



Local Issue Brief

The American Institute of Architects • Government Advocacy • Current Issue Position and Analysis

Expedited Permitting Key Points:

- *Santa Monica, CA, provides an expedited permitting process for new buildings and major renovations that receive LEED® Certification.*
- *Chicago's green permit program reduces the permitting process for developers and owners who build green to less than 30 business days, and in some cases less than 15 days. The length is determined by the number of green building elements, LEED certification level, and project complexity.*
- *Louisville/Jefferson County, Kentucky's online permit system has successfully reduced staff time on projects from two hours to 30 minutes and customer wait time from four hours to 30 minutes.*
- *San Francisco offers fast-track permitting on green commercial projects, and the city has hired "embedded employees" from the private sector, who conduct the work of permitting officials.*
- *Ventura County, CA, has saved over \$1 million and three staff positions by streamlining the administration and enforcement process and successfully using information technology.*

Expedited Permitting

AIA Position

The American Institute of Architects (AIA) supports expedited permitting. The AIA believes that expedited permitting increases tax revenue for local jurisdictions and reduces costs for the design/construction industry, while also providing localities with an incentive option to promote sustainability and other beneficial land use policies.

Action Sought

The AIA urges local government officials to support expedited permitting and implement programs that incorporate this policy. This tool is also valuable from a strategic standpoint to encourage green building and sustainability initiatives in exchange for a streamlined process.

Explanation and Justification

Delays in permit approvals are costing local governments millions of dollars in lost revenues, as projects that take longer to come on line cost localities tax money. Streamlining the permitting process for building, plan, and site permits can also save the design/building industry substantial time and money.

The AIA report, "[The Economic Impact of Accelerating Permit Processes on Local Development and Government Revenues](#)," shows that communities with a more efficient building permitting process can gain millions of dollars in tax revenues and significantly bolster their economic development. The AIA commissioned PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP to study the relationship between building permit processes, local economic activity, and government tax revenues. The study concluded that the implementation of a more responsive permit process over a five-year period could result in a 16.5 percent increase in property taxes and a 5.7 percent increase in construction spending.

Expedited permitting may require the reorganization and augmentation of permitting staff to ensure that these programs reach their full potential. The use of technology is also an important part of a successful expedited permitting program, in that it improves the efficiency of the program and available staff. Electronic plan review also increases the speed of the process and review accuracy, reduces the number of resubmission cycles, and provides a robust measurement tool to measure staff productivity and do plan review remotely.

Successful green permitting programs also need permitting professionals to be trained in green rating systems used in the community. Unfortunately, one of the problems faced by many smaller permitting agencies is that they do not have the time or money to adequately staff their existing responsibilities, let alone additional requirements, and therefore solutions need to be found. The resource crunch faced by communities can be potentially solved in multiple ways. These can include federal/state funding for local initiatives and/or subsidies from the private sector. Third party approval systems can also be used to ensure that the permitting process is handled properly. Expedited permitting programs are potential revenue generators for jurisdictions, as projects that move forward quickly increase local tax revenue.

For more information on Green Expedited Permitting Programs, see Local Leaders in Sustainability: *Green Incentives* available at: www.aia.org/localleaders_incentives.