Got Development? 5 Questions to Ask to Elevate your Building Department
About the Alliance

Inspiring Innovation to Advance Communities

- Convene and Engage Networks of Thought Leaders
- Provide Training to help Organizations Build and Sustain a Culture of Innovation
- Identify and Distribute Leading and Emerging Practices and Trends Important to Local Government
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Introducing Today's Presenters

Chris Miller, SAFEbuilt Regional Director, SAFEbuilt
Got Development?

5 Questions to Ask to Elevate your Building Department
Agenda

• Welcome and Introductions
• 5 Key Questions You Should be Asking
• Real World Solutions
• Wrap-up
• Inspiring innovation to advance communities
• Committed to changing the way local governments perform
• Values:
  • Premier resource for emerging practices
  • Building cultures of innovation
  • Connecting thought leaders
• Leading provider of community development solutions
• Partner with over 500 communities in 11 states
• Core values:
  • Integrity
  • Improvement
  • Service
  • Teamwork
  • Respect
Presenter – Chris Miller, AICP

- Responsible for SAFEbuilt’s operations in southeast
- Managed start-up for unique public private partnership between City of Atlanta and SAFEbuilt
- 20+ year career in local government and commercial development
- Specializes in helping governments provide efficient community development services
- Master's of Science in Planning from Florida State University
Why Efficiency Matters

- Protect public health, safety, and welfare
- Support economic development
  - Provide effective stewardship of public monies
Why Efficiency Matters

• Recent Trends:
  • Rising Long Term Obligations:
    o Health care costs
    o Pension obligations

• Potential Risks:
  • Shifting fiscal burdens to future generations of taxpayers
  • Reduced or compromised services
  • Lack of fiscal sustainability
5 Key Questions
1. Is the public being protected?
Protect Public Health, Safety and Welfare

- Connection between local codes and public safety
- Properly trained and certified staff
- Coordination between departments
Case Study: State of Florida

Building Codes Pay for Themselves in Disaster-Prone Regions

Damage from Hurricane Charley, 2004 (FEMA.gov)
Florida Case Study

- New code changes (Florida Building Code) adopted in response to Hurricane Andrew’s impact:
  - 125,000 homes damaged
  - $28 billion in recovery cost
  - 11 insurance companies put out of business
- Designed specifically for extreme wind storms like hurricanes
  - Florida Building Code applies to new homes only
- Effectiveness of new code analyzed for the period between 2001 and 2010
• **Key Findings:**
  - Reduction in losses for homes built per new code ranged between 47% and 72%
    - Both number of claims and value of insurance claims were reduced
  - New code increased the cost of building a home by $3,254, on average – saved approximately $10,000 in damage claims during 10 year period

Source: Simmons, Kevin M.; Czajkowski, Jeffrey; Done, James M. “Economic Effectiveness of Implementing a Statewide Building Code: The Case of Florida.” University of Pennsylvania working paper, 2017.
Case Study:
Town of Milliken, Colorado

Preparation Enables a Town’s Recovery

Flood Damage, 2013. (KMGH)
Milliken, CO Case Study

- Area suffered historic flood event in September 2013
  - 20” of rain during month versus the normal 2”
- Flood impacted 17 counties:
  - Approximately 18,000 buildings damaged
  - 400 people unaccounted
  - 12,000 evacuees
  - 500 shelters set-up throughout the state
- Impacted areas were inaccessible for days and basic services were unavailable
• **Key Findings:**
  
  • In Milliken the Building Official developed an assessment and reconnaissance plan to implement once the Town was accessible
    - Preparation needed prior to the storm
    - Building assessments should start ASAP
      - In Milliken 54 homes were evaluated for damage during first 2 days of the response
    - Comparisons using historical permit information are helpful in some cases to evaluate damage
      - Building permit and property appraiser data is key
  
  • External coordination using public information officers and other city officials to key to helping citizens navigate the regulatory requirements
    - Many communities waive permit and inspections fees
    - Recovery process can take many months

Source: http://safebuilt.com/colorado-floods-helping-colorado-recover-unprecedented-flood-damage/
2. Are we promoting and fostering Economic Development?
Support Economic Development

• Greatest cost for new development is risk
• Competitive local governments provide predictable, professional, and punctual permitting
• Anticipate local issues affecting local economy
  • Age and quality of existing commercial and residential structures
• Coordinate Development
  • Local codes should speak to each other
  • Departments should work with each other
  • Development approvals should sync with local boards
Support Economic Development
Tools and Techniques

• Internal consistency
  • Other codes/interpretations
  • Departments

• Promote private investment
  • Code enforcement
  • Minimum housing code
  • Apartment inspections

• Provide predictable outcomes
Case Study:
State of Florida

Using Lean to Improve the Building Permit Process

Case Study:
Kittitas County, Washington
Located east of Seattle in the Yakima Valley
  - Current population approximately 45,000

