MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of County Commissioners
           Gary Schmidt, County Administrator

FROM: Cheryl Bell; Assistant Director, Development

DATE: August 3, 2021

RE: Development Direct – DTD's New Online Permitting and Plan Review
           System

We are excited to share with the Board an update on the Department of Transportation and Development's (DTD) new permitting and plan review software system – *Development Direct*. With *Development Direct,* scheduled to go live in August, our customers will be able to complete online the entire process of applying for and receiving Building, Electrical, Mechanical, Plumbing, Site Development, Right of Way and Utility permits. (We plan to add Septic and Land Use permits to the system in 2022.)

Background

DTD's Land Use and Permitting line of business serves as the permitting authority for all unincorporated Clackamas County and several cities in the County (by intergovernmental agreement). In fiscal year 2020/2021, this work involved more than 674,000 customer interactions and processing more than 22,000 development-related permits. That resulted in more than 6.7 million square feet of constructed space at a value of approximately $384 million.

Prior to the pandemic, the department relied on paper submittals of permit applications and supporting documents. This was challenging because up to seven internal workgroups, and a variety of outside service districts, might need to review the materials. Our customers were required to facilitate the process by driving to County offices and walking through up to seven work areas to submit their applications and plans.

With the onset of COVID-19, DTD Land Use and Permitting rapidly deployed a digital submittal solution as an interim measure that has been used for more than a year, but it was not designed for the long term. Our customers have become accustomed to digital submittals and, based upon their positive feedback, we realized it would be difficult to go back to paper submittals. In light of this and the many other advantages a digital solution provides, on July 23, 2020, at DTD's request the Board approved entering into a contract with Avolve Software to purchase an electronic plans review platform – what we now call *Development Direct*.

Benefits of Development Direct Online Services

Development Direct will provide our customers with even more time-saving and efficient ways to manage their projects, and allow our staff to be more efficient, more sustainable, and more resilient in how we deliver services to our customers.

- Electronic services allow customers to view their project's status in real time, 24/7, from wherever they are.

- Electronic services provide customers the freedom to apply for and manage permits when it's convenient for them, eliminating the need to visit the Red Soils Campus for permitting, which saves them time and money.

- As we have learned from the global pandemic and other regional disasters, the ability to continue to provide our services efficiently and quickly -- even if we cannot provide them in-person -- provides important resilience for our customers and DTD.

- We will still provide personalized service to help our customers be successful, but will be able to provide it when and where our customers need it.

Customers Without Digital Access

While all permits will be processed electronically, we understand that online services don't work for everyone. Therefore, we will offer several options to assist our customers.

- *Permit center:* We are establishing a Development Direct kiosk in our permitting lobby on the second floor of the Development Services Building. At this kiosk we will help customers scan a limited-size drawing package, upload files, and navigate the online application and payment screens.

- *Support for customers without internet:* For people without a computer or internet access, our staff will be available to provide individual support in person or by telephone.

Training

While this type of system will be familiar to some of our customers, especially business customers who work with many different jurisdictions, we know it will be a change and a challenge for many others as they get started. Therefore, we are offering several ways for customers to learn how to use Development Direct.

- Advance notice: We are spreading the word that this new system will be launched later in August, through a Coming Soon website (https://www.clackamas.us/development-direct), social media, signage and notices in emails.

- Website: Our web pages will include detailed instructions for people to follow to help them use the new system, as well as ways they can contact staff for assistance, and access to the 68-page user manual.

- Webinars: We will host a free, live *Intro to Development Direct* webinar, publicized through our web site, direct customer emails, social media and a press release.

- Customized services: We will work with customers to provide personalized or group trainings to meet their needs.