

Mission/Overview:

The City Plan Department is the technical staff to the City Plan Commission, the Board of Zoning Appeals and the Historic District Commission. The City Plan Commission is charter mandated to "prepare and recommend plans for the improvement of the entire City or any portion thereof" These plans shall be designed to promote the coordinated development of the municipality." The Department writes and updates the City's Plan of Conservation & Development (the Comprehensive Plan) and writes or collaborates with other departments on other plans such as Municipal Development Plans. The City Plan Commission provides advice as requested or required by Statute to the Board of Aldermen on planning, zoning, conservation, historic preservation and land use matters. Zoning text and map changes must be referred to the Commission by Charter and Statute; as must acquisition and disposition of real property, and capital budget expenditures. Certain other matters such as the design of streets, bridges, parks squares and public buildings must also be reviewed by the Commission. The Board of Aldermen refers other matters as well, at their discretion. The Commission reviews site plans of a certain size pursuant to the New Haven Zoning Ordinance and in environmentally sensitive areas (in coastal and inland wetland areas).

The Department works closely with other City Departments on the planning and design of capital improvements such as parks, schools, roadways and streetscapes; as well as reviewing housing and other large development projects, and maintains an Environmental Clearance Record for certain USHUD funded projects. The Department also manages a number of design and construction projects, particularly those which are not clearly within the purview of the Parks or Engineering departments and where there is an environmental permitting component; these include trails, waterfront access (not in a park) and special projects such as public art, or a fountain for the Green..

The City Plan Department is often the first point of contact for developers, residents or media looking for information about development in New Haven.

A member of the City Plan Commission and the Executive Director are members of the Capital Budget Committee. A member of the Commission is a member of the regional Plan Commission.

Attention Required by March 31st:

Regular Meetings: City Plan Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals & Historic District
Appointments to any vacant Commission positions

Board of Aldermen: Pending matters

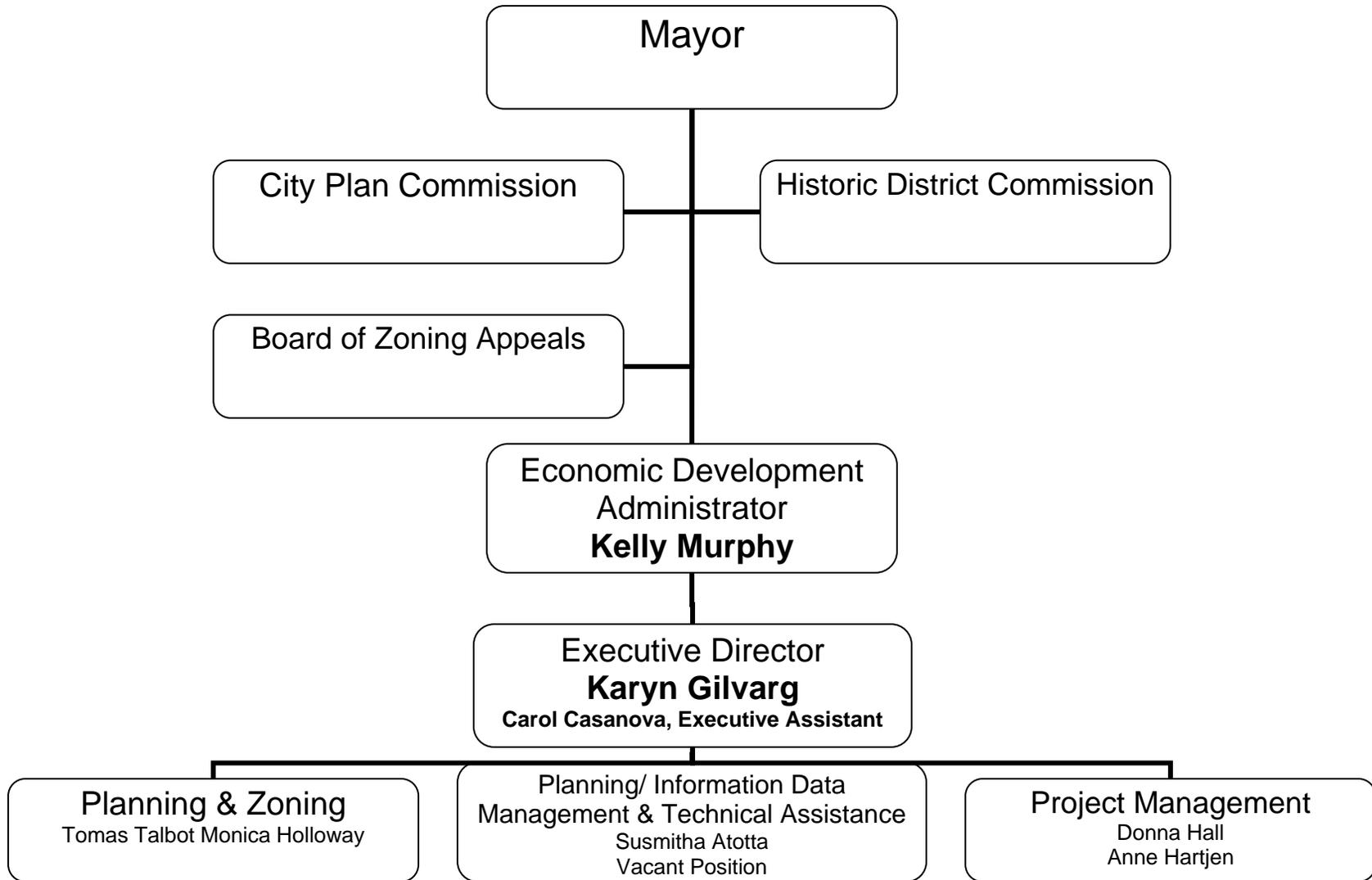
Farmington Canal Heritage Trail bid & construction contract