Staff identified a need to coordinate and streamline the single family permit approval process for both staff and the public
  - The single family permitting process was viewed as cumbersome and was causing permitting delays for developers and builders

Solution was to engage Washington State’s Lean Academy for public agencies
• **Key Findings/Improvements:**
  
  • Used the Lean Process to streamline single family permit submittal process
    - Eliminate permit backlogs
  
  • Step 1 – Diagramed existing process
  
  • Step 2 – Created need statement of how to restructure the process and why it was being restructured
    - Key components: Stress customer service, clarify roles and reduce “**bouncing**”
  
  • Step 3 – Reviewed permit package
    - Reduced size (and confusion) from **26 to 17** pages
  
  • Step 4 – Evaluated preliminary screening process used when submittals are accepted
    - Process outlined and needed information was better identified
  
  • Step 5 – Implementation and knowledge sharing with other departments

  • **Reduced plan review time from as many as 8 weeks to 3 weeks** (**30 days or less** is the goal)

3. Is the building department ready for development?
Development Ready?

- **Staffing Levels**
  - Number and type
    - Consider pending retirements
  - Supplemental services
  - Benchmark LOS

- **Process Improvements**
  - Workstreams
  - One-Stop permitting
  - Concierge customer service
  - On-line permitting and forms
  - e-Plan
Building Codes Pay for Themselves in Disaster-Prone Regions

Engaging the Private Sector to Enhance Service

Case Study:
Atlanta, Georgia
The City is an employment center, but not population center

Region projected to grow by 2.5 million by 2040 (City’s share is 1.2M)
  - City’s policies now encourage density and infill development

City and development community created a Technical Advisory Committee to help manage and improve development process

Atlanta hired BKD (CPA and advisory firm) in 2015 to evaluate permitting process, they recommended:
  - Focusing on the customer experience
  - Improving communications
  - Developing staff capacity
  - Becoming more data driven
  - Reducing the regulatory burden
• **Key Findings/Improvements:**
  - City engaged SAFEbuilt in late 2015 to provide the following services:
    - Management and process improvement
    - Plan review
    - Building inspection
  - Data from BKD was utilized to evaluate current processes and create new customer-focused workstreams
  - “Welcome Area” was transformed to concierge station and all forms and handouts were updated
  - Data collected and analyzed to measure performance and fine-tune operations
  - Major improvements during the first year included:
    - **13% productivity increase**
    - Express permits issued over the counter
    - Monthly plan reviews increased by 85%
    - New customer-centered workstreams launched

Source: SAFEbuilt and City of Atlanta
4. Are permit fees and services aligned?
Effective Stewardship of Public Monies

- Consider how services are funded
  - Taxes, fees, or both?
- Roles and responsibilities
  - Is building department self sufficient, combined or funding other departments?
- Efficient use of resources (people and equipment)
- Identify budgetary needs to plan for the future
Effective Stewardship of Public Monies

• Partnering with development community
  • The City of Columbus, OH and development community have an MOU outlining:
    o Staffing levels
    o Training support for staff
    o Use of overtime and contact services for peak periods

• Enterprise fund versus General Fund
  • Development fees are adjusted on an annual basis to ensure the fees charged are consistent with the cost to provide building department services
  • Until recently Atlanta used a similar special fund for permitting
5. Can service be measured?
Measure, Measure, Measure - Dashboards

- Accountability is one key to ensuring efficiency
- Reports can be:
  - Annual
  - Monthly
  - Weekly
  - Real-Time

![Permit Volume](image)

![Review Turnaround Times](image)

![Express Workstream Volume and Review Times](image)
Building Codes Pay for Themselves in Disaster-Prone Regions

State of Florida

Real-Time Tools to Measure Performance

Centennial, Colorado
Measure, Measure, Measure - Dashboards
Wrap Up - 5 Key Questions

1. Is the public being protected?

2. Are we promoting and fostering economic development?

3. Is the building department ready for development?

4. Is there alignment between permit fees and services?

5. Can levels of service be measured?
Questions and Wrap-up

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Thank You!

www.safebuilt.com
Q&A

Chris Miller, SAFbuilt Regional Director, SAFbuilt
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Upcoming learning events:
http://transformgov.org/en/calendar

- **Workshops**
  - Workforce of the Future Workshops in Longmont, CO (8/29), Charlottesville, VA (9/6), Palo Alto, CA (9/7) & Minden, NV (9/26)

- **Webinars**
  - Intentional Leadership: Getting Results and Engagement by Letting Go of Control on 8/24
  - Managers Forum: A Reflection on Leadership and Leading Innovation through Organizational Transitions with Tansy Hayward on 9/12
  - Enhancing Public Entrepreneurship on 9/28
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