

## **Counter Service Hours for Planning, Building and Public Works to Change**

In an effort to improve customer service, the Departments of Planning & Building and Public Works are implementing a pilot program which will change counter service hours, effective February 28, 2022. Counter service includes unscheduled inquiries at the counter as well as by phone and email. This is a pilot program, which will be effective into the fall of 2022. The new hours will be:

Monday through Thursday: 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Friday, Saturday and Sunday: closed

The Planning & Building Department and the Department of Public Works are focused on providing the highest levels of customer service to the Piedmont community, but the past two years have placed unprecedented strain and demands on the departments. The result is a backlog of building permit applications.

“Customer Service is about more than just being open and available to the public. It is also a function of how quickly we can efficiently process permit applications and approval,” said Planning & Building Director Kevin Jackson. “In order to improve customer service overall while maintaining our high standard for responding to inquiries, the Planning & Building and Public Works Departments will remain open for unscheduled service during the lunch hour Monday through Thursday and devoting ourselves entirely to permit processing on Fridays. These hours are consistent with those provided by other cities in the Bay Area. We’re also seeking to hire two part-time staff to accelerate building permit review.”

This change in counter service hours is being made in conjunction with technology upgrades, available later this year, which will allow residents to submit permit and project applications, service requests, as well as pay business license taxes online. With this forthcoming system, project plans will be submitted, reviewed, and approved in digital, rather than paper format. In addition, community members will no longer have to carve out time during the workday and make a trip to City Hall to engage with staff, review documents, ask for a pothole to be fixed, or request other services.

“Once the technology upgrades are fully implemented, we will be better placed to determine if the changes to counter service hours should end or continue,” Mr. Jackson added. “The operational changes forced upon us by the COVID pandemic affected services greatly and made technological upgrades more urgent. Thankfully, the City Council has been proactive in approving technological advances in all departments, ushering our ability to serve the community even farther into the twenty-first century. In the coming months and years the interim changes and long-term improvements will merge into a greatly enhanced customer service experience.”