



1211 South Pearl St. | Tacoma, WA 98465
253.272.2112 | www.masterbuilderspierce.com

Pierce County Performance Audit Committee
930 Tacoma Ave. S., Room 104
Tacoma, WA 98402

Date: January 6, 2026

Subject: Formal Request for Performance Audit: Planning and Public Works (PPW) Building and Development Fund and Fee Structure

Dear Members of the Performance Audit Committee,

With over 800 members, the Master Builders Association of Pierce County (MBAPC) is the leading homebuilders' association serving Pierce County's residential construction industry. For decades, we have dedicated ourselves to being the most trusted and respected voice on housing in the region. Today we are writing as industry representatives and customers of Pierce County to formally request that the Committee include a performance audit of the **Planning and Public Works (PPW) Building and Development Fund** in its upcoming work plan.

We are aware that the recently passed fee increases won't take effect until February 2026, an immediate, comprehensive, and independent look at the last decade of operations is necessary to ensure long-term fiscal accountability, departmental efficiency, and accountability to customers. Specifically, we request the audit cover the following:

- **10-Year Permit Activity Analysis:** A comprehensive review of permit volume (residential, commercial, site-development, and land use) from 2016 through 2025. This should include an evaluation of approval timelines, performance by individual reviewer, and trends to determine if increased staffing or funding has resulted in improved service delivery times.
- **Fee vs. Cost-of-Service Analysis:** A review of the charges for services and license & permit revenue streams compared to the actual operational costs of the Development Center. State and Federal law mandate a legal nexus between fees and the services they fund. The public deserves to see the data justifying how current and 2026 fee levels align with the actual labor and overhead costs required to process those specific permits.

- **Lost Revenue:** An analysis of revenue lost from declining permits and missing growth targets.
- **Fund Balance Stewardship:** An examination of the PPW Building and Development Fund's reserve levels over the last 10 years to ensure that fee-generated revenue is being used strictly for its intended purposes and not diverted to unrelated obligations or backfilling budget shortfalls.
- **Comprehensive Staffing Needs Assessment:** A comprehensive review of all current and proposed positions within the Development Center.

This assessment should evaluate:

Core vs. Supportive Roles: Identification of positions that are essential to permit processing versus those dedicated to administrative processes.

Redundancy Examination: An analysis of whether technological investments (like the 3% technology fee) have resulted in the projected labor savings or if staffing has remained stagnant despite automation.

Staff roles: A review of supervisor-to-staff ratios to ensure the department is not top-heavy.

As the home building and development community is expected to fully sustain the PPW Building and Development Fund, there must be transparency and accountability. Ensuring that the development process is both self-sustaining and efficient is vital to the county's economic health and housing affordability. This is imperative as fees and delays continually increase pushing home ownership out of reach for Pierce County residents year after year. Pierce County must remember its purpose is to provide services for the public, not generate revenue to balance its budget.

We look forward to your response and are hopeful that the current, and worsening, housing crisis offers enough evidence for the committee to move this request forward.

Build Homes. Not Barriers.



Tony Laer
MBAPC President



Corey Watson
MBAPC Legislative Strategy Chair