

Krista Sykes - Three ways to ease the pain of permitting - part 2 of 2

May 19, 2011 - Construction Design & Engineering

Part 1 appeared in the April CD&E section.

According to Scott Weiss, managing director of commercial development for Gutierrez Co., the firm's long history of pre-permitting helps differentiate them from competitors. Over the past three decades, Gutierrez Co.â€™a full-service, fully integrated construction and property management firmâ€™has developed a system: they acquire an appealing site, secure all approvals and permits, and then locate a user for the project. This order of things allows the firm to work toward permitting without pressing client deadlines. Gutierrez then takes the pre-permitting process further than most developers by commissioning detailed renderings to showcase the project's potential. With approvals in place and strong visuals in hand, Gutierrez markets the project as fully permitted and shovel ready, attractive qualities for would-be owners and build-to-suit tenants. Most recently the company has taken this approach with Burlington Research Center, a project fully approved for 590,000 s/f of development, located in a prime spot off Rte. 128. According to Doug Fainelli, Gutierrez's vice president of operations, the firm sees the site as "a great campus for a major corporate headquarters, consolidation, or perhaps growth for life science companies expanding out of Cambridge."

Pre-permitting may help Burlington Research Center attract such a desired client. Pre-permitted projects eliminate the risk of schedule delays and cost overruns due to unexpected permitting issues, which can as much as quadruple expected permitting expenses. In short, pre-permitting helps Gutierrez deliver buildings on time and on budget, mitigating the clients' risk. Nevertheless, pre-permitting brings a different kind of risk for Gutierrez, who must invest significant time and money upfront. Apparently the firm thrives on this risk: of the 10 million s/f of developable space Gutierrez currently controls, one-third is fully approved and shovel ready, and one-third is just a few permits shy of this status. For Gutierrez Co., this strategic pre-permitting system helps ensure success.

In various ways, VinCo Properties, Diamond Sinacori, and the Gutierrez Co. have all developed approaches that facilitate the permitting process. Their methods may be diverse, but they share two features. Whether cultivating trusting relationships, community involvement, or shovel-ready projects, these approaches rest on common-sense yet frequently overlooked principlesâ€™help people like you, help people get involved, help people see what can be. These elements emphasize human aspects of development and contribute to a very desirable resultâ€™saving all parties time, money, and pain.

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