

Leon County Board of County Commissioners

Agenda Item

April 4, 2017

To: Honorable Chairman and Members of the Board

From: Vincent S. Long, County Administrator

Title: Department of Development Support and Environmental Management 2017
“Upgrade”

Review and Approval:	Vincent S. Long, County Administrator
Department/ Division Review:	Alan Rosenzweig, Deputy County Administrator
Lead Staff/ Project Team:	Ken Morris, Assistant County Administrator David McDevitt, Director, Development Support & Environmental Management

Statement of Issue:

This item presents a Development Support and Environmental Management (DSEM) “upgrade” rollout to better promote and perform previous process improvements and service offerings put in place in recent years and to launch significant new changes and enhancements to better facilitate both the highest quality service to our customers and the highest quality development for our community.

Fiscal Impact:

This item has a fiscal impact. Funds are available as a result of vacancies within the DSEM and Building Inspection Funds to support the upgrade features described herein for the balance of the current fiscal year. Funding from the DSEM and Building Inspection Funds will be contemplated in the FY 2018 budget to support these ongoing enhancements.

Staff Recommendation:

- Option #1: Accept the County Administrator’s planned upgrade of customer support services at the Department of Development Support and Environmental Management.
- Option #2: Approve the creation of the Chief Development Resources Officer position within the Department of Development Support and Environmental Management.
- Option #3: Direct staff to bring back an agenda item and resolution to formally create the Advisory Committee for Quality Growth and thereby dissolve the existing DSEM User Group.

Report and Discussion

Background:

The County Administrator continuously assesses and seeks opportunities to enhance the capacity of the organization to fulfill its responsibilities to its citizens, carry out the policies, priorities, and vision of the Board of County Commissioners, and to be in a continuous state of better meeting the needs of our customers. Key to Leon County's organizational success to this end has been our commitment to be a listening and learning organization which never forgets that while we are vested with enormous and sometimes complex responsibilities, we are ultimately in the people business.

Among the most important and certainly most difficult functions of county government is administering a regulatory framework (permitting process) which reflects our local growth management policies and the statewide Florida building code. Few people would argue the importance of local growth management policies and processes necessary to: mitigate urban sprawl, protect important environmental features, preserve historic lands and buildings, promote affordable housing, require appropriate public infrastructure to support development, ensure public involvement and avoid the unfortunate and prevalent default development pattern of 21st century America which results in "the geography of nowhere". These issues go directly to the quality of life of our community. However, people differ on growth management policies and processes because they impact them very personally, whether they are sitting in traffic on a congested road or reacting to what they believe to be incompatible development in their neighborhood. Philosophically, individuals may believe that growth management policies and processes may be too restrictive or too permissive and at the same time their individual philosophies may not reconcile with their reactions when those policies or processes impact them personally.

Similarly members of our development industry are impacted personally by our growth management policies and processes. In addition to serving our community at large at DSEM, members of our development industry are important customers. Our men and women at DSEM are a bit like public safety officers who direct traffic, but at the intersection of public policy and private investment. Their jobs are difficult even when traffic is smooth and steady, but it becomes even more so when traffic gets busy. This happens in cycles which correspond to the economy and when more and new "drivers" are added to the roadway. At times like these we tend to hear more complaints about the development process being too complicated and/or time consuming.

As such, times like these provide enormous opportunities to make specific and systematic improvements to our processes to better serve our customers. That is precisely what we have done in the past, however, in times like these it appears that it is also easy to forget that. Instead unfortunately some people tend to revert to a distant notion of development process as one which is intentionally growth averse. In fact, during the last economic boom in the early 2000s, significant improvements were made to our development process to serve our local development industry that are found in few other places in the nation. Perhaps the most emblematic of those being the County and City creating a common permitting software system, consolidating GIS

functions and later establishing countywide minimum environmental standards, and even building the Renaissance Center for no other purpose than to create a one-stop shop for all local planning, permitting and development services.

