anselmo.

A classic concern of builders and property owners is that municipal staff are not concerned about the timing of decisions or their demeanor with applicants. A majority of respondents agreed that Town of San Anselmo was timely and professional; another 9.9 percent was neutral. Results were more mixed for plan submittal and project review.

Town of San Anselmo staff was actively engaged in guiding the permit process and timeline for me:

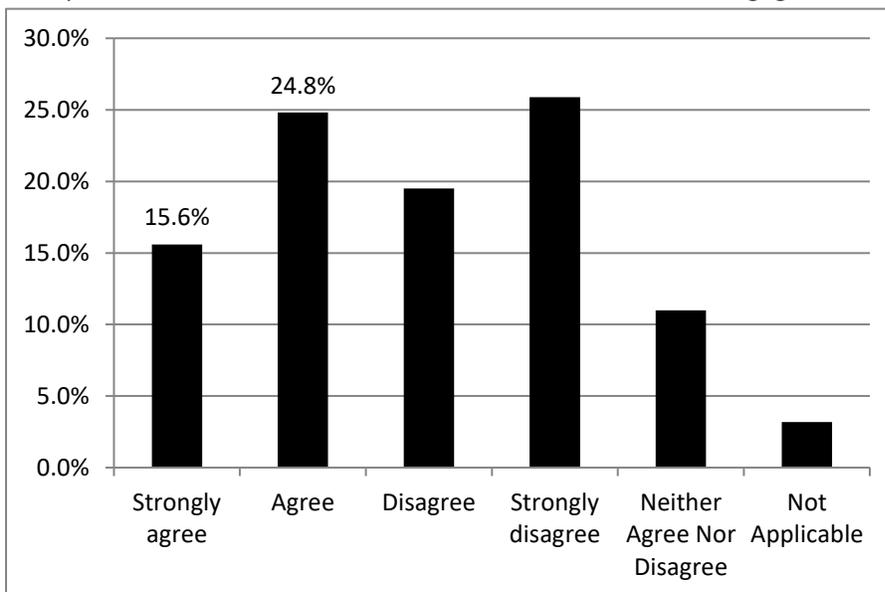


Town of San Anselmo staff was actively engaged in guiding the permit process and timeline for me:

Response	Interaction Type					
	Building Plan Check - Submittal	Building Plan Check - Over the Counter	Engineering/ Survey Project	Planning and Project Review	Inspection	Resolving a Violation
Strongly Agree	18	14	4	12	21	3
Agree	37	15	7	26	42	6
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	13	5	3	7	19	1
Disagree	37	13	9	29	31	8
Strongly Disagree	52	29	13	32	42	17
Totals	157	76	36	106	155	35

40.4% agreed that Town of San Anselmo Staff followed through in a timely, professional, and friendly manner

The question about timeliness was focused on staff's active engagement in the permit process. Another



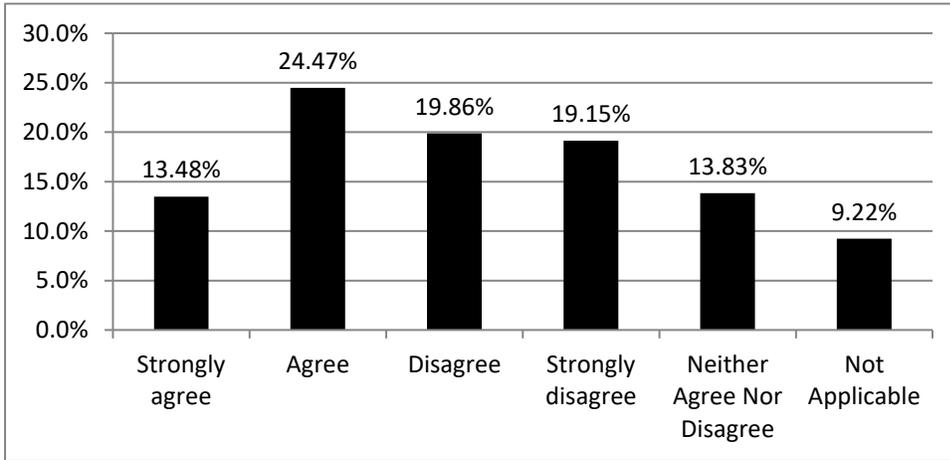
concern heard from permit applicants throughout Marin County in previous studies of other municipalities is disengagement by staff. This relates to timeliness of processes and expectations of applicants. Reducing time to a permitting decision or action is a consistent customer concern for permitting services. See the additional comments

provided by respondents in the Appendix based on connections to this question.

Staff followed through in a timely, professional, and friendly manner

	Building Plan Check – Submittal	Building Plan Check – Over the Counter	Engineering/ Survey Project	Planning and Project Review	Inspection	Resolving a Violation
Strongly Agree	17	13	4	10	24	6
Agree	32	14	4	25	43	5
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	15	6	4	8	18	0
Disagree	37	13	9	28	30	7
Strongly Disagree	56	30	15	35	44	17
Totals	157	76	36	106	159	35

37.8 percent agreed that individual staff members served as dedicated points of contact throughout the permit process



Because much of the application process has moved online to maintaining those online services is critical for Town of San Anselmo to make adjustments as needed. Responses were generally very positive in terms of

using online services. The same lean toward plan submittals and project review as having more concerns or not as strong a center of opinions continues. The distributions across opinions and reasons for seeking permitting were relatively uniform.

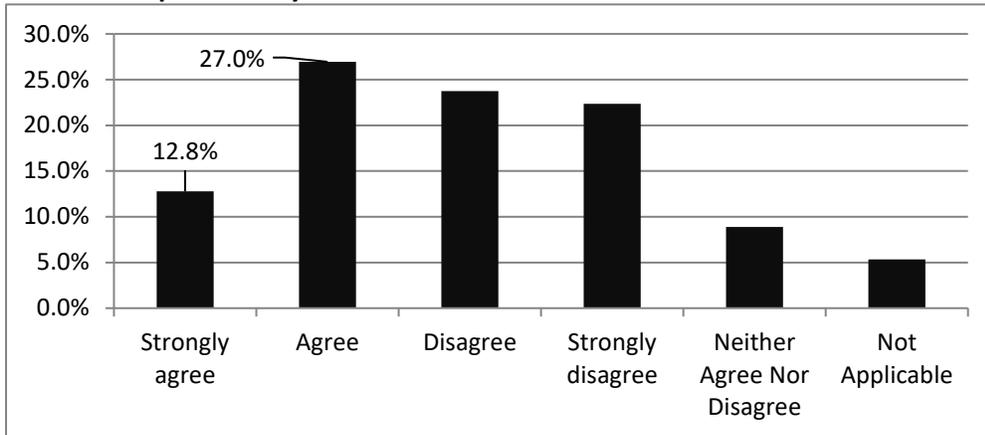
Staff members served as dedicated points of contact throughout the permit process:

Response	Building Plan Check - Submittal	Building Plan Check - Over the Counter	Engineering/Survey Project	Planning and Project Review	Inspection	Resolving a Violation
Strongly Agree	18	12	6	8	19	5
Agree	35	22	7	32	43	7
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	25	5	2	13	23	3
Disagree	37	18	11	26	32	6
Strongly Disagree	40	16	9	22	31	13
Totals	155	73	35	101	148	34

39.8% of Respondents considered information provided by staff was consistent and accurate:

The next question was about information shared with applicants. The results here suggest that customers generally were not in agreement that staff information was consistent and accurate. Some of that concern could be due to how information is communicated back to customers and connects to other perceptions such as timeliness and a dedicated contact person who knows the project from the start to finish. .

Information provided by staff was consistent and accurate:



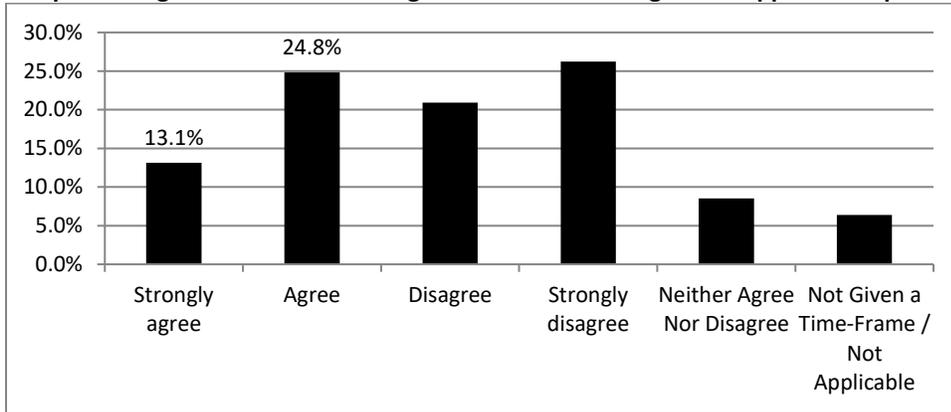
Information provided by staff was consistent and accurate:

	Building Plan Check – Submittal	Building Plan Check – Over the Counter	Engineering/ Survey Project	Planning and Project Review	Inspection	Resolving a Violation
Strongly Agree	12	11	4	5	19	3
Agree	44	20	4	29	43	5
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	16	3	4	10	14	1
Disagree	42	18	12	31	45	8
Strongly Disagree	42	23	12	29	34	18
Totals	156	75	36	104	155	35

37.9 percent signaled Permitting Office and Follow-Through worked within expected timeframe

Just under 38 percent of respondents suggested the follow-through was timely. However it is difficult to meet all expectations; a good survey question for Phase II may be: “Has follow-through improved since your last interaction?” or “What is your expectation of timeline?”. This can help the Town of San Anselmo’s permitting office communication efforts and help shape expectations. The distribution of agreement and disagreement on follow-through was relatively even across reasons why applicants sought permitting in San Anselmo, as the data shown here suggest.

The permitting office followed through on the time-frame given to approve the permit



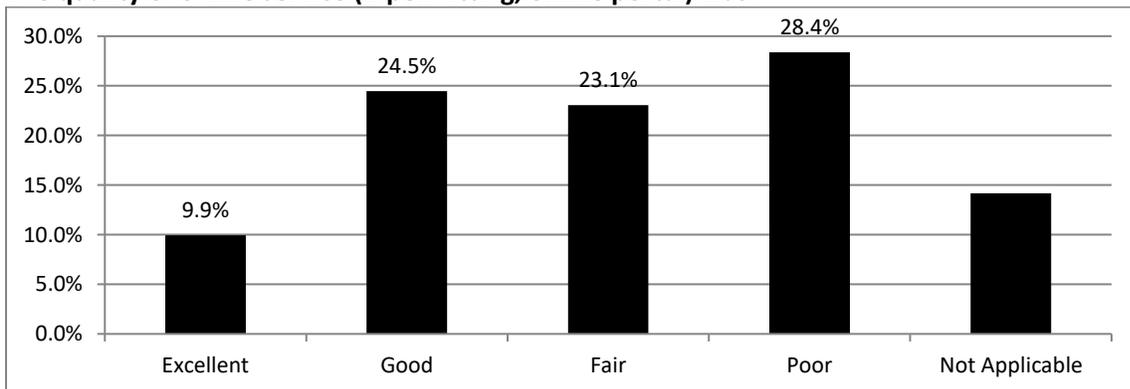
The permitting office followed through on the time-frame given to approve the permit

	Building Plan Check – Submittal	Building Plan Check – Over the Counter	Engineering/ Survey Project	Planning and Project Review	Inspection	Resolving a Violation
Strongly Agree	13	11	3	7	19	4
Agree	30	13	4	24	41	5
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	12	6	2	5	15	2
Disagree	41	19	9	24	33	6
Strongly Disagree	55	25	16	42	46	17
Totals	151	74	34	102	154	34

34.4 Percent Considered the quality of online service as Good or Excellent

Since the inception of the Permit Improvement Program in 2018, the quality of online service at permit departments throughout Marin County has been a focus of best practices. The Town of San Anselmo shows some room for improvement here, as well as setting expectations for clients. One of the largest concerns with E-permitting and online processes is that they are not necessarily quicker and more efficient in terms of turnaround times and communications; 51.5 percent of respondents suggest the process was fair to poor, including those for which are not applicable. For the Town of San Anselmo, it may be worth looking at response times and systems once plans and other requests are received versus desk visits and see if their time efficiencies.

