



## AlignAlytics™ Helps City of Atlanta Reform Its Building Permit Process:

### A Case Study

Using a proprietary strategic process called AlignAlytics™, The Schapiro Group (TSG) has helped the City of Atlanta streamline its construction permitting agency so that application review times have been cut by more than half.

Soon after taking office, Mayor Shirley Franklin began an extensive review of the City's economic development processes. Her New Century Economic Development Plan contained several initiatives, many of which were affected by the building permit process. She targeted the Bureau of Buildings for reform, as it was beset by backlogs and procedural confusion. Developers, builders and citizens had long complained about delays, and the City was losing growth opportunities.

Mayor Franklin assigned Deputy Chief Operating Officer Luz Borrero to implement a 32 point plan that addressed changes in leadership, business processes, technology and customer relations. Borrero assumed full responsibility as the Department of Planning and Community Development and the Bureau of Buildings underwent leadership transitions. Eventually, Ibrahim Maslamani, CBO, AIA took the reins at the Bureau and Steven R. Cover, AICP, was appointed Department Commissioner. Cover and Maslamani assembled a leadership team intent on continuing the transformation of the Bureau into an efficient, responsive organization. Soon after, TSG was enlisted to assist in the reorganization, charged with helping to conform roles and responsibilities to organizational strategies. AlignAlytics™ proved to be the ideal tool.

To become fully acquainted with the Bureau, TSG senior strategist Alex Trouteaud immersed himself in its day-to-day activities. Following on-site meetings with Maslamani and his team, TSG did an in-depth survey of every Bureau employee (129 in all). This survey revealed how employees spent their work day and how their roles related to each other. Analyzing the results, TSG mapped how daily activities connected (or failed to connect) with the Bureau's mission and strategic goals.

The result was a three-prong plan for speeding up application reviews, delivering a better customer service experience, and improving the efficiency of the Bureau's information technology. In addition to laying out a number of recommended actions, AlignAlytics™ forecast improvements that the Bureau could expect to achieve. Maslamani and his team combined these recommendations with complementary restructuring initiatives already underway.

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The freshly energized Bureau matched the benchmarks and exceeded Mayor Franklin's key goals. Maslamani says, "Originally, 83 days was the average for approval on a single-family home. Our goal was to get to 50 days. Now we are down to 28 days." Similar improvement is evident with commercial permitting, cut from 240 to 90 days. A renovation project has dropped from 14 days to same-day approval.

More breakthroughs are coming, including Georgia's first online system for application submission, review, tracking and approval. The Bureau also has established a special approach for review of projects of \$10 million or more, bringing all disciplines together when the application is submitted to streamline the process.

"The Schapiro Group provided a road map for being a faster, more customer-sensitive organization," says Maslamani. "The difference in what applicants say now, compared to two years ago, lets us know we are on the right track."