

SANTA BARBARA COUNTY BOARD AGENDA LETTER



Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 568-2240

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TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Valentin Alexeeff, Director
Planning & Development

STAFF CONTACT: Mike Zimmer, 568-3120
Kathy McNeal Pfeifer, 568-2507

SUBJECT: Innovative Building Review Program - Amendments

Recommendation(s):

That the Board of Supervisors:

- A. Authorize P&D staff to approve final plans for projects meeting only Target 1 of the Innovative Building Review Program;
- B. Remove various incentives from the Innovative Building Review Program's target levels.

Alignment with Board Strategic Plan:

The recommendations primarily align with Goal 4: Implement Strategies for Economic Vitality and Sustainable Growth.

Executive Summary and Discussion:

Recommendation A: The County's Innovative Building Review Program (IBRP) is a free program that advises developers on how to make their developments more energy efficient. The advice comes from the program's volunteer committee, which consist of eleven local design professionals (contractors, architects, engineers, energy consultants, and government officials). The IBRP provides a number of incentives to projects that reach one of three target levels. To reach a target, a project must exceed California Energy Efficiency Standards (Title 24) by a certain percentage and include additional energy-efficient features outside the purview of Title 24 (e.g., recycled building materials, alternative energy systems, etc.).

Currently, the IBRP volunteer committee has the authority to give final approval to all projects participating in the program. Final approval includes: (a) verifying the project's Title 24 calculations; and (b) approving energy-efficient features that the applicant is including to reach a target level are reflected in the final plans.

Staff recommends that the Board of Supervisors downshift the final approval for Target 1 projects to P&D staff. Target 1 projects are typically straight forward and not very innovative (e.g., higher insulation ratings, more energy-efficient appliances, etc.), and final approval of this target level does not require the expertise of the IBRP volunteer committee. Focusing the IBRP volunteer committee on the more innovative aspects of the program may increase interest and participation of the IBRP volunteer members and reduce burn-out. Consultation of energy-efficient features for all target levels would still go to the IBRP volunteer committee and so would project approval review for projects reaching Targets 2 and 3.

Recommendation B: As noted above in the *Recommendation A* discussion, the IBRP provides a number of incentives to projects that reach the three target levels. Staff recommends that the County repeal some of the incentives that either the public is not interested in or are not appropriate for the target level. Regarding Target 1, staff recommends repealing two of the three incentives. First, staff recommends removing the incentive that provides the applicant with a basic life-cycle analysis for each energy-efficient feature. In the six years that this incentive has been offered, no one has asked for this analysis. Second, staff recommends removing the 50% reduction for the energy plan-check fee incentive if the Board of Supervisors downshifts authority to approve Target 1 to P&D staff. The expedited review through the plan-check process would remain as the only incentive for Target 1 under this recommendation. Having only one incentive for Target 1 appears appropriate since this target is relatively easy to meet and serves as an entry-level target. In addition, expedited review is the most popular incentive with participants and it will still encourage new developers to the program.

Regarding Targets 2 and 3, staff recommends repealing the incentive that provides the applicant with a brochure that details the life-cycle analysis for the energy-efficient features. No one has asked for this analysis during the six years that it has been offered. Under this recommendation, the three remaining incentives for Target 2 would be: (a) 50% reduced plan-check fee, (b) expedited review through the plan-check process, and (c) IBRP logo to use for marketing purposes. For Target 3, participants would get the three incentives under Target 2 and a Resolution of Commendation from the Board of Supervisors.

Mandates and Service Levels:

Participation by developers in the County's IBRP is strictly voluntary. As an incentive-based strategy, the IBRP currently establishes a private-public partnership to provide free advice to developers on constructing more energy-efficient buildings. It also expedites processing of building permits for those developments that surpass California's energy-efficient standards by a prescribed target. Lastly, it reduces the permit fee slightly since much of the verification of compliance with California's energy standards is accomplished through the IBRP. The proposed amendments do not change this service level.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

There are no fiscal and facilities impacts. The members of the Innovative Building Review Committee volunteer their time to attend the meetings. Planning & Development Department staff time with the IBRP is approved within the Building & Safety Division Cost Center on page D-296 in the Planning & Development Department's section of the County's Budget FY 04/05. Staff costs are included under the Use of Funds Summary, line item Permitting & Inspection, and the Source of Funds Summary, line item Building & Safety Permits.

Special Instructions:

N/A

Concurrence:

Innovative Building Review Committee members

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