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PA's building code regulations: The key to getting construction started and buildings occupied

By now, everyone who is anyone in development, design and construction knows that the International Building Code (the IBC) is now *the* Uniform Construction Code in Pennsylvania – enacted to level the playing field across the state so that everybody, everywhere is building to the same standards and is being held to the same requirements. And by now, those same developers, design professionals and contractors, as well as the municipalities across the Commonwealth charged with enforcing the IBC, are getting comfortable with its technical requirements.

Yet, despite the highly touted “equity” and streamlined organization that was promised following implementation of the IBC, developers everywhere continue to experience the same old story when it comes to getting a project built and occupied: long lead times, shifting standards and escalating costs.



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Why? Ultimately, it is often due to the failure of all parties involved – developers, design professionals, contractors and municipal officials – to follow the provisions of not just the IBC technical requirements, *but the administrative requirements of the IBC Regulations as well.*

The IBC Regulations establish fairly exacting administrative procedures for the submission and review of projects, the issuance of permits, the inspection of on-going construction and, ultimately, the issuance of that all important certificate of

occupancy. For example, when issuing a permit, the Regulations require a reviewing official to stamp the permit set as compliant with the IBC. I call this the “magic stamp.” Once you have the magic stamp, the rules can not change and, generally speaking, conformance of the construction to the permit set *entitles* the holder to a certificate of occupancy within five days of issuance of a final inspection report.

Imagine: no last minute calls to add an extra layer of drywall to the corridor walls to increase the fire rating because the code official is suddenly not “comfortable” with the rated system you selected, no out-of-left field requirement to add a run of two dozen sprinkler heads to a system that already complies, no additional last minute dampers in already compliant HVAC systems...magic right?

And it is not just the magic stamp that can streamline the process. The IBC Regulations

are replete with requirements and timelines designed to create an efficient and equitable process from start to finish – the trick is to make sure that everyone is following the rules. And the good news does not end there. New Jersey developers may benefit from many similar provisions within the New Jersey Regulations.

The moral of the story? Knowing – and using – the IBC Regulations can significantly speed the process from permit to occupancy. And a speedier process is likely to result in lower costs, faster completion and, here is the big payoff: a satisfied client.

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