In response to the burst of the “housing bubble” and the economic downturn leading to the Great Recession which followed, the County took an assessment of the former department known as “Growth and Environmental Management” and was renamed to Development Support and Environmental Management to better reflect the County’s *People Focused, Performance Driven* culture shift and commitment to continuously improve and refine its services with an emphasis on value-added support in the form of staff expertise, technical resources, and customer support to assist the development community in realizing the highest quality development potential. The Great Recession severely impacted the development industry and consumer confidence as a whole, resulting in untold layoffs and the closure of many businesses. To support the local construction industry during this period of uncertainty, the County took strategic steps, including the use of cash reserves, to focus its resources on investing in the community by accelerating the five-year capital improvement program construction schedule to provide immediate employment opportunities through the construction of public infrastructure projects. While others waited due to the down economy, Leon County Government embarked on some of its most ambitious projects such as the Public Safety Complex, Cascades Park, and the construction and expansion of branch libraries. More than \$100 million was invested back into the community through public infrastructure projects creating an estimated 985 jobs and providing an economic bridge for employment opportunities as the nation awaited the recovery of the market.

Throughout the economic recovery, the County continued to listen to our customers and made significant changes to the development review and approval process in order to meet their expectations. Most recently, DSEM has initiated significant process improvements, expanded services offered, launched new technology, and implemented enhancements to streamline development processes and better assist customers (discussed later in this item). However, staff has observed that many of the services offered are not being fully utilized as often as possible, particularly on the front end of the development process, and acknowledge that while many customers regularly express genuine satisfaction and appreciation of the professional level of service and assistance they receive, too many complaints and perceptions persist related to the time and complexity of the development approval process. This upgrade is the next iteration of service enhancement at DSEM which will promote existing services, process improvements, enhance the customer feedback process, offer unparalleled customer service through an “ombudsman” position and higher level professional services to functionally resolve foreseeable problems, offer greater clarity and certainty in our development process, and enhance intergovernmental coordination.

Analysis:

Leon County Government, and DSEM in particular, has a long history of working side by side with local stakeholders to shape and implement the policies that guide development in the community. For example, County Administration and DSEM facilitate regular gatherings with the development community, both formal and informal, to get their input on what the County is doing right, or wrong, and where we can improve as an organization. These efforts include hosting lunch & learn sessions, regular presentations and participation in local trade group meetings, industry training sessions, facilitating the Leon LEADS Listening Sessions, and supporting the Board-appointed DSEM User Group which reviews and offers recommendations on changes to the Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Regulations.

The ongoing communication efforts between DSEM and the end user is vital for the implementation of new programs and enhancement while reinforcing the relevance of managing responsible growth and facilitating the highest quality built and natural environment attainable for our community. A listing of the County’s programs, policies, and service enhancements supporting the development review and approval process is included below. This listing is not exhaustive but demonstrates the level of effort the County has, and continues to place, on fostering a positive and facilitating environment for our local development community:

- No impact fees.
- Eliminated the occupational license tax (also known as ‘the local business tax’) in 2009.
- Suspended the assessment of fees for requests to extend environmental management permits during the Great Recession and again in early 2013 for development related activities.
- Currently exploring mobility fees to replace the concurrency management system which disproportionately penalizes the last development project to a given area based on the lack of available roadway capacity.
- Currently analyzing residential preservation (RP)-designated parcels located inside the urban services area and not in platted subdivisions to determine the appropriate site-specific zoning designation in order to provide greater certainty for future development.
- Developed and implemented the Project Manager Model to ensure continuity during the review process, assist with the seamless facilitation of an integrated team approach to customer service, and provide ongoing reinforcement regarding DSEM’s primary goal of presenting a coordinated and unified team approach to customer service delivery.
- Implemented a dual track review and approval process for new development proposals allowing for concurrent development and environmental review.
- Implemented a conceptual site plan approval process with abbreviated submittal requirements to provide an applicant certain development approval assurances required to market a project and secure financing.
- Expanded web-based permitting services to allow additional classifications of contractors to apply for and receive County permits online.