The quality of online service (E-permitting, online portal) was:



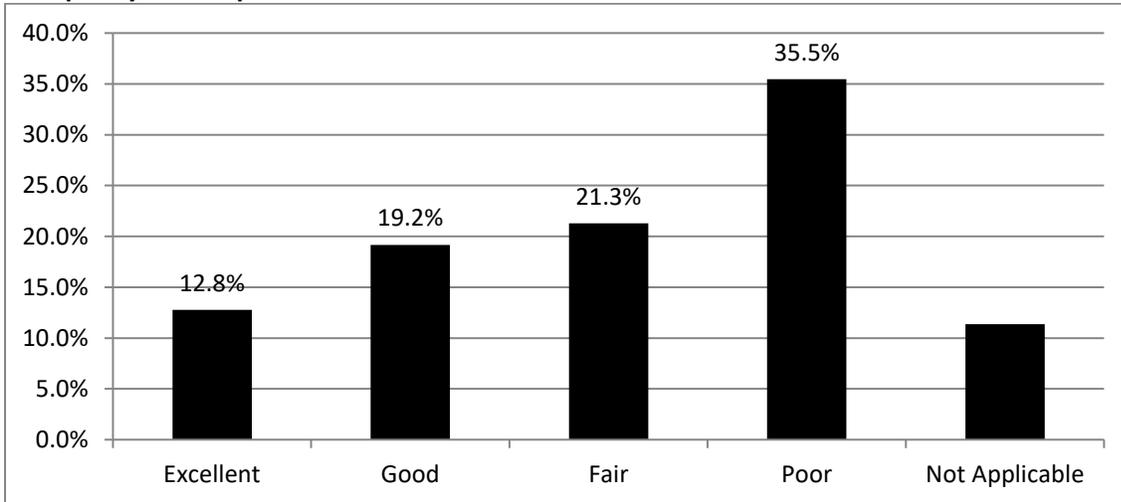
The quality of online service (E-permitting, online portal) was:

	Building Plan Check – Submittal	Building Plan Check – Over the Counter	Engineering/ Survey Project	Planning and Project Review	Inspection	Resolving a Violation
Excellent	17	10	2	5	17	2
Good	35	19	7	24	41	5
Fair	46	13	7	29	37	9
Poor	49	26	15	38	46	17
Not Applicable	12	8	5	10	24	3
Totals	159	76	36	106	165	36

Only 32 percent consider remote interactions as Good or Excellent

Related to E-permitting and online services, especially since the pandemic period (2020 to 2022), remote interactions that allow applicants to connect with permitting staff from a job site, home, or a vehicle has become a process expectation for applicants as if it was a face-to-face interaction. This looks to be an area for improvement, where inspections and building plan submittals generally were considered to need more focal change.

The quality and responsiveness of remote interactions was:

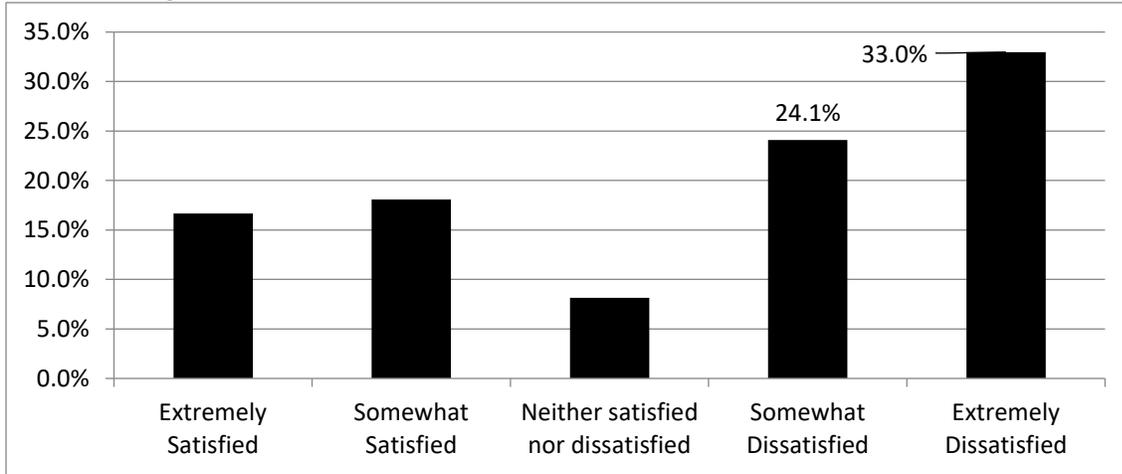


The quality and responsiveness of remote interactions (phone calls, email) was:

	Building Plan Check – Submittal	Building Plan Check – Over the Counter	Engineering/ Survey Project	Planning and Project Review	Inspection	Resolving a Violation
Excellent	19	10	3	8	20	4
Good	26	14	5	16	31	3
Fair	34	15	8	28	35	7
Poor	70	31	18	46	60	20
Not Applicable	10	6	2	8	19	2
Totals	159	76	36	106	165	36

An overall satisfaction rating was asked of the respondents. We will see in a bit that we also asked about “Net Promoter Score”. 57 percent were dissatisfied with their Town of San Anselmo permitting experience.

Overall Rating of Satisfaction:

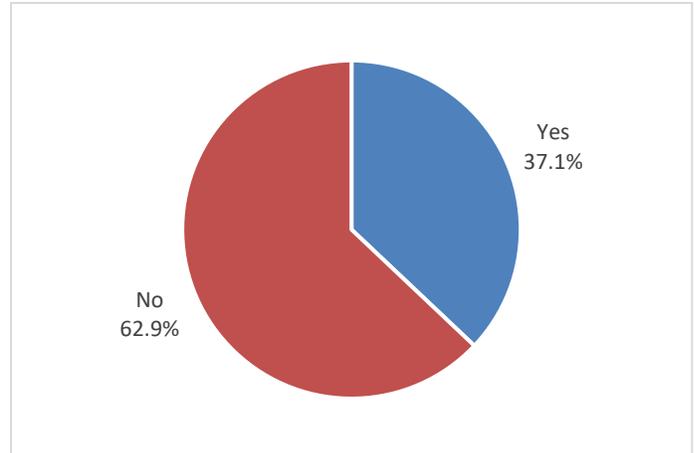


Overall Rating of Satisfaction:

	Building Plan Check – Submittal	Building Plan Check – Over the Counter	Engineering/ Survey Project	Planning and Project Review	Inspection	Resolving a Violation
Extremely Satisfied	19	14	4	10	28	2
Somewhat Satisfied	20	10	3	13	32	5
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	12	3	1	7	13	1
Somewhat Dissatisfied	44	15	10	31	38	4
Extremely Dissatisfied	64	34	18	45	54	24
Totals	159	76	36	106	165	36

If "Yes", was the Town of San Anselmo more or less accurate, timely, and/or responsive than other Marin County jurisdictions with which you have worked?

This question follows the responses above, but also ties to the net promoter score or NPS below. The Town of San Anselmo has opportunities to improve these opinions.



Promoting San Anselmo as a *Place to Build* using a Town Permit

The final survey question asked was a “net promoter score” or NPS. For tracking progress over time and another angle on a summary measure of customer satisfaction, this is perhaps the survey’s most important question. The NPS is generally defined as the likelihood that a customer or client picked at random would recommend a vendor’s good or service to another person. A goal for many organizations that use NPS is to consistently show improvements in score over time. Changes, when working, create positive feedback and “word-of-mouth” advertising for pursuing permitting when doing projects versus engaging in unpermitted projects within San Anselmo.

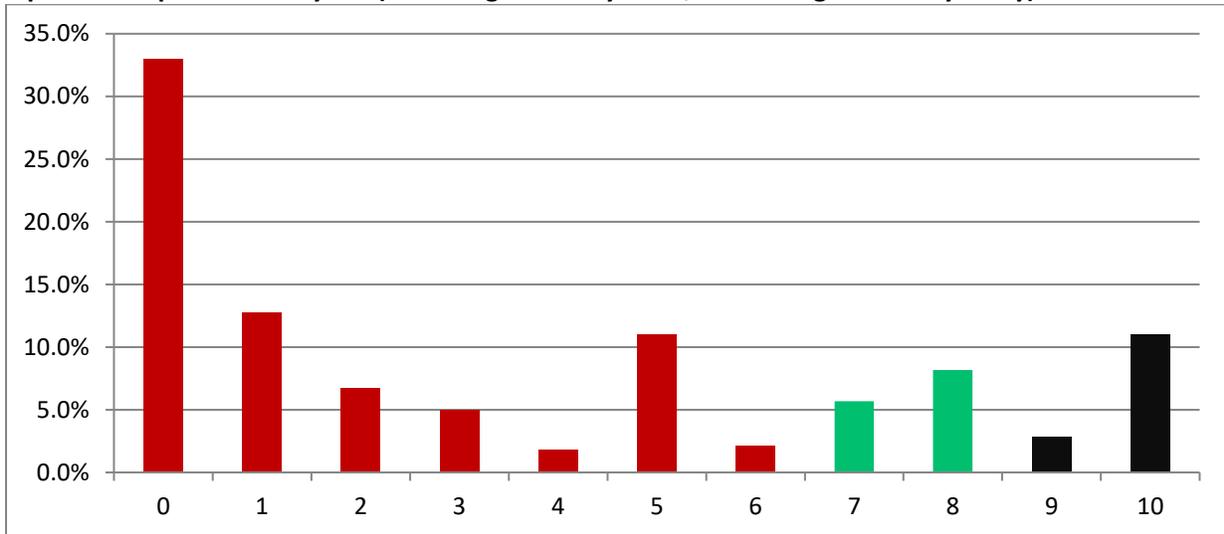
The following bullets are general rules to follow with net promoter scores:

- Answers 9 or 10 would most likely recommend the service (Promoters);
- Answers 7 or 8 are neutral (Passives); and
- Answers 0 and 6 most likely would not recommend the service (Detractors).

The NPS score in Phase I was -58.5, or 58.5 percentage points more detractors than promoters. The figure below shows data across the range of “Detractors” (**red**) to “Promoters” (**black**).

Net Promoter Score Data Comparisons, Town of San Anselmo

How likely are you to share with friends/colleagues that the Town of San Anselmo permit process was a positive experience for you? ("0" being not likely at all, "10" being extremely likely)



The dynamics of these numbers are important of how shifts can rearrange the NPS. For example, given the sample size of 282 responses. The large number of "0" responses maybe a function of one or more poor experiences (see Appendix for some of the open-ended responses); of the 282 open-ended responses, 154 (81.9 percent) came from those that gave a 0, 1 or 2 as a NPS response. Further, if all the 5, 6, 7, and 8 respondents became "9" respondents (marginally neutral or neutral to marginal promoters), the NPS would move from -58.5 to -18.4 (+40.1 percentage point change). It is in that middle group the most work can be done, as the 0, 1 and 2 group will be harder to move in the short-term. From those gains, migrating strong detractors to neutral or closer to neutral is less difficult after making adjustments and augmenting word-of-mouth about process improvements.

5: (FINAL QUESTION – OPTIONAL) I am interested in participating in a 1-hour focus group about my experience. Please include your contact information below (Name, Email, Address, and Phone Number):

This question was used to collect contact information from respondents to recruit potential focus group participants. The question yielded over 35 interested community members and building professionals.

