



Local Governments in Stanislaus County Create Countywide Program to Expedite Permitting and Improve Customer Satisfaction

March 10, 2016

GO-Biz recognizes a unique cooperative effort among ten government jurisdictions in Stanislaus County, California for creating the “Stanislaus Builds” Accountable and Prompt Permitting Program (APP), one of the first countywide models to incorporate all of its local governments in a joined effort to streamline the development permitting process.

The initiative began in late 2014 with an examination of policies and practices in each city and county agency to compare permitting programs already in place. The findings confirmed the establishment of similar and effective permitting practices in individual agencies that had not been previously coordinated, packaged, or marketed and an agreement was made to begin that work.

The result is the APP Program, six common services offered by the 10 local government agencies including:

- ❖ Centralized permit centers to limit the travel required by applicants throughout the permitting and entitlement process;
- ❖ Development services representatives, which assigns each applicant their own representative to act as a liaison throughout the permitting process;
- ❖ No-cost predevelopment reviews to identify, early in the process, potentially difficult issues that might delay permitting;
- ❖ Phased building permit issuance, which allows the bundling of permits by phase whenever possible;
- ❖ Expedited plan review and inspection so that applicants on major projects can have access to key staff working on an overtime basis as available;
- ❖ Customer service training to ensure that all team members within and among the agencies are consistently trained in best practices and use that knowledge and expertise to provide the best possible customer service to applicants.





Breaking Barriers to Doing Business

Steven Ames is the Chief Business Development Officer for the Stanislaus Business Alliance, an organization charged with furthering Stanislaus County's economic development and one of the program's masterminds. Asked about the program's implementation thus far, Ames said he was impressed.

"We are pleased with the commitment at all levels to significantly improve the permitting process," said Ames. "This effort is less about forcing folks to adopt specific best practices and more about acknowledging and encouraging what's already in place and ensuring that continuous improvement is consistently emphasized. We believe the positive impact has already been felt by developers and permit applicants."

Thomas Hughes, President of Anaheim-based Craftsman Cutting Dies, could testify to Ames' assertion. After a recent acquisition of an existing die cutting fabricator located in Stanislaus County, it was imperative that Hughes get the company relocated from its former business location to Ceres and up and running on a very accelerated time frame. The Ceres permit staff was able to offer three particular elements of the APP that met Hughes' immediate needs. First Hughes was directed to an individual at the city who then became his primary contact on all city-related permitting and construction issues. Next the city offered a phased-permitting process, which allowed Hughes' contractor to begin upgrading the building's electrical service and internal needs while other aspects of the tenant improvements were still under design and review. To further expedite the compressed construction time schedule he needed, Hughes requested and was able to receive expedited plan check services via an available plan checker who was able to work overtime, with the overtime costs reimbursed by the permit applicant.

Speaking of the experience Hughes remarked, "I was impressed when the representatives at the city listened to my critical needs and offered some flexibility to their standard plan check and permit processes. Having access to these elements offered by the city made a huge difference in getting our company open, putting the existing employees back to work, and delivering the finished products to our customers."

According to management heading up oversight, the final element is the accountability piece. "We have to make sure that we are doing what we said we would every time a permit is applied for and when something falls through, we need to take a look at the reasons and continue to learn and grow as a cooperative group of local governments in our County," said Ames. "This agreement puts us in a good place moving forward and serves as proof positive that we are a force to be reckoned with in terms of economic development."

GO-Biz applauds the APP Program officials in Stanislaus County for effectively modernizing the County's developmental permitting processes and congratulates them on becoming a B³ Champion!



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