- Implemented the department-wide utilization of ProjectDox software to allow customers to electronically submit applications (building permits, site and development plans, and environmental permits) and enable staff throughout the department to concurrently review applications in a more time efficient manner.
- Enhanced serve to provide after-hours and weekend building inspection services.
- Provide training sessions at the request of the Tallahassee Builders Association to assist builders in identifying potential environmental site constraints prior to engaging in the building permitting process.
- Hosted Citizen Engagement Series sessions on DSEM and the development review process.
- Integrated low impact development practices into the development review process.
- Developed county-wide minimum environmental standards in accordance with the voter-approved amendment to the County Charter in 2010 to provide consistency.
- Revised the County’s review thresholds for new development proposals which have reduced permitting times as more proposals qualify for the Administrative Streamlined Application Process (ASAP) review and approval by staff.
- Worked with representatives from the solar industry to streamline the review process for proposed solar applications and revised the associated permitting fee assessment methodology which resulted in reduced permitting fees for solar projects.
- Waived building permitting fees following Hurricane Hermine totaling \$21,610 for repairs and building reconstruction activities (89 permits) that resulted from the storm.
- Worked with FEMA to enter the National Flood Insurance’s Community Rating Program, and received a Class 6 Rating for the County. The rating resulted in a 20% savings for individual flood insurance premiums and represents an annual savings to County residents required to purchase flood insurance of nearly \$100,000.
- Recently added a portion of the building permit fee schedule to the onsite permit hard card for easy consumer reference.

This listing of efforts supporting the local business community is extensive and ongoing as the County continuously seeks opportunities to enhance service levels based on customer feedback. Beyond giving presentations and offering training sessions, DSEM went so far as to create a custom ‘Lego Lakes’ simulation game as part of the County’s Citizen Engagement Series to demonstrate to citizens the development review process and “getting to yes”.

At the Board’s most recent retreat in December 2016, facilitating the development review and approval process was again a high priority. As such, the County established a five-year bold goal to reduce the average permitting time for single family homes by 30% from 11 business days to eight. Over the past two fiscal years, single family permits have accounted for 94% of the new construction permits issued in unincorporated Leon County. This trend is anticipated to continue based on the County’s Comprehensive Plan, which implements an Urban Service Area

(USA) concept, and the availability of infrastructure (primarily central sewer service) inside the USA. Therefore, the County determined that focusing on this type of building permit application would be the most beneficial to the citizenry. Staff anticipates that similar stretch goals will ultimately be initiated for commercial and other non-residential permits.

Despite all of this, as previously mentioned there have been recent meetings and newspaper coverage portraying local government as being “not business friendly”. Other negative perceptions associated with the local development process discussed at these meetings and conveyed through local media publications were the overabundance of bureaucratic “red tape” and fears of retribution for speaking out or complaining about the permitting process. The County takes these issues very seriously and acknowledges the need to be constantly evolving to address specific process improvements and perceptions.

This upgrade builds upon the many programs and services offered through DSEM while also acknowledging that we can do more to facilitate assisting customers through the development review and approval process. The core components of this upgrade call for enhanced customer service and outreach efforts including the continual utilization of technology to support the industry coupled with the recognition of the personalized face-to-face customer interaction. This approach to service will be “high tech and high touch” for all paths of customer interaction with DSEM (in-person, over the phone, or online).

This upgrade and relaunch at DSEM includes the reallocation of existing staff resources and the creation of a new position to provide greater facilitation and assistance with the County’s value-added services provided relative to the development review and approval process. The new Chief Development Resources Officer, described later in more detail, will fulfill the long desired need for a senior level planning and development professional, or ombudsman, to be available in a consultant-type role for customers at DSEM. This new position will be a liaison dedicated to provide guidance, offer in-depth navigation and consultation on the development process, charged with managing and enhancing the customer service culture at DSEM, and serve as the County’s point person on development related issues with intergovernmental organizations, industry groups, and business associations to foster these important relationships on an ongoing basis.

