



Santa Rosa County

Development Services

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At Your Service

Welcome to the first edition of SRC Development Services' new newsletter. Be on the look out on the third Thursday of each month for the latest issue where you will find information on services and local trends that impact the development review, permitting and inspection process in Santa Rosa County.

Avalex: DO to CO in Just 14 Months

The commercial development process, from the first application to the final inspection, doesn't have to be overwhelming or lengthy. Just take the recent opening of Avalex, a \$10 million, 53,000 square foot project on U.S. Hwy. 98. Development services staff was able to work with Avalex founder and CEO Tad Ihns to ensure that his building was ready for business- from the development order to the certificate of occupancy- in only 14 months. In fact, the project turn around time is exactly what made Santa Rosa more attractive to Ihns, stating that "efficiency and speed is what made it happen in Gulf Breeze and not Pensacola."



Regulations designed to ensure community safety and quality of life can complicate the development process. Developers must navigate a number of state and federal permitting requirements, utility company regulations, fire district standards, and county codes which can be overwhelming for even the most seasoned professional. What sets Santa Rosa apart from other counties is the streamlined and truly collaborative commercial development review process.

Overhauled in 2009, our county's development review process addresses the need for coordination at every step, starting before even the initial development application is filed to the final occupancy of a building. From the beginning, every project is assigned a project manager who is tasked with not only responding promptly to all customer requests, but is required by internal procedures to touch base with the owner and developer regularly at key points during the project.

What does that mean for the customer? Communication typically begins with a pre-application meeting which brings together all of the county reviewers, the customer and his design professionals, and often other permitting agencies to discuss each step in the process. That helps the developer to understand up front what the full process will encompass.

Project managers then follow the project closely during review, construction, and inspection with an eye towards minimizing delays for the customer. In fact, staff meet

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Santa Rosa's Development Service Center was created to provide a collaborative and comprehensive approach to customer service. The DSC enables residents and property owners to accomplish all of their development related county business at one location, with the help of well trained and organized county employees.

How's our customer service? www.santarosa.fl.gov/customerservice/survey.html

weekly to discuss each project in the pipeline and how they may assist in moving the project on to the next step. Ed Hewes, of Hewes & Co. the general contractor praised the collaborative process and attributes it as a major factor in how the Avalex project was completed so quickly saying, "It was a pleasure working with the development services team on this large project. The project manager, office staff, and inspectors were friendly, professional and prompt with their updates and inspections."

Royals Serves as Interim Building Official



Rhonda Royals was named interim building official on Feb. 6 after Santa Rosa County's previous building official, Tim Tolbert, accepted a position with Santa Rosa County School Board on Feb 3. She will serve in that role until a permanent replacement is named.

Royals began working with Santa Rosa County 34 years ago. While working for development services, she earned an associate degree in business from Pensacola State College and has served in many positions in the development services department, from permit clerk, plans examiner, inspector, to deputy building official.

Rhonda holds several state certifications including building code administrator, building inspector, 1 & 2 family dwelling inspector, building plans examiner and floodplain manager.

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We've made many changes in the last two years, but we are not done yet. Through feedback from our customers, the commercial development review process is continually tweaked to better meet your needs.

Groundwater Protection Meeting Scheduled

The source of drinking water for Santa Rosa County residents is ground water. This is true whether they have a private well or if they get their water from one of the 16 water providers in the county. State and local regulations protect the area immediately around public supply water wells from development that could contaminate the groundwater.



In 2009, the board of county commissioners expanded that protection to include a Wellfield Protection Zone in the East Milton area. Rather than protect the area around each individual well, or well head, the Wellfield Protection Zone protects a larger area that encompasses 11 wells. [Click here](#) for more information about the current wellfield area.

In 2010, Santa Rosa County received a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to evaluate the boundaries of the Wellfield Protection Zone. The project consultant, Advanced Geospatial, Inc., submitted a report in June that recommends a change to the wellfield boundary and changes to the regulations. [Click here](#) to view the full report online.

The Santa Rosa County Zoning Board has scheduled a workshop for Thursday, March 1 at 6 p.m. to review the recommendations. The workshop is open to the public and will be held in the commission boardroom located at 6495 Caroline Street in Milton.

Projects in the Pipeline

Recently Approved Development Orders

- U-Lock Storage, an outdoor storage facility, 6060 Gulf Breeze Pkwy., Gulf Breeze
- Shark Tooth Automotive building, upgraded parking lot & access, 4220 Gulf Breeze Pkwy., Gulf Breeze

Recently Approved Certificates of Occupancy

- Avalex, 2665 Gulf Breeze Pkwy., Gulf Breeze
- Midway Water Systems, 1661 Nantahala Beach Rd., Navarre
- 3-Delta Systems, 1300 Shoreline Dr., Gulf Breeze
- Bikes Plus, 5262 Stewart St., Milton



The 2010 Florida Building Code will go into effect on March 15. All permit applications issued on or after this date will fall under the new code. Development Services will schedule a workshop in April, date to be announced, to discuss significant code changes in residential construction.