

DEKALB COUNTY GOVERNMENT



ICMA 2016 LOCAL GOVERNMENT EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Strategic Leadership and Governance Awards

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DeKalb County, Georgia

DeKalb County is Georgia's third largest county with more than 750,000 residents calling it home. Known for its business and education hub, growing international community and natural wonders, DeKalb County Government is administered by a County Chief Executive Officer, and legislative policy is set by a seven-member Board of Commissioners. The county possesses unique and important assets located at the heart of the Metropolitan area.

Problem Assessment

Complimentary to preservation and enhancement of the physical property is the idea that rules and regulations also preserve and enhance community harmony. Relationships between home owners, the business community, and the code regulators are an important part of the health of a community. The way by which the DeKalb County Code of Ordinances were enforced, and the organizational structure of these regulatory services created internal restrictions in delivery, and as such, code enforcement officers were often unable to address or resolve certain field-related issues without the need for referral to another functional area of the County. For example, if a Code Enforcement Officer visited a restaurant to follow-up on a complaint about illegal signage, and he or she notices that the business does not have a license, they would be forced to contact the *Business License Division*; then that arm of government would send an inspector to verify non-compliance and issue notices/citation when/if appropriate. This fragmented approach to Code Compliance and Enforcement was highly inefficient, as these redundancies cost the County in higher resource utilization and decreased service delivery. This approach also delayed response times, had a negative effect on public expectations, and diminished the County's capacity to promptly remediate existing problems.

Program Implementation

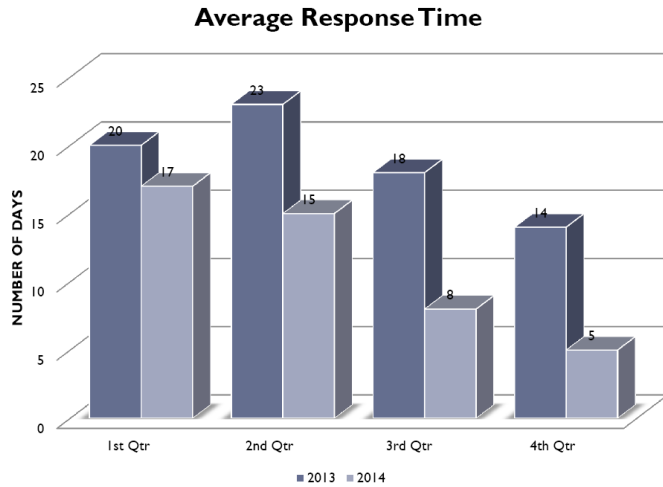
As the county continued to seek cost-saving opportunities, the idea of consolidating inspection, compliance, and regulatory enforcement services was introduced as a strategic priority.

Realigning and streamlining Code Enforcement via consolidation of the structural function was aligned with the CEO's strategic priorities, which includes increased operational efficiency, customer service, fiscal integrity, and investing in employees. Executive staff knew that eliminating redundancies and ensuring that existing resources are available to provide a wide range of services at a higher rate of speed will restore public confidence and will enable greater economic development opportunities for DeKalb County.

In order to increase the efficiency of regulatory services, increase revenue related to these services, decrease costs, and achieve a greater level of effectiveness and efficiency, the Code Enforcement Division led the implementation of a plan leading to the establishment of a consolidated management structure and service delivery. The plan made recommendations for necessary changes in the existing code of ordinances to enable the appropriate regulatory framework to support this new structure. The adoption and implementation of the consolidated approach to the field inspection and Code Enforcement processes broke existing silos and realigned service delivery that maximized customer service. This new structure created a more nimble workforce with greater flexibility and capacity for service delivery across Code Enforcement and Inspection functions. Department directors from Public Works, Police, Animal Control, Watershed Management, and Finance agreed on which exact code sections to be consolidated or shared with Code Enforcement.

Measurable Outcomes of the Program

Code Enforcement response time improved significantly from 2013 to 2014



	Service Requests
2013	11,011
2014	12,397

The consolidation not only met immediate policy concerns, but created a rational system of service delivery that resulted in greater effectiveness and improved code

compliance and regulatory performance. Code Enforcement’s ability to have an officer verify non-compliance and issue a violation notices for a variety of violations has been expedited by the new process that involved cooperation among consolidation of county departments, as well as service agreements. The form of vertical integration to service delivery created a new culture and delivered a new approach to service delivery by current and future stakeholders

Analysis of the Program

A number of services performed by governments lend themselves to attaining economies of scale, whereby unit costs of the services decrease as the volume of the services increases; this project presented opportunities for cooperation by eliminating duplication of efforts. By merging these services, the County developed and measured accountability objectives, and transparent processes to allow the public to assess the County’s performance toward these objectives.