The timing of this upgrade and relaunch arrives as the community is experiencing higher levels of developer interest and investment following the Great Recession. In light of this interest, there is a need for professional facilitation of projects at earlier stages of the development process. For example, as the economy continues to improve there will be added pressure to expand the USA and build infill projects affecting existing neighborhoods. The addition of the Chief Development Resources Officer with a strong background in planning and development can help facilitate the highest quality project attainable by consulting with the relevant parties in the earliest stages of the project. The same rationale applies to the ongoing exploration of mobility fees because a new system of transportation concurrency will require significant input, education, and facilitation between the County and the development industry.

Should the Board approve the staff recommendations associated with the upgrade at DSEM, staff will initiate a public rollout explaining and reinforcing these enhancements. More importantly,

these changes will reflect the upgraded service model set forth in the new customer value proposition for DSEM. These elements of the upgrade, along with the physical improvements to the welcome area at DSEM and planned staffing changes to support customer needs, are as follows:

1. DSEM Customer Value Proposition: The new customer value proposition articulates our clear commitment to our customers. Additional and customized training services will be provided to DSEM employees to further reinforce this value proposition.
 - *You are our customers. Whether you are a contractor or a conservationist, we believe that customer service and community stewardship are not mutually exclusive. We believe that by providing the highest quality of customer service, offering value-added professional guidance and technical resources, and ensuring efficiency and clarity at every stage of the development process, we facilitate the highest quality built and natural environment attainable for our community.*
2. Chief Development Resources Officer: DSEM’s extensive stakeholder outreach is chronicled in a previous section of this agenda item but further efforts are needed to alleviate ongoing negative perceptions, continue to build rapport with the development community, and enhance service levels to meet and exceed customer expectations. This upgrade builds upon the many programs offered through DSEM and acknowledges the need for greater facilitation to navigate the County’s value-added service enhancements through the creation of a dedicated liaison specifically available to provide guidance and answer questions about the development review and approval process. The County has already implemented the Project Manager Program to ensure continuity during the development review and permitting process for the more complex projects. The program assists with the seamless facilitation of an integrated team approach to customer service, and provides ongoing reinforcement regarding DSEM’s primary goal of presenting a coordinated and unified team approach to customer service delivery. The proposed Chief Development Resources Officer will be a senior planning and development professional with expertise in the development review and permitting process but will not be responsible for processing development plan concepts or associated permits. Instead, the Chief Development Resources Officer will offer the in-depth navigation and consultation-type services sought by DSEM customers that will help facilitate the highest quality project attainable for our community. This is a natural progression for the Project Manager Program and positive next step for DSEM by providing an additional level of assistance and mediation support for proposed development projects that require inter-departmental, inter-jurisdictional, or inter-agency coordination.

In addition to serving as a dedicated liaison for customer development needs, the Chief Development Resources Officer will continuously engage customers to identify process improvements with the goal of making the review process as straightforward and effortless as possible. To be successful, this position will have great autonomy to assess and identify process improvements and will be empowered to resolve issues on behalf of customers. Beyond face-to-face interactions with customers at DSEM, the Chief Development Resources Officer will proactively engage the development community and trade groups on behalf of the County and serve as the point person on intergovernmental coordination and improvements related to development services. This new position will be located

immediately adjacent to the welcome area at DSEM to supervise customer service matters and will be empowered to champion process improvements on behalf of customers. Further explanation of the duties and responsibilities of this new position are as follows:

