

Who's on staff?

Eight of 13 planned Community Development staff members have joined the city.
The staff, along with their key duties are:



Steinhauser

Cindy Steinhauser, director
 • Develop and direct department staff
 • Guide day-to-day decision-making processes
 • Provide direction for coordinated and collaborative services



Pries

Jeremy Pries, zoning compliance liaison
 • Enforce City of Rochester zoning compliance
 • Provide zoning approval for contractors
 • Provide guidance and educating residences on zoning codes



Sosa

Allison Sosa, planning supervisor
 • Supervise a team of development review planners
 • Provide answer to development-related questions posed by the community



Smith

Jessica Smith, administrative assistant II
 • Process planning applications
 • Create meeting agenda packets
 • Send/publish notifications of public hearings
 • Triage phone calls/emails



Patterson-Lundgren

Molly Patterson-Lundgren, principal planner
 • Assist property owners and developers with understanding code requirements
 • Review and analyze submitted applications and development plans
 • Advise Planning and Zoning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals with development reviews and ordinance amendments



Yetzer

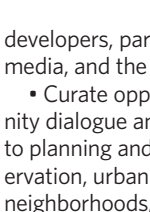
Ryan Yetzer, principal planner
 • Maintain and update City zoning ordinances and City policies
 • Complete development and site plan review
 • Answer development and zoning questions from citizens and developers

• Make recommendations to various City Boards, Commissions, Committees and the City Council
 • Manage various Community Development projects and initiatives



Oslund

Sarah Oslund, communications and engagement coordinator
 • Facilitate clear, consistent communication occurs between the Community Development Department and developers, partners, stakeholders, the media, and the community at-large
 • Curate opportunities for community dialogue and engagement related to planning and zoning, heritage preservation, urban design, sustainability, neighborhoods, and more
 • Content development for the website, department collateral, social media, etc.
 • Participate in city- and county-wide communications groups to share pertinent info



McGeough

Desmond McGeough, planner
 • Provide assistance to developers and citizens on development approval requirements.
 • Review plans and prepare reports on development requests.
 • Ensure compliance with zoning and other development codes.
 • Present findings for variances, exceptions, conditional use permits, site plan reviews and similar current planning applications.
 • Assist the public with planning and zoning questions.
 A sustainability coordinator is set to start mid-July, as efforts continue to hire an urban design/heritage preservation coordinator, two more planners and an administrative assistant.

A one-stop shop

City planning and development will be overseen from former Think Bank building

BY RANDY PETERSEN
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Allison Sosa has had one foot in county government and one foot in City Hall in recent weeks.

The former planner for the Rochester-Olmsted Consolidated Planning Department has been gradually merging into her new role as planning supervisor in Rochester's Community Development Department.

"I think it's going well," Sosa said. "It's obviously a pretty big undertaking."

Having more than two years of experience in the consolidated office as a county employee, Sosa said her history with the county staff has been beneficial. The transition has also allowed her to take on planning oversight of new projects so the work transfers more smoothly between offices.

Sosa is one of two county employees who moved to the city department in an effort to move work related to new development reviews and other specific planning efforts under the sole purview of the city.

Ryan Yetzer, a former planner in the consolidated department, is now a principal planner for the city.

Much of the work the two former county staffers faced in the consolidated department will remain the same. Sosa will move from working directly on planning reviews to supervising a team of five planners doing the work. For now, she said, she will continue to attend Rochester Planning and Zoning Commission meetings when projects are presented.

Meanwhile, Yetzer has remained a key figure in recent zoning discussions as the city looks at a land-use manual update. He will continue to work with city zoning ordinances and policies, while also working on development and site plan reviews.

SOMETHING NEW

Others among the emerging 13-person department staff are new to the local planning efforts, with some recruited from with-



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Allison Sosa, community development planning supervisor, gives a presentation at the Planning and Zoning Commission on Wednesday at the council chambers in Rochester.

in the city and others drawn to Rochester.

Cindy Steinhauser, who started as the city's first Community Development Department director in December, said the recruiting efforts were more challenging than expected.

"If there's been a little bit of a bump, it's recognizing how tight the workforce is and who we are competing against," she said of the process of developing a new department in less than a year.

Still, she added that the opportunity to be part of something new attracted many of the members of the new staff.

"They are excited to be part of starting something up, helping to lay the path," she said.

That new path will involve emerging changes in how work related to new development is handled.

For developers and their consultants, it means more trips to City Hall, where the Community Development team is temporarily housed in Public Works offices.

Anyone filing paperwork for annexations, zoning changes or development plans and permits will need to start at the City Hall office, even as new house permits and other building permits are initiated at Building Safety, which will remain on the county campus at 2122 Campus Drive SE through January.

ON THE MARCH

The plan is to move the three departments — Community Development, Public Works and Building Safety — under a single roof by the end of March.

On Monday, the Rochester City Council supported a plan to start renovation on a portion of the existing North Police Precinct building at 4001 West River Parkway NW in August, to create offices for the three departments. Building Safety offices are expected to be complete by February, with the remaining offices becoming available a couple months later.

With a total estimated cost of \$22 million, the project also includes creating new space for a larger portion of the police department to be housed at the West River Parkway location.

Until the new location is ready for the planned one-stop development shop, Steinhauser said the departments are looking to find efficiencies to make a smooth transition.