Boathouse at Canal Dock: Phase I construction, budget for Phase II

Wayfinding: Citywide system in design,

Downtown Crossing: Route 34 conversion: Phase I Construction underway (see EDA)

Downtown Crossing Full program: design and construction need additional funding



Budget Summary:

General Fund Budget:

Non-personnel GF budget is extremely minimal & covers office supplies and legal advertising, court reporters, usually has to be supplemented toward the end of the fiscal year

Capital Fund:

1450: Route 34 East	\$567,133
Portion of 20% match to federal TIGER II grant and earlier Congressional Earmark	
Also supports ½ of employee salary	
1451: On-call Planning and Engineering	\$125,000
Consulting services for planning and review of projects	
P154: Farmington Canal Heritage Greenway	\$250,000
Portion of 20% match to state/federal Transportation funds	
1454 Coastal Area Improvements:	\$142,133
Planning and engineering studies and permit fees, also supports ½ of employee salary	

There are balances from prior years in all these categories, which are needed to fully fund the obligations or projects.

Special Fund:

Prior year balances needed to fully fund the obligations or projects

CDBG:

Funded Position: Assistant Director of Comprehensive Planning \$071,468

Grants:

- Farmington Canal Heritage Greenway
- City Wayfinding System
- Freedom Trail
- Downtown Crossing
- Ferry Earmark
- Boathouse
- Long Wharf Park
- Route 34 Earmark

Summary of Open Items:

Farmington Canal Heritage Greenway

Contact: Anne Hartjen, ASLA, Senior Project Manager 203-946-6383

Project is ready to bid. Construction will start spring 2014, Need to secure YDA funding

Boathouse at Canal Dock

Donna Hall, Senior Project Planner: 203-946-7842:

Construction underway Phase I (platform).Phase II building needs additional funding

Wayfinding – Citywide system

Contact: Anne Hartjen, Senior Project Manager 203-946-6383

Need contract with designer.

Downtown Crossing- Route 34 conversion:

Donna Hall, Senior Project Planner: 203-946-7842:

Construction of Phase I (TIGER II) underway (see EDA reports)

Design for the full program underway.

Long Wharf Park

Donna Hall, Senior Project Planner: 203-946-7842:

Design underway

Comprehensive Plan Update

Susmitha Attota, Assist Director for Comprehensive Planning 203-946-7814

Background data compiled, “Data Book” Survey responses received.

Need to work on internal (City Departments) and community outreach for developing recommendations.

Ferry Feasibility Study

Federal Congressional earmark obtained in 2007 for study of cross sound ferry service from Forbes Ave. & East Street. Initial study nearly complete, in draft. Property owner became un-cooperative; could be approached again to see if larger study can be completed, otherwise CDOT/FHWA will withdraw the funding commitment.

Coastal Resilience Planning

Given the Department’s Authority under the Coastal Management Act it could be leading a work group to plan for sea level rise. However this is impossible with current staffing levels and skill sets.

