Leveraging the Approval Process to Get the Development You Want
New Partners for Smart Growth Conference 2016
Speakers:

- Drake Butsch, First American Title/Moderator
- Brian Blaesser, Robinson & Cole LLP
- Debbie Bassert, National Association of Home Builders
- Bob Kaufman, Maryland Building Industry Association
Session Objectives

- Learn about where the development approval process typically bogs down in most communities today.
- Understand the impacts of a lengthy and unwieldy process for all involved, including renters and home buyers and the very types of projects that can be built.
- Hear about recent efforts across the country to improve process efficiency in order to facilitate desired development.
Renewed concerns about housing affordability

Many factors contribute to the challenge:
- Plans that solicit jobs but don’t adequately provide for housing
- Outdated ordinances that limit the range and mix of housing types
- Increasing fees that add to housing costs
- Environmental/growth controls that constrain land supply
- NIMBY opposition to development
A factor many don’t consider

- Length and complexity of the development review and approval process
- No longer 6 to 9 months but 1 to 2 years
- As long as 4 to 7 years in some areas
Ties up developers’, builders’, and investors’ capital
Adds unexpected interest and carrying costs
Those add to cost of housing, at all price levels
Particular challenge for affordable product
Can even affect project feasibility
Also ties up public investment!
Reframing the discussion

- Old:
  - Streamlining techniques
  - Regulatory barriers removal strategies

- New:
  - Process efficiency
Documenting the Process

Land Development Checklist

National Association of Home Builders
New research for NAHB by Abt Associates

- Frustration stems from
  - Complexity of the process
  - Lack of information about steps involved
  - Unclear how long each step will take
  - Process differs across municipalities
Inefficient process increases government’s administrative costs
Reflects poorly on government competence and image
Creates perception of a negative climate for business
Increased process efficiency is a win-win for all

- Developers and builders
- Homebuyers and renters
- Local government
- Taxpayers
New NAHB Report

Development Process Efficiency: Cutting Through the Red Tape
Report includes:

- Information about each strategy
- Multiple examples of communities using the strategy with links for more information
- Examples of comprehensive system overhauls
- Detailed case studies
Streamlining/consolidating the review process

- Overhaul permitting approval process
- One-stop permit system
- Increase coordination between agencies
- Standardize interpretation
- Change or update zoning to reduce need for variances
- Combine public hearings
Increasing staff capacity

- Maintain appropriate staffing levels
- Hire specialized staff
- Establish reliable mechanism for funding building services
Creating a separate process for expedited review

- For desirable housing projects
- Based on pre-approval
- For an extra fee
Implementing online permitting

- Online permitting
- Online submission of plans
- Real-time inspection updates
Creating accountability

- Annual report on approval times
- Online permit progress tracking
- Customer satisfaction surveys
- Tie employee advancement to performance
- Limit review times
Making process more user friendly

- Comprehensive checklists
- Development assistance department
- Assist with quality of applications
- Improve communication through regular meetings with developers
Regional authorities to provide assistance to local governments
State legislation on process
Provide resources to local governments
Development Process Efficiency: Cutting Through the Red Tape

- Report available online at [www.nahb.org](http://www.nahb.org)
- For more information contact: Debbie Bassert
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