



CONTRACT PROVIDER INCREASES EFFICIENCIES, DECREASES COMPLAINTS, AND GENERATES COMPLIMENTS

CITY OF ROSWELL, GEORGIA

Roswell, Georgia, is a community of 88,000 just north of Atlanta. Residents value quality of life, and their city, known as an upscale bedroom community, has been named one of *Atlanta Magazine's* best places to live—twice. City leaders hope to expand Roswell's identity so that it's also viewed as a business-friendly community actively seeking development and redevelopment projects.

Leaders understood that to achieve this, the city's building department must be perceived as consistent, efficient, and customer service-oriented—perceptions that didn't previously exist. To turn things around, SAFEbuilt was contracted to provide building department and code enforcement services effective September 1, 2012.

MAKING A
DIFFERENCE
WHERE YOU
NEED US

TOO MANY COMPLAINTS AT CITY HALL

Building departments naturally have rules and procedures to follow as they go about their daily routines. Frustrations from the residents, businesses, or builders can arise when there is a breakdown in communication, or misunderstanding of those procedures and guidelines. If the conflict can't be solved, a phone call to elected officials might be triggered.

In Roswell, those calls were definitely triggered. In fact for the past several years the Mayor and City Council were fielding plenty of complaints about their building department.

The Mayor and City Council challenged their Director of Community Development, Alice

Wakefield, to solve the problem. "It was really a perception problem that we had," says Wakefield. "People were doing their jobs, but I could see that we had to make a major change to get major improvement."

ROSWELL CONTRACTS WITH SAFEBUILT

After an RFP process, SAFEbuilt was selected over three other organizations as the contract provider of building department and code enforcement services. In their proposal, SAFEbuilt guaranteed a dedicated, full-time building official and pledged their involvement in the community. What's more, SAFEbuilt was a logical choice because they were already providing services to other Atlanta-area clients, including neighboring cities Johns Creek and Milton.

The Mayor and City Council unanimously supported the staff's recommendation to contract with SAFEbuilt. "City Council was somewhat concerned about the staff positions that would be eliminated as a result of this partnership," says Wakefield. "However, SAFEbuilt gave high consideration to existing staff members as they built their Roswell team. In the end, all but three are still working in our

building department, but now under SAFEbuilt's leadership and model."

TRANSITION AND ONBOARDING

SAFEbuilt and Roswell decided that a 90-day transition period was reasonable for the amount of work that needed to be done. During that period there were numerous meetings held with other city departments in order to create workflows and accountability.

"A large part of what we needed to unravel was that departments were either unknowingly stepping on each other's toes, or in some cases, there just wasn't a clear understanding of accountability."

– Jon Walker, Director of Regional Operations for SAFEbuilt.

"We spent a fair amount of time sitting down with the stakeholders to try and understand why the city was doing some things, who was authorized for certain tasks, and then putting it all down on paper," continued Walker. "We were able to get the majority of the needed changes to ordinances during the transition period and before the actual service of the contract began."

Even when a few individuals chose to retire just prior to a full transition, Wakefield shared, SAFEbuilt had the resources and depth of talent to quickly move staff to Roswell and prevent any gap in service.

EFFICIENCIES ON THE RISE

With efficient processes and a clear definition of responsibilities, the Building Department for the City of Roswell is handling the same volume with four fewer staff members than previously. Customer service levels have increased. And the Mayor's office and City Council members are not receiving calls about their building department.

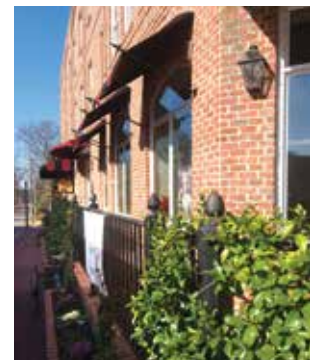
When asked about cost savings of the SAFEbuilt partnership, Wakefield said it's too early to report specifics; although she does anticipate savings. She emphasizes that money wasn't the driving factor in partnering with SAFEbuilt—the ability to run an efficient department with a high

level of customer service and a flexible attitude were.

INNOVATIONS IN CODE ENFORCEMENT

A new innovation in code enforcement is being implemented. Neighborhood Improvement Teams (NIT), an idea that was shared with SAFEbuilt by the City of Beaufort, South Carolina, is connecting residents with government through existing or new neighborhood groups. NIT was designed to provide the avenue for citizens to voice their concerns, community organizations to offer assistance, and government agencies to coordinate responses.

By eliminating communication barriers between key city officials, community service organizations, and citizens, the NIT ensures that people have a voice, that the city has ears, and that everyone's needs are met without anyone being overwhelmed or taking issues to court.



As Jon Walker, SAFEbuilt's Director of Regional Operations explains, "The NIT program is a means to an end. We know that city code enforcement officers can issue a ticket with 10 days to comply on a home with peeling paint, shutters falling down and a rotten porch. Depending on the homeowner's resources they may be able to meet that deadline. However, the neighborhood association may

- Increased efficiencies
- Improved service levels
- Public education efforts
- Neighborhood Improvement Teams

know that the homeowner is elderly, living on a set income and physically unable to work. The business

community may donate or raise funds to help purchase needed materials. A local civic organization or church could provide labor for the work. The goal is always the repair of the home."

COMPLAINTS HAVE EVOLVED TO COMPLIMENTS

In the past, the Mayor's office reported receiving "weekly" complaints about the building department. Those complaints have all but stopped, and in fact, the office has received numerous compliments expressing a high level of satisfaction.

REAL MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY

SAFEbuilt's model is different and customized for each of their client partners; however, in Roswell, they look just like city staff. They wear Roswell branded apparel and drive co-branded vehicles.

At Christmastime, the SAFEbuilt team contributed to a city initiative to collect care items for troops in Afghanistan. Their generosity helped the Community Development team to take a very proud 3rd place in a city-wide competition.

"They are part of our community," says Wakefield. "They are more than a contractor who just does their job and goes home."

"It's just who we are at SAFEbuilt, members of a team with a common goal for a safe-built environment," says Walker. "Our Roswell team members live in Roswell, take their kids to the neighborhood school, and take pride in the livability of their town."



"I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your help with regard to our moving forward with our relocation to Roswell. You helped clarify what needed to be done, and you helped me GET IT DONE. Having been a small business owner in Roswell for more than 10 years, I find it refreshing to see the positive strides that the city is making towards making it easier for small businesses to open, and thrive, in Roswell."

– Mark W.