- Serve as an ombudsman and in-house consultant to customers through proactive assistance in navigating the development review and building permitting processes.
- A dedicated liaison empowered to resolve customer service issues, work with staff to proactively identify project solutions, and make presentations to local trade groups, associations, and community organizations.
- Continuous evaluation of customer experience and opportunities for process improvements including policy modifications, land development regulation changes, utilization of new technologies, and enhanced customer interaction.
- Greater customer relations care including face-to-face interactions and follow up phone calls to ensure that customer expectations are being met.
- Coordinate and reinforce customer service training and values throughout DSEM.
- Staffing the restructured Advisory Committee for Quality Growth, subject to Board approval, currently known as the DSEM User Group (described in more detail in #4).
- Participation in the TBA’s Annual North Florida Home Show and coordination with TBA in advance of their Annual Parade of Homes to ensure that all of their permits have been issued in a timely manner in order to present their new inventory.
- Host open house events at DSEM for industry professionals.
- Manage, update, and make improvements to the DSEM website to ensure that it is user-friendly and details all of the available value-added services.
- Regular submission of brief Did-You-Know summaries of County development services and market trends for industry electronic newsletters.

The County Administrator has identified an ideal internal candidate, Barry Wilcox, to serve in this role and lead the relaunch at DSEM. Mr. Wilcox presently serves as the Comprehensive Plan and Urban Design Manager for the joint Planning Department and holds a master’s degree in Urban and Regional Planning. Already familiar with the County’s development approval process and many of the area stakeholders, Mr. Wilcox also brings nine years of private sector experience to the position in addition to professional certifications from the American Institute of Certified Planners and the U.S. Green Building Council. Prior to joining the Planning Department, Mr. Wilcox served as a Senior Project Manager and Director of Planning for two of the top multi-disciplinary development consulting firms in Central Florida. Respected by his professional peers, Mr. Wilcox serves on the executive committee of the Florida Chapter of the American Planning Association (APA Florida) and is the current Chairman of the Capital Area Section of APA Florida. His expertise, genial personality, communication style, and ability to relate to customer

perspectives given his private sector experience, fully aligns with the customer value proposition and will result in a successful upgrade at DSEM.

3. Customer Experience Liaison: DSEM receives a significant amount of phone calls and walk-in traffic on matters each day relating to development review and environmental permitting, official records, building plans review, etc. Currently, one person is stationed at the front desk to greet customers and serve as the primary receptionist for incoming phone calls (secondary and tertiary staff are utilized on a daily basis for phone and customer support). To better serve incoming customers, the primary call-taker will be moved to the back office area. This will lessen the call volume for the secondary and tertiary receptionists while also providing a dedicated person in the welcome area to assist customers face-to-face. The newly titled Customer Experience Liaison will be the first point of contact for an arriving customer at DSEM, entrusted to actively and immediately engage the customer in support of their efforts.

In order to successfully assist a novice seeking their first permit or an experienced developer with detailed site plans, the Customer Experience Liaison must be well versed in the County’s development processes and demonstrate the County’s core values relating to customer service. This position can be achieved through a realignment of existing personnel at DSEM. To serve in this important new role the County Administrator has selected Pam Scott, Sr. Administrative Associate under the DSEM Director, with 15 years of outstanding service to Leon County Government. Ms. Scott’s friendly demeanor, professionalism, along with her high level understanding of the development process and familiarity with staff will be able to marshal the necessary resources to facilitate the desired customer-centric environment at DSEM.

4. DSEM Office and Welcome Area: Based on input through the County LEADS process and members of the Tallahassee Builders Association, the DSEM suite at the Renaissance Center has recently been renovated to reflect a more professional, welcoming, and customer-oriented support area. Attachment #1 provides a few illustrations of the welcome area prior to any renovations. Although the recent renovations at DSEM offer a refreshing physical space and future improvements are planned for the adjacent records room, staff identified several opportunities to further convey the County’s commitment to customer service, efficiency, clarity, and providing technical resources throughout the development process. Attachment #2 offers conceptual renderings to aesthetically showcase the array of County services specifically designed to provide value-added support for development activity and reinforce the County’s vision, mission, and core practices. Additional enhancements displayed in the conceptual renderings include:
 - Signage to better welcome customers, reinforce the emphasis on customer service, and encourage feedback to thereby enhance the customer experience.
 - A television monitor to display service information, tutorials, testimonials and infographics relevant to the development industry including market trend data compiled by DSEM and the Office of Economic Vitality. For example, many customers are unaware that DSEM’s webpage includes average timelines based on the permit type, an uncommon practice among local government permitting agencies.