Conclusions

Overall, the survey responses reveal meaningful insights into how residents experience the permitting process and where improvements are most needed. While many individuals acknowledged helpful staff interactions, the broader feedback points to systemic issues that create confusion, inconsistency, and unnecessary frustration for applicants. The findings underscore the importance of clearer public information, more streamlined procedures and continued investment in user-friendly processes. These themes collectively illustrate that the foundation for effective service is already in place, but strategic enhancements can significantly elevate the department’s performance. By using these findings to guide future improvements, the Town can strengthen its permitting process and better meet the needs of its community.

Focus Group Summary

K.A. Woods Construction Industry Consulting

November 5th, 2025

TO: *Rick Wells, CEO, Marin Builders Association*
FROM: *Keith Woods*
SUBJECT: *Summary of San Anselmo Focus Group Sessions*

Thank you for letting me take part as Moderator in the recent contractors and residents focus group sessions held at MBA to gain first-hand insight and input into the Town of San Anselmo’s permitting process.

I believe the best way to report what was’ heard during these sessions is to categorize the participants’ comments into five primary areas, and to include a few quotes that best reflect the groups’ collective sentiments. They might be best summarized as the “Five C’s”:

Consistency

Participants expressed great frustration with the lack of predictability on how long it would take to get their permit. Timeframes as lengthy as 2-5 years were commonly cited. (It’s important to note that In many cases, it was not the Community Development Department that was blamed for delays, difficulties, and inconsistencies in permit approvals – it was problems encountered in dealing with the Fire Department.)

"I think by the time my newborn is in high school, I'll probably have my permit."

"We finally hired an Attorney to pound the permit out of them."

"It's getting increasingly difficult to find a General Contractor willing to work in San Anselmo."

"Just knowing how long it likely will take to get my permit would eliminate a lot of frustration."

Clarity

Many contractor participants expressed overall dissatisfaction with the existing permitting process, but they at least understood it. The residents who rarely seek permit issuance found the lack of clear rules and expectations by the CDD to be most frustrating.

"They need a better means of tying the whole permitting process together. It's disjointed."

"If I only knew what they wanted from me, I would be more than happy to comply."

"I don't think they read plans carefully since they send me irrelevant code requirements."

"Who is the actual decision-maker in the process?" Why does the baton get passed so often?"

Communications

Contractors and homeowners alike all cited poor or irregular communications with staff as a major frustration. While certainly not always the CDD's fault, it is the participants' perception.

"I had a tree removal issue and I couldn't get anyone to respond. I finally just did it."

"It was almost impossible to get feedback as to where my project was in their process."

"Trying to contact someone in the CDD or Fire Department is an enormous waste of time."

"There is miscommunication at all levels and there appears to be no team approach."

Customer Service

Overall, focus group participants were complimentary toward specific CDD staff members, but had concerns about the general absence of an overall customer service atmosphere. The lack of a 'can-do' helpful approach by the Fire Department in particular was cited frequently.

“When I went in, the staff was friendly but didn’t seem to know the procedures or the fees.”

“Heidi and Eric have been far better to work with than others in the past.”

“I have been threatened by email and insulted verbally. How can they treat a citizen like that?”

“They are generally nice people, but all of them would benefit from some training.”

Costs that are equitable

It is not uncommon, and probably predictable, that participants felt that the fee structure associated with securing a permit is excessive. The groups expressed an understanding that cost recovery is necessary, but questioned how these costs and fees are calculated.

“Older residents on fixed incomes can’t afford building costs and the existing permitting fees.”

“Resale inspection fees jumped from “\$320 to \$1,020. Why?”

“Staffing has increased, but fees seem beyond the cost of the number of new employees.”

“The fees have jumped from 1-2% of a contractor’s job cost to almost 10%.”

As a bottom line to this summary report, while there are some elements of the permitting process in the Town of San Anselmo that are in good working order, the participants felt there are significant improvements that need to be made ... and as soon as possible! What should be of greatest concern to San Anselmo government leaders is the significant amount of unpermitted work that has apparently become prevalent in the community. Problems related to the “Five C’s” listed above are likely the cause of the unpermitted work, which leads to safety concerns as well as significant losses of fee revenue to the Town.

Opportunities Summary

Below is a list of the most common frustrations from the surveys, focus groups and one-on-one meetings.

Permitting Delays and Frustration

Participants reported permit processes lasting from several months to years, even for small projects. Root causes include miscommunication, redundant plan checks, lack of coordination, and a culture of risk avoidance.

Fire Department Bottlenecks

The Fire Department was identified as the largest source of permitting holdups. Excessive sprinkler and hydrant requirements and unchecked authority have caused widespread frustration.

Staffing, Training, and Attitude

Staff quality varies widely. While some employees were praised, others lack training and demonstrate defensive attitudes that prioritize risk avoidance over service.

Excessive Fees and Hidden Costs

Fees have increased significantly, discouraging compliance. Many contractors and homeowners operate without permits due to cost and delays.

Communication Gaps

The online portal lacks transparency and feedback. Applicants often need to call or email repeatedly to learn their project status.

Recommendations

Below are recommendations to consider implementing.

Structural and Process Reform

- Integrate Fire Review into the CDD workflow.
- Implement 'one-stop' plan review.

Customer Service Transformation - Adopt the 'Four C's + 1' Framework:

- Consistency – predictable timelines.
- Communication – proactive updates.
- Customer Service – problem-solving attitude.
- Costs – transparent, fair fees.
- Clarity – clear checklists and guidance.

Improve Communication and Responsiveness

- Set standard response times for emails and phone calls.
- Offer office hours or virtual drop-in hours for quick questions.

Enhance the Online Permitting System

- Upgrade the online portal for live status tracking and publish average processing times.
- Rewrite website sections in plain language to eliminate ambiguity and reduce technical jargon.
- Add a searchable FAQ that covers the most common small residential projects.
- Ensure mobile-friendly formatting, as many residents search on phones.
- Streamline the online application process.

- Allow applicants to track real-time status updates (review stage, outstanding items, estimated timelines).
- Upload templates and sample completed applications so homeowners can model their submissions.
- Enable digital corrections and communication directly through the portal so applicants do not need to email back and forth.

Policy and Incentive Programs

- Create an amnesty program for unpermitted work and earmark revenues for staffing and training improvements.

Cultural and Leadership Change

- Develop internal checklists and decision trees so staff apply requirements consistently across all customers.
- Train staff regularly on code interpretation, customer service, and communication expectations.
- Publish all guidelines and exceptions publicly, and commit to following the posted rules unless a justified code-based exception is documented.
- Improve transparency by explaining the *why* behind requirements rather than simply stating them.

Continued Review and Improvement

- Continue the Permit Improvement Program phases

Closing Phase I Summary

The Town of San Anselmo deserves recognition for taking meaningful steps to improve customer service within the permitting department. These initial efforts demonstrate a commitment to fostering a more responsive and accessible permitting experience for residents, homeowners, and building professionals. As the Town continues this work, placing equal emphasis on customer needs and staff empowerment will be essential. Strengthening communication, clarifying requirements, modernizing online tools and standardizing internal processes will not only enhance public understanding but also provide staff with the structure and support needed to deliver consistent, high-quality service. By advancing these priorities, the Town can cultivate a permitting process that is transparent, efficient, and consistently positive for the entire community.

Summary of Appendix Comments

Question 15 — Comparison to Other Jurisdictions

Overall Themes

- **San Anselmo widely viewed as less accurate, less timely, and less responsive** than other jurisdictions.
- **Most commonly cited issues:** long delays, poor communication, inconsistent information, unhelpful staff, difficult third-party plan check process.
- Some positive comments noted friendliness of certain staff and decent counter service, but these were exceptions.

Negative Themes

- **Significant delays** in permit reviews, inspections, and responses; some took *years*.
- **Communication problems:**
 - Phone almost never answered; voicemails rarely returned
 - Emails often ignored or responded to with unrelated or incomplete answers
- **Inconsistent or incorrect guidance** provided by staff, sometimes changing mid-process.
- **Third-party plan check (outside contractor)** heavily criticized for inaccuracy, slowness, and unnecessary comments.
- **Unprofessional or rude behavior** by former staff.
- **Perception of unnecessary bureaucracy**, nitpicking, and adversarial attitude toward homeowners.
- **Fees and requirements considered excessive**, especially compared to neighboring jurisdictions.
- **Reputation as one of the hardest or worst jurisdictions** in Marin/NorCal for permitting.
- **Resale inspection process** consistently described as slow, inaccurate, and burdensome.
- **Some believe San Anselmo discourages building or improvements**, harming property owners.

Moderate / Mixed Feedback

- Some said staff at the front counter are friendly and in-person interactions better than online.
- A few noted improvements in communication toward the end of a project.
- Some mentioned that Planning staff (not Building) were helpful and responsive.

Positive Outliers

- Individual staff members named as helpful (Ely, some inspectors, Will).

- A small number said San Anselmo was “about the same” as others.
 - A few respondents had smooth or typical experiences.
-

Question 16 — Suggestions for Improving Customer Experience

Process & Workflow Improvements

- **Hire more staff**; increase hours of operation and phone coverage.
- **Bring plan check in-house**; eliminate or reform third-party plan check (e.g. Willdan, CSG).
- **Streamline the permit process** with clearer steps, faster turnaround, and fewer repeated resubmissions.
- **Fast-track small/simple permits**, including decks, kitchens, baths, and repairs.
- **Provide a single point of contact** for each permit applicant.
- **Allow pre-submission meetings / plan reviews** to prevent weeks of avoidable corrections.
- **Stop adding new comments late in the process**; ensure reviewers coordinate.

Communication & Customer Service

- **Return calls/emails promptly**; create SLAs (response time standards).
- **Improve accuracy of information**; ensure consistent guidance across staff.
- **Train staff** in customer service, de-escalation, and communication.
- **Cultural change recommended**: shift from “gatekeeping” to “helping.”
- Address perception that some staff are rude, adversarial, or obstructive.

Technology & Online System (eTrakit)

- **Replace or overhaul eTrakit**; make it user-friendly and reliable.
- Provide clearer **instructions, checklists**, and examples for required documents.
- **Improve tracking** so applicants know status, needed items, and next steps.
- Add **online scheduling** for appointments, inspections, and pre-submittals.
- Create **plain-English documentation** and process diagrams.

Policy & Code Issues

- Reduce unnecessary or overly strict local requirements.
- Increase **flexibility** for small projects and like-for-like work.
- Consider eliminating **resale inspections**, as many jurisdictions have done.

- Streamline interactions with **Fire, Water District, and Sanitation**, including coordinated reviews.
- Increase allowed **HVAC sound decibel limits** to reflect modern equipment realities.
- Provide clear guidelines for **gray areas**, interpretation of newer codes, and Title 24.
- Reduce perceived “money grab” by increasing transparency of fee structures.

Fairness, Transparency & Accountability

- Ensure consistent treatment of all applicants; address concerns of unequal or preferential treatment.
- Create a **formal complaint process** for staff behavior or permit handling.
- Provide written expectations upfront so surprise requirements don’t appear mid-project.
- Encourage planning and building departments to collaborate rather than conflict.

Staffing & Personnel Comments

- Many recommended replacing certain staff or leadership positions due to perceived rudeness or obstruction.
- Others said there are now some new helpful staff; want more like them.
- Calls for **more inspectors, more knowledgeable reviewers, and better internal coordination.**

Customer Experience

- Increase empathy and respect toward homeowners and contractors.
- Offer options for **in-person meetings**, not just online submissions.
- View homeowners as partners rather than adversaries.
- Provide support for homeowners without contractors (first-time applicants need more clarity).

Complete Appendix (reviewed and edited for clarity only)

Excerpts from responses to Question 16:

If "Yes", was the Town of San Anselmo more or less accurate, timely, and/or responsive than the other jurisdiction you worked with?

The third-party plan check process was far less accurate, timely and responsive than anything I've ever experienced before.

Tiburon has gone through some changes in the last couple of years. But most will say San Anselmo is the most difficult jurisdiction to work with.

