



Georgia Planning Officials Newsletter

September 2007

Building Smart Growth

(Part 3 of 3)

Achieving building code compliance has proven to be a challenge in some communities, and the impact of poor construction quality can be severe. Most Georgia communities conduct building inspections and measure the performance of their efforts based on the quantity of inspections. It has been more difficult to determine the quality of code compliance efforts. Here are some basic considerations to increase the effectiveness of your inspections:

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO PROTECT YOUR COMMUNITY?

Hire Certified & Experienced Inspectors: Make sure the people you have conducting building inspections are qualified. The International Code Council certifies building inspectors in areas related to building trades. Send a certified electrical inspector to inspect electrical work and let the certified plumbing inspector look at the plumbing work. For more information on certifications, go to www.iccsafe.org. In addition, building products and techniques are constantly changing. Make sure your staff is keeping current in the field with continuing education.

Collect More Data: Obtain as much information as you can before a building permit is issued. Contractor licenses, construction plans, material listings and installation guides for pre-engineered systems are a good start.

Insist on a Plan Review: Local governments review zoning requests, site plans, and even tree plans, but many do not look at architectural plans before issuing a residential permit. Reviewing plans can identify common problems such as missing details, product conflicts and design flaws. The purpose of a plan review is to make sure the project has been well thought out prior to construction.

Provide Information in the Field: Inspectors should use the data that has been collected with the permit. By reviewing building plans and information on construction materials, they will be better prepared to catch important issues in the field.

Be Fair and Consistent: Be consistent in your code interpretations and fairly communicate those same interpretations to builders. This is the only way to make sure everyone understands the environment they are building in.

New neighborhood developments are meeting the challenge of growing within our environment. However, as site plans change to fit into the environment, we must make sure that contractors meet the necessary building codes. Enforcing this compliance with the building codes is vital to ensuring that a community's growth is sustainable from the first homebuyer to the next. After all, live-work-play neighborhoods can only succeed if people want to continue staying in them.

Jon Walker is the Director of Operations for SAFEbuilt Georgia. He can be contacted through www.SafeBuiltGeorgia.com.

Upcoming Events

Community Planning Institute— Albany, Georgia October 16-17, 2007

This 2-day workshop sponsored by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and the Georgia Planning Association, provides twelve hours of education in land use, comprehensive planning and legal issues.

Community Planning Academy: Board of Zoning Appeals— Atlanta, Georgia

October 18-19, 2007

This 2-day workshop sponsored by the Atlanta Regional Commission, provides BZA members with legal, technical and organizational knowledge and skill to enhance and maintain a consistent and sound decision-making board.

Community Planning Academy: The Practical Applications of Greenspace Planning —

Atlanta, Georgia

November 1, 2007

This course will also focus on the social, environmental and economical benefit of having greenspace in your community. It intends to encourage participants to begin looking at greenspace as infrastructure, something that can shape and maintain quality growth.

Transfer of Development Rights Implementation Class —

Palmetto, Georgia

November 9, 2007

For more info please see: <http://www.georgiaplanning.org/>

We want to hear from you! Please send us your thoughts, experiences and advice on being a Planning Official. E-mail or fax your submissions to Robbie Hayes at rhayes@atlantaregional.com or 404.463.3105