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Comments/Recommendations on "Universal Planning Notification" Draft Proposal (7/9/09)

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Building Permit Application/Discretionary Review

- Section 311/312: Final comments TBD. Transition to online plans may be okay as a long term goal, but there is concern that for many people and even some organizations this may be technically/logistically difficult and may be dis-incentivizing for public awareness and participation. Instead we recommend an initial "opt in" system that allows organizations and individuals to choose to receive on-line plans. There should still be an explicit allowance for hard copy plans upon request. There should also be clear procedure for a household to opt out again, for example if the occupancy changes and the new occupants do not prefer the on-line option. This opt-in approach will allow the transition to on-line plans as a standard to be gradual and un-intimidating for the general public.
- Section 311/312: add to the notification the identification of local Neighborhood Associations and relevant Community Advisory Committees (if applicable to site).
- Section 311/312: final comments on the question of whether garage permit applications warrant 311/312 notification is still TBD and at this time should be left open as the UPN proposal continues to be drafted. (Planning Dept is supposed to review garage additions if the building is historic but no public review or notification standards are currently applied). At minimum garage additions should be subject to the department's new Pre-Application requirement.
- Public Initiated Discretionary Review Hearings: add to the notification the identification of local Neighborhood Associations and relevant Community Advisory Committees (if applicable to site).
- Reduced 311/312: These are new. Concept makes sense, need to see detailed definition of "minor projects" before supporting; 10 day short-notice period may be too short (final comments TBD pending more detailed proposal from Planning Dept)

Public Hearings for Entitlements

- Notices should have all the same content and format standards as for 311/312 notices (consistency--a project is a project from the community's perspective regardless of how it is permitted/approved within the system)

- Final comments on 20 days notice period or 30 days (which would be same as for 311/312 notices) is TBD; if project is subject to department's new Pre-Application requirement, then that *may* be a case for the shorter (20 day) hearing notice period. If not, then 30 days notice for hearing should be the standard.

Other Notifications

- BBN: The BBN option should be retained. It is an important tool to track activity for specific sites/areas that are outside someone's or an organization's immediate radius of notification.

General Standards

- Basics: "Basics" info about a project should follow same general format and content standards as current 311/312 notices, with modifications and improvements as already noted in the department's draft proposal and recommendations/comments here. The General Standards should also aim to improve consistency in the completeness and clarity of the project descriptions provided in the notices, particularly the description of proposed changes.
- Specifications for project plans, both content and quality--department's intake checklist should be carefully scrutinized for each project application to ensure compliance with plans specifications. (Goal is to make the plans legible, understandable and consistent for general public on receiving end.)
- Online Plans: Floor plans should continue to be available for all projects which currently require floor plans, either upon request and/or available through on-line access.