We have been working with the Town of San Anselmo for over 25 years and the experience of the past few years has declined tremendously. Other towns (Kentfield, Tiburon, Ross, Novato, San Rafael and County) have all been more professional, friendly and most of all knowledgeable and timely.

I asked the person in charge to review my permit, because it appears the outside contractor had padded the billing on my permit application significantly. She did not respond to my request for an audit. I understand she is gone, the process is still broken.

Comparing to other jurisdictions in Marin, the Town of San Anselmo staff is the most friendly and the submittal process is pretty straight forward , but the permit timing is about the same as other jurisdictions taking a long time to review and requires too many documents that not a lot of people can afford, but this is the problem with California Code.

Much better than dealing with the County itself.

I worked on a project that had a long span and in the beginning, had harder time reaching and getting responses from the city, particularly phone call was impossible. but toward the end of the process, the communication became easier via email and in person so I saw a good progress! other jurisdictions can be reached through call or online appointment. but as long as there are ways to reach to the city for questions remotely (email. call, zoom) it's fine, in my opinion.

San Anselmo is slower to respond to emails and phone responsiveness is almost non-existent, its better at other jurisdictions. I have a hard time getting anyone on the phone in San Anselmo and when voice messages are left I have rarely heard back from anyone. I have however had good customer service at the counter hours.

The Town of San Anselmo is the poorest of all I have worked with, including Fairfax, Ross, San Rafael, and the County of Marin

Plan check person was very helpful in processing the permit

My contractor took out the permit on my behalf and handled all the details.

I've worked in almost every jurisdiction north of the Golden Gate Bridge, and I can honestly say that San Anselmo was the most frustrating experience I have had. The staff was unhelpful, and some of the requirements were ridiculous.

I permit jobs everywhere from San Francisco to Sacramento, and San Anselmo isn't the worst, but they're certainly not the best. Some issues are with the codes being enforced, and I've requested two in person meetings with a plan reviewer and was told I cannot meet with them both times. No middle ground or alternative- just no.

Only Novato and Mill Valley are more difficult to deal with.

I have worked with San Rafael on a permit. Their permitting online tool is fantastic. They were quick and available to answer question. The inspection process was relatively easy to set up and their inspectors were realistic and helpful.

Town of San Anselmo was consistently inaccurate, not timely and difficult to work with. Other Marin towns are easy to work with.

Way too long to get the resale inspection

Nitpicky over small items

I emailed and sometimes didn't receive a response. I called and sometimes received an email that was sort of unrelated to my actual question/inquiry. I was ignored, given inaccurate info. The person in charge at the time was super combative from the very beginning and was a nightmare to deal with. In terms of accuracy, timeliness, and responsiveness, San Anselmo was way less than any other jurisdictions I've worked with.

Incorrect information at the front desk was given to potential buyers that prevented them from proceeding with purchasing the property.

Horrible experience with SA other municipalities are much more streamlined and helpful
See below.

Steps to resolve the matter were inconsistent, overly complicated and unnecessary, and dragged on for an extended period of time. Woman staff member was beyond rude and continued to add obstacles and withheld information I needed. I diligently tried to resolve the violation that was caused by a workman without my consent.

Very inconsistent advice and the inspector tried to make my client take out a second permit for a previously permitted space.

Less accurate and less timely. Although, to be fair, City of San Rafael, Town of Tiburon, and City of Sausalito have increasingly been delayed in completing and scheduling their resale inspections

Horrible. This is exactly why people avoid permits!

Less accurate, timely, and professional was the town of San Anselmo.

I am a residential homeowner and have only pulled building permits for my property in San Anselmo. It took more than two years to get the permit, it cost over \$12,000.00, no one answers the phone, no one responds in a timely manner, the information they provided was always less than complete resulting in time consuming delays. NO ONE from the permit department EVER came to the property to actually look at the work we wanted to do which was to replace a rotting deck. We're lucky no one got hurt while we waited two years to start the project. We work in both Marin and Sonoma Counties and thus far this is the most feckless organization we've encountered.

It was one of the worst and most costly experiences. A lot could have been mitigated if someone could have taken responsibility for simple decisions and not have allowed those in charge at the time (no longer there) to inaccurately, arbitrarily and very rudely on top of it, make them! It's been 5 years and we're STILL not done with their permit process! The Public works department should stay Luvinia in particular was helpful.

Permit process for private property renovations and upgrades have usually been very tedious and lengthy, at times without unnecessary hurdles. The town also profits from improvements and upgrades since the property taxes will be reassessed and will usually go up after a project. I could not recommend a purchase in San Anselmo that was a "fixer" to a client due to the circuitous and unclear process at the Town

Much less accurate, timely and responsive than others in the area.

Less timely, less responsive, poor third party plan check process. The Town of San Anselmo is about the worst place to try and get a simple permit. Call backs are next to none. Response takes months. There is only one person that was helpful, and that was Ely. Everyone else doesn't seem to work.

They were worse overall. Although when I worked with San Rafael it was in 2008 so not necessarily a fair comparison.

San Anselmo is particularly challenging to work with, make the process hard, provide inconsistent guidance based on who you interact with and are generally extremely rude. I totally get that it is all our obligation to keep our community safe but the team at the permit department and the senior management there are rude, unhelpful and seem to operate the office in a penal manner towards our community. I totally don't understand it as San Rafael is remarkably more smooth and I'm not sure there are more safety issues (on a per capita basis). We've also pulled permits in other towns in California and San Anselmo is the slowest, most unhelpful and by far the most frustrating - really poor experience.

The worst ,most petty and pointless time consuming process I have seen in 40 years in the business. Town of San Anselmo was much LESS responsive and less easy to work with.

The resale inspection and subsequent permit process felt like cat and mouse. There was refusal to rely on professional engineers signed and stamped letters which is extremely frustrating. We resolved all permits but it took over a year and was very costly as we were forced to hire a draftsman to present the documents in a particular format which felt excessive.

It is often extremely difficult to get someone on the phone to assist with minor questions. Often emails to the general plan check email are not responded to until follow-ups are sent several days later. Staff are always courteous and helpful at the desk, but we have had an extremely difficult time getting someone on the phone more often than not, which means we make an extra trip to town hall, which is an added expense to our client, for questions that would be easily resolved with a short chat. I expect staff are quite busy and understand they likely get a significant volume of applications and calls and I don't blame the individuals there, and they probably don't have adequate staff # to handle phone calls and emails promptly. Given the expense of permitting there though we frankly hoped for more help. Permitting is often complicated and it would be very helpful to us to have a reliable remote channel of communication. Appreciate that plan check hasn't been outsourced to third parties.

My profession is commercial lending on construction projects in Northern California and Nationwide and I work with several towns in building permit applications for projects from \$5m - \$20m. San

Anselmo has a serious problem in the building department that needs to be addressed. I have 30 years experience working with cities on permits and I would be happy to appear before a grand jury or town council to lay out my experience as would my San Anselmo architect and Kentfield Engineer. It is not a lack of staffing issue, building code issue, but it is the management and a few of the employees that are the problem in my view who are not accountable to anyone.

Less efficient and less timely.

To be fair, there was a recent shakeup of personnel including the transfer of the head of the department soon after my experience.

It is about the same but most jurisdictions don't do a good job of communicating or meeting the required time frames. It takes too long to get approvals on anything but over the counter permits. You have so many different groups that need to review and they all point the finger at the other group on why there are delays. The other issue is they are way too concerned about what neighbors think even when no exceptions or variance are being asked for. If you are building within the parameters that have already been approved then it should be a quick easy process instead of a long drawn out process that doesn't change anything.

The city of San Rafael was far more accurate, timely, responsive and reasonable.

I particularly appreciated being able to communicate by email. Very happy even though we had to do some work after the first inspection! Keep up the good work!

They are very Podunk - takes forever to get a simple permit approved. Client was a former mayor of San Anselmo and even he couldn't get them to move. Very behind the times.

more accurate, etc.

Less responsive than Marin county, San Francisco county, Alameda County. Difficult to work with. And extremely untimely.

Extremely difficult to work with at the time. Took over 6 months to secure a permit to install spa. very slow. They need to do more in-house plan checks. outsourcing plan checking has made the process very slow and discouraging.

The staff members are friendly but the communication is not great and the process is slow.

Tried to get approval from a town official for a permit issue never got a response from phone and email.

San Anselmo is a builder-unfriendly town. Processes are designed to thwart development and discourage homeowners from improving their properties.

I find that San Anselmo is more difficult and has more onerous requirements for other jurisdictions. The Planning Dept. has been very good to work with. The Building Dept. has been a nightmare over the last few years. The people who were the worst are no longer with the Bldg. Dept. The new people are a huge improvement. There are engineers and contractors who will not do any work in San Anselmo because of their experiences with San Anselmo Bldg.

San Anselmo was the worst by leaps and bounds. I've never seen such inefficiency, incompetence and lack of knowledge and consistency within the process. Working so few hours a week with such high demand and sending work out of office is unacceptable. Inspectors are rude, inaccurate and power-drunk, and are not up to code on current changes. Would not consider looking at the new codes.

I've been working with SA staff for a while, and they have always been very helpful. I am working with Will at this time, and he is always following through with his word. He is a very helpful staff member. CF1R is not a code requirement for permit issuance - difficulty with communicating with staff due to lack of follow up. Not able to reach out, no communication from office staff regarding corrections but was able to locate details two months after on Etrakit.

San Anselmo permit technicians are just rule followers that don't have any power. The noise ordinances are too low for such small properties when dealing with the placement of air conditioning. In the code, it states that a structure may be built around the unit if it does not pass the sound decibel check process. But there is no way to reflect that in an honest permit process in planning. The permit tack will simply say you need to change your numbers at which point we need to lie just to get the permit approved. Then once the inspector comes out if it does not pass we can make the necessary adjustments. The permit tech asked me to find a sound blanket online and said there was many examples, but would not give me one. I had a very difficult time finding anything online that would bring the sound level down below 40 dB. This number needs to be brought up to 45 to reflect smaller backyards a push towards electrification and an overall push towards growing commerce. I hate working with San Anselmo.

Town of San Anselmo is regarded as one of the toughest jurisdictions in NorCal to pull a permit.

Vague on timeline to permit project.

Less accurate, timely, and responsive.

They were less than timely and less than responsive then many of the other townships and cities in Marin County, sometime way less.

Your staff were rude.

Excerpts from responses to Question 16. These responses are included as written by applicants with minor grammatical revisions and posted in the order in which they were received.

Do you have any suggestions for improving the customer experience for the permit process in the Town of San Anselmo?

Yes, I would love to have a meeting to discuss areas of opportunity for SA to improve the resident/owner/and Town's experience during the permitting process.

I'm an agent and rely on feedback from clients who are often lost in the process and a maze of documents. Can it be streamlined? The application for Resale Inspection is slow and cumbersome.

Too many steps involved in the process!

Treat people with respect and be more neutral. But most of all is to treat all the same. Ely was quite pleasant, proactive and seemed to follow guidelines set for him. Other staff were unfriendly and put up roadblocks to paths forward (and not just in one circumstance, they did this routinely and at every interaction). The length of time it took to get the most basic "over the counter" permits is really inexcusable. Much of the delay seems to be a lack of knowledge and therefore set unnecessary roadblocks.

Hire more staff to review the permit set of documents.

I have multiple suggestions:

The open counter hours should be staffed with someone knowledgeable about the process. The admin folks are not and some are frankly condescending (Her supervisors, including the former building official and her boss are as well, so it is not surprising unfortunately). However, she should not be put in the position she is in where she is trying to answer code or procedural questions, or at least should know her purview and what is not included. That is a management issue.

Building officials should be responsive to an extent. I have had instances where it was necessary to discuss a nuance that was not addressed by town/code guidelines and could not get any guidance or even a courtesy conversation to understand the best route towards resolution. Planning stepped in and addressed the intervened thankfully.

The people in the planning have been great to deal with. Very responsive and very proactive.