With Public Works, that means sharing office space and some staff from the start.

When it comes to Building Safety, concerns have been raised regarding the separation of work that once was housed in the same county building at 2122 Campus Drive SE. Steinhauser and Building Safety Director

Randy Johnson worked out an arrangement that lets Building Safety staff sign off for planners on routine permits, even though some work will still require the departments to exchange documents.

Both supervisors said the new process will make things easy for homeowners or contractors seeking permits, but it also allows staff to overcome potential barriers in their work, exposing them to a larger part of the process.

Steinhauser said that exposure will continue once more staff in the three departments are able to share space and discuss potential obstacles found in the current system.

The cooperation between city departments in a single location will provide an avenue to fairness and defined expectations for developers, homeowners and others in the community, she added.

"One-stop shop is about the customer experience, it's about technology, it's about continuous improvement, it's about performance measures so you are holding yourself accountable," Steinhauser said, noting new efforts will be rolled out as work continues. "I think these are all good first steps, but we need to continue moving forward."

Where do I get my building permit?

That and other common questions (and answers)

BY RANDY PETERSEN
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As Rochester's Community Development Department has been gearing up for new duties starting Monday, several questions have emerged.

Here are some of the answers that have been provided in various forms:

What changes Monday?

All planning and zoning applications and permits for projects within Rochester city limits will be processed through the new Community Development Department, which is temporarily housed in the Public Works Department in City Hall, 201 Fourth St. SE.

Does that mean I need to go to City Hall with my paperwork?

Projects requiring planning and development review will be handled at City Hall, but building permits typically handled by Rochester Building Safety will continue to be started at the office located in the Olmsted County campus at 2122 Campus Drive SE.

Building Safety is slated to remain at that site through January, when it plans to move into new offices being built in the Rochester Police Department's north precinct building, 4001 West River Parkway NW.

Community Development and Public Works are expected to move to the remodeled space by April, putting all three departments in the same location for the first time.

Does that mean a building permit will require two stops until the shift

is made?

While planning staff has been required to sign off on permits in the past, a new process has been initiated to allow Building Safety staff to sign off on some projects for Community Development planners.

"We are committed to not making it difficult to the end user," Community Development Director Cindy Steinhauser said.

Building Safety Director Randy Johnson said the added review in his office will require minimal added time, since his staff already handles the documents.

While many projects will be able to be handled within the same day at the Building Safety office, some items, such as some garages or decks, could require a review at both locations. For that, the applicant can make a trip to City Hall or give staff a day to move the paperwork between the two offices.

Will I need to pay for parking to attend a pre-development meeting?

One of the benefits seen at the consolidated planning site was ample free parking for contractors who often show up with large vehicles.

Steinhauser said the Community Development Department has arranged use of the Rochester Public Utilities community room, 4000 East River Road NE, for weekly pre-development meetings so contractors and others can meet with staff from various departments without need to plug a parking meter at City Hall.

What happens to projects already underway?

Ben Griffith, director of the Rochester-Olmsted Consolidated Planning Department, said county planning staff has made a conscious effort to direct land-

use applications to city planners in recent months.

He said the goal is to make sure the same planner is working on a project throughout the shift between city and county governments.

"The customer and/or applicant should see a seamless transition when the city planners currently at 2122 (Campus Drive SE) begin operating at City Hall beginning on July 1," he said.

How many people stayed with the county?

Olmsted County administrators stated early in the transition process that no planning department staff would be required to take city jobs and none were expected to be cut from the county payroll.

Since the transition started, two county staff members took jobs with the city's Community Development team. Two other county planning staffers took jobs elsewhere, and one staff member retired. A sixth position was reduced when Griffith moved from being the assistant director to the director and his previous post was eliminated.

It leaves the county department with the equivalent of 32 county employees.

What will the county staff do?

In recent months, the city and county have been working on an agreement to better define the responsibility of each entity.

While the city is taking over review of new development, the county staff will largely remain responsible for long-range planning in and out of the city, including providing support for the Rochester Olmsted Council of Governments, which reviews transportation projects using federal funds.

Griffith has noted the transition will also allow county staff

to increase support for townships and smaller cities in the county.

The final agreement defining duties is expected to be sent to Olmsted County commissioners for approval on Tuesday, with plans to send it to the Rochester City Council later in the month.

How big is the city staff?

The Community Development Department is designed with 13 people, including the director.

So far, eight staff members are on board with a sustainability coordinator set to start mid-July.

Efforts continue on hiring an urban design/heritage preservation coordinator, two more planners and an administrative assistant.

In addition to dedicated Community Development staff, the department is also sharing two Public Works staff for office coordination and administrative duties.

Who's funding the added city staff?

Rochester Deputy Administrator Aaron Parrish said the projected cost for the department's first full year is nearly \$1.87 million, with an estimated \$571,200 being collected in development fees, which had been sent to the county. It will leave a cost of nearly \$1.3 million to cover.

Parrish said funding plans remain fluid as the 2020 budget is prepared, but noted a Downtown Abatement District levy is set to expire this year and would free up approximately \$1 million in potential tax capacity.

Additionally, he said restructuring this year added urban design/heritage preservation coordinator and sustainability coordinator position, which repurposed resources from an open administration position and some grant funding.