Major Functions / Projects:

City Plan Commission

The Commission meets regularly on the third Wednesday of every month; the Mayor and the City Engineer are ex officio members. There are five other members and three alternates, all appointed by the Mayor. The Department writes between 150 & 400 reports a year for the City Plan Commission, depending on the application load. The reports are the staff's recommended actions, the Commission approves the reports or modifies or conditions them to convey their decision or advice. Not all Commission agenda items are public hearings. Many of the reports are advice to the Board of Aldermen on land use matters, or on the design of public facilities.

Board of Zoning Appeals

The BZA meets monthly on the second Tuesday of the month, usually 10 times per year (no August or January meetings). There are five regular members and two alternates, all appointed by the Mayor. All applications to the BZA are Public Hearing items. The department staff writes background reports for each application. The Department writes between 80 and 300 BZA reports a year.

The Historic District Commission

Meets on the second Wednesday of each month if there are applications. The Commission is composed of 5 members all appointed by the Mayor. All applications before the Commission are public hearings. The Commission issues Certificates of Appropriateness. The City is Certified Local Government.

These Commissions make important land use decisions. It is critical that Commissioners receive both technical and ethics training. They need to understand the legal principles and practices that guide both the staff and their actions; they must be cautioned about engaging in ex parte communication and about attaching unwarranted or illegal and unenforceable conditions to their decisions. Land use decisions are frequently litigated, so the better informed and trained the commissioners are, the less likely the City will have to spend substantial resources defending their decisions.

PLANNING AND ZONING INFORMATION

The Department provides planning and zoning information to the public on a daily basis; inquiries come from walk-in visitors (hours for walk-ins are 9:30 to 2:00 pm), email and telephone or regular mail. Walk-ins also include persons with building permits, which require a zoning sign-off. Other City Department may also originate inquiries.

This service takes up a substantial portion of staff time. Questions range from the simple – “Can I open a restaurant here?” to very involved questions concerning large major development projects. The Department maintains paper record files on all actions of the BZA since 1926, and of the City Plan Commission since 1913, and of the Historic District Commission since 1971. Automating this library of files is key to providing faster & a more efficient service.

The department also maintains current Inland Wetland Maps and FEMA NFIP maps for use by the public.

The Department also maintains libraries of paper drawings and plan documents. In recent years the department has required electronic files for site plans in order to update the City’s Geographic Information System, but it appears Information Technology is unable to keep up with the volume of plans received.

The Department maintains USHUD Environmental Checklists on CDBG and other HUD funded projects.

ZONING ENFORCEMENT

The department aids in zoning enforcement, and the Deputy Director for Zoning is the Acting ZEO. Enforcement is complaint driven, generally handled on a case by case basis depending on the nature of the violation and whether other codes or regulations are involved, only the most egregious cases can be pursued. The Department is unable to adequately staff this function with the existing staff levels.

The Department must also review most Building Permit applications, and sign off on them for zoning conformance. This is a time intensive activity and involves several staff checking multiple paper files for each application.

Zoning enforcement also includes reviewing all applications to the CPC, BZA & HDC for conformance to all Zoning and other land use regulations including Site Plan Review, Soil Erosion and Sediment Control, Inland Wetlands, and Flood Plain Management. Numerous staff are involved in these reviews on a daily basis.

Work on these aspects of administration, regulation and enforcement take far too much staff time because so much of it is spent hunting for history files on properties. These are generally address base but there is no digital access to all of the separate files. Time spent on these activities diminishes the time available for activities like planning, research and regulation amendments.

Farmington Canal Heritage Trail

Contact: Anne Hartjen, ASLA, Senior Project Manager 203-946-6383

The City Plan Department has managed design and construction of this project since 1997. A Master Plan completed in 1998 after a series of community meetings has guided development since then. The Trail is built, from the Hamden town line south to Temple Street,

The fourth phase is nearly ready to bid. This will take the Greenway below grade from Temple Street to Orange and Grove, where it will rise to grade and then be an on-street facility to Long Wharf Drive near the new Boathouse at Canal Dock. A portion of the above-grade trail will be painted sharrows on City Streets and a portion will be an exclusive "Cycle-track." Phase IV is expected to be bid this fall, allowing a spring 2014 construction start, lasting for 2 construction seasons.

The Trail will have historic and cultural interpretive elements in the below grade portion as well several signs in specific neighborhoods (Long Wharf, Hillhouse, Dixwell, & Newhallville).

