

Streamlined permitting processes overview

In some cities, towns, and counties, the process associated with obtaining approval for new construction is so time-consuming or costly that it dampens the amount of new development and adds significantly to its costs. Among other causes are extensive delays in issuance of necessary approvals and entitlements, excessive requirements to obtain variances or special use permits, and unclear or conflicting guidance across or within agencies.

To help streamline the process, cities, towns and counties can initiate a comprehensive review of all steps in the development approval process to identify the factors that most significantly suppress new residential construction and redevelopment. With a clearer picture of the obstacles, local leaders can then begin to assess whether they can be reduced or eliminated to stimulate development activity and moderate the price pressure on the existing housing stock.

While streamlining the development approval process is unlikely to result in an immediate increase in the housing supply, improvements in the regulatory environment can make cities, towns, and counties more attractive to for-profit developers and non-profit developers of affordable housing, helping to increase the housing supply over the long term and moderate price increases. This section describes key considerations for communities that are considering updating their permitting process.