



January 21, 2021

Ms. Daphne Hooper  
City Manager  
City of Fernley  
595 Silver Lace Blvd.  
Fernley, NV 89408

Dear Ms. Hooper:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide more information about Management Partners' services, specifically how we review the way the City is organized and executes its delivery of development review and our methodology for recommending improvements. Periodic review of important and complex service delivery systems to ascertain what is working well and where opportunities for improvement exist is a best practice in municipal management. This letter outlines our approach to examining Fernley's development review function so it can work better for both the employees who are responsible for it and for the public served by it.

Before I describe our workplan, I would like to tell you more about our firm, including our qualifications, experience, and expertise.

## **About Management Partners**

Management Partners was founded in 1994 with a specific mission to help local government leaders improve their service to the public. Since then, we have worked with cities, counties, towns, and special districts of all sizes across the United States to help them work more effectively and run more efficiently.

We offer a balance of perspectives with a practitioner's bias and a proven track record of successful consulting engagements. This experience gives us a sensitivity that produces positive outcomes. We are proud to say that as a result of our quality work, many of our clients ask us to complete subsequent assignments.

- *We Know Local Government.* Our associates have served in local governments, so we have a deep understanding of the operating and political environments in which you work.
- *We Take a Collaborative Approach.* We consider ourselves part of your team and strive to ensure our work supports your overall corporate strategy and goals.
- *We Have Extensive Experience.* Each of our more than 100 associates is an expert in one or more service areas, and our firm has assisted hundreds of jurisdictions in 42 states.
- *We Have Developed Proven Methodologies.* We understand the importance of a holistic approach to improving organizations, using field-tested methods for each aspect of the work.
- *Our Work Plan is Tailored to Your Needs.* Each of our projects is individually tailored to our client's unique needs, starting with a careful learning process.

- *We Take Pride in the Quality of Our Work.* Our internal processes ensure first-rate, complete staff work and adherence to the highest of ethical standards in public service.
- *We Are Focused on Implementation.* As practitioners, our recommendations make practical sense and are able to be implemented.
- *We Provide a Full Suite of Services.* Management Partners' services include everything required to support local government leaders, including organization assessments, performance management, process improvement, strategic planning, and financial planning, budgeting and analysis.

## **Development Review Process**

The development review process is a highly visible and complex function of a city. The significant resources the private sector devotes to develop property requires a particular sensitivity to the time and quality of the city's review work for both residential and commercial developments. Finding a balance between the public policy and legal requirements of such work, and the need for frequent users of the development review process to feel they are well-served by it, is the challenge faced by cities across the country.

Management Partners has extensive experience assisting local governments in optimizing their development review processes. We are focused on results and have a bias for action. This focus is especially important when reviewing the components of a business process as complex as development review, with its many discrete functions in different city departments.

We propose to conduct a comprehensive review of development-related processes from pre-application to public hearing/approval using a proven methodology to address issues throughout the process. Our approach goes beyond diagnosis and study to include a focused decision-making and implementation process so the desired improvements become part of the city's business processes.

The City of Fernley was incorporated in 2001 and has been one of the fastest growing cities in Nevada during the last several decades, from a population of 5,164 in 1990 to an estimated 21,674 in 2020. Development has also been brisk, with the total assessed value rising from \$586 million in 2017 to \$881 million in 2021. The scope and pace of development requires a review process that meets the needs of developers, protects the interests of residents, and engages employees in fine-tuning processes to be most efficient and effective. The result is better application submittals, reviews, inspections, and customer service.

The approach we describe below contemplates using a facilitated workshop based on the GE Work-Out™ technique, which was originally designed by General Electric to quickly identify and implement operational improvements to drive decision-making and implementation. We recommend this approach for two reasons – executable implementation decisions are made and carried out with maximum appropriate speed, and they are settled on with full consultation with and involvement of your key staff members who actually do the work.

Once the recommendations have been approved, we support implementation with detailed action planning and a structured "check-in" after the basic work is completed, which provides an opportunity to confirm that the intended progress has been implemented and to fine tune the remaining tasks.



## Proposed Work Plan

### Activity 1 – Start Project

Management Partners begins this project by meeting with the key staff to finalize our proposed scope of work and schedule. During this initial meeting we will want to discuss the business concerns giving rise to the project. In this way the plan of work and schedule can be precisely tailored, applying sensitivity to the needs and circumstances of City staff.

The project startup activity forms the foundation of our relationship with the City and provides a setting for Fernley's project team and Management Partners' team members to meet and discuss relevant background information about the project. We will confirm the project activities, staff and stakeholder interview schedule and locations, project deliverables and due dates to ensure the project is completed on time and on budget.

We understand that the work associated with this project is in addition to the normal work of the City in general and the staff who carry out development-related activities. Our goal is to integrate our work activities in a manner that is thoughtful, thereby minimizing disruption to the divisions that are the focus of this effort.

### Activity 2 – Analyze the Process

We begin by learning how the city currently operates and understanding the history and nature of the work arrangements in place. We will begin by conducting interviews with key leaders in the Planning Department, as well as Public Works, Building, Redevelopment, Utilities, and any others, as designated by the project manager. We usually also interview the City Manager and other executives to understand their views about what is working well and improvements that they think are necessary. The purpose of the interviews is to:

- Learn about the structure, staffing and work systems;
- Understand strengths and weaknesses of each department in the development processes;
- Hear feedback about existing technology;
- Understand the current culture surrounding development services; and
- Hear ideas for improving communication and service integration and ways to eliminate redundancy and unnecessary process steps.

