



Policy Memo: Streamlined Permitting

The City of Syracuse should allow for architect self-certification building permits for some construction projects and set deadlines for the department commenting process, while reducing permit fees. Pre-approved building plans can also provide an option for easy permitting.

Overview:

The City of Syracuse's Central Permit Office is often overwhelmed with applications and is understaffed. This pressure can be alleviated with architect self-certification of some building permits. This program would allow architects with the proper insurance and training to self-certify that building code requirements are met on eligible project types. The city can decide to allow all projects to self-certify, or certain types of small projects to self-certify such as small commercial spaces and residential buildings up to six units. This can speed up the permitting process significantly for small projects, improving outcomes for project stakeholders and the state of Syracuse's revitalization efforts. By reducing the amount of time spent on reviewing small projects, this will also decrease permitting times for large projects. Some major cities such as Chicago and New York City allow for self-certification on certain project types.

The City of Syracuse can also set deadlines for departments to comment on permit applications for small projects. While self-certification takes pressure off of the Central Permit Office, it doesn't speed up the permitting process for small projects when it comes to other departments' comments. Imposing a strict deadline for departments such as DPW, Plumbing, Water Engineering, and Engineering to make comments on small projects that will have minimal impact on those departments' systems can prevent delays in the permitting process.

Further, permit fees should be carefully studied and reduced for project types and locations of particular interest to the City of Syracuse.

Pre-approved building plans, such as [those created for the city of South Bend](#), Indiana, can also create greater ease for permitting new construction for 1-4 family homes and townhomes, accessory dwelling units, and other building types.