5. Advisory Committee for Quality Growth: To better reflect the need for a broader and continual examination of the development approval process, this upgrade includes a complete overhaul and restructuring of the County’s 14-member DSEM Citizen User Group (Attachment #3) including the renaming of this volunteer body as the *Advisory Committee for Quality Growth*.

The *Advisory Committee for Quality Growth* will serve as a standing committee made up of development industry professionals and community stakeholders to provide continuous feedback and guidance to DSEM on process improvements, service enhancements, and regulatory policies which support the highest quality growth and development attainable for our community. The responsibilities of this advisory committee will place a greater emphasis on proactive input and feedback for all development review and approval matters. Each member will be appointed by the full Board through a nomination process involving several stakeholder organizations that will continue to impose certain eligibility criteria for the now 15-member advisory committee as follows:

Table #1: Proposed Membership Structure for the Advisory Committee for Quality Growth

Seat #	Eligibility Criteria	Nominating Organization(s)
Seat 1	A person who is engaged in providing development, planning, or environmental-related consulting services.	Tallahassee Builders Association
Seat 2	A person who is engaged as a real estate professional or represents a real estate-related organization or association.	Tallahassee Builders Association
Seat 3	A person who is involved with commercial development.	Tallahassee Builders Association
Seat 4	A person who is involved with residential single family development.	Tallahassee Builders Association
Seat 5	A person who is employed by the university or local school system.	N/A
Seat 6	A person who serves on a neighborhood association board or represents a neighborhood-based organization.	Council of Neighborhood Associations
Seat 7-8	A person employed by, or represents, a community-based or environment-related organization.	N/A
Seats 9-11	Any resident of Leon County	N/A
Seats 12-15	A person who represents a business association or organization.	The three Chambers of Commerce, Network of Entrepreneurs & Business Advocates

Should the Board approve this recommendation, staff will bring back an agenda item and resolution at the next Commission meeting to formally create this advisory committee and to dissolve the existing DSEM Citizen User Group. The *Advisory Committee for Quality Growth* would be staffed by the new Chief Development Resources Officer and immediately charged with providing continuous feedback and input on the overall customer experience at

DSEM including proposed process improvements, customer service and desired regulatory enhancements.

6. Public Information Roll Out: As part of the DSEM upgrade, Community and Media Relations will conduct an extensive public information campaign to educate and engage businesses, citizens, community partners, and local media. The campaign will describe why and how the upgrades improve customer service, efficiency, clarity, and resources. If approved by the Board, Community and Media Relations will execute the following communications plan:

- Immediately issue a County news release describing the upgrade to citizens, businesses, and media.
- Submit a My View to the Tallahassee Democrat.
- Coordinate with partners to include DSEM upgrade information in community partner newsletters including, but not limited to, various homeowners associations, Council of Neighborhood Associations, business partners and associations, Office of Economic Vitality, as well as the Greater Tallahassee Chamber of Commerce.
- Schedule an open house to showcase not only the physical features and updates in the DSEM lobby, but also to introduce citizens and business partners to the upgrade service delivery and staff who will help them at all phases of a project.
- Participate in the Tallahassee Builders Association's 2017 Parade of Homes in early May.
- Produce short video testimonials that serve to highlight DSEM resources and services, as well as the new upgraded service model; these videos would be featured on social media and the County's television station.
- Use the May County Link advertisement in both the Tallahassee Democrat and the Capital Outlook to announce the DSEM upgrade, resources, and key information about the improvements.
- Distribute printed material on the County's online printed portal and other services.
- Produce and schedule radio spots to highlight the upgrade and inform citizens about online and in-person resources.
- Create informational content for the County's Comcast and CenturyLink channels.
- Create engaging social media content to highlight resources and service delivery.