For larger project submissions, a pre-submission page-turn would be beneficial for all involved. The hour of investment would save weeks/months in the process (not to mention countless hours invested from both the Town and those doing the submissions).

Limit adding new comments not on previous plan check response comments.

Someone from the building department should QC and check the review comments received from 3rd party plan checkers. We have received multiple comments that were incorrectly applied to our project (WUI comments, for instance). Mistakes happen, but there have been multiple instances where comments have been received that are inaccurate applied to our project. Again, this would provide a better service and save all parties time and money.

The Customer Service is good, the Process for review is broken.

Bring plan check in house. Remove plumbing SB407 requirement - not enforced consistently and when enforced adds unforeseen expense to an otherwise inexpensive safety upgrade (we specialize in seismic retrofits).

Process in a timelier manner. PLEASE consolidate with fire inspections and include questions about the fire inspection performance and staff in this project. Big problems with fire element!

1. A better attitude.

2. Less bureaucracy.

3. More professionals.

Try and work with people and understand what the project is and communicate better. It would be more efficient if there was a designated person reviewing each job drawings. By having different people reviewing the updated revisions, they sometimes add additional revisions they want. It's exhausting and very expensive. My remodel was relatively small, and it was a nightmare. . .

Better guidance about all of the requirements, responsibilities, and time expectations for applying for building permits.

Work with the home owners. And for engineering reviews, bring someone in-house.

I understand the budget constraints, but being open on a part time basis does not serve the community well.

Yes. Get rid of the condescending people behind the counter.

So resistant to meaningful change. Dep't probably needs new leadership.

We are trying to get a permit approved to install solar. We're told SA is using a third party to process this permit and it has been delayed and denied multiple times (we're going on 4 months now). We have a relatively new build home that should not have any major issues with solar installation. It's been incredibly frustrating to the point we're now considering dropping the whole project.

Is it possible to hire more inspectors for this area especially? Time wise, waiting for approval of the permit took too much time. Others have said that too .

email correspondence has been improving, maybe accepting call ins during certain time period?

The process is not at all customer service oriented. Nor is it respectful of property owners time or monetary investment. The town should be joining with property owners to problem solve. I have contractor clients who will not consider a project in San Anselmo because the permit and inspection process is so arduous they cannot make projects pencil. Please improve!

Too many hoops to jump through.

There are many ways the permitting process can go depending on what a homeowner is doing. In the case of us homeowners, we're not trying to make big \$\$\$ on our houses, we're trying to keep them maintained by maximizing our investment and handling other associated tasks when we have our contractors here and the walls or something else is open and we can save by dealing with it at that time. Its not reasonable to force us to do exhaustive technical drawings when we do things that aren't adding square footage. Hand drawn or copied drawings from previous submissions should be allowed and supported. The online system is great because we all know what's happening: but it seems like the building department has all sorts of drawings and submissions from us that they simply ignore or are not familiar with. They should be. Its all there for us to see at one time. EG. requiring a resubmission of the property lines every time we go to do the slightest thing is a waste of time and energy, isn't it?

Further, after getting architects involved because they know how to submit and what is needed, we end up paying more to address our issues. Fixel permits should be simple, easy and across the desk (like

dry rot fixes or re-roofs).

I don't have experience with other Marin areas, but I have done permitted work on 5 houses in my time: Nevada County, Butte County, San Francisco County and Yolo County. Marin is the most expensive and the least helpful currently in my experience. We can do better.

Speedier processing.

More timely communication.

More accountability for Town breakdowns in the process.

More thoughtful and even handed treatment.

Yes, I have many suggestions. 1) stop charging outrageous fees for everything and anything relating to the permit process. You take advantage of people in this town and assume everyone has unlimited funds to spend when all we want to do is improve our home which is already cost prohibiting. 2) the timeframe for permit approvals and inspections needs to improve. I waited 8 weeks for a plumbing inspection before I could proceed with dry walling. 3) Don't require a permit for every damn thing! I have friends in other states that have literally built entire homes in the time the time it took me to remodel my home.

1) Give the Counter Tech authority to issue permits over the counter for bathrooms and kitchens and decks etc. I know you are going to say you don't have time or money. I am going to suggest if you hire and train this guy he will net make you money once word gets out this is available. About 72% of construction projects do NOT get permits because it is deemed to expensive and time consuming. San Rafael gets my time and money because they make it easy to get a permit. My clients who are in the county specifically will not hire me if I insist on a permit.

2) Set up the web site to schedule ZOOM meetings to review plans or ask pre submit questions - it should be with specific people in specific departments. You can make the planner, permit teck, building official available whenever it works for there schedules- This is PRO ACTIVE and will prevent many issues

Hire people who are knowledgeable about the codes. Then they can actually look at the project before them and respond to the needs of that project. The system now relies on checklists and bureaucracy, not intelligent review.

I do not think I could have completed the online permit process without the help of the plan check person.

I know staffing and budgets are tight, but the process is one of the few things in life that takes a long time. The duration felt almost arbitrary. Also, you have to participate in the process for some time before you even know if your project is financially feasible. We wound up giving up on our project and buying a different house.

My contractor sent me to the counter in the theory that the staff is more responsive to homeowners.

The delay in issuing the permit was threatening the contractor's timeline. Not sure the permitting dept had a timeline.

Align yourself with other county and city processes and requirements. I'm not sure how else to say this but many of the staff, including fire could use an attitude adjustment. Almost everybody I interacted with was curt and unhelpful.

More interaction with real people. Don't like the online system.

Allow in person meetings with plan reviewers, raise the required decibel level for HVAC equipment to 55dB.

The main problem is that the permit staff seems to feel that their job is to make the permitting process as difficult as possible. They feel they are not there to provide assistance or answer questions. And they have No flexibility. Two main people seems to generate this approach. Past leadership does not understand customer service and felt the residents of San Anselmo were there to work for her vs the other way around. When I compare the permitting process in San Rafael to San Anselmo, there is something from the top that process a completely difference approach. Now I will highlight that Heidi Scoble, who heads planning, is completely different than the permit staff and shows kindness, understanding and a complete willingness to work with residents.

Better communication within and to home owners and consistency.

Go to the online method like Sausalito and Mill Valley. Provide the record of permits, etc. and let the buyer do their own due diligence.

Stop changing the rules. Such inconsistency in what is shared and the goalposts constantly change. It's impossible to do construction in San Anselmo

Keep the focus on safety and hazard items when performing the resale report.

They need to keep things consistent. They treat everyone differently. Some people they turn a blind eye and allow whatever they want and then turn around and hammer the next person. Totally inconsistent performance.

I would highly recommend firing the man who his moonlighting engineering projects during the day, we have had contractors meet with him during work hours on job sites of his moonlight projects.

Save SA building department funds and time by stop resale inspections just like other jurisdictions in Marin County

Luckily, they got past leadership. Instead of guiding the homeowner through the process, she was obstructionist from the very beginning. Not only was she super combative and rude, it felt like she was trying to stop us from remodeling our 1,000 square foot bungalow. Others were just as bad, and should be fired too. They made me gut the entire house, install new insulation, all new windows, solar panels, undergrounding electrical, etc. I applied for a financial hardship waiver, and was sternly denied. Too busy working on his side gig as an Engineer to pay attention to the townspeople. They told me my project needed to be all electric (I had to get rid of perfectly good gas appliances), which was untrue –

Heidi Scoble later told me that because the ban on natural gas in “new construction” is being challenged in the courts, they technically can’t prohibit me from using it. It was too late at that point. Heidi was the only person that smiled at me, responded quickly to my email, and actually took a 20-minute meeting. I saw two old ladies coming out of the Building Department crying twice under former leadership. Horrible experience.

Get a new UI for e-trackit.

In other towns re-sale building inspectors inspect health, safety and code violations. Most share permit information and relay on the buyer to deal with missing permits.

Eliminate the resale inspections. Improve timely response and train staff to improve customer service. Right now staff is punitive and unhelpful

My clients dad passed away in the building and he had done some remodeling without permits. My client was his daughter and she did have some input on some of the remodel. They had rebuilt the deck but it was like for like. They had remodeled the kitchen by replacing the cabinets and counters and sink. They added led cans in the ceiling. Like for like. They had retiled and replaced the tub and toilets in one bathroom and retiled and replaced shower pan and vanity in the other. When we tried to sell it the city called out everything including an expansion that happened in 1982. Luckily we had evidence that the expansion from 1982 was permitted by the city / county. The county had records somehow. They wanted an engineer to stamp the deck but no engineer would touch it because they didn't do the work. My client used the previous footers. They wanted plans for everything including mep plans. We had to rewire the whole kitchen and put the bathrooms on dedicated circuits. The city required arc circuit breakers. They also wanted a plumber to certify all the fixtures as being energy / water efficient. They also wanted a plumber to certify all the plumbing even though my client didn't touch the plumbing. (this was extremely hard to get) Previously she did have Ongaro and Sons replace the water service and copper lines to the fixtures which she had a permit for but the city would not accept this. The city advised us to hire a consultant who was very expensive and did not help very much. To say the whole thing was very time consuming, stressful and a huge amount of work, time and money, is an understatement. We also had an ac unit that a company applied for permits for but never finalized and we realized the ac unit was too close to the neighbors and the city had us move it. But it was a lot of work figuring out what the decibel level requirements were, would a sound barrier work etc (it was one decibel over I believe). Luckily the ac company came out and took care of it by moving it.

I also have clients who want to build a deck. They have an unlawful adu. The city wants the adu abated before they will issue permits. My client tried to get the adu permitted. They wanted it abated before they would issue new permits to get it permitted. My client abated it. They wanted to know where she dumped everything. She had given it all away on Next door. They wanted copies of the posts to make sure it was given away. It goes on and on... anyway they want to move because its so difficult to get anything done to their house.

I grew up in San Anselmo and have now lived here for 30 of the 37 years I've been alive. From personal experience, the permitting process in San Anselmo has gotten so time consuming and painstaking that I have moved away from the town of San Anselmo jurisdiction. The red tape and delays involved with simple permits has become so brutal and unforgiving that the developers that I actively work with have excluded the town of San Anselmo as one of the places they'd like to build

new homes for the residents and have focused on other areas of Marin. This directly impacts the community's potential for quality housing, upscale development, young family growth, and overall reputation. I also can assume this does impact the Town's revenue as well as home builders and buyers of new construction bring in high property taxes. The resale inspection process has become so unforgiving that sellers are less incentivized to sell OR they are more incentivized to do unpermitted work. The entire permitting and resale process appears to be 100% money driven from the residents' perspective, which paints the town in a negative light and fuels an unbecoming reputation. In my opinion, this is one of the only things holding back the community from reaching its full potential. San Anselmo has a moment here to become Marin's best town, but we can't get there with this kind of crutch. I have many suggestions on how to fix this and would love to be a part of this focus group you are creating.

Better online system to apply, pay, and schedule the inspection at the same time, shorter wait times to schedule the inspection, and then shorter wait times to receive the report back after the inspection.

Needs a complete business model overhaul to current times and expectations of proper customer service

Honestly and respectfully work with people to resolve issues instead of causing an adversarial relationship. Provide a clear and complete path to resolve a violation.

Have one point of contact for new applicants.

Treating everyone who comes to the counter with respect. The majority of permit applicants who I interact with are taxpaying citizens or agents for those citizens. I have often observed staff speaking to people at the counter (as well as myself and my clients) in a manner that assumes the person has been a permit scofflaw on purpose, or that they have done something wrong. It creates for a very difficult dynamic from the start. I would also encourage more inspections. Having two inspections a week does not keep up with the demand. It then creates friction among all parties and worst of all, it costs people money. There were 132 sales in San Anselmo in 2024. Even at that historical low, that's 11 per month; and we know these all don't come neatly averaged throughout the year. In Spring and Fall, there are as many as 20 listings on in a month. 2024 was an incredibly low year. For more common data points there were 155 Sales in 2022, 246 Sales in 2021 and 172 Sales in 2019.

