

Expedited Green Permitting

Seattle, WA

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There are many reasons to build green—energy efficiency, marketability, long-term savings. Seattle developers have one more reason: faster project approval. Expedited permitting is valuable to a developer. It adds greater predictability to the overall development process, which can reduce risk and costs for investors. It is also an effective way for communities to prioritize and promote the types of development that will be most beneficial to the public.

PRIORITYGREEN
Streamlining Sustainable Development



In 2009, Seattle's "Priority Green Expedited" program established faster review and construction permitting processes for residential and commercial projects that go beyond the city's basic building standards, which are already among the greenest in the nation. The higher green building criteria address energy and water conservation, waste reduction, stormwater management, indoor air quality, and gross conditioned floor area. Eligible projects receive faster reviews and approvals, application assistance from green building staff experts, and faster intake appointments.



Green projects move faster

Developers interested in expedited permitting must secure verification from one of two third party green certification programs. [Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design](#) (LEED) is a well-regarded nationwide certification program administered by the U.S. Green Building Council. [Built Green](#) is a regional nonprofit green residential program developed by the Master Builders Association of King and Snohomish Counties in partnership with the counties and Washington State agencies. Alternatively, small residential projects can access expedited permitting through inspection by Seattle city staff if their project meets the rigorous energy efficiency and solar standards outlined in the [Passive House](#) program.

Priority Green Expedited

- ✓ Developers save an average of 2 months off the typical 6-month process to get to a construction permit.
- ✓ In 2014, one out of four eligible projects was going greener to get expedited permits.

The developer starts the process by submitting a verification letter from the certifying organization and a checklist of criteria to show how their project would meet the higher green standards required for the speedier review track. The city confirms eligibility for the program within two weeks, and the project enters the development review fast track where it receives a single point of contact throughout the process, priority scheduling, faster plan review, and faster construction permit approval. According to Seattle's Department of Planning and Development:

- Developers using the Priority Green Expedited track save an average of two months off the typical six-month process it takes to get to a construction permit.
- Projects are going greener to take advantage of the faster review process. In 2010, ten of the eligible projects (4%) used Priority Green Expedited permitting. By 2014, 233 of the eligible projects (23%) were using it.

The program is more popular with residential than commercial developments, perhaps due to availability of faster plan review and additional special incentives like density bonuses. Built Green reports that since the implementation of the Priority Green Expedited program, many more housing projects are meeting the higher 4-star rating.

Similar programs in other communities

Other cities are also trying expedited permitting to increase green building development. In Utah, [Salt Lake City's Expedited Plan Review](#) program grants review and approval to projects within three days of application and site plan approval within another two weeks. Commercial projects must achieve the LEED Silver or higher certification and residential projects must earn an [Energy Star Home](#) rating of 85 or better.

In Florida, [Miami-Dade County's Sustainable Buildings Program](#) offers expedited review for commercial, industrial and residential projects that are certified as LEED Silver or greater and projects that feature solar water heating and solar photovoltaic systems. The program was enacted in 2005 through [Ordinance 07-65](#).

Seattle's Priority Green Expedited web site:

<http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/permits/greenbuildingincentives/prioritygreenexpedited/default.htm>