Issues:

The 2006 Yale Development Agreement between the University and the City provides some of the non-federal matching funds for design and construction. Yale should be reminded of this commitment, as the schedule for the Trail has extended beyond original plans (due largely to review periods that CDOT and FHWA require, and to coordination with CDOT on the I-95 Q-bridge project). The Yale funds should be drawn down at the start of construction.

The Parks Department maintains the Greenway. Already taxed by the maintenance for Parks, the Department is pressed to keep up with maintenance. Mowing is done regularly, but the collapsible bollards which help keep motorized vehicles off the trail at the street crossings in Dixwell and Newhallville are often left open. There are periodic calls to light the trail. This is not recommended as it is currently signed to be open from sunrise to sunset, as are the Parks, allowing Police to ask persons to leave after sunset.

It is recommended that policy and procedures for the Greenway, including rules and regulations for its use, licensing for vendors on the Greenway or whose properties access the Greenway. These licenses are potential source of revenue that could be returned to the Greenway for maintenance.

The Vision Trail, a Multi-purpose non-motorized route from the Green to the Waterfront diverges from the Trail and provides an alternate route to Long Wharf Pier. Funds should be allocated to rehabilitate this trail, though not part of the Greenway; the route is not all on public ROW and in some areas there is no easement or ownership for the trail.

Boathouse at Canal Dock

Donna Hall, Senior Project Planner: 203-946-7842:

The Boathouse at Canal Dock will be located on New Haven Harbor directly north of historic Long Wharf Pier at 451 Long Wharf Drive. Phase IV of the Farmington Canal Line Greenway will end here at the waterfront.

The project is 100% state/federal funded, no City funds are budgeted. The project is mitigation for the loss of an historic structure, the Adee boathouse built 1914 and demolished 2009 pursuant to construction plans for the I-95 Q-Corridor Bridge; as well as mitigation for the separation of the public waterfront from the rest of the City by I-95. The platform and building will be used for public access to the waterfront, for boating access and to tell the story of New Haven's cultural and natural environment, and for recreational and educational programs.

The platform that supports the boathouse is 50,000 square feet. The building is two stories, 29,000 SF in total. The lower floor is below the flood elevation to allow its use for boat storage. The upper story contains meeting rooms and support faculties for the lower floor such as bathrooms and locker rooms. In addition to availability of the lower floor for boating activities and storage, the City has negotiated a preliminary agreement with The University of New Haven to bring a portion of their Environmental Sciences program to the Boathouse. This program currently works with New Haven's Schooner, Inc. on environmental education programs. The exterior platform and the interior of the facility will display interpretive information about New Haven history. Fragments of the Adee boathouse will be incorporated into the building. In addition to the Boathouse and the rebuilt Canal Dock Pier, floating docks, including adaptive docks for use by handicapped individuals, will be available. Boats and boating programs of all types, crew, kayak and canoe paddling, sailing, etc. will have access to the waterside. A primary goal is youth programming. The public will have access to platform for waterside strolls or events.

Issues:

Budget: The original project budget was set at \$30 million; \$2 million was added by an earmark in 2006. The current value of the original 30 million dollars is probably 17.5 million. Many reductions in area and program have happened over time as the project budget was forced to absorb significant escalation costs. With Phase I under construction approximately \$13.5 million remains for the boathouse building, site work and docks. This is not sufficient to build the project as originally envisioned and approved. The City has asked the State DOT to increase their contribution.

Management: The facility will be owned by the City but operated by a non-profit, which has been formed: the Canal Dock Corporation. Similar to other public facilities such as the Shubert Theater, The Carousel at Lighthouse Park, or the Walker Skating Rink the facility will be managed like the other City enterprise funds so that its costs are covered by its revenues.

Wayfinding – Citywide system

Contact: Anne Hartjen, Senior Project Manager 203-946-6383

The City has received Federal transportation funds to design and construct initial portions of a new Wayfinding system. The City's prior Wayfinding system (sometimes referred to as the Rumney signs) is worn and signs are missing.

The Town Green Special Services District and the City Plan and Transportation Departments worked together with a consultant, Urban Places, to develop a structure and locations for a new sign system. Working with a large stakeholder committee that effort produced a plan which shows each proposed sign location and suggests copy for each face of each sign.

