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Bureau of Development Services Creates Process to Get Sustainable Technologies into Building Faster

Printable Version - October 22, 2008 - 2 Comments



Bureau of Development Services
FROM CONCEPT TO CONSTRUCTION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**October 22, 2008****Contact: Debbie Cleek, 503.823.9651**

(Portland, OR) Portland City Council recently passed an ordinance allowing the Bureau of Development Services (BDS) to create an Alternative Technology Advisory Committee (ATAC) to help evaluate innovative sustainable technologies in the context of existing building code requirements.

"The creation of the Committee is vital to the bureau's efforts to move emerging green technologies into more development projects in Portland," said Debbie Cleek, a Green Building Specialist for the bureau.

In 2006, the Development Review Advisory Committee (DRAC), a citizen advisory body representing those with interests in development review processes, neighborhood livability and the environment, convened a subcommittee to look at ways the City could accelerate sustainable development on a city-wide scale. One of the recommendations of the DRAC subcommittee was to create a committee to review alternative technology.

BDS has seen growing interest on the part of developers to use innovative building products or construction practices to increase a project's sustainability, or to comply with green building certification programs, such as LEED. At times these technologies are so new that they do not have standard testing data available to show how they perform. In addition, nationally recognized testing data is often expensive and time consuming to obtain.

To address these issues, BDS has created a new review process where an applicant can gather relevant information about a technology and present it to a panel of experts with backgrounds in the sustainable building industry. The panel will review the information and make a determination as to whether or not the data is sufficient to support its use in building projects. In addition, the technology must offer a more sustainable option than the product or system it would likely replace. The Committee will make a recommendation to BDS that will be considered as part of a standard building code appeal using the 'Alternative Methods' section of the state Building Code.

BDS and our industry partners believe that this new process will open up an avenue to allow more experimentation with new building methods, which in turn will help advance green building science. It is anticipated that the applications the Committee will see will run the gamut from high-tech building products that are currently being used in Europe to natural building methods using simple, local materials.

For more information about the Alternative Technology Review Committee, please contact Debbie Cleek at 503-823-9651 or visit BDS' website at www.portlandonline.com/bds/atac.

About the Bureau of Development Services (BDS):

The City of Portland's Bureau of Development Services (BDS) promotes safety, livability and economic vitality through efficient and collaborative application of building and development codes. BDS staff reviews and issues approximately over 50,000 building, plumbing, electrical, mechanical and sign permits, along with performing 217,000 permit inspections and 1,300 land use reviews for residential and commercial properties. For more information visit our website at www.portlandonline.com/bds.

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Posted by: nora mullane - October 23, 2008 01:28 PM

How will the members of this committee be selected? Is this outlined in the ordinance? And when do we anticipate the committee would be formed?
Lots of questions.
Thanks.

Posted by: Debbie Cleek - October 24, 2008 12:11 PM

We have already collected applications for the Committee Appointments, but are still awaiting City Council approval. Per the ordinance, committee members must be either "design professionals, construction contractors, or persons associated with a university with an engineering school." In addition, two designees from BDS who are familiar with building code

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review shall serve as ex-officio members of the committee.

We hope to have the committee members officially sworn-in and ready to review requests sometime in November.

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