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FOCUS ON AURORA

# More on the special report: How Aurora paved a smooth path for developers

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In order to get a project going, developers must first make their way through a process in the municipal government to make sure that the project plans adhere to rules about zoning, density, design and a number of other factors.

This process is similar in every city and town in Colorado, but some municipalities make it easier for developers to make their way through that process than others.

Aurora is one such city, having set out to improve its permitting and planning process years ago.

But that's not to say that the city lets developers do whatever they want, said [Vinessa Irvin](#), manager of development assistance at the City of Aurora. The city still makes sure that developments stick to rules set forth in its planning documents, but wants to provide a clear path for the city's progress.

"Overall, to create a good, sustainable community, you have to have the economic development," Irvin said.

In the early 2000s, Aurora created development timelines to help make the process more predictable and tries to adhere closely to those timelines, something it's able to do 85 percent to 95 percent of the time, Irvin said.

City planning employees also hold meetings early with developers, sometimes even before developers have purchased the land, Irvin said.

This helps developers determine the viability and timetable for potential projects, which in turn can help them make a decision about whether or not to buy the land and move forward with the project.

And Aurora's office of development assistance acts as an ombudsman for the development community, Irvin said. That can help communications among all of the people involved in a project, including various planners within the city, the developer and their consultants, architects and others who have a seat at the table.



Stanley Marketplace

The smoothed-out development process has helped Aurora win smaller-scale projects, like Stanley Marketplace, which sits just on the Aurora side of its border with Denver, but has also aided the city in its bid for big economic-development wins, such as the recently announced 1 million-square-foot Amazon.com Inc. distribution center, which will be located in a business park developed by San Francisco-based Prologis.

“They’re on very short time fuses. With this program, participating developments and businesses can apply and we sit down in advance and plan it out and we can cut the process in half and get the development going in a timely manner,” Aurora City Manager Skip Noe said.

“We’re literally showing them the best way to work through the process to be able to open in their designated timeframe. Part of what happened with Amazon, is we worked with a lot of people to work through that time frame. It was a collaboration between our folks and the developer and the business.”

**Molly Armbrister**

Reporter

*Denver Business Journal*