City Plan has worked to get the state grant agreement in place, to issue an RFP for design consultants, and has interviewed and selected a consultant, Merje, now under contract. Design will start up this fall, and will include public outreach. Town Green will assist to the extent they are able, and as the project moves toward construction for the summer of 201 it is anticipated they will help raise funds for the 20% non-federal share of construction.

Downtown Crossing- Route 34 conversion:

This project was initiated by the City Plan department which worked first with SCRCOG to explore feasibility and then with the Mayor to obtain Congressional Earmark funding. The City had begun a plan when EDA began working with Carter Winstanley to develop a new building (100 College Street, Alexion HQ) in the excess ROW that would be created by the conversion. The City received federal TIGER II funding for the first phase of conversion. That construction is well underway and is managed by EDA in collaboration with EDC.

Work on the overall plan and future phases continues. The City Pan Department would very much like to continue to manage the planning of the conversion but is unable to do so at current staff levels. It is not clear that there is capacity within the City to well manage the future planning and integrate it with all the other planning and implementation efforts, including several major development projects.

CDOT agreed to allocate an additional \$2.2 million to the planning and design effort and that grant agreement is expected shortly. (see EDA & EDC reports)

Issues:

Large and complex project, need additional staff to manage adequately.

Institutional Planning

New Haven has several large non-profit institutions with multi-building campuses, including several state institutions. It is important to meet regularly with these organizations to learn of their short and long term plans as well to hear of their concerns with City services and other interfaces with New Haven and its government and citizens. These regular contacts should happen at several levels, from the Mayor to the President of the college, hospital or university, to department heads with similar purviews. If there are regular meetings to exchange information it is always much easier to communicate in more heated situations because staff will know their counterparts. It is also much more likely that collaborative projects will emerge if the City and these institutions have a good understanding of each other's needs and resources.

Major Functions / Projects:

Not currently staffed

Coastal Resilience Strategy

As mentioned elsewhere in this report, New Haven must begin planning for the impact of sea-level rise and increased storm strength. A team approach across several departments needs to be planned and funded.

New Haven Trails

New Haven can complete the trails following each of its three rivers. In many places trail segments are already built (West River Park, Edgewood, West Rock for example) and only lack small connecting links, activation of coastal easements, placement of wayfinding signs and publicity. Not all of the trails are in Parks, so a separate project to continue to develop them is necessary.

Neighborhood Planning

New Haven's neighborhood activists are engaged and dedicated to improving their individual neighborhoods. They communicate well and often with their elected officials and City staff about immediate neighborhood concerns. There is no vehicle to express longer-term visions for neighborhood improvement. CPD has been involved in several starts of neighborhood based plans but cannot staff this sort of effort at current staff levels (even with teams using LCI and EDA staff). Unfinished efforts include: Route 34 West (Dwight Street to EGB), Whalley Ave., Trowbridge Square, Cedar Hill, and several others.

Complete Streets

Re-introduce Complete Streets Committee, charge it with meeting regularly and reviewing all City ROW projects in a timely and thorough manner.

Neighborhood Notebook

A handbook for neighborhood activists describing city and state department functions, where to go for help with nuisance issues, non-profit agencies interested in

neighborhood issues, organizations that may offer grant funding for pet projects, and tips for neighborhood organizing. Web-site.

Citywide G.I.S.

The City's Geographic Information System could be an additive, accessible enterprise wide compilation of information. The system is managed by information technology personnel who have little idea how the data is used by staff or the public. Inter-departmental groups working on applications and improving data quality have ceased to meet. The City is losing staff time, and likely tax revenue, due to inaccuracy such as Police and Tax office using different addresses for properties, or acreage and zoning recorded incorrectly.

New Haven Green

Re-programming and refurbishing. Parks began a process including extensive public outreach for new uses for the Green, and a capital project schedule and budget. Project for Public Spaces produced a report and list of short and long term projects. Simple things like re-lamping the lights with brighter more energy efficient luminaires and re-painting the posts, would greatly enhance the appearance of the Green.

Downtown Streetscape

Street lighting, trash receptacles, bus-shelters, benches and sidewalk condition and textures can make an inviting and pleasant outdoor environment; existing fixtures and their condition could be inventoried, maintained and replaced on necessary on a continual and incremental basis.

Other Parks Projects

Major renovation of Lighthouse Point Park to develop it as the signature park in New Haven and the region. Major improvements would include a renovated Bathhouse Building, picnic pavilions, and a promenade along the beach area, Lighthouse restoration, Shoreline Greenway Trail connection, as well as a bike connection to East Shore Park, and enhanced parking and lighting.

