INSTITUTE FOR BUILDING TECHNOLOGY AND SAFETY

building TRUST
building PARTNERSHIPS
building a FUTURE

IBTS

Introduction: IBTS

- IBTS was formed by governmental organizations to provide services on demand which would normally be provided by government in the built environment.
- IBTS is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) corporation.

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IBTS Founding Members

CSG	Council of State Governors
NATIONAL GOVERNORS ASSOCIATION	National Governors Association
National League of Cities	National League of Cities
NACO Counties Care for America	National Association of Counties
NCS BCS	National Council of States on Building Codes and Standards

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Models for Success: Implementation

- Regulatory barriers present a complex series of issues, and reducing costs to create affordable housing is a continuing challenge.
- The successful creation of affordable housing hinges on more than policy decisions. You need models for success, an actual game plan for successful implementation after the policy decisions have been made.

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Issues

- After the policy decisions have been made:
  - There can be a delay in implementing those decisions, and inconsistencies of enforcement add costs.
  - Local jurisdictions are often understaffed, and/or not adequately trained to assess the introduction of newer cost-saving technologies.

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Models for Success: Implementation

- Part 1: discussion of a working model for success, Arlington County, Virginia, in which an expedited review process for rehabilitation and new construction projects is being successfully implemented.
- Part 2: discussion of a different approach to construction inspection.

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Models for Success: Implementation

- Because county building code offices tend to be understaffed as a rule, with a heavy project backlog and serious delays in approvals, developers tend to build in costs that anticipate those delays, resulting in considerably higher project costs.
- An expedited review process is one way of seriously reducing those costs. Counties can and should use credible third party reviewers to reduce their own burdens, and enable developers to get approvals in a fraction of the time they would normally take.

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Arlington County, VA: Expedited Review Process

- Having a sufficient stock of affordable, safe housing is a major policy objective for Arlington County. An expedited review process is one of the tools it's using to get there.

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Arlington County, VA: Expedited Review Process

- Arlington manages its expedited review process through an agreement with IBTS, a nonprofit public service organization dedicated to reducing the burdens of government offices at all levels.
- IBTS conducts plan reviews of plans for housing units and other buildings submitted to Arlington County.

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Arlington County, VA: Reducing Project Costs

- The cost for third party reviews is transferred directly to the developer.
- Arlington County is thus able to provide exceptional service to developers and the community without incurring additional costs to its taxpayers.

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Arlington County, VA: Implementation

- Developers deliver plans for their projects to the Arlington County Inspection Services Division.
- Permit numbers are generated for each project, and the plans are delivered to IBTS the next day for review. The turnaround time for the first review by IBTS is less than a week for standard projects.

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Arlington County, VA: Implementation

- Once IBTS completes its review, it sends comments by e-mail to the county and the project's architect, so that any issues can immediately be worked on.
- The reviewed plans are sent back to Arlington.
- At present, revisions are taken care of by county staff.

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Arlington County, VA: Effectiveness

- The expedited review process has been extremely successful in expediting the building permit process.
- The expenses incurred by developers in this process are a fraction of what they would have been, given the amount of time lost in the county's standard review process. This is the principal benefit to the developer – significantly reduced time for plan reviews.

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Arlington County, VA: Effectiveness

- As a result, the developers are able to build more quickly, saving considerable dollars in construction costs that are passed on to potential occupants.
- This improves the financial base for affordable housing developments, and creates strong incentives to develop more affordable housing units in Arlington County.

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Contacts

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Part 2: Models for Success

- Different approaches for inspections:
  - Current model:
    - Builder requests an inspection of a completed aspect of construction.
    - Building Department schedules the inspection.
    - Builder cannot proceed with construction until the relevant aspect of construction has been inspected and passed.
    - For a typical house, this process is repeated 7-12 times depending on the jurisdiction.

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Suggested Alternatives

- The Builder and the Building Department meet to discuss the parameters of the project before building starts, and agree on a minimum inspection checklist.
- The Builder should identify a qualified individual who will sign and be responsible for each inspection item. The Building Department should approve this individual based on demonstrated qualifications.

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Suggested Alternatives

- The Builder should conduct all inspections, and a designated Inspector should sign each item on the agreed-upon inspection list.
- A completed inspection list should be forwarded to the Building Department.
- The Building Department may choose to conduct its own inspection, or accept the Builder's submission.

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Suggested Alternatives

- The Building Department must conduct inspections within one day of the aspect of construction certified by the builder, and considered to be accepted by the Building Department.
- If the Building Department chooses to conduct an inspection, it should not be a typical pass/fail inspection, but should instead address specific items to be jointly inspected by the Builder's Representative who signed the inspection form, and a Representative from the Building Department.

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Suggested Alternatives

- If a noncompliance is detected, the Builder will be required to explain why the inspection form was signed.

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Benefits

- Takes away uncertainty and delay of scheduled inspections.
- Builder gains control, with increased responsibility.
- Building Department sets the standard and adopts the role of educator, rather than the typical adversarial relationship inherent in the current inspection process.
- Reduces costs.

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