

City of Carrollton, Texas, Development Process

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SUMMARY

The city of Carrollton, Tex., consolidated its development process into one department and now offers an orchestrated permitting service. The new permitting service provides continuity and replaces a previously disjointed system that allowed the creation of phantom codes. The new process attracts economic development, builds productive alliances, expedites permits and inspections, and aligns with the city's long-range goals of maintaining a sustainable community and transforming the city's organization into a service business.

CARROLLTON EARNS WINNING SCORES

Carrollton's new developer-friendly process centralizes management and oversight of commercial development projects and associated public infrastructure through a single chain of command, improves the business flow, and emphasizes the importance of timeliness in managing commercial projects in a competitive marketplace. As a result, projects are proactively managed in one department—from initial permit application submittal through plan review to permit issuance, through all inspections to final Certificate of Occupancy issuance, and to two-year maintenance bond approval—in an accelerated, organized progression through the municipal system. *(See the development process flow chart.)*

THE PLAN REVIEW PROCESS

Each new project is assigned a project manager to coordinate steps in the first phase of development and to maintain contact throughout the plan review process. In the first phase the plan review team provides 95 percent of the principal team effort in managing the commercial project. The field service inspection team has 5 percent involvement at this stage to become familiar with the project and to avoid any site specific and/or construction surprises. The Plan Review project manager works from the beginning with the consultants during the pre-application meeting and coordinates all communication with clients and staff, including the inspection staff during the permitting process. All plan reviews are performed in the Building Inspection Department, including all building, fire and other codes, zoning, civil engineering, traffic, health, and pollution control requirements for private development with associated public improvements. When all reviews are complete and the permit is issued, the project manager reviews the plans with the inspection team prior to the preconstruction meeting.

THE FIELD INSPECTION PROCESS

After the plan review process has been completed, the project moves to field inspection. Again, a project manager is assigned for this phase to act as one point of contact for the customer. In this phase, participation levels change and the plan review team is involved only 5 percent of the time while the inspection team is engaged 95 percent of the time. A preconstruction meeting is scheduled with all of the project's contractors, subcontractors, engineers, and architects to proactively address inspection requirements. This ensures that each participant knows how and when to request inspections, what inspections are required, and what is required to pass each inspection. The preconstruction meeting also enables the contractor to address construction issues prior to calling for an inspection and hopefully helps to complete the project on schedule.

One of the last stages of the field inspection process is the pre-Certificate of Occupancy meeting. This



Flow Chart of the Development Process
Image Credit: Ravi Shah

meeting is typically held one month before the scheduled completion date. It is important to identify any remaining job completion issues and to establish the final punch list at this time since this is the last meeting until the final onsite inspection.

FINAL PHASE: OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE

The last phase of our development process is an on-site inspection before the two-year maintenance bond deadline has passed. At the same time the certificate of occupancy is issued, an inspection is scheduled 20 months in the future to reinspect all utilities and pavement in the right-of-way or easements that are covered by the two-year maintenance bond. The city's operations and maintenance departments are included in the inspection process to check valves, manholes, and camera sewer lines. If deficiencies are identified, the contractor or bonding company is notified to correct all items before the two-year maintenance bond expires. The project is officially closed after all deficiencies are corrected. A certificate of acceptance is issued prior to the expiration of the two-year maintenance bond.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTOR

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RESOURCES

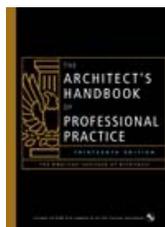
More Best Practices

The following AIA Best Practices provide additional information related to this topic:

- 14.05.01 Establishing Code Search Methodology and Process
- 17.06.02 AIA 10 Principles for Livable Communities
- 17.03.01 Planning for Concealed Site Conditions

For More Information on This Topic

See also "Zoning Process Assistance," by Morris Hancock, AIA, *The Architect's Handbook of Professional Practice*, 13th edition, Chapter 17, page 547. *The Handbook* can be ordered from the AIA Bookstore by calling 800-242-3837 (option 4) or by sending an e-mail to bookstore@aia.org.



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Key Terms

- Building performance
- Regulatory requirements
- Permits
- Testing and inspection