The application was read in piecemeal instead of reviewing the entire plan, it was rejected multiple times for different reasons.

Be an actual partner. Be helpful. Eliminate the ridiculous red tape and nonsense. Get off your power trip. Make the process affordable and efficient. This can increase property values and quality of life and sense of community.

In my experience, it would take six weeks to get a very short email back, which clarified nothing, and just delayed the process. It felt as if there was not enough people to manage the project and not an organized system for tracking the project. It would have been helpful to have a single point of contact that we spoke with on the phone whenever needed. Additionally, we had a neighbor who worked for the town pop in to inspect the project, and take a video unknown to us, which felt sneaky. We also received red tag and stop work tags for planting a tree in our front yard, where another tree had been, on Earth Day! This "infraction" was identified by the same neighbor, which again was weird, as compared to having the Town contact us with a single point of contact. All of this made Town the

enemy instead of a supporter for our work and improvement. After all, we were fixing a leaking pool and planting a tree. Not a huge project!

Fire the inspectors.

Most of the issues that have come up are rooted in San Anselmo's outdated planning and building (and other) codes. They are unnecessarily onerous, contrary to stated goals, car-centric, and fundamentally in conflict with affordability. Staff are left in an unfortunate position of having to muddle their way through with homeowners and contractors, which leads to conflict and frustration. This is what keeps this town unaffordable and the least diverse town in the Bay Area. My overall suggestions are: 1. Planning staff make recommendations to town council on which code sections are unnecessary roadblocks and should be removed 2. meet and accommodate State housing laws rather than trying to subvert them at every turn. 3. provide options that reduce cost to projects rather than add 4. Eliminate unnecessary reviews 5. Ask (or tell) the Fire Dept. to get on board with completing reviews on time (no more homeowners showing up with doughnuts or having to pay extra to have them review-- this is unethical to say the least) 5. when gray areas are known, memorialize decision making to have clear direction 6. keep costs front and center before asking homeowners to meet every letter of the law and don't go out of the way to seek out every little area where they may not be meeting code (this adds tremendous costs to homeowners). 7. Train staff on de-escalation and customer service, and set standards for response times. 8. reach out to a town that has a good reputation or has gone through an improvement process (this town is probably not in Marin County)-- what did they do to make improvements? what does their planning code look like?

Staff have acted as strict gatekeepers- blocking progress rather than facilitating progress. They have no regard for cost. Staff give conflicting answers to basic questions. There are gray areas (unclear what course of action contractor/homeowner should take) in the planning and building codes, and staff do not give any grace whatsoever to homeowners. They always come down on the most expensive and most onerous option. Some staff have been routinely rude and dismissive. They have not shown up to appointments and not answered emails or responded to phone calls.

Lower the cost if you want more people to pull permits.

Staff seemed there to give information only, but never advise on problem solving or resolution of issues holding back the permit process.

It's onerous and from what I heard from neighbors always has been. The advice I've been getting: think twice before asking for a permit. It's ridiculous

Yes. E.g., more staffing for peak customer hours, better telephone message response time, etc.

I believe the building department reflects from the top down. The leadership of the building department in San Anselmo needs to change.

Provide the whole picture of requirements up front and not piecemeal as the process played out. Add a tickler system to make sure material submitted is timely reviewed.

Provide a way to email questions to get clarification or updates.

Answer the phone or return phone calls, make policies very clear so all can understand and comply. Open the office every day. Have a full staff every day that actually wants to help people accomplish their goals. REDUCE THE OUTRAGEOUS PRICES.

The online process seems somewhat poor in most cities. Long delays. Incorrect feedback. A lot of room for improvement.

In many ways this process feels like a money grab. An explanation of how the fee is determined and what it is used for would be great.

Overall newer staff is great, but better responsiveness to phone calls would be great. No one ever picks up the phone, business hours or not. I have always had to stop in person.

The combo of the Plan Checker and the existing chief inspector are the problem.

Need to be consistent — every visit ended up with a new issue that needed to be completed. Staff is unfriendly like they don't enjoy their jobs. Charged me to have forms notarized though no one was aware that it needed to be notarized.

Perform town responsibilities on time.

Expand hours of availability!

Make a fresh start by gradually introducing a new team while transitioning out the existing staff. The Public Works department should stay OUT of the Planning Department! Review what needs to be permitted. I was red flagged for replacing some rotted wooden siding panels. That should not have required the expense, fine and time of permitting. Remove more red tape. Encourage repairs, upgrade and improvements as those benefit both the owners and the Town of San Anselmo.

Clearly stated paperwork that is end-user/resident friendly. If you want residents to permit their work, the forms have to be in laypersons terms. Clear timeline. Clear requirements.

Yes I have a number of suggestions

The town needs to have a zoning ordinance that makes sense and brings clarity to the process rather than blindly trying to force new residential units out of every planning application.

- 1) Don't assume customers are more familiar with the process than they actually are.
- 2) Be sure all counter personnel are equally informed on the details of the permit process you are engaging.

Do more over the counter permits for small kitchen and bath projects.

Respond to emails and phone calls. Understand that your online portal for getting an inspection is often not working. The IT department for the Town of San Anselmo should have a better layout and they should know what they are doing. If I did my job the way the Town of San Anselmo, especially the

IT department, handles permits and inspections, nothing would get done and all my clients would be angry.

Yes, they need to get rid of some of the ridiculous hurdles to getting a project done. Common sense would be nice.

The process feels like a cash grab for San Anselmo. The city workers forget that they are actually employees of the people who pay tax dollars. The process to get a permit takes too long.

1. Employ what San Rafael and other cities/towns in Marin do around resale conditions if those are what is truly slowing down the gears on permitting

2. Interpersonal training for dept staff. I have never encountered such rude, disinterested and unhelpful people as I have in the Building Permit dept. I have a very thick skin and negotiate for a living but the lack of basic kindness/decency - in a community like ours is kind of baffling to me. I have pulled permits in other Marin County cities and also Los Angeles county and San Anselmo is by far the worst and most rude.

3. Better response time SLAs to emails etc. You can't rely on anyone getting back to your emails or giving you a response that is helpful and actionable which results in having to physically go into the office. This is time consuming for the home/biz owner and probably creates congestion and slows things down for Building dept. staff. Get an intern, young person or just basic AI chat bot that can respond in a helpful manner to incoming queries / emails etc.

The timeline for getting our permits reviewed and approved was absurd. It delayed our project significantly which costs us tens of thousands of dollars in the long run.

The Town of San Anselmo needs to staff the permitting office appropriately, keep the office open for longer working hours, and work to improve their internal processes so their timelines are reduced. It was a very bad experience for us overall.

Fire your 3rd party plan check subcontractor they are padding hours by nit picking needlessly .

Digitize entire process. Set SLAs and clearly communicate them. Provide a simple process diagram for different types of commonly occurring permit. Use a IT service system to triage issues and workflows to allow a more self-service system.

There is a widespread perception that the culture within permitting is toxic and obstructive. Many residents experience unhelpful, even hostile interactions during office hours, and fear speaking up due to concerns about retaliation. Projects face constant delays—especially with outsourced plan reviews—and there is a general feeling that this is why our downtown remains empty and residential improvements stall. It's time for a change that prioritizes service, transparency, and partnership with the community

1) improve turnaround times for small changes - not 3 weeks then 3 more weeks, etc - continuing to delay

2) expand the desk hours and days

3) pick up the phone

4) answer emails so you don't have to go in

5) be more proactive in telling people what they need to do, when and why. Sometimes it's like pulling teeth trying to figure out what's needed

6) in general... just please be more helpful. We pay a lot of money for the "help" of the city to get through the legal process. Yet it feels like the staff make you feel like you owe them something vs feeling customer service focused (though Jackson and the young guy are great). There are barriers and more barriers to entry, that it makes most people I talk to not want to go the legal permitting route.

7) better tracking system. I've been there before, and I've physically seen my neighbors there before, having to have folks look through emails that were sent because the city said things weren't in yet (but were sent).

8) if you expect us to work with outside agencies for changes San Anselmo requires (like under grounding) then please help coordinate that and have a partnership with that utility company so it doesn't delay construction for 6+ months, keeping you out of your own home. Or requiring a \$50,000 road bond or check to the city. That's extreme, especially when the water district messed up the pipe size. Or the city hiring someone to put survey markers in that put them in the wrong spot and cost us money and unfortunate unneeded conversations with our neighbors.

Process needs to be more customer focused, understanding of customer needs and issues. Some requirements are unnecessary, such as preparing an expensive detailed architects plan that turned out to be completely unnecessary. The department needs to be more understanding and considerate of individual projects and needs. A cookie cutter approach to assisting customers is not working.

More technical training for staff, including inspectors.

The online portal is difficult to navigate.

Get people in there that know the code, and can read plans. The current system relies on checklists that do not necessarily apply to the project at hand. This wastes time and effort. It took 5 months for me to get my permit approved. I am now still working on getting it fully signed off. To say it's been painful is an understatement. It's not the fault of the current planning staff. Part of this is tied to the prior head of the planning commission (there's more to say about that). And part of the pain was dealing with the sign-off of the fire dept. And now I'm dealing with RVSD. Not the San Anselmo planning commission's 'fault', but still part of the onerous and painful task of dealing with the permits.

The homeowner has to learn a lot throughout the process if representing him or herself. If a homeowner is representing themselves as we did, it would be nice to have one point of contact at the Town- but this may not be feasible.

The portal is unwieldy- you can't see what you're doing nor what it involves. Staff have no idea that you paid fees. Make the portal user friendly.

Don't sub out plan check

The County of Sonoma has a great system. If you call, you are directed to leave a message and can expect a call back within 1 business day. You never get someone immediately, but you always hear back within that period. That has held up pretty well in my experience. I expect it reduces interruptions for staff during the day by eliminating the need to respond immediately, and gives those of us calling some confidence that we'll hear back.

Now that the building manager has left, the new town council needs to be accountable to the home owners and i believe should hire a candidate from the area without a political agenda that is just interested in the process, efficiency, customer service and meeting the building codes. It took the building department over 1 year to approve a 500 square foot ADU addition on existing foundation converting game room. Building department requested 3 separate geological reports, and when my architect and homeowner asked for short extension on permit approved as our contractor took another project due to delay after delay, the building department official with oversight from the building department manager told the architect and the owner an extension was never requested and would be denied if requests. When we presented the written emails received by the building department officer they responded the architect made these up and was lying. We sent them emails sent with verification of receipt. The architect was on the planning commission. The homeowner served as a board member and treasurer for several large nonprofits in Marin, the Chamber of Commerce, Rotary and the Ca and San Rafael Government affairs committee, and lived in Marin for 60 plus years and 24 years a homeowner in San Anselmo and has 30 years construction project experience. I have brought this issue of the building department in San Anselmo with the elected officials, who made aware of the issues in San Anselmo specifically.

Do not use outside consultants.

Provided information for a Flatwork permit was not accurate. Required retention basin information was from Bay Area Water Quality District for large scale developments. Much of the information was not applicable or did not appropriately scale to a single residence.

Speed up the permitting process for simple decks

The experience interacting with people at The Counter became a daily occurrence to try and move my permit along. Only when I began showing up every day did it seem like the permit approval actually start to make meaningful progress. We had multiple instances when the format of a submitted document was not "correct", even after explicitly asking about the format to avoid such an issue. Often times this would cause a rejection of the document but there was no communication that it had been rejected or what the next steps were to rectify. I had to act as a detective and show up in person to get any sort of context or additional information. Overall, it took us nearly 2.5 years to permit and build a ~250 foot addition onto our house. Common feedback from our contractor and others I interacted with during our plan/build was that "San Anselmo has the reputation as the worst permitting department in Marin"

They need to streamline the process and be more transparent.