We are likely to also interview City staff members who provide support to the development review process in areas such as information technology, geographic information systems, and legal. The interviews help our team members understand what is working well and what could be improved.

We will supplement information gathered during staff interviews by reviewing workflow and workload data as available to identify redundancies, process flow bottlenecks, inefficiencies in communication and the use of staff, technology, and other resources key to completing the review. We will review the City's development codes, forms, process documents, policies and procedures, and reports. We will assess organizational structure to look for opportunities to improve efficiency. Additionally, we will supplement our analysis with applicable industry best practices based on our expertise and knowledge as a national firm.



### Activity 3 – Conduct Interviews with Development Process Applicants and Stakeholders

Since development review is customer service work, we would meet individually with a representative sampling of the local developer community who fit one or more of the following characteristics to learn their perceptions about what they see as opportunities for improvement:

- Large developer/contractor,
- Small developer/contractor,
- First time applicant/contractor,
- Architect/engineer,
- Experienced residential developer/contractor, and
- Experienced commercial developer/contractor.

We will solicit their input about aspects of the process that work well, communication, and areas for improvement. While the interviews are confidential, we will prepare a summary of the key themes and opportunities for improvement at the conclusion of this activity for review with you.

We will compare and analyze the information from Activities 2 and 3 and conduct the appropriate follow-up to gather additional information, resolve any conflicting information, or gather any additional data needed. Once completed, we will have identified any significant issues and opportunities for improvement that will inform our analysis in Activity 5.

### Activity 4 – Create Process Maps

During this activity, we will review or create process maps for four or five specific development review processes. These may include:

- Projects involving public hearing at the Planning Commission,
- Projects involving administration-level approval,
- The pre-application process,
- Subdivision maps, and
- Public improvement plans.

As you may know, a process map is a diagram that shows each step in a business process. Process maps are useful in ensuring each step is documented, and in identifying potential changes for greater efficiency and improved customer service.

Once we have draft process maps prepared, we will review them with staff to ensure the steps we have identified are accurate. The maps will be a key element for the GE Work-Out™ described in Activity 6 below.

### Activity 5 – Conduct Analysis and Prepare Process Assessment

Management Partners' team members will analyze the information collected during the previous activities. We will assess the issues and themes identified from our interviews with Fernley staff and stakeholders, and compare current operations, workflow, and the use of technology with best practices and the City's goal of process efficiencies.

As we examine what we have learned and documented through the process maps, we will identify ways to improve development review business processes, communications, and assess how well technology is being used to improve and streamline application submission and intake, plans review, permitting, and inspections within and between departments involved in development review functions.



Once the analysis is complete, we will prepare a memorandum that contains our observations and preliminary recommendations. It is likely to include the following:

- Documentation of current development review processes and process maps;
- Documentation of technology and software used to support existing review, permitting, inspection and payment functions; and
- Recommendations for improvements.

We will review the memorandum with you and the project team for feedback about the ideas contained in it, particularly to identify potential implementation barriers.

This information will be consolidated into a briefing book with background materials for the Work- Out Team and serve as the basis of the facilitated GE Work Out process itself.

### **Activity 6 – Facilitate Staff Process Improvement Workshop**

Management Partners will engage staff in a facilitated process improvement workshop that uses quality management principles of employee engagement and focused decision-making to drive implementation of needed improvements. While it is helpful for us to analyze the organization's business processes and make recommendations, facilitating this workshop will leverage the deep knowledge and experience of staff to solve problems and promote buy-in for making the necessary changes.

To accomplish this, we will plan and facilitate a three-day workshop involving staff members who do the work of development review every day. We will use the GE Work-Out™ technique to engage managers and employees in a process designed to take the information created in this project and turn it into an actionable implementation plan.

In collaboration with a City of Fernley Management Team for this project, we will create an agenda and goals for improvement to be addressed in the Work-Out. Once adopted by management, the City's Management Team will meet with a pre-selected group of employees (the Work-Out Team) to review the goals of the workshops. We will facilitate the Work-Out using the process maps to identify process improvements and other background information, concluding with an ending presentation by the Work-Out Team to the City's Management Team. The presentation will detail the steps the City needs to take to implement improvements. Then we will prepare a draft Implementation Action Plan based on the recommendations for final adoption by management.

### **Activity 7 – Assist with Implementation**

Next, Management Partners will prepare a draft Implementation Action Plan. The draft Implementation Action Plan will include suggested priorities and assigned responsibility for each of the recommendations. The Action Plan is designed to be an executable plan of work that is used to track the specific recommendations identified in the Work-Out.

### **Activity 8 – Conduct Post-Plan Progress Checkup**

In a perfect world, City staff could devote all their time to making the improvements contained in the Implementation Action Plan. But as people who have worked in local government for many years, we understand the many responsibilities competing for the time and attention of your staff.

We also want to make sure that this project leads to real change. Therefore, we recommend planning a structured process six-nine months after the action plan is finalized to assess how implementation is proceeding and whether fine-tuning adjustments to the plan are needed. This will enable us to address



any of the more complex implementation issues encountered and to support manager's work in driving implementation.

### **Cost Estimate**

We estimate that the review and improvement of the development review process for the City of Fernley will cost about \$70,000. We look forward to finalizing the specific plan of work, project team(s) and schedule of performance with you.

### **Conclusion**

We are prepared to meet with you to finalize a plan of work that will address the city's needs to execute the continuing flow of development review work even as it modifies and improves its business process.

Please let me know if we can provide any additional information.

Sincerely,



Jerry Newfarmer  
President and CEO

