


Date: August 30, 2022

To: Thomas B. Modica, City Manager 

From: Christopher Koontz, Acting Director of Development Services 

For: Mayor and Members of the City Council

Subject: **Update on Development Services Ombudsperson Position**

In January 2022, the Development Services Department (Department), with Long Beach Recovery Act funding, created the temporary Development Services Ombudsperson position (Ombudsperson). The position was designed to assist Permit Center customers through the permitting process, conflict resolution, or concerns related to issues that may arise on individual projects, data collection and to facilitate process improvements for customers and City staff. Ombudsperson services are advertised on the Department's social media platforms and website

The Ombudsperson meets, as needed, with business leaders, frequent customers and other customer advocates as well as proactively with requested associations and the Economic Development Commission to provide program information and services.

The Ombudsperson created and implemented an automated Development Services Permit Center Customer Survey to gather feedback about the services rendered, permitting process, and customer service at the Permit Center. From April to July 2022 the survey was emailed to 2,232 customers who registered and completed an appointment. A total of 246 responses were received. The results of these responses are displayed in Table 1. All responses were measured on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) rating scale.

Table 1: Survey Responses from April to July 2022

Question	Average Score
Staff was responsive to questions?	4.73
Staff provided clear, easily understood information/options to assist with your project?	4.66
The staff member(s) who assisted you was courteous.	4.74
The staff member(s) who assisted you was knowledgeable.	4.66
Please rate your overall level of satisfaction with this Permit Center experience.	4.60

Customers also had the option to ask for the Ombudsperson to contact them for additional information or help regarding their experience at the counter. The ability to contact the Ombudsperson has allowed the Department to troubleshoot issues or facilitate solutions for

individual projects such building permits, business licenses, and code enforcement cases involving permits. For example, a customer reached out to the Ombudsperson expressing the difficulty in obtaining their pool permit at the counter. The Ombudsperson researched the building code requirements for pools and coordinated with the plan check team to help the customer meet the requirements needed to obtain their permit.

The next major undertaking by the Ombudsperson will be creating automated phone surveys to track the effectiveness of customer service provided by the department over the phone.

As additional customer service feedback is collected the Ombudsperson position will develop proactive process improvements. During 2023, staff will evaluate the effectiveness of this position and determine if it warrants being made permanent and structurally supported in future budgets.

If you have any questions, please contact Christopher Koontz, Acting Director of Development Services at (562) 570-6288.

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