Major improvements to the summit of East Rock Park to develop it as a signature park destination for the region, including enhancement of the Angel of Peace monument area, the lookout area, picnic areas and pathways. Restoration of historic masonry bridges. Possible "tea-room" concession at the summit.

Implementation of the West River Memorial Park Master Plan

Including connection between West River and the reflecting pool to promote tidal flushing of the whole system, construction of a circular path system, bridge to one of the islands, connection to the Tennis Center to the north, and major cleanup and redesign of Marginal Drive. Eliminate CSOs.

Update Parks Master Plan as part of the Comprehensive Plan

Include capital projects budgets, enterprise revenue concepts, and role for volunteers and benefactors.

CSOs

Look at alternative ways to reduce CSO overflow, and to finance them.

Transit

Organize a powerful voice for local transit needs and ideas to speak directly with the state (modeled on the Metro-North commuter organization?). Market transit to persons of all incomes. Get local institutions to participate financially and as constituents in the public system rather than running duplicative parallel services. Improve the customer service orientation of the public system.

Long Wharf Park

Contact: Donna Hall, Senior Project Planner 203-946-7842

Connecticut Department of Transportation and FHWA have committed \$4 million to "Shoreline stabilization" in Long Wharf Park, as part of the Q-Bridge I-95 project FEIS. The department has done some initial work but encountered setbacks caused by Storm Irene and Hurricane Sandy. A request to fund Extra Work was recently approved by CDOT and the City expects project design resume by November 2013.

Key Systems/Processes:

Record Files that should be converted to electronic data base files:

- City Plan Commission
- Board of Zoning Appeals
- Historic District Commission
- Environmental Clearance Record
- Maps: Zoning, Inland Wetlands, Flood-FEMA NFIP
- Historic Resources Inventory

Permit System: Established in Building Department, Planning and Zoning modules not implemented, these would link the systems across departments and make information sharing much easier and more efficient, and reducing permit times for applicants.

Geographic Information System: This important tool is used by many departments but the data needs to be diligently updated and checked for quality, it is rapidly going “stale”. For example the assessor’s data base has not been updated to include new zoning designations. New applications could be developed that are more user friendly. User groups need to meet regularly to exchange information and develop new tools and products for the public. GIS can be linked to permit system for building, planning and zoning permits.

Website Development Maintenance: Largely performed by Department staff, need to develop and add new features and databases

Library of Plans and Maps: Needs cataloging and conversion to digital

System Deficiencies/Attention Required:

Staff: Staff has been reduced from 15 positions to 7 in the last 5 years. This requires the remaining staff to focus on administrative review (required by statute and charter) and less on actual planning. Several neighborhood plans have been started over time, but there is no capacity to complete them. The department also lacks an environmental planner.

Hazard Mitigation Plan: Written in 2005 and revised in 2010, will need an update in 2015. Should be used to develop a priority list of coastal defenses and other actions to mitigate impact of natural disasters.

Coastal resilience planning & implementation should be carried out by a inter-department work group, and an annual budget allocated to begin to work on permitting, design and eventually construction of infrastructure to mitigate impact of sea-level rise.

FEMA/ Sandy/Irene grants and repairs are being carried out by several departments. A small inter-departmental group should focus on these grants ensure the City gets maximum and timely reimbursement.

Information Technology is not up to commercial standards and the City is falling further and further behind in use of software that could improve communication and eventually improve efficiency. The City's use of Groupwise for scheduling makes interface with other scheduling programs difficult. Computers are slow, software is several generations old. This is a huge source of frustration to all staff, and significant time is wasted waiting for slow loading computers. This is particularly noticeable with the large drawing and mapping files.

Website is not regularly patrolled by any person or department and so some pages are significantly out of date.

Permit System integration for the planning and zoning modules has not occurred, leaving both the public and staff dependent on paper file and walking back and forth between departments.

Geographic Information System is not regularly updated, and new applications are not developed. Inaccurate information on unit counts, addresses, and zoning has not been corrected. There is little communication between the multiple departments that use it, no plan to maintain the various information layers, and no effort to develop tools and applications for internal or public use.

Staff Training: There is no budget for staff training, whether it be for getting more functionality out of software, for ethics or for project management. Some professionally licensed staff are required to take Continuing Education Credits to maintain their licenses, and this is not budgeted.