IMT Institute for Market Transformation

FACT SHEET

ENERGY CODE
COMPLIANCE

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For more information about specific strategies, see IMT's website at www.imt.org/codecompliance. Check out the case studies and fact sheets for streamlining and best practices for building department websites.

Global Buildings
Performance Network

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Using Technology to Improve Code Enforcement

Technology can be used to streamline the plan review and inspection process and improve code enforcement.

STRATEGIES

- *Update the building department's website.*
- *Invest in electronic plan review software.* Examples of software packages are: Avolve's ProjectDox, EnerGov, and CRW System's TRAKiT.
- *Invest in tablets.* Light-weight, internet-capable tablets that code officials can take along to inspections allow inspectors to fill out checklists on-site and notify stakeholders of the results.
- *Use automated scheduling*.

CHALLENGES

- Some strategies may require the local governing body's approval or a change to a regulation or ordinance.
- 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.
- New software will require a significant initial capital investment, but jurisdictions report that switching to electronic plan review systems has saved them money in the long run because the plan review process requires fewer staff hours and less paper and necessary storage space while speeding up and increasing accuracy of the review process.

BENEFITS

- *Save time and money.* Using more technology can streamline the regulatory process.
- *Increase code compliance rates.* Two of the main reasons for low code compliance rates include lack of funding and time for inspections and lack of qualified staff. Technology can be used to reduce the administrative burden on staff, so code officials can provide more thorough inspections and plan reviews. Furthermore, financial savings can be redirected to train staff.
- *Reduce the building department's carbon footprint.* Software and electronic plan reviews can reduce the amount of paper used throughout the process, as well as fuel emissions associated with transportation of supplies, customers, and code officials.
- *Improve customer service.* Replacing paper systems with electronic plan review software speeds up the process and stakeholders generally find it easier to use. They do not have to travel to the building department to submit plans. Also, paper is easy to misplace, while an electronic plan reviewing system will keep all important documents together where they are easy to find. An up-to-date website will also decrease frustration and needless questions.
- *Improve accessibility.* Electronic plan review programs aggregate all reviewers' comments and allow all stakeholders to track their project's status easily. Other described strategies, like a website or automated phone scheduling, make the building department's services more accessible to a jurisdiction's citizens.
- *Streamline the compliance process.* Implementing new technology will require a jurisdiction to carefully review their existing plan review and inspection process.

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 links to all of the necessary forms and associated state and county departments.
- The city of Bend, Ore., invested in web-based planning software instead of hiring two new inspectors and saw a 50 percent reduction in process time per each permit application.
- 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.

OTHER RESOURCES

http://www.avolvesoftware.com/
http://www.energov.com/land-management.html
http://www.crw.com/