Conclusion

Among the most important and certainly most difficult functions of county government is administering a regulatory framework (permitting process) which reflects our local growth management policies and the statewide Florida building code. Few people would argue the importance of local growth management policies and processes which go directly to the quality of life in our community. However, people differ on growth management policies and processes because they impact them very personally, believing they are either too restrictive or too permissive. These personal beliefs are escalated during periods of rapid development activity

which occur in cycles that correspond with the economy and steer new development and new developers to perceive that the development process is too complicated and/or time consuming. It is important to underscore that times like these provide enormous opportunities to make specific and systematic improvements to our processes to better serve our customers. That is precisely what we have done in the past; however, it appears that it is also easy to forget as some people unfortunately tend to revert to a distant notion of the development process as one which is intentionally growth averse.

In addition to serving our community at-large, members of our development industry are important customers whom are impacted personally by our growth management policies and processes. As demonstrated throughout this analysis, Leon County Government has a long history of working side by side with local stakeholders to shape and implement the policies that guide development in the community. The *People Focused, Performance Driven* culture requires a continuous assessment and self-examination of the capacity of the organization to fulfill its responsibilities to its citizens and carry out the policies, priorities, and vision of the Board of County Commissioners. Again, significant improvements that are found in few other places in the nation were made to our development process during the last economic boom in the early 2000s to serve our local development industry. Further, DSEM initiated significant process improvements, expanded services offered, launched new technology, and implemented enhancements to streamline development processes and better assist customers. As previously mentioned, staff has observed that many of the services offered are not being fully utilized as often as possible, particularly on the front end of the development process, and acknowledge that while many customers regularly express genuine satisfaction and appreciation of the professional level of service and assistance they receive, too many complaints and perceptions persist related to the time and complexity of the development approval process.

The DSEM upgrade and relaunch presented herein is the next iteration of service enhancement at DSEM which will promote existing services, process improvements, better incorporate citizens and professionals in the development process, offer unparalleled customer service through an “ombudsman” position and higher level professional services to functionally resolve foreseeable problems, offer greater clarity and certainty in our development process, and enhance coordination with intergovernmental and trade association stakeholders. It represents the County’s commitment as a listening and learning organization continuously in search of better meeting the needs of our customers by refining its services with an emphasis on value-added support in the form of staff expertise, technical resources, and customer assistance to aid the development community in realizing the highest quality development potential. Customers can expect to experience a high tech and high touch approach to the development review and approval process with a greater emphasis on personalized face-to-face interactions and follow-up phone calls to ensure customer satisfaction.

The timing of this upgrade arrives as the community is experiencing higher levels of developer interest and investment following the Great Recession. In light of this interest, the DSEM upgrade will be implemented immediately in order to satisfy the need for prudent facilitation of projects at earlier stages of the development process, alleviate ongoing negative perceptions, continue to build rapport with the development community, and enhance service levels to meet and exceed customer expectations. And finally, the upgrade calls for a restructuring of the

advisory body on development matters to engage trade groups, business associations, and interested stakeholders in a collective forum to continuously examine the entirety of the development review and approval process and provide guidance to staff on process improvements, service enhancements, and regulatory policies which support the highest quality development attainable for our community. The participation of these groups and proactive identification of evolving customer needs and service enhancements will further support the County’s commitment to refine our services to better meet customer expectations. This upgrade is not the first example, and will not be the last, to demonstrate our commitment to significant and continuous improvements to meet the needs of our customers and reaffirm that customer service and stewardship are not mutually exclusive.

Options:

1. Accept the County Administrator’s planned upgrade of customer support services at the Department of Development Support and Environmental Management.
2. Approve the creation of the Chief Development Resources Officer position within the Department of Development Support and Environmental Management.
3. Direct staff to bring back an agenda item and resolution to formally create the Advisory Committee for Quality Growth and thereby dissolve the existing DSEM User Group.
4. Board direction.

Recommendation:

Options #1, #2 & #3.

Attachments:

1. DSEM welcome area prior to renovations.
2. Renovated DSEM welcome area with design concept enhancements.
3. Overview of the existing Development Support and Environmental Management Citizens User Group.