Online is awful. Bring back-office hours and the ability to meet with the people you will be working with. The human element matters. Improve communication and availability

It was fine working with Eli but the woman at the counter was incredibly unfriendly nor helpful. The online permitting system is not user friendly. in that it is not clear precisely what information and plans need to be submitted for specific projects, which results in delays and frustration. When I filed, the estimated cost for a \$1,000 job valuation was over \$2,000 for the permit. This deters folks from getting a permit. Be more transparent about the fees. Example: don't show all the potential fees for permits, including road bond, etc for a small trellis permit that the Town is clearly not going to charge. When I meet with staff, they have always been friendly, helpful, and knowledgeable. When I submit online, it is a different experience. I end up having to submit new information each time. I will never again apply online without first discussing the permit with the staff person actually approving the permit to learn what precisely must be initially submitted and what precisely the permit fee will be so that I am not going back and forth with unnecessary emails and delays. Transparency is key. It would not surprise me if people end up not applying for permits when they see the initial fee online. Again, everyone at the Town has been nice and helpful.

Our plans called for a particular placement of solar batteries on an exterior wall. They were placed in accordance with the approved plans. When inspected by an outside person working for the town, it was determined that the approved placement was in violation of code. Big delay. Big expense for the installer.

Inspections were timely. Since I know one of the people in the department, I received excellent, timely, and even though I didn't particularly like the result, a very good explanation of the problem.

There is an adversarial relationship between the town and homeowners, I think. It would be nice if a representative of the town could be assigned to a project and have as their goal, quick completion of the project and resolution of any issues. The owner needs an advocate.

And consistent with Ezra Klein's new book "abundance," there just are too many rules to allow projects to be completed in a timely and unencumbered manner.

Improve response time

Improve customer relations-

Actively help rather than block progress

The red tagging by the code enforcement person is over the top. He is on a power trip and seems most interested in letting you know he is the sheriff, so to speak.

First of all fix the most antiquated website in the history of websites. What a joke.

Second of all, our Town Of San and Summer went to limited hours during Covid, why the heck they are still at limited hours and still make the same amount of money is unnerving. They work half days and 3-4 days a week. Why? The pandemic is over. It is my understanding that the people that work for the town make a significant amount of money, yet they are not open to the public during convenient business hours. You have to bust your ass to get there before noon.

Finally they make it VERY difficult to get anything approved, not to mention all the rules and guidelines change. It's a moving target.

-Portal is too jargon-y for a lay person

-Create a timeline and plain English version of what the process looks like

- Need to create more incentives for property owners to upgrade vs making punitive when they do try to upgrade

- Create program (even if you have to pay) to help property owners be smart about upgrades

- The number of inspections we had felt like a lot and created a bunch of waiting time

- Create an even easier program for ADUs - still opaque about what is needed

The planning department made errors that, to their credit, adapted the process to serve us. Unfortunate delay but that happens. The building department was rude from the initial desk contact to the top, incompetent and opaque with their process. The first inspector (who also got fired) was also terrible.

Faster and more streamlined permit application process. Faster review/decision and approval of permits

If there is a permit being requested with no variance or exceptions those should be fast tracked.

Our inspector was asked to sign off on a new air conditioning and duct system. He came out 3 times, and each time had new requirements. Baffling.

The outsourcing of the plan review makes it impossible for homeowners to submit. Items that needed changing or more detail required the use (and expense) of a licensed architect- even after our plans were drawn up by a licensed landscape architect

Pasting a house with a pink slip with no conversation with the home owners and asking our workers to leave (unbeknownst to us) was a really jarring, really negative experience. And we were replacing three boards of siding that had rotted from storms (not doing any construction). The whole experience was really negative, ultimately 1.5x more expensive, and it required constantly going downtown to talk with someone bc the website was not helpful in resolution. I had a really negative experience to say the least.

I would just say that we had been warned by many ppl that working with the permits dept was not easy or pleasant, and when I got to a point in my project when I had to take over, I found the people to be helpful and clear and good at answering questions and helping to get the job done. The major problems seem to be silo effect (getting inconsistent info from different depts involved and difficulty communicating between stakeholders), generally clunky interfacing (the website/etrakit portal is not very user friendly), and lack of clarity around language and processes for the lay person.

The inspector denied our permit after our contractor installed new heat pump. The outside unit was located at exact spot of old equipment but was not approved and there was nowhere else to install equipment that met new rules. The city has been unreasonable and recalcitrant when heat pumps should be encouraged as more efficient climate friendly additions.

Yes, the people at the office are friendly, professional and accommodating. However, their processes are such that it is clear that they serve those processes even when it means not serving their customers. San Anselmo has a reputation for being the worst town in Marin to get a permit for. I suppose that could be considered a good thing but if you are in the process, it not only took a long time, it cost me more in planner and builder and craftsmen fees because of their reiterative and very long process. Nothing was easy and I finally got the permit 4 months later and exactly one day before I would have had to pay over a \$10,000 fine to a purchasing party (for not having secured the permit).

It was nail biting to say the least.

It is the overall sentiment that the town is extremely difficult to work with in regards to building/renovating, often giving conflicting information, delayed responses, limited availability, and nitpicking things that have little to no significance, but lead to unnecessary expenses and increased delays. The town should be a resource, not a deterrent. It should help guide business & residential owners to be successful and build/renovate efficiently, cost-effectively and timely. It should provide helpful resources and help the process move forward in a timely manner, not throw up roadblocks to delay it. It should be clear from the beginning all necessary requirements, all contacts needed (eg. for sanitation/water inspections), and any potential red flags to avoid, to make it a proactive experience, rather than a reactive.

Have a culture that starts with wanting to find a way to help people with their building/planning process, not a culture of restrictions/rules/delays.

more timely email interaction, accurate timing of process

The process has been uniformly great for me over several projects, including home renovations and a solar install. The one place where I think there is room for improvement: it's very difficult to get phone assistance, so I always have to drive down to Town Hall. More consistent phone coverage, or a dedicated set of telephone hours when calls will be fielded, would be awesome.

Longer open counter times

More staff? Friendlier personnel? Things were the slowest I could ever have imagined. I NEVER would have bought in San Anselmo if I knew how awful this department is. Ely is the only friendly person. And I feel bad for him that it's not his fault, but the entire system is terrible. The other lady at the desk is also just nasty and mean. It's unnecessary, unfortunate and absolutely needs to change.

As with all Marin we should have the same set of guidelines for all City's. San Anselmo gets bogged down and cumbersome because there are so many rules and reqs and not enough staff to deal with them all in my opinion.

The overall environment of the dept is consistently unfriendly, felt animosity, unhelpful.

Fire gatekeeper. The third party engineering firm (Willdan) was logging in hours for small changes in the permit that should have taken minutes, not weeks.

It was just so damned bureaucratic, really difficult to accomplish what should have been relatively simple. The most recent round was better, the person was more helpful, but the first round a few years ago was horrible. In both cases though there was not clarity of information and process, and it

took way longer because of all the run around. I would not recommend this to anyone. The online portal was really really a challenge to figure out.

I wish we had been better informed ourselves and I wish the town would have helped with this important knowledge sharing. To be fair many interactions were handled by contractors, designers, etc. but it is a complicated process and as a consumer it was lengthy and frustrating. Did have good interactions with some inspectors but not all but maybe because we were approved. Hopefully will also be at the end of this.

The town left hazard posts where the sidewalk hazards were present. The town did not pick them up even after the repairs had been confirmed and signed off.

Bring back in-house plan checking.

The Building Dept is in dire need of customer service training and sensitivity training - from the officials to the clerks who handle phones etc - not only are entry level employees poorly trained and provide incorrect information, the Building Official (AF) and the Head of Public Works (SC) are rude, threatening, misleading and poor examples to their staff. This is not the way to work with residents of the Town you work for.

Hire more staff so the process is faster. Streamline the building code so it's easier to understand.

Change staff personnel.

Answer all communications in a timely manner as if it mattered

More communication regarding time frames and outlining the particular steps needed to obtain a permit.

Our frustration is that our permit was approved and the work was done according to the approved permit. The inspector came out, verbally approved, went back to the office and decided to reject the approval and design stating we needed different insulation. This caused a loss of time and large increase in cost as the contractors had to redo the work. It should have been highlighted up front in the permit process vs. the inspection once the work was done.

3rd Party permitting process is too slow and not responsive. Fire Dept. approval process was inconsistent and not responsive at times. Need to have better coordination with water, fire, sanitation requirements. Many items popped up at the last minute to get final approval.

Seems like voicemails for any questions are never answered. If you're lucky and speak to a person, then things are usually okay.

The whole process needs to be streamlined. The staff are wonderful but they can't make it streamlined. There are always new bits of surprising information at every turn. Hugely lengthy process and so expensive both for permits and for the costs associated with construction delays. Should be possible to sit down at the beginning and go through the project and find out expectations/requirements all in one go, not an endless drip feed of new and additional details.

I could not navigate the website so I went to city hall and the staff helped with the permit process get back to people in a timely manner for inspections so they just don't sit there for weeks until the town feels like getting to it. the town permitting situation is the absolute worst in the county. for no good reason.

Planning Commission hearings seem rigged, decisions are made well ahead of the hearing based on subjective criteria. Neighbor complaints rule the day, and commissioners ignore any fact before them to appease opposition from neighbors.

Complete review of counter staff. Inspectors are way out of line with some of their comments. Get some of the work done in house. Plan check inconsistent.

Some staff members are helpful and friendly. Others are not. I have clients complain that some staff members do not explain the requirements clearly and they are confused.

The Town needs to have a plan checker on staff at least for smaller projects. Phillips Seabrook does a good job of plan checking, but CSG is awful to work with.

HAVE THE PLAN REVIEWER MAKE A CONCISE LIST OF CORRECTIONS SO YOU DO THIS ONCE NOT MULTIPLE TIMES

logging into the website can be troublesome at times

My EV charger permit was supposed to be issued in a day or two. But I didn't receive any communication at all. After 4 days I went in to see if I had missed something. Turns out it was stuck in limbo and not processed until I made an in-person visit. Doesn't inspire confidence at all.

1. Work M-F 9-5 (demand is there and we are paying for it with taxes!)
 2. Fire absolutely everyone that has been there because they'll want to do things the old way.
 3. Keep the entire process in one place with one team for speed, accuracy and efficiency.
 4. Hire an all new team who goes through new training together, stays in same building together. Assign each employee to specific jobs for duration of the project, so the process is more efficient. Each project has the same team at the Town. Same front desk person, same inspector, same person who approves plans etc.
 5. Monitor and listen to complaints about corrupt and ego-driven inspectors/staff. Allow complaints to be levied against all employees. That way management can see where certain employees need more training. Have other cities (mill valley/tiburon) help guide new ways of working better.
- We have done several major remodel projects in the town of San Anselmo. There are some great people in the office. However, as a whole, the process has been extremely slow, unduly expensive, and unreasonable. Sadly, we have witnessed very different treatment (favorable vs unfavorable) between various parties (including ourselves) in obtaining permits - so much so that we honestly wonder if there are bribes or some other monetary exchange that lends favorability to some projects over others. You ask for more supplemental materials than any town I've ever pulled permits for. I managed it, but a novice neighbor said it took her months to get a permit approved because she was so confused by all the extra asks.

Not at this time. The process is working out great, from submitting the info to the online payment.

For corrections involving HERS certificates, a complete reinspection should not be a requirement. For permit issuance, CF1R should be provided along with complete HERS report by final inspection. Items should be available to upload to portal (like HERS Certificates) prior to inspection. Office staff can be more welcoming and courteous, very cold and rude.

First and foremost, consider that applicants (either homeowners, or design professionals as direct proxies for the homeowners) are paying your salaries, and you should be IN SERVICE to them; think about how you HELP them achieve their goals, getting a project accomplished, and not setting roadblocks, or asking for non-essential information be added to document sets that have no practical benefit to the project.

A lot. I'm 3 years into trying to get a permit to rebuild my parking deck, and the initial feedback delayed me quite a bit, and then I found out the initial feedback wasn't accurate.

