IMT Institute for Market Transformation

FACT SHEET

ENERGY CODE
COMPLIANCE

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WHY STREAMLINE?

Streamlining the compliance process can encourage business by minimizing the time and money a business spends while waiting for permits to be processed, saving time and money, and increasing code compliance rates by better allocating funding and staff time.

Global Buildings
Performance Network

IMT Institute for Market Transformation

Streamlining Compliance Processes

Streamlining is the practice of improving building regulatory processes to remove overlap and create more efficient administrative procedures. It can make building departments more effective at enforcing building energy codes, while improving customer service and resulting in financial and energy savings.

STRATEGIES

- *External Communication*: Information for navigating through the regulatory process should be easy to find and clearly articulated on a website, which can include brochures, permit applications, and checklists.
- *Internal Communication*: Using software that helps all stakeholders track project updates or physically housing the entire buildings department in one building can help create a cohesive system.
- *Plan Review:* An electronic plan review process that allows architects and engineers to electronically seal plans and all stakeholders to track their progress in real time has made the plan review process more efficient in many jurisdictions.
- *Inspections:* Using an automated online or phone scheduling system to schedule inspections will reduce the administrative burden. Inspections should be planned to minimize travel time. Employing multidisciplinary inspectors and scheduling inspections so locations are grouped together can reduce travel time.
- *Technology*: Other possible technological advances that could be used include: mobile devices, electronic seals and signature, and electronic storage.

CHALLENGES

- Some strategies may require the local governing body's approval or a change to a regulation or ordinance. For example, to use electronic plan review software, a jurisdiction may need to change the statute to allow for electronic seals and signatures. A plan should be formed to garner the appropriate support and time budgeted for a legislative change.
- As new software is added to a jurisdiction's suite of tools, it should be verified that new software is compatible with existing software. Also, IT policies should be considered, so that staff can download and use all of the necessary programs.

SUCCESS STORIES

- Ventura County, Calif., invested $160,000 for a new permits and inspections software package and saved over $1 million in costs over a six-year period, even as the staff's workload increased by 80 percent. Ventura County also has a specific permitting website that articulates the steps of acquiring a permit and includes relevant links.
- When implementing a new software program, Boca Raton, Fla., reduced its application types from more than 150 to 90 and its permit types from 130 to 12.
- Gillette, Wyo., has an electronic plan review process that allows public and private stakeholders to view plans and provides near real-time online tracking.
- Butte County, Calif., streamlined its permit applications process by gathering input from all stakeholders and county departments involved. There is now more interdepartmental coordination, and the process is less complex and requires less time and fewer resources to complete. The building department also created an Economic Development Committee that businesses about to start construction work can meet with.

OTHER RESOURCES
Check out IMT's website.
- IMT's Ryan Meres facilitated a webinar on "Local Strategies for Improving Energy Code Compliance." Streamlining was highlighted as a strategy. Playback of the webinar is available here.
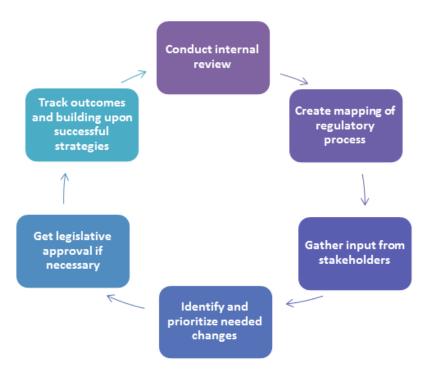- For more in-depth information about streamlining, find IMT's case study here.

Figure 1. Streamlining the code compliance process