I have over 40 years working as a commercial construction project manager. I have worked all across the US as well as in Canada and Puerto Rico. I find the staff at San Anselmo incompetent.

Allow inspectors to get involved in the process of planning in permit approval. The last time I tried to get an inspector involved for the above situation. He said he would help but then it just turned out to be a joke. In the end we faked our numbers just to get the permit approved. When the inspector came out with his decibel meter it actually passed so shame on you
Post pandemic, municipalities have sought to automate processing with horrible results. In SA this has been made worse by the outside plan checker (profit motivated to extend/delay review(s)). Result is a distancing, pass-the-buck, delay, and unhelpful 'no-one-in charge' mentality. Dump or drastically simplify the online processing, fire the outside plan checking group. Return to service basics like counter hours and direct processing.

It is confusing, people not responsive, unhelpful, and too expensive.

no complaints

Good service

1. Explain the final inspection requirements upfront.
2. The building official should stick to their area of expertise.
3. Energy code are officials to decipher by the average building official who is most likely a design professional. In such cases, the official should reach out to the State agency that is responsible for the subject code for interpretations rather than adopting some counterintuitive ruling based on lack of understanding of the code intent.
4. The building department should provide adopt clear guidelines regarding interpretation of newer code requirements. As an example, what are the consequences of failing a HERZ test in a remodel? Does the homeowner need to tear out the old ductwork and replace them.

Try harder?

Tear it down and start from scratch

Put Eli as the main clerk there not Lavinia who is very confrontational especially to young contractors trying to understand the process and do work the correct way

It took 2 months for them to say we need a different drainage plan, which I don't understand. This is an urgent repair of a failed retaining wall.

Simplify the online experience - eTrakit is outdated and not user friendly. The town's website with building/permit resources is unorganized and unhelpful. Some town employees are extremely responsive and helpful (shoutout to William Messinger), while others will totally ignore emails for months. The people behind the counter are unhelpful and guide you to the website for information - which you can't find.

my experience with getting a permit to renovate a portion of our home in San Anselmo was extremely time consuming and tedious with no one really having authority or answers. The entire process took over 8 months and several revisions thanks to the fire dept changing their mind and plan reviewers not understanding what the plans entailed and requesting edits that were not possible. We ended up having to spend thousands of dollars more on our project and many extra months to satisfy the towns requirements and when it came time for inspections the inspector STILL tried to tell us we were not up to code. Very inconsistent and expensive experience all around that will make us think twice before doing more work on our home.

Return phone calls and emails

Most recent permit experience was very easy. Prior experience was absolutely horrible solely due to unreasonable comments from Fire Department.

Don't make home owners jump through a bunch of hoops for no good reason (i.e. historical resource evaluation). Guide them through it, and work with them to make it as simple and easy as possible for everyone. If there is written guidance, rules, exceptions...FOLLOW THEM AND HONOR THEM! Building department acts like dictators...changing their requirements or what they want to see until they get the answer that they want to see. Planning department is much too subjective (i.e. they personally don't like how it looks, so they want you to rearrange your entire project to slightly change the aesthetic).

Improve online permitting

Sentiment Summary from Question 16

Sentiment	Thematic Analysis (auto-tagged)
Positive	Permit Process Improvement, Interdepartmental Coordination
Negative	Permit Requirements, Workflow and Process Management
Neutral	Staff Performance and Conduct
Negative	Processing Efficiency, Staff Technical Competence
Neutral	Staff Resource Allocation
Neutral	
Negative	Submission and Review Process, Communication Strategies, Staff Technical Competence
Negative	Submission and Review Process, Communication Strategies
Negative	Submission and Review Process, Inspection Procedures

Negative	Processing Efficiency, Inspection Procedures
Neutral	Workflow and Process Management, Staff Technical Competence
Negative	Communication Strategies, Problem Resolution
Neutral	Permit Requirements
Neutral	
Neutral	In-House Engineering Review, Homeowner Collaboration
Negative	Point of Contact and Accessibility
Negative	Staff Performance and Conduct
Negative	Department Leadership
Negative	Third-Party Permit Processing, Solar Installation Approval
Negative	Processing Efficiency, Inspection Resource Allocation
Positive	Communication Strategies
Negative	Permit Processing Complexity, Customer Service Model
Negative	Permit Processing Complexity
Negative	Permit Process Flexibility, Drawing Submission Requirements
Neutral	Communication Strategies, Staff Performance and Conduct, Processing Efficiency
Negative	Processing Efficiency, Fee and Cost Management, Permit Requirements
Neutral	Communication Strategies
Negative	Over-the-Counter Permit Issuance, Digital Meeting Scheduling
Negative	Submission and Review Process, Staff Technical Competence
Negative	Plan Check Support
Negative	Processing Efficiency, Fee and Cost Management
Negative	Processing Efficiency
Negative	Workflow and Process Management, Staff Performance and Conduct
Negative	Personal Interaction Preference
Neutral	Point of Contact and Accessibility, Technical Requirement Adjustment
Negative	Department Leadership, Customer Service Model
Neutral	Communication Strategies
Neutral	Documentation and Clarity, Website and Online Systems
Negative	Website and Online Systems, Customer Service Model, Inspection Procedures
Negative	Zoning and Regulatory Compliance
Neutral	Inspection Procedures
Negative	Zoning and Regulatory Compliance
Negative	Staff Performance and Conduct
Neutral	Resale Inspection Efficiency
Negative	Zoning and Regulatory Compliance, Staff Performance and Conduct
Neutral	Website and Online Systems
Neutral	Permit Requirements, Inspection Procedures
Negative	Customer Service Model, Inspection Procedures
Negative	Zoning and Regulatory Compliance, Inspection Procedures
Negative	Inspection Procedures, Permit Approval Process
Neutral	Processing Efficiency, Inspection Procedures, Website and Online Systems
Negative	Customer Service Model

Negative	Communication Strategies, Problem Resolution
Neutral	
Negative	Staff Performance and Conduct, Inspection Procedures
Negative	Submission and Review Process
Negative	Processing Efficiency, Customer Service Model
Negative	Project Tracking, Communication Strategies, Inspection Procedures
Negative	Staff Technical Competence
Negative	Zoning and Regulatory Compliance
Negative	Fee and Cost Management
Negative	Problem Resolution
Negative	Permit Processing Complexity
Neutral	Staffing Levels, Communication Strategies
Negative	Department Leadership
Neutral	Submission and Review Process, Requirements Communication
Neutral	Communication Strategies
Negative	Fee and Cost Management, Communication Strategies
Negative	Application Feedback, Website and Online Systems
Negative	Fee and Cost Management
Negative	Communication Strategies
Negative	Staff Technical Competence
Negative	Workflow and Process Management, Staff Performance and Conduct
Neutral	Processing Efficiency
Neutral	Point of Contact and Accessibility
Neutral	Staff Performance and Conduct
Negative	Department Leadership
Negative	Permit Requirements
Neutral	Zoning and Regulatory Compliance
Positive	Workflow and Process Management, Documentation and Clarity
Positive	
Negative	Zoning and Regulatory Compliance
Neutral	Permit Approval Process, Staff Technical Competence
Neutral	Permit Requirements
Negative	Website and Online Systems, Communication Strategies
Negative	Zoning and Regulatory Compliance
Negative	Processing Efficiency, Fee and Cost Management
	Communication Strategies, Staff Performance and Conduct, Workflow and Process Management
Negative	
Negative	Processing Efficiency, negative
Negative	Third-Party Review Process
Neutral	Workflow and Process Management
Negative	Department Leadership, Staff Performance and Conduct
Negative	Processing Efficiency, Customer Service Model, Communication Strategies
Negative	Customer-Centric Approach

Negative	
Neutral	Staff Technical Competence
Negative	Website and Online Systems
Negative	Submission and Review Process, Staff Technical Competence
Negative	Processing Efficiency, Interdepartmental Coordination
Negative	Point of Contact and Accessibility, Permit Approval Process
Negative	Website and Online Systems, Communication Strategies
Negative	Submission and Review Process
Positive	Communication Strategies
Negative	Processing Efficiency, Staff Performance and Conduct
Neutral	Submission and Review Process
Negative	Documentation and Clarity
Neutral	Processing Efficiency
Negative	Processing Efficiency, Communication Strategies
Negative	Workflow and Process Management, Communication Strategies
Negative	Point of Contact and Accessibility, Website and Online Systems
Negative	Customer Service Model
Negative	Fee and Cost Management, Documentation and Clarity, Website and Online Systems
Neutral	
Negative	Permit Approval Process
Neutral	Processing Efficiency, Customer Service Model
Negative	Code Enforcement Approach
Neutral	Documentation and Clarity
	Point of Contact and Accessibility, Permit Processing Complexity, Website and Online Systems
Negative	Inspection Procedures, Permit Approval Process, Workflow and Process Management, Website and Online Systems
Negative	Customer Service Model, Communication Strategies
Positive	Processing Efficiency
Neutral	Processing Efficiency
Negative	Inspection Process
Negative	Submission and Review Process
Negative	Website and Online Systems, Communication Strategies
	Website and Online Systems, Workflow and Process Management, Communication Strategies
Negative	Inspection Process
Positive	Processing Efficiency
Negative	Workflow and Process Management, Communication Strategies
Negative	Communication Strategies
Neutral	Communication Strategies
Neutral	Point of Contact and Accessibility
Negative	Point of Contact and Accessibility
Negative	Documentation and Clarity, Workflow and Process Management

Negative	Staffing Levels, Customer Service Model, Processing Efficiency
Negative	Staffing Levels, Permit Processing Complexity
Negative	Customer Service Model
Negative	Submission and Review Process, Customer Service Model
Negative	Website and Online Systems, Workflow and Process Management
Negative	Workflow and Process Management
Negative	
Neutral	Submission and Review Process
Negative	Customer Service Model
Neutral	Staffing Levels, Permit Processing Complexity
Negative	Customer Service Model
Neutral	Communication Strategies
Neutral	Workflow and Process Management
Negative	Inspection Process
Negative	Submission and Review Process, Interdepartmental Coordination
Negative	Communication Strategies
Negative	Permit Processing Complexity, Fee and Cost Management, Processing Efficiency
Positive	Point of Contact and Accessibility, Website and Online Systems
Negative	Permit Processing Complexity, Inspection Response Time
Negative	Neighbor Complaint Influence, Permit Approval Process
Negative	Staff Performance and Conduct, Plan Check Consistency
Negative	Customer Service Model, Communication Strategies
Negative	Permit Requirements
Neutral	Problem Resolution
Negative	Website and Online Systems
Negative	Application Status Tracking, Permit Processing Communication
	Staff Technical Competence, Workflow and Process Management, Organizational
Neutral	Restructuring
Negative	Customer Service Model, Fee and Cost Management, Processing Efficiency
Negative	Permit Requirements, Documentation and Clarity
Positive	
Negative	Documentation and Clarity, Customer Service Model, Inspection Process
Negative	Permit Requirements, Customer Service Model
Negative	sm_negative
Negative	Staff Technical Competence
Negative	Permit Processing Complexity, Inspection Process
Negative	Website and Online Systems, Customer Service Model, Problem Resolution
Negative	Permit Processing Complexity, Communication Strategies
Neutral	
Positive	
Negative	Zoning and Regulatory Compliance
Neutral	
Neutral	

Negative	Communication Strategies, Staff Technical Competence
Negative	Processing Efficiency, Permit Processing Complexity
Negative	Website and Online Systems, Staff Performance and Conduct
Negative	Processing Efficiency, Permit Processing Complexity, Inspection Procedures
Unknown	
Neutral	Communication Strategies
Negative	Interdepartmental Coordination
Negative	Department Leadership
Positive	Website and Online Systems, Permit Requirements
	Permit Processing Complexity, Permit Requirements, Zoning and Regulatory
Negative	Compliance